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# The Luddite Method

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## Our goals and beliefs

We believe that wild nature is something to be revered and respected. Because we believe life under wild nature is the freest and most dignified way of life, we believe all of the ecosphere should be wild, or at least have a choice to be. However, since the Industrial Revolution, a technological way of life has made great strides in destroying our ability to live wildly. The industrial system disrespects and domesticates all of nature, from humans to animals to the earth, and even the parts it has not physically touched are affected by the global problems it is creating — problems that the technocratic elite behind it all are attempting to fix with more technology. This system has become so great that it threatens to destroy wild nature and replace the ecosphere with a life created completely from a lab. Because of the nature of this system, nothing will be able to opt out.

Therefore, luddites' goal is to end the industrial system.

## What we know for sure

We know that the industrial system will be going through turbulent times in the coming decades. It has created a number of ticking time-bombs for itself, from climate change to invasive species. Within the next couple of decades, the industrial system will begin to feel their effects. Because the industrial system is only 200 years old, it hasn't yet worked out all of its problems (if it ever can), so even if it is eventually able to handle the disasters, it will have a lot of trouble at first. Furthermore, the industrial system is inherently fragile compared to Mother Nature, who has caused cascading blackouts by rubbing a few tree branches on power lines. Historically, the more complex and sophisticated a civilization is, the more fragile it becomes. The only thing that might save the industrial system from this historical trend is its unprecedented ability to dominate nature.

We know that anti-technology backlash is inevitable. At the very least people will respond loudly to problems technology has caused, even if they don't view technology as the problem. For example, when automation becomes the norm in highly industrialized countries, large portions of the work force will become unemployed. This will be a huge weakness for the industrial system, since people have an inherent need to achieve concrete goals autonomously, and the industrial system relies on work to artificially satisfy this need. Furthermore, the entertainment and propaganda industries have not quite become sophisticated enough to deal with such a high unemployment rate. When such a large amount of people become suddenly unemployed, they are likely to lash out in ways powerful enough to cause instability.

However, it is also likely that some people will attack technology directly. Technology is already the primary controlling force in our lives: automated systems run the stock market, algorithms are highly influential forces in deciding Google search results or Netflix recommendations, and sophisticated policing and surveillance techniques keep people from threatening the system without them even knowing it. However, more people are going to realize how much technology influences their lives as they begin to interact with its artificial products on an everyday basis. Consider, for example, how widespread the anti-Facebook sentiment is, or how easily people can attack a company like Google. Before this point in history, technology wasn't even a cultural topic for discussion. Now it is one of the most common.

Some of these attacks will likely be violent. Anti-techno-logy terror groups have already sprung up all over Europe and South America, and the FBI considers ecoterrorism to be its number one domestic terrorism threat. Many defense experts also predict that anti-technology terrorism is the most likely future terroristic threat.

But historically the vehicle for revolutionary change in modern times has been the mass movement. Revolutions are the result of many things, from insurrections to rebellions to terrorism. However, insurrections alone do not cause a social revolution, as demonstrated by the recent tumult in Greece and Arab nations in the past few years. These three things are merely indicators that the time is ripe for a mass movement. Recognizing that the collapse of the industrial system will not come about except by inevitable collapse or a mass movement tells us a few other things we know for sure.

First, we know that historically, mass movements result from both the work of a dedicated minority and from events outside that minority's control. For example, the Russian Revolution would never have happened without both the Bolsheviks and the effects of World War I. However, we also know that mass movements cannot be sustained without the dedicated minority, even if the events outside of the minority's control happen anyway. Dedicated minorities are important to mass movements because large groups of people are inherently volatile, so their activity comes and goes in rigor and combativeness. The dedicated minority provides stability between the active phases.

Second, the dedicated minority, because of its stable presence, is able to win ideological dominance, which will direct people's energies to work against the industrial system consistently. Ideology is paramount to the effort of revolutionaries because ideology motivates people, provides moral justifications for revolutionary action, and clearly delineates a good and bad side in revolutionary conflict.

