YOU HAVE NO SOVEREIGNTY WHERE WE GATHER –
WIKILEAKS AND FREEDOM, AUTONOMY
AND SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CLOUD

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Abstract

Wikileaks represents a new type of (h)activism, which shifts the source of potential threat from a few, dangerous hackers and a larger group of mostly harmless activists -- both outsiders to an organization -- to those who are on the inside. For insiders trying to smuggle information out, anonymity is a necessary condition for participation. Wikileaks has demonstrated that the access to anonymity can be democratized, made simple and user friendly.

Being Anonymous in the context of Wikileaks has a double promise: it promises to liberate the subject from the existing power structures, and in the same time it allows the exposure of these structures by opening up a space to confront them. The Wikileaks coerced transparency, however, is nothing more than the extension of the Foucauldian disciplinary power to the very body of state and government. While anonymity removes the individual from existing power relations, the act of surveillance puts her right back to the middle.

The ability to place the state under surveillance limits and ultimately renders present day sovereignty obsolete. It can also be argued that it fosters the emergence of a new sovereign in itself. I believe that Wikileaks (or rather, the logic of it) is a new sovereign in the global political / economic sphere. But as it stands now, Wikileakistan shares too much with the powers it wishes to counter. The hidden power structures and the inner workings of these states within the state are exposed by another imperium in imperio, a secretive organization, whose agenda is far from transparent, whose members, resources are unknown, holding back an indefinite amount of information both on itself and on its opponents.

I argue that it is not more secretive, one sided transparency which will subvert and negate the control and discipline of secretive, one sided transparency, it is anonymity. The subject’s position of being “a multiplicity that can be numbered and supervised”, its state of living in a “sequestered and observed solitude” (Foucault 1979) can only be subverted if there is a place to hide from surveillance. I argue that maybe less, and not more transparency is the path that leads to the aims of Wikileaks.

Author’s bio

Bodó Balázs (1975), economist, assistant professor, researcher at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Department of Sociology and Communications, Center for Media Research and Education. He was a Fulbright Visiting Researcher at Stanford Law School in 2006/7. He is a Fellow at the Center for Internet and Society at Stanford. He is the project lead for Creative Commons Hungary and a member of the National Copyright Expert Group. He is the head of the Masters Program in Cultural Industries. He has advised several public and private institutions on development projects of digital archives, content distribution, online communities, business development. His academic interests include copyright and economics, piracy, media regulation, peer-to-peer communities, underground libraries, digital archives,
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