

*You cannot evict an idea
whose time has come!*

These words express the nature of the global movement against the rule of money over life. They belong to the people, the 99 percent, who are bringing fundamental, urgent issues to the street, into the media and the realm of public consciousness, into schools, universities, jobs, homes, and into intimate discussions and relationships.

These words also express something else. They articulate a state of mind, a focus, and a concise articulation of the problem. The idea whose time has come is mainly about three things: inciting interventions that create a rupture in the order of things with the goal to redefine our fields of experience and the relationship between being, doing, and saying; encouraging dialogue; and creating new, emancipatory social institutions.

I N T E R O

If communication and art are to play a relevant role in shaping a future worth having, we need to further redirect, reinvent, and reimagine our own understanding and the way we think, theorise, and practice them both. The burden of debt not only offers an opportunity to do so, but also an urgent responsibility.

During the global protests against the austerity measures and financialisation, one thing became clear. Debt is no threat to the capitalist economy. In fact, it lies at the very core of the neoliberal project.

The imperative financial logic is simple: to generate more debt. While punishing indebted people and states for unpaid debts, financial capital simultaneously offers them new loans that they will not be able to repay in future. Drawing these nations deeper into the cycle of debt, (mostly) Western democracies and financial institutions have loaded debt onto future generations.

Today, public debt is an obligation handed down from the present generation to future ones. Millions are enslaved through debt, and indebted life has become naturalised. Debt has become the primary mechanism that takes power from the people and gives it to the hands of the 1 percent. But debt is rarely questioned. Its moral obligation is culturally embedded. It is shaming and therefore unspeakable. Its power lies in its violent normalcy.

What is to be done? Clearly, after years of the welfare state, we are now

in the cycle of debt—the capitalist age of economical, financial, and political emergency, which could last forever. It could turn into a constant way of life; life under debt. Surely we do not want to become the “capitalist entrepreneurs” of our lives, or self-governed “human capital”.

Yes, we are witnessing the uncertainty of the current times, which generates mass anti-capitalistic critique through interventions in the public sphere. But public critique is not enough. Our struggle should use all that public reason and power offer to support the many aspects of the current common anti-capitalist effort. Our aim should be one: to abolish capitalism with all reasonable means.

Taking a step back and looking at the global movements from a distance, it is clear that we need to learn more. We need to create strategies for understanding and ways of learning that go beyond the institutional, cultural, and pragmatic boundaries of professions and fields of knowledge. This process is already happening with great intensity around the world, and we at Memefest have been contributing to it for many

years. From our perspective, a better understanding of communication and art for social and environmental change, together with developed relevant practices, is crucial.

InDEBTed to Intervene is a book of critical lessons in debt, communication design, art, and theoretical practice. It is inspired by the intensive process we have undertaken during the Memefest 2012 Festival of Socially Responsive Communication and Art, themed 'Debt'. It shows some of the results of this process but also presents additional work on the theme.

The book starts with texts written on the subject for this publication by scholars, educators, and activists from Slovenia, Australia, and the US. Debt is discussed through the lens of public communication, art, design, technology, political economy, social struggle, surveillance, protest, education, enforced subjectivities, and urban as well

as virtual space. This is followed by an international selection of works from the 2012 festival process: visual communication, critical writing and participatory radical art. Works include written contextual articulations by participants and commentaries by some of Memefest's curators. This extradisciplinary contextual, public, and dialogic approach to analyse and evaluate communication design and art is unique to Memefest. It shifts the focus beyond the image and towards communication. Finally, an essay about the extradisciplinary seminar/workshop/intervention held in Brisbane at the Queensland College of Art in November 2012 follows.

This collection of response-able essays, theoretical discussions, art, and communication design works presents findings about debt through the lens of communication and art for social and environmental change; in this sense, it is the first of its kind. It offers analytical insights, conceptual apparatuses, practical tools, and radical inspiration. Debt defines our lives and lies at the core of human relations; this book is an intervention that aims to contribute to the process of real change. The time for change is now.

Oliver Vodeb,
Nikola Janovič Kolenc,
Brisbane and Ljubljana,
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