Third, we know that near the end of revolutions, moderates are usually the first to take power. This happened for the French, Russian, and American Revolutions.

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However, in most cases, moderates were unable to hold power because the instability of the conditions under which they took it delegitimized them quickly, or because the revolutionaries successfully delegitimized the moderates themselves. Most of the time revolutionaries take power directly from moderates, not the elite.

We know that the industrial system is a global system, and therefore its collapse must be global. This probably means that luddites will have to be dispersed geographically. It does not, however, mean that they need to be in all parts of the world. Luddites need only to be in parts of the world where the industrial system is most vulnerable.

Lastly, we know for sure that the left is a threat to the luddites. Previous anti-technological efforts like Earth First! show how leftists swarm where there is any mass movement, and consequently they destroy the movement's integrity and focus by loading it with issues important to various leftist groups. Furthermore, the left's critique would only accept anti-technological critiques as one among many, which means any anti-technology movement would be subsumed by the left, not helped by it. For example, ecological critiques of green anarchists in South America have been accepted by insurrectionary anarchists in the area, but as a result, green anarchists only become insurrectionary anarchists, not the other way around. The left is able to do this partly because most of its factions are old and well-established, and they have a lot more institutional support than new movements would have. Related to the oldness of leftist movements is the oldness of leftist leaders. Many of these leaders have lost a genuine hope in revolution, and they have accepted less radical ends while keeping their old rhetoric. Anyone who has studied revolutionary efforts knows that revolutions are not started by the old and disillusioned activist, but by the naive and young.

# A general plan

## Structure

Luddites should operate as a group of autonomous collectives organized around core values and in contact with each other. Groups have to be autonomous because: sophisticated policing and surveillance methods would easily destroy traditional organizations; the industrial system is global and must be fought globally; and traditional structures are too slow for any contemporary movement.

However, a looser structure may mean some groups have weaker confidence in the luddite values of wildness, dignity, and freedom. This can be countered

in two ways. First, groups that are geographically close should regularly meet up and share stories, tactics, and beer. This will function to enforce the general feeling of camaraderie among collectives, and it will reinforce the core values in groups that are new or ideologically weaker. Second, each geographical area should have one or two main collectives who manage the area's newspaper. The newspaper should be a consistent source of news for various collectives, and it should reinforce core luddite values.

Collectives' structure should be similar in that there should be one or two people (or more, depending on the size of the collective) who run the local propaganda effort, whether that is a website, a podcast, a newspaper, or something else. These people should be some of the most focused and dedicated of luddites.

Like ideology is the way to maintain unity among collectives, friendship should maintain unity among collective members. Members of a collective should know each other well and, if they cannot be friends, they should at least be able to get along in a healthy manner. Relational unity is both strategically and ideologically sound. Ideologically, it makes sense that luddites organize themselves in a very human, non-mechanistic way. Strategically, relational unity effectively combats efforts of governments and rival organizations to stir up trouble within the collective. It is very difficult for an infiltrator to be effective if collective members expect to meet his family or visit his home.

## Timeline

From the perspective of a collective, a luddite revolution is likely to go something like this:

**1.** One or two individuals begin a luddite collective in their area. They recruit highly dedicated people who believe in the sacredness of wild nature and the abhorrence of the technological system, and they begin working on unifying propaganda projects like puppet shows, podcasts, blogs, newspapers, or something else. During this period individuals grow increasingly attached to the collective community and beliefs.

**2.** At some point the collective has enough members to begin organizing in its area. They stress certain pressure points in their area and start organizing people around specific issues that will benefit the overall goal of ending the industrial system. For example, if the luddite collective was near a university well-known for its innovations in biotechnology, the luddite collective would want to instigate conflict between students and the biologists or just increase anti-biotech sentiment in general.

**3.** Perhaps a member of the collective moves to another area and starts another luddite group there. Eventually a few luddite groups form in general geographical

proximity, and members from all of the collectives coordinate an annual meet-up. At this meetup, luddites decide on which collective is most fit to run their main newspaper. They also update each other on their progress and celebrate.

