

Opening Salvo

“Never again will a single story be told as if it is the only one.”

– John Berger

We are Everywhere falls somewhere between an activist anthology and a grassroots history, agitational collage and direct action manual. It traces the anticapitalist movements from their emergence in 1994 to the present, documenting the rise of an unprecedented global rebellion – a rebellion which is in constant flux, which swaps ideas and tactics across oceans, shares strategies between cultures and continents, gathers in swarms and dissolves, only to swarm again elsewhere.

But this is a movement of untold stories, for those from below are not those who get to write history, even though we are the ones making it.

The powerful look at our diversity and see only miscellany. The media report that we don't know what we're talking about, we have no solutions, we represent nobody, we should be ignored. If they would stay quiet for a while, they might begin to hear the many different accents, timbres, voices, and languages in which we are telling our myriad stories.

We wanted a way to document, broadcast, and amplify these unheard stories coming from the grassroots movements that have woven a global fabric of struggle during the last decade. And so we came together as an editorial collective,

Notes from Nowhere, to produce this book.

But how does one begin to tell the history of a movement with no name, no manifesto, and no leaders?

The answer is that you tell it the way you live it. Just as there is no single banner we march behind, no little red book, and no doctrine to adhere to, there is no single narrative here. Rather than one dominant political voice, one dogma, one party line, we present you with a collision of subjectivities. These are moments both intimate and public, charged with inspiration, fear, humour, the everyday, and the historic.

Like this movement, we relish intimacy, subjectivity, and diversity, and we think that personal stories have as much (if not more) to teach us as any manifesto. In this, we differ from many past traditions of struggle. We are part of a new, radical, transformative politics based on direct democracy; one that values our individual voices, our hopes, our joys, our doubts, our disasters, and requires no sacrifice from us except that we sacrifice our fear. And so this book subverts the conventional reporting of such movements, taking as its starting point the experiences of those actually involved.

The book is divided into seven sections, each introduced with essays on key characteristics of the movement, written by the editors. After each essay comes a series of stories, in roughly chronological order, which show the progression of the movement as it emerges, comes together, and matures. Interspersed among these texts are do-it-yourself guides to direct action.

Running throughout the book is a historical timeline. We

chose to begin with the Zapatistas as we see their uprising on 1 January 1994 as heralding a new era of resistance movements, and we come full circle, ending with their retaking of San Cristóbal de las Casas on 1 January 2003. It reveals the sheer scale and number of undocumented struggles that go on, almost daily, all around the world.

We are Everywhere does not, and could not, seek to present a packaged whole or complete overview, and its limitations, its editorial choices, are our own. In following a few threads of this complex, dispersed, and centreless web, the threads that we began to pull were the ones closest to us, which wove through our own memories and experiences. As we followed them, we realized that there were many places we couldn't reach, where barriers of language, culture, and distance prevented us from hearing the voices of those directly involved. Inevitably, this was particularly true of the global South, and, in some cases, we have only been able to translate these movements through the voices of Northern visitors working with those movements. Whenever possible, these pieces have been read and commented on by the social movements themselves before making their way into the book.

The Zapatistas have taught us through their struggle founded on radical notions of dialogue and participation to embark on a rebellion which listens. In this spirit, we produced in the summer of 2001 a 100-page preview booklet, *Notes from Everywhere*, which we gave for free to activists at gatherings and actions in 11 countries on three continents, soliciting critiques, feedback, and further contributions. We

continue that dialogue through our website.

When we started to bring these stories together, we were excited to confirm what we'd always suspected – that separate movements converge, recognize each other as allies, and struggle together.

So where do you fit into all of this? Well, the Zapatistas, from behind their masks, are saying not “Do as we do”, but rather, “We are you”.

But don't forget that what you hold in your hand is only a book. As Gerrard Winstanley, one of the English Diggers – who through exemplary direct action demanded the abolishment of private property and encouraged the poor to reclaim the commons – wrote in 1649: “Thoughts and words ran in me that words and writing were all nothing, and must die, for action is the life of all, and if thou dost not act, thou dost nothing.”

Notes from Nowhere

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www.WeAreEverywhere.org

“If you listen carefully to the celebrating voices, those of the rich and the powerful in their corporate offices and government buildings, you can pick up a nervous undertone. If you watch the policy-makers closely, you may notice that the smiles are often thin and the hands that hold champagne glasses sometimes twitch, involuntarily.

If you listen even more carefully, you can discover why. In the background you can hear another set of voices – those from below – far, far more numerous. These are voices the powerful do not want to hear, but they are having a harder and harder time ignoring them.

Some of these voices are quiet and determined, talking together in bare tenements. Some are singing and reciting poetry in the plazas, or stirring young hearts with old tales deep in the forests.

Some are discussing,
planning their future,
inventing lines or
chanting in the streets.

All are talking about
revolution, whether they
use that term or not.”

– Harry Cleaver

This book wouldn't exist if it wasn't for the tireless, unsung efforts of people everywhere working for no reward except the sweet knowledge that they are in the right place, at the right time in history, doing the right thing. This book is for them.

