

REINVENTING THE ROSE OF FIRE: ANARCHISM AND THE MOVEMENTS AGAINST CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION IN BARCELONA

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Abstract: This article explores the intersections between classic anarchist praxis and contemporary anti-corporate globalization activism in Barcelona. It engages in a sympathetic debate with two key literatures, pushing my argument in contrasting, yet ultimately related directions. I differ with accounts that emphasize an *identity*, arguing instead that anti-corporate globalization movements involve a *confluence* between anarchist principles and emerging networking logics associated with late capitalism. Given this affinity, anarchism is one among several related positions radicals adopt in particular contexts. Indeed, radical identities reflect a growing emphasis on multiplicity, openness, and flexibility. Attention to such specificities is important for analytical and strategic reasons.

Keywords: Anarchism, Barcelona, corporate globalization, late capitalism.

Late one evening toward the end of September 2001, I was sharing drinks and *tapas* with Pascual, a friend from the (ex-) Movement for Global Resistance (MRG) in Barcelona.¹ We had just finished an intense summer of anti-capitalist protest, including increasingly confrontational mobilizations against the European Union (EU) in Gothenburg (May), World Bank in Barcelona (June), and G8 in Genoa (July). Radicals were now beginning to discuss how to translate this counter-summit activism into sustained movement building, while reinforcing their struggles at the local level. One strategy was to build new self-managed social centers, squatted or otherwise, in neighborhoods throughout the city. This would expand the critical spaces housing

movement-related activities, including meetings, political forums and debates, as well as parties and concerts. As we talked, Pascual pointed out that beyond the recent upsurge in squatting, Barcelona has a long history of anarchist *ateneos populares*, community spaces during the early 1900s that housed debates and forums around issues such as women's rights, vegetarianism, and free love, as well as a variety of cultural events.² Pascual viewed such anarchist projects as a model for present-day organizing. When I asked him why, he resolutely exclaimed, "I'm an anarchist! We have to create our own institutions. If the anti-globalization movement can do that we'll be unstoppable!"

As many observers have noted, anti-corporate globalization movements, particularly in Europe and North America, have been characterized by a resurgence of anarchist thought and practice.³ Since the first Peoples Global Action (PGA) inspired Global Days of Action, including the Carnival against Capitalism on June 18, 1999 or the protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle that November, radical movement sectors have emphasized anarchist principles such as decentralized coordination, non-hierarchical organization, consensus decision-making, and direct action. This has been particularly evident in Barcelona, a city with a strong culture of opposition forged through decades of nationalist and anti-Franco struggle and a powerful anarchist legacy. Indeed, anti-corporate globalization activists in Barcelona, dubbed the "Rose of Fire" during the anarchist bombings in the 1890s, often point to the city's anarchist past as a major influence. However, unlike Pascual, many do not identify

as anarchist in the strict sense. Rather, anarchism forms part of a wider movement culture shaped by the interaction between traditional patterns of opposition and an emerging cultural logic of networking.

This article explores the intersections between classic anarchist praxis and contemporary anti-corporate globalization activism in Barcelona. It engages in a sympathetic debate with two key literatures, pushing my argument in contrasting, yet ultimately related directions. First, in conversation with José Alvarez-Junco's work on the "two anarchisms" in Spain,⁴ I suggest that anti-corporate globalization movements in Catalonia not only reflect traditional anarchist principles, these are distinctly communitarian. Second, I also contribute to recent discussions regarding the links between anarchism and anti-corporate globalization among politically engaged scholars. Here I differ with accounts that emphasize an *identity*, arguing instead that anti-corporate globalization movements involve a *confluence* between anarchist principles and emerging networking logics associated with late capitalism. Given this affinity, anarchism is one among several related positions radicals adopt in particular contexts. Indeed, radical identities reflect a growing emphasis on multiplicity, openness, and flexibility. Attention to such specificities is important for analytical and strategic reasons.

