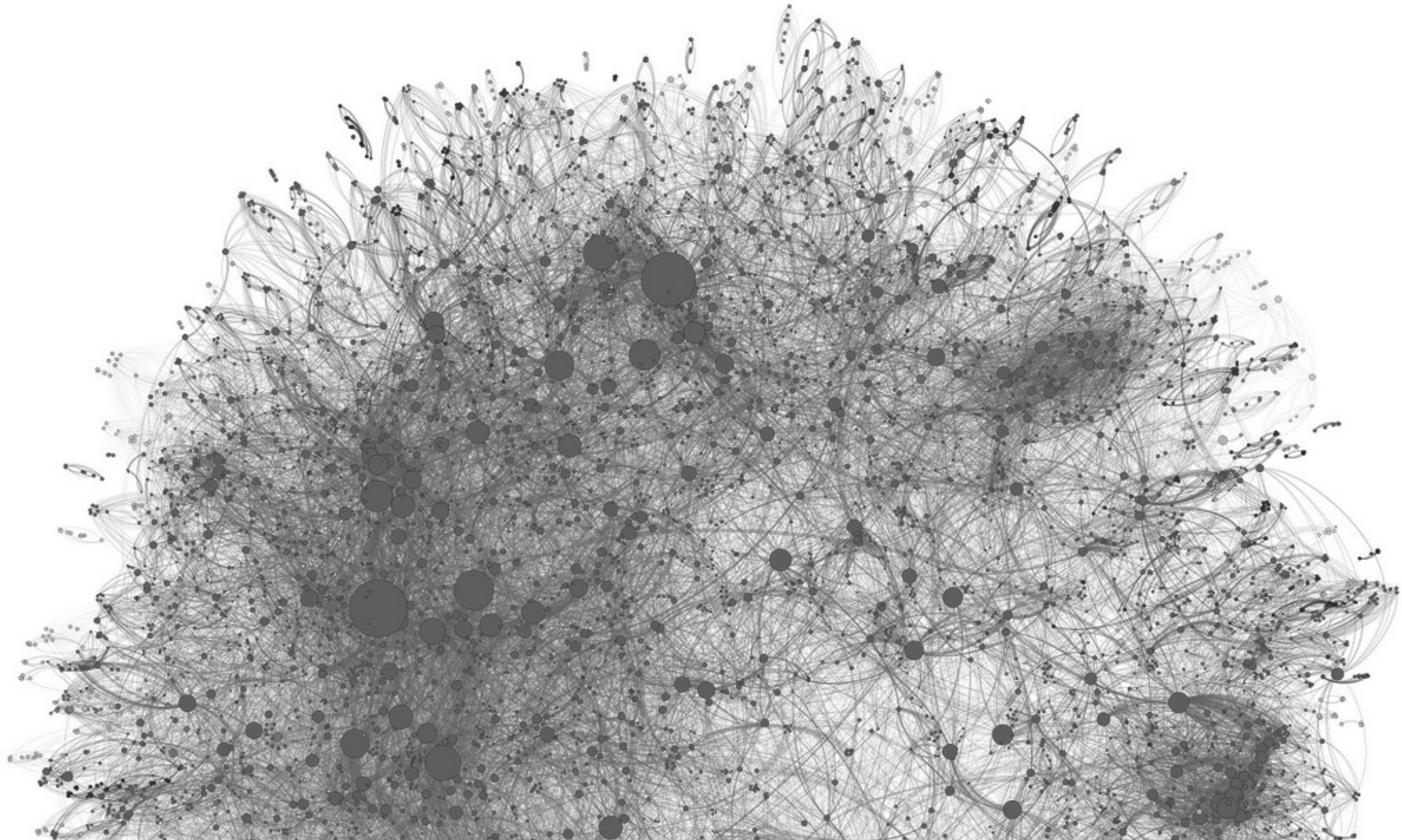
COUNTER-INFO:
A HOW-TO GUIDE



This text originally appeared on the counter-info site, ***itsgoingdown.org*** *in May of 2016.*

For more zines and pamphlets exploring similar themes, visit ***www.sproutdistro.com***

With any luck, you'll find someone to carry the proverbial torch, so you can refocus on your priorities, whatever they may be. No one can fault you if no one responds, at least you tried!

I'll close with some examples of local counter-info sites in the territories known as the United States & Canada. Some are more active than others.

https://antistatestl.noblogs.org/
https://bcblackout.wordpress.com/
https://conflictmn.blackblogs.org/
https://defenddnvr.wordpress.com/
https://fireworksbayarea.com/
https://mtlcounter-info.org/en/
https://nwanarchistnews.noblogs.org/
https://phlanticap.noblogs.org/
http://pugetsoundanarchists.org/
https://rififibloomington.wordpress.com/
https://thirdcoastconspiracy.wordpress.com/
https://trianarchy.wordpress.com/

What Is Counter-Information?

