



The 147 Companies that Control Everything

In 2011, Forbes published a list compiled by three systems theorists in Zurich who used a database listing 37 million companies and investors worldwide and analyzed all 43,060 transnational corporations and stock ownership that links them. The purpose of the analysis was to map their economic power. The researchers discovered that global corporate control has a distinct bow-tie shape, with a dominant core of 147 firms, mostly banks, that control everything.

Three systems theorists at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich have taken a database listing 37 million companies and investors worldwide and analyzed all 43,060 transnational corporations and share ownerships linking them. [They built a model of who owns what](#) and what their revenues are and mapped the whole edifice of economic power.

They discovered that global corporate control has a distinct bow-tie shape, with a dominant core of 147 firms radiating out from the middle.

Each of these 147 own interlocking stakes of one another and together they control 40% of the wealth in the network. A total of 737 control 80% of it all. The top 20 are at the bottom of the post. This is, say the paper's authors, the first map of the structure of global corporate control.

The #occupy movement will eat this up as evidence for massive redistribution of wealth. The [New Scientist talked](#) to one systems theorist who is "disconcerted" at the level of interconnectedness, but not surprised. Such structures occur commonly in biology, things like fungus, lichen and weeds. Economists say the danger comes when you *combine* hyperconnection with the concentration of power. The Swiss scientists warn that this can lead to an unstable environment. No *Scheisse*, Sherlock.

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