This article is primarily based on fourteen months of ethnographic research among MRG-based activists in Barcelona from June 2001 to September 2002.⁵ I begin with a discussion of classic anarchism and traditional cultures of opposition in Catalonia, and then explore the links between anarchism and emerging networking logics in the contemporary period. Next, I consider how anarchist principles are expressed within concrete organizational and technological practice among anti-corporate activists in Barcelona. I then move on to an analysis of emerging political identities and visions, including the rise of a new anti-capitalism influenced by anarchism, yet emphasizing ideological openness, diversity, and flexibility. In the conclusion, I consider some of the broader implications of this analysis.

1. THE TWO ANARCHISMS

According to José Alvarez-Junco, anarchism has traditionally been characterized by two ways of

conceiving freedom: liberal individualist and socialist communitarian.⁶ The first stresses personal liberty and self-expression, the latter collective self-management in the spheres of economics, politics, and society. The individualist branch is evident in the writing of Max Stirner, who did not identify as an anarchist, yet has been widely influential within the libertarian tradition given his defense of the self in the face of oppressive institutions such as religion and the state. The second branch is often associated Peter Kropotkin, who believed that people have a natural proclivity toward collective self-management in the absence of hierarchical institutions. Although figures such as Bakunin attempted to reconcile these tendencies, particular anarchist traditions tend to emphasize one or the other.

Alvarez-Junco associates communitarian anarchism with an older "Spanish" model, and the individualist tradition with a more recent "European" artistic-intellectual trend, Anglo-Saxon in origin and brought into France and Spain with the student movements of the 1960s. Whereas the former was mass based, morally austere, and characterized by a modernist faith in science and the liberatory potential of the working class, the latter tended toward elitism, hedonist ethics, the critique of reason, and individualist action. Mirroring Bookchin's critique of "lifestyle anarchism,"⁷ Alvarez-Junco thus contends, "The problem with this ethical and aesthetic critique of bourgeois life is that revolutionary action, struggle, and rebellion are completely disconnected from the doctrine or objective being fought for, becoming important and attractive in themselves."⁸ Contemporary individualist anarchism represents a complete break with the communitarian anarchism of the past, as Alvarez-Junco points out with respect to the reemergence of the National Labor Confederation (CNT) after the death of Franco: In 1976, the anarchists held a couple of massive, fervid assemblies and there were those who thought that anarchist Spain was indeed eternal. What those fleeting explosions demonstrated was not the continuity but rather the distance separating 1936 from 1976. The old CNT trade unionists found themselves face to face with young, irreverent *ácratas* (libertarians), who were less interested in trade unionism than in "happenings," personal freedom, and transgressing social taboos- whether by free love, drugs, or outlandish aesthetic provocations. The elders replied in puritanical tones, unable to comprehend this new

phenomenon.⁹ Of course, Alvarez-Junco is describing the Spanish context three decades ago. It is not my intention here to quarrel over his characterization of the resurgent anarchist movement in Spain during the 1970s, although one detects a tone of hostile exaggeration. Nor am I arguing for a complete continuity between classic anarchism prior to the Civil War and the anarchist currents that emerged following the transition. Indeed, in Catalonia the CNT was crushed during the early Franco years, replaced by the Communist Workers Commissions (CCOO) and Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSUC) as the main forces of opposition during the dictatorship. Moreover, the increasingly wealthy industrial democracy that arose after the death of Franco was a far cry from the economically backward, autocratic Spain during the early decades of the twentieth century. The largely middle class student base and emphasis on aesthetics and personal expression identified by Alvarez-Junco with respect to post-transition anarchism correspond to the features more generally attributed New Social Movements (NSMs) in Europe and North America during the same period.¹⁰

Instead, I refer to Alvarez-Junco's analysis to make two observations regarding anti-corporate globalization movements in Barcelona. First, these combine features traditionally associated with modern individualist *and* communalist currents of anarchism. On the one hand, radical anti-corporate globalization activists are generally younger and middle class and tend to practice a personally expressive, often ludic brand of politics. On the other hand, their new forms of organization and protest reflect traditional communitarian anarchist principles, including non-hierarchical organization, self-management, federation, and self-organization. Contemporary radicals are striking the kind of balance between the two anarchisms favored by Bakunin, as Ana, from MRG explains, "anarchism means tolerance, respect, freedom, and participation; it means community, but also the individual within the community."¹¹

