

‘Where Have All the Leaders Gone?’

A lecture by Michael Hardt

We continue to witness the eruption of ‘leaderless’ social movements. Globally, movements have left journalists, political analysts, police forces, and governments disoriented and perplexed. Activists too have struggled to understand and evaluate the power and effectiveness of horizontal movements. The movements have proven themselves able to pose democratic ideals, sometimes force reforms, and to pressure and even overthrow regimes – and indeed, widespread social processes have been set in motion in coordination with or as a consequence of them – but the movements tend to be shortlived and seem unable to bring about lasting social transformation. Many assume that if only social movements could find new leaders they would return to their earlier glory and be able to sustain and achieve projects of social transformation and liberation. Where have all the leaders gone?

Leadership has become a conundrum that today’s social movements seem unable to solve, but the leadership problem in revolutionary and progressive movements is not entirely new. In this lecture Michael Hardt will use some examples from past theory and practice to situate and clarify some of the issues and alternatives involved in the organization of social movements today.

Michael Hardt is Professor of Literature at Duke University and co-author (with Antonio Negri) of *Empire*, *Multitude*, and *Commonwealth*. Their new book, *Assembly* will be published in October 2017.

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