The following is a selection of excerpts from the text "The (Revolt) Medium is the Message: Counter-Information and the 2008 Revolt in Greece". It's reprinted to give some context for the usage of the term "counter-information" (or "counter-info") amongst anarchists:

First of all, the term "counter-information" is not an officially recognized one. When we say "counter-information", we mean information "from below". In other words, we mean that on the one hand there exists dominant information that offers the view of authority on events – and often even shapes them. On the other hand, there are parts of the society that are competitive and hostile toward authority and that organise their own channels of information, essentially class-based interests. There are then two main elements in what we name counter-information: first, it serves the needs of the movement that is competitive and hostile toward authority and by extension, stands in competition with mainstream media.

...

Understanding the importance and necessity for counter-information the anarchists went one step further. Groups and collectives would publish posters, distribute brochures, use public address systems to inform people of current affairs in crowded public locations, and spray pain messages in the streets.

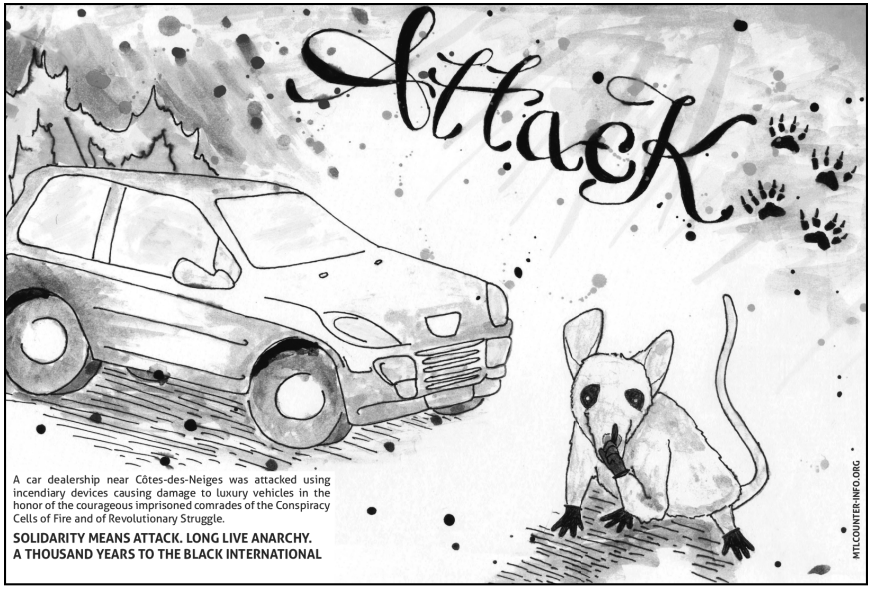
...

When we talk about counter-information during December's events we do not by any means speak of a solid or homogeneous flow of information – quite the opposite. What gave shivers of hope to some and fear to others was the fact that the communicative explosion – mirroring the explosive reality in the streets – was uncontrollable, with many nodes and means of transmission, different codes, diverse transmitters and receivers.

Overall, in December the entire spectrum of communication mediums was utilised (banners, slogans, stencils, texts, communiqués) in initiatives and actions that were "transplanted" with much creativity from the streets to many aspects of public life – schools, radio stations, theatres, the Acropolis, and so on. There exists, of course, a common denominator in all the examples above: unmediated communication.

...it is interesting to examine how counter-information made use of the Internet. The ventures that sprang up back in those days—regardless of how long they lasted—would set up a blog and an e-communication channel (email, forum), and quickly network with "sibling" e-ventures. Counter-information in December was decentralised and helped decentralise action in return. Each occupation became a counter-information hub and all these initiatives came together both on the streets and on the internet in the form of links. This enabled networking and the massive exchange of information.

...Internet-based communication obviously entails some weaknesses. It is impersonal and partial. Under no circumstances can it replace human contact and the wholeness of communication (verbal or otherwise), face-to-face. It can give one the illusion of participating in a group, when in reality the connection with others is temporal. On a political level, web communication has been criticised for making idle, rather than increasing, reflexes whilst websites such as Indymedia are critiqued for becoming centres that manage anti-authoritarian action. Above all, however, the technologies of information are not immune to control—on the contrary. The networks of electronic communication are openly available for intense electronic monitoring, causing a series of security issues. Overall, we should not confuse the capacities offered by new technologies to the social antagonist movement with a de facto positive development. Political and social processes are those that define the use of media.



yet—here you are!). Twitter is generally the easiest platform to create an anonymous account, Instagram the most difficult. Use the email you created in Step 1 to create accounts and use them to promote new content on the site. If you aren't sure what a hashtag is, get some young hooligan to explain it or something. It's not so hard.

5. Don't drop the ball

Hey, it happens. Running a site like this isn't always the most exciting task and it's easy to get overwhelmed. For most of us, counter-info isn't the biggest thing in our lives. Like I mentioned earlier, many counter-info sites are left idle by those who ran them, collecting metaphorical dust. There's nothing wrong with wanting to step back from a project for whatever reason.