Second, the rupture between classic and contemporary anarchism in Barcelona is perhaps not as complete as Alvarez-Junco's account would suggest. At the most obvious level, as we saw with Pascual, many radicals continue to look to Barcelona's anarchist legacy as a model and inspiration for present day struggles. At the same time, although the anarchist movement was largely wiped out under Franco, many of the ideas, values, and practices it promoted: the

critique of hierarchy, decentralization, and grassroots participation, helped forge, along with the unifying force of Catalan nationalism, a unique culture of opposition in Catalonia, providing fertile terrain for the emergence of contemporary networking logics.¹²

In this sense, although the Communist CCOO was at the forefront of the opposition to Franco, it promoted open, loose-knit, and participatory structures that are typically associated with anarchism. This model helped facilitate collective action under repressive conditions, but leaders also believed that they were building a new kind of union based on grassroots assemblies and direct participation.¹³ This participatory logic- no doubt influenced by Spain's anarchist past, combined with an ethic of unity in diversity associated with the anti-Franco movement, which brought together multiple actors including workers, students, feminists, ecologists, nationalists, and neighborhood activists, helped give rise to the "unitary" model of mobilization in Barcelona, which is still evident today. Meanwhile, the more radical NSMs that emerged in Catalonia during the 1980s and are at the heart of anti-corporate globalization movements: anti-militarism, squatting, alternative media, solidarity and Zapatista activism, are all influenced by anarchist ideas and practices related to autonomy, self-management, and decentralized coordination. Despite a significant rupture, current expressions of anarchism are thus not entirely disconnected from Spain's classic anarchist tradition.

2. ANARCHISM AND THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF NETWORKING

That said I now want to push the argument in a different direction. While some politically engaged observers have suggested that more radical anti-corporate globalization networks are essentially anarchist, I want to suggest this is not *exactly* the case. On the one hand, as we shall see, many radicals in Barcelona do not identify as anarchist in the strict ideological sense. On the other hand, many of the principles often associated with anarchism actually form part of a broader networking ethic characteristic of post-fordist, informational capitalism. In this sense, there is a growing confluence between anarchist ideas and practices and an emerging cultural logic of networking. As we shall see, this helps explain why so many anti-corporate globalization activists are drawn toward

libertarian politics. Two kinds of arguments have been put forward regarding the relationship between anti-corporate globalization movements and anarchism. The strong case suggests that more radical movement sectors, or the practices driving the movement, are anarchist. This does not mean a rigid, doctrinaire form of anarchism, but a flexible, “post-structural” version attuned to the multiple, shifting forms of power and identity in today’s post-modern world.¹⁴ Graeme Chesters suggests that emergent properties of the “alternative globalization movement” as a complex, self-organizing system are generated by the “adherence to anarchist principles of organization and decision-making.”¹⁵ These include: participation, antipathy to hierarchy, consensus process, directly democratic decision-making, respect for difference, and the goal of unity in diversity. Chesters then asserts, “If there is a spider at the centre of every web the one spinning this new wave of networked resistance is resolutely and undoubtedly anarchist.”¹⁶ While I am sympathetic to the thrust of this argument, it overstates the case. The principles and practices Chesters identifies are associated with anarchism, but they are also manifestations of wider social trends. Rather than an *identity*, I suggest there is a *confluence* between anarchism and contemporary networking praxis.

The weaker case argues for precisely such a loose affinity between anarchism and anti-corporate globalization activism, but fails to specify the logic of this connection. For example, Barbara Epstein suggests that anti-corporate globalization activists have an “anarchist sensibility,” a kind of “soft” or “fluid” anarchism, more akin to organizational culture than a coherent worldview.¹⁷ For his part, David Graeber maintains, “Anarchism is the heart of the movement, it’s soul; the source of most of what’s new and hopeful about it.”¹⁸ At the same time, although principles such as anti-authoritarian organization, prefigurative politics, and direct action emerge from the libertarian tradition, they do not necessarily constitute a strict anarchist ideology. On this view, anarchism is a spirit of resistance, an anti-authoritarian ethic, and a guiding principle.¹⁹ *Why* anarchism assumes