THE DIGITAL FIFTH COLUMN. A PROJECT THAT GOES BEYOND NET-ART

CIBERGOLEM

For over a decade now, Cibergolem—the *nom de plume* of Andoni Alonso and Iñaki Arzoz—has been conducting a project of critical cyberculture. Among other texts, they have published a book entitled *La nueva ciudad de Dios. Un juego cibercultural sobre el tecno-hermetismo [The New City of God. A cybercultural play on techno-hermetics]* (Siruela, 2002 -www.siruela.com/ncd). This denounces in ironic terms the emergence of a techno-hermetic philosophy and a digitised religion; *Basque Cyberculture* (University of Nevada, 2003), the first critical overview of Basque cyberculture and *Carta al homo ciberneticus [Letter to homo ciberneticus]* (Edaf, 2003), a handbook for STS activists.

Since 2002, Cibergolem has been working on the next phase in its critical project in the field of the concept of activist technology and cyberculture - the concept of "hyperpolitics" as an alternative approach to politics in the age of cyberculture and globalisation.

Hyperpolitics is a concept reprocessed from Peter Sloterdijk and related to the area of hyperphilosophy (philosophical, participative, interactive and progressive hypertext). It is also closely related to some concepts that are critical of formal or representative democracy, such as the "absolute democracy" that Michael Hardt and Toni Negri recovered from Spinoza and Benjamin Barber's "strong democracy". Our proposal, however, has its own specific sense as a hyperphilosophical and cybercultural review of the focuses of alterglobalisation from the critical perspective of the "epistemological anarchism" (Paul Feyerabend), following a *fifth-columnist* strategy of internal activism of globalisation.

Some defining features of hyperpolitics are:

-participative democracy at all levels
-rejection of (techno)utopia and violence
-creation of virtual nations
-coordination of activism with hacktivism
- a communitarist sense of its globalism
-imagination and humour as weapons against dogma
-the need for a common hyperphilosophical programme
-the transmutation of the empire into a global republic

Such a fifth-columnist strategy requires that (hack)tivists abandon tactics of *confrontation* for tactics of *creation*, an area in which, precisely, all the arts have much to contribute.

In this aspect, our project for fifth-column hyperpolitics is initially developed as a reticular artistic project in the network.

In an age of art and post-avant-garde crises, one of the means of overcoming this situation is precisely through techno-art, and more specifically, activist *net-art*.

However, in order for the proposal for hyperpolitics to really make sense we need to go further: from art as production to hyperpolitics as new popular art.

Thus hyperpolitics recoups the idea of art-life as a fifth-column lifestyle and ethical commitment for any citizen.

In short, art is transformed into a life art, beyond art and beyond non-art, as a hyperpolitical creation of true "direct democracy" (Joseph Beuys), in which civic participation and participation by the activist groups is fundamental for sustaining an activist rearguard.

To date the proposal on fifth-column hyperpolitics has discreetly followed a series of tentative and experimental phases centring on Cibergolem's initiatives, starting from the Tester project and, in parallel, working in other areas.

Specifically:

1 Dissemination of fifth-column hyperpolitics:

-within the Tester project, in the book *Tester. Trabajo de nodos [Tester. Nodes at Work]* (2004) and in this a collaboration proposal sent out to Cibergolem's friends to prepare texts and emblems for its library
-through the drafting by Cibergolem of an anti-treaty as an essay-fiction, entitled *The Digital Fifth-Column*
-web-page, which will contain a range of materials which are complementary to the anti-treaty and which will contain different fifth-columnist initiatives. See www.quintacolumna.unex
-distribution of educational texts on concrete aspects of hyperpolitics, such as Flash Boletín HiperPolítica (Hyperpolitics Flash Bulletin).

2 Creation of the *Fifth-column Privateer Group on hyperpolitics*:

-working cell based on the node of deliberation on fifth-column hyperpolitics centring on Cibergolem/Tester and subsequently extended to new collaborators, whose function is not only to theorise and disseminate hyperpolitics, but to put it into practice in different areas of civil society

3 Application of fifth-column tactics by the Privateer Group:
-first actions by Cibergolem as a privateer brand, chiefly related to the arts, education and politics.

