Radicals on the Web

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Movements aren't born on the Internet. The digital realm can't supply the mysterious spark that turns an obscure cause into a widespread passion, that motivates scattered individuals to take collective action.

But once people are in motion, the Internet is an agitator's dream: fast, cheap, far-reaching. Grassroots movements of all kinds increasingly use listserves and discussion groups to coordinate their work. Email is beginning to do away with the expensive chore of stuffing envelopes, long a staple of activist life. And with the planetary reach of the World Wide Web, activist networks are globalizing at nearly the pace of the corporate order they oppose.

For radical and alternative media, the potential is enormous. One striking example: During the Seattle WTO protests and their aftermath, the Independent Media Center logged a stunning 2 million hits on its website, which broadcast firsthand reports from the streets.

However, a "digital divide" in computer and Internet access remains between the haves and have-nots, which in the United States often means whites and people of color. Such disparities carry over into grassroots organizing: Even a group as large and media-savvy as Reverend Al Sharpton's National Action Network is not yet online.

What follows is a tiny sampling of what's out there, a guided tour to some of the best radical gathering spots on the Web:

CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION

The best place to hook up with the fight against corporate globalization is the A16 website. It's the online hub for the main coalition that is planning the sure-to-be-splashy April 16 protests in Washington, D.C., which will target the annual meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Be sure to read Elizabeth Martinez's influential essay on this burgeoning movement, "Where Was the Color in Seattle? Looking for Reasons Why the Great Battle Was So White"

To study globalization issues in greater depth, check out the excellent reading list offered by San Francisco's Modern Times Bookstore. Or subscribe to Essential Action's Stop-imf listserve, which posts 1-5 messages per day on topics relating to the IMF, structural adjustment, and Third World debt (write to stop-imf-request@lists.essential.org with "subscribe" in the body of the message).

Finally, a comprehensive resource guide on corporate globalization can be found on Global Exchange's website.

DIRECT ACTION

At the upcoming A16 World Bank/IMF protests, you can expect the streets to be filled with music, art, exuberance, and blockades – much as they were in Seattle, until the police started lobbing gas canisters into the crowd.

This spirited protest style owes much to Reclaim the Streets, a worldwide phenomenon, little known in the United States, that was born five years ago out of the convergence of England's anti-road- building movement and underground rave scene.

RTS played a major role in the even less-well-known J18 protest, a crucial activist watershed. This June 1999 day of anti-capitalist action around the world coincided with a G8 global su-

perpower summit in Germany, and pointed the way to Seattle and beyond. Learn more at the Mid-Atlantic Infoshop's indispensable website.

For the latest news of radical direct action – genetically engineered crops destroyed! pompous capitalist pied! – scan the voluminous offerings from DAMN, the Direct Action Media Network. And don't miss the Earth First! Journal website, filled with frontline reporting and ruminations from direct action movements around the world.

ANARCHISTS

Somebody give the mainstream media a clue phone: Anarchists don't all smash windows and wear black masks. On the contrary, there are nearly as many anarchisms as there are anarchists, and spirited debates rage among them about tactics, strategies, and political styles.

Anarchist influences pervade many of the liveliest grassroots movements today. The best portal by far into this activist realm is the sprawling Mid-Atlantic Infoshop site.It features daily news updates, key texts and manifestos, extensive links, and an excellent FAQ that dispels common misconceptions about anarchism.

Of course, some anarchists *do* smash windows, wear black masks, and so forth. Read what they have to say in the "N30 Black Bloc Communique", written shortly after Seattle. And check out the recently issued call for a "Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc" at the A16 protests.

To get a sense of anarchism's international reach, peruse the multi- lingual A-Infos news service.

POLICE & PRISONS

New youth movements are building throughout the U.S. on an array of criminal justice issues: police brutality, racial profiling, the death penalty, prison expansion and privatization.

From the protests against the police acquittals in New York's Amadou Diallo killing to the civil disobedience actions in response to California's Youth Crime Initiative, young activists have brought new life and creativity to longstanding campaigns. The Schools Not Jails website details fiesty teen actions against "the incarceration of a generation" in California.

Hip hop has been central to much of this organizing. A key example is the Prison Moratorium Project's "No More Prisons" CD, released in late 1999. For an overview of related efforts, read Angela Ard's nuanced essay, "Rhyme and Resist: Organizing the Hip-Hop Generation."

The Prison Activist Resource Center includes statistics, background materials, and links to activist groups. Finally, for comprehensive background materials on the "war on youth," check out the resource guide available at the website of ColorLines magazine.

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