



# Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left (History of Communication)

*Todd Wolfson*

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Digital Rebellion examines the impact of new media and communication technologies on the spatial, strategic, and organizational fabric of social movements.

Todd Wolfson begins with the rise of the Zapatistas in the mid-1990s, and how aspects of the movement--network organizational structure, participatory democratic governance, and the use of communication tools as a binding agent--became essential parts of Indymedia and all Cyber Left organizations. From there he uses oral interviews and other rich ethnographic data to chart the media-based think tanks and experiments that continued the Cyber Left's evolution through the Independent Media Center's birth around the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle.

After examining the historical antecedents and rise of the global Indymedia network, Wolfson melds virtual and traditional ethnographic practice to explore the Cyber Left's cultural logic, mapping the social, spatial and communicative structure of the Indymedia network and detailing its operations on the local, national and global level. He also looks at the participatory democracy that governs global social movements and the ways the movement's twin ideologies, democracy and decentralization, have come into tension, and how what he calls the switchboard of struggle conducts stories of shared struggle from the hyper-local and dispersed worldwide. As Wolfson shows, understanding the intersection of Indymedia and the Global Social Justice Movement illuminates their foundational role in the Occupy struggle, Arab Spring uprising, and the other emergent movements that have in recent years re-energized radical politics.

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