All phases are currently activated to varying degrees. At this moment of germination in hyperpolitics, it is just as important to disseminate the concept itself as an activist device, as to deploy fifth-column tactics of infiltration type.
Our latest contribution to the Tester initiative is a micro-action of *e-mail-art* as part of the **HiperEuropa'05** project, focusing on the most immediate challenge that alternative hyperpolitics needs to confront with activist solutions: the European constitution.
Until now, the project has centred on fifth-column participation in critical platforms on the European constitution and the publication of articles in the regional press on the referendum held in Spain (20 February 2005).
This micro-action—adapted from the anonymous Chinese treatise *thirty-six strategies*—is an attempt to do our bit for the *resistance* to the European constitutional system, whose immediate aim, beyond a Yes or No to the constitution, is to develop hyperpolitics in Europe.

HiperEuropa'05 micro-action information

-Flash Bulletin on hyperpolitics and the European constitution sent out to the press, fanzines and webzines, and by e-mail and SMS to friends, forums and organisations

E-mail version:

The European constitution now being submitted for approval represents the consecration of a formal and representative democracy in crisis.
Faced with this restricted and outdated democracy, an alternative is emerging: hyperpolitics, or citizen politics.
From a hyperpolitical view the determining factor, before an examination of the actual contents of the constitution, is the process by which it has been drafted in a closed convention, the manipulative institutional propaganda, and the approval by the States of the mechanism of approval, copper-fastened against reform.
How can a citizen make Europe more democratic, in other words, more hyperpolitical? By getting involved in a fifth-column way in the constitutional process and by evaluating his or her options on the referenda that have been called:
-a vote either for or against the constitution amounts to an acceptance of the rules of the game, just as a definitionless blank vote or passive abstention does.
-a spoiled vote with a message against the constitution incorporated could be a way of recording a symbolic protest provided the same message is used in significant or massive numbers
-a call for active abstention, through activist work in favour of another kind of constitution.

The strategic goal is to advance hyperpolitics, but there are various possible tactical levels:

- the constitution is not passed thanks to non-ratification in any one of the countries where a referendum is to be held. We need to concentrate with hacktivist micro-actions on countries where a referendum is to be held.

-the constitution is passed, but with a pyrrhic victory, at the cost of major opposition from the No campaign and active abstentionism leading to the creation of a critical and alternative European opinion (as in the case of the Iraq war), differentiated from the *Eurosceptics*.

The triumph of the constitution and the failure of a hyperpolitical European opposition would thus mark the beginning of a process of fifth-column infiltration and other similar tactics.

Whether the European constitution is passed or not, a fifth-column strategy of infiltration is being set in motion to perform an in-depth hyperpolitical work, first through the signing and distributing of a fifth-column declaration of commitment.

model for **the declaration of fifth-column commitment as a hyperpolitical double-double agent.**

I undertake, within a period of 1 year, to infiltrate some European institution, organisation or party or to create a node in its interior in order to carry out alternative hyperpolitics in a fifth-column way
I undertake to disseminate, promote and practice hyperpolitics: participative democracy, a common hyperphilosophical programme, critical imagination and humour, (hack)tivism and the transmutation of the empire into a global republic

+ name or pseudonym

Europe and the world will keep turning, but the important thing is whether, through our actions, we are capable of creating an increasingly effective resistance. Our commitment to hyperpolitics through the fifth-column is our tentative and experimental contribution beyond net-art.

But, if you want to practise fifth-columnism, you can now infiltrate Cibergolem's own digital fifth-column. Contact us, tell us about your experiences and send us your texts.
We need your help, from the field of art or other activist fields, to create the

First Fifth-column Potlach of Strategies and Tactics for Hyperpolitics

We will use your contributions and those of the *fifth-column Privateers* to prepare the next Cibergolem action: *Behemoth v Leviathan.*

+ More information at www.quintacolumna.unex

(Text to be copied, distributed and sent to Cibergolem)

Cibergolem, is aware of the precariousness of the nascent *art of hyperpolitics*, especially in view of the tactical failure of all its initiatives to set the bases for the progressive triumph of a common long-term strategy.
For that reason we hope to be able to call on your participation,

Fifth-column regards