

# They’ re telling us what’ s next

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Dear friends,

We’ re not listening, but the oligarchs are signalling the next phase of climate denialism. We’ ve talked fairly extensively about AI and its use of massive amounts of power -indiscriminately sourced, and it’ s products inequitably accessible. However, through what can only be seen as a major win for the manufacture of consent, the mainstream largely let the AI bubble blow over. Yes, there are some sycophants and bootlickers out there still suggesting that LLMs can replace humanity, but for the most part the remainder are just capitalists. In the mainstream the complete inability for LLMs, ML models, and other “AI” tools to come close to what humans are capable of has been obviously received, and deeply felt as yet another “capitalist innovation” , to the point that most intelligent workers are rolling their eyes.

This eye roll, or the movement of a technology into “nerd status” is a critical part of manufacturing consent to enable AI’ s subterfuge into obscurity for capitalist gain. Make no mistake, machine learning technologies in all their forms *can* absolutely support the creation of better conditions of labour. However, the current trajectory of acquiring power stations, depriving exploited communities of water, and paywalling of AI tools does not lead us closer to collective liberation. The key take away, here, is that the capitalist class is doing everything they can to simultaneously make engagement with AI tools a nerdy niche, and to massively grow it as a product for capitalist reproduction (at this stage not even necessarily profit -though it’ s assuredly coming). Between Altman’ s pivot to for-profit OpenAI, Microsoft’ s nuclear strategy, and the increasing media backrooming of AI tools - there’ s a clear message.

The message, stated loudly and clearly in public by Schmidt, is ‘we are never going to meet our climate goals anyway’ [1]. Therefore, let’ s just hyperaccelerate AI and make the billionaires as profitable and comfortable as possible while the rest of us drown, burn, starve, and fade away. Not to mention the collateral damage to nature, ecology, and life on our pale blue dot. This is the miserable misanthropic messaging peddled clearly by the hegemon and their bootlickers. Stop worrying and learn to love the bomb.

As we know, hegemony refers to the dominance of one social group over others, achieved not just through coercion but primarily through consent and cultural leadership. Here, the 99% are subservient to the 1%, and must accept absurd conditions -such as “paying to live” and “working for subsistence” -not freedom, progress, or any other such empty notion. As articulated by Gramsci, hegemony involves the ruling class establishing their worldview as common sense and natural, making their dominance seem inevitable. This fatalism, or inevitability, is what fuels finance-bro’ s statements like “capitalism is the peak of human development” . Hegemony is accomplished through institutions like schools, media, and religious institutions, whose role is to shape people’ s values and beliefs. Sounding familiar? When AI is configured as work, nerd, and other such visages, it abstracts it into a tool of production - to be owned and controlled entirely by the capitalists, this requires consent to a corporate AI hegemony.

Manufacturing consent, broadly, builds on Gramsci’ s theory of hegemony to examine how public opinion is shaped in ostensibly democratic societies. As Chomsky and Herman argue in their work:

“The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general popul

Through ownership structures, advertising pressures, reliance on official sources, and ideological filters, mainstream media reinforces elite perspectives rather than challenging power. This manufactures consent for policies that often run counter to the public interest. Gramsci similarly highlighted how civil society institutions generate spontaneous consent to the social order established by the dominant group. So not only is an analytical reading of the media required, but also counter-hegemonic perspectives to challenge this gripping status quo.

Despite the power of hegemonic forces, resistance and counter-hegemony are always possible – always needed, and forever reconfigured just as hegemony is. This process takes many forms, from organised social movements to everyday acts of non-compliance –hello, anarchy. In the education space, we can draw from critical pedagogy, from Freire and others, not as a bourgeois tool for fostering complicity – as many of my bootlicking middle class colleagues tend to believe –but to foster consciousness that is able to recognise and *challenge* oppressive ideologies. Alternative media, grassroots organising, and building solidarity across diverse groups also helps construct counter-narratives and prefigurative social relations –a project we attempt here, together, creating radical counter-narratives to hegemonic messaging. Artists, intellectuals, and cultural workers play a key role in imagining alternatives to the dominant worldview. As Gramsci noted, organic intellectuals emerging from subordinate classes are crucial for articulating counter-hegemonic ideas and strategies. We, actually, hold the power –and if we realise it, we can change things.

While the course set for us by oligarchs and billionaires is grim, there are always possibilities for transformation. By building broad-based movements that connect diverse struggles – for climate justice, economic equality, racial justice, and so on –we can generate the people power needed to reshape governance structures. Experiments in participatory democracy at local levels show the potential for more responsive, accountable political systems. The growing recognition of the climate crisis creates openings to challenge the logic of endless growth and extraction. By reclaiming and expanding the commons, developing solidarity economies, and cultivating ecological consciousness, we can work towards governance rooted in sustainability and collective flourishing rather than private profit. The future is never determined –through collective struggle and imagination, we can create more just and life-affirming ways of organising society. Or, at least, that’ s the dream.

So, revolution on Thursday? What do you think?

In solidarity,

Aidan

[see also] <https://mndrdr.org/2024/the-power-of-ai> <https://mndrdr.org/2024/our-future-the-ai-panopticon> <https://mndrdr.org/2024/ai-accessibility-or-global-heat-death>

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1. <https://www.businessinsider.com/eric-schmidt-google-ai-data-centers-energy-climate-goals-2024-10>