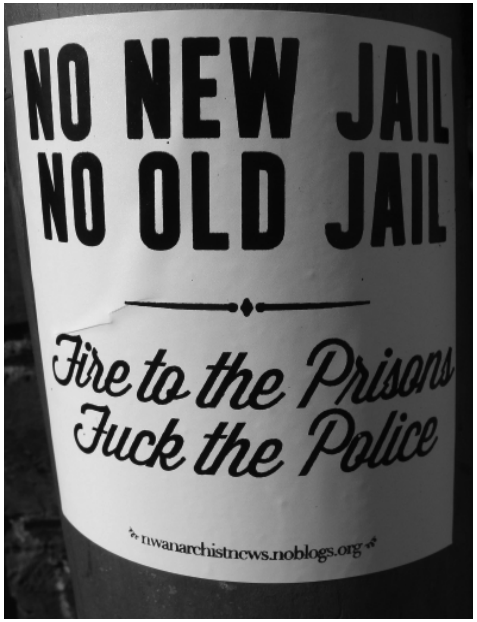
However, these sites serve an important function, and it would be nice for people to not need to restart this process every few years. If you don't find yourself drawn to a counter-info project any more, put a call out there (either informally to comrades, or a public announcement on the site) for people to get involved.

initial writing to start off with. If the people involved aren't the most confident of writers (the de-specialization of writing is a whole other essay!) then at the very least there should be an introduction to the site, it's perspectives, and it's intentions.

4. Spread the word

So you made a site, great! But now who's going to look at it? Hit up your comrades and reach out (if you haven't already) for friends that might be interested in maintaining the site with you. It shouldn't take too long for the most active of anarchists to get word of a new site, but that's a minority (active) of a minority (anarchists) that might check it sometimes. How do you expand beyond that?

The answer is, funnily enough, different forms of counter-info. Making flyers, posters, stickers, and more. These things can be simply ads for the site (there's nothing wrong with that!) or they could elaborate a local tension, providing the site as a place for further exploration.



I want to take this moment to give Montreal Counter-Info a big shout out for their Communique Poster series, a magnificent and inspiring form of bridging online and physical counter-info.

Social media is another way to promote the site. There is always some inherent risk with using social media, but then again there is risk in using the internet at all (and

Counter-information via the internet came to strengthen the spread of the word and the action that was born from direct democratic procedures. The new mediums may have reshaped the landscape, but did not affect the forms of action in their essence. Today, as always, the streets are where we make history.

Counter-Info: A How To Guide

Anarchist counter-information plays a crucial role in building our force. Counter-info can not only spread our ideas and analysis with others, but it also helps to build connections between different circles of antagonists that might not otherwise encounter one another. There may also be some truth to the theory of momentum; when it seems like there is more activity, it motivates more people to take more action.

With this in mind, I am genuinely confused as to the lack of anarchist counter-info websites in many parts of the North America. And even with the limited number that do exist, many lie dormant after the small handful of people running the site move on to other projects. Without sites like this, how could anarchists report on the actions that are obscured by the activist left, or reflect on moments of potential unrest, or simply communicate an attack after carrying it out?

Before going any further, let me clarify my terms. I distinguish a counter-info site as not being representational of any organization, group or collective aside from the sole purpose of maintaining the site. Notoriously, Puget Sound Anarchists has dealt with this indistinction on multiple occasions. An organization's website is in a broad sense a site of counter-info, but this is not relevant to the purposes of this piece.

For the spread of counter-info, here is a basic outline of how to take on this actually quite simple project.

1. Create an email

Use an invite code from your RiseUp email account along with a friend's to make a new email to use for the site. If somehow you nor any two people you know have RiseUp accounts, request one on the sign up page. RiseUp is an email server (among many great things) for the exclusive use of anti-authoritarians. Also, it's worth noting that if you don't already use it, Tor is pretty great and it's use is recommended for this process.

2. Set up a site

Anti-authoritarian web servers like NoBlogs or BlackBlogs are based on the easy-to-use WordPress but like RiseUp are meant for use exclusively by people who agree to basic points of unity. Create a free account and blog on one of these sites to get started (use the email you created in step 1). I won't waste time going step-by-step guide in setting up the site itself, it is fairly straightforward and there are many tutorials out there for those interested.

Make sure to display the email address somewhat prominently (in the sidebar, for instance) and/or create a contact form using the provided WordPress plug-in. This allows people to submit content to the site.

3. Content and scope

Different counter-info sites take different routes on what they publish. Some sites will only publish original content submitted directly, others will aggregate news and analysis from other sites (like the local Indymedia or a larger site like It's Going Down). Some include local news that isn't from an anarchist perspective or directly relevant to anarchists, as a way to stay informed about their region. Most sites include upcoming events as well, providing a space for people to get involved and make connections. Having a propaganda section of zines, posters, or fliers is fun, and it's always neat to have a section for local radical history.

It's also important to evolve when necessary. No matter what format you decide on, never let that limit you in the future.

With the site set up, it's probably helpful to have some