**4.** 1, 2, and 3 repeat. From this point on we can only guess in a very general way what will happen. It is likely that once luddites become recognized in the popular consciousness, their characters and tactics will change tremendously. As groups become more rooted in their communities, they will be able to organize more combative actions.

**5.** Some disaster destabilizes the industrial system. At this point luddites will hopefully have gained enough social power to act accordingly and in a coordinated manner. A revolutionary time period begins.

**6.** The luddites suffer wins and losses, and eventually a moderate group gains power. Luddites begin efforts to delegitimize the moderates, and, when they are successful, they finalize their revolution against the industrial system.

**7.** Luddite collectives will likely be involved in community building after the industrial system's collapse. Given that the circumstances after collapse will be unknown, not much can be said about this.

## Tactics

Because luddism's ideology is incredibly simple, luddites have a wide range of options in the area of tactics and maneuver. The range is so wide, in fact, that it would be impossible to list them all here. Instead, the following is a list of categories of tactics, as well as suggested reading for a more in-depth analysis of each.

### Internal tactics

Luddites can and will normalize a numer of practices that enable the group to last. For example, in the outline above luddite groups used propaganda projects in order to maintain unity and active membership. Similarly, relational unity as a tactic builds stronger bonds between individuals and inhibits moles and infiltrators.

The Bolsheviks employed a number of internal tactics, and business literature often includes a lot of information about similar topics.

- *The Organizational Weapon* by Philip Selznick
- *What is to be Done?* by Vladimir Lenin

### Networking and organizational tactics

Luddite collectives are not going to build power with numbers or guns. Their power and their revolution is going to be social. This means they will have to master the art of networking, influence, and storytelling.

- *The Advent of Netwar* and *Swarming and the Future of Conflict* by Arquila and Ronfeldt
- *Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky
- *Community Organizing* by Speer and Hughey
- *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie

### Combative tactics

In some cases luddites might want to engage in legal combative tactics or civil disobedience. Luddites hoping to learn more about these sorts of tactics should read about the history of Earth First!, the tactics unions used in the streets during the labor movement, and current protest tactics like the black bloc.

- *Ecodefense* by Dave Foreman
- *Hit Where It Hurts* by Ted Kacznyski

## Targets

Revolutionaries must choose targets well, industries that the system can't compromise on. Older industries like the electric power industry or the telecommunications industry may be industries where the system is weakest infrastructurally, and the system surely can't back down in those areas, but newer technologies like biotech, nanotech, and artificial intelligence are industries where the system is the weakest socially. Many people are highly suspicious of those three industries, which is an advantage for luddites.

Below are a list of potential target industries for revolutionaries:

- Biotechnology
- Nanotechnology
- Computer industry (software development, metal mining, etc.)
- Electric power industry
- Energy industry (fracking, nuclear, green energy, etc.)
- Artificial intelligence and robotics
- Entertainment and propaganda industry (gaming, TV, social networks, etc.)

- Communications (especially sattelite technologies)
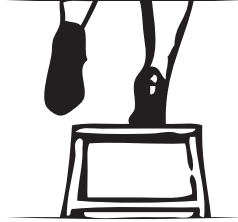- Financial industry (banking, stock trading, etc.)

## The Future

Luddites must not wait for the answer to every question before they begin their work. The technology problem is an urgent one, and collectives are going to end up making mistakes anyway. Early Earth First! had it right when they said they would let their actions set the finer points of their philosophy.

Luddites must also constantly ask themselves how their current projects contribute to the overall goal of ending the industrial system. Any projects that do not lead to that goal should be dropped.

Lastly, luddites must not try to control what circumstances after collapse will be. It would be impossible to do so. Uncertainty is an intrinsic part of any revolutionary effort, and that is ultimately a strength for the luddites, who can fill that uncertainty with hope for a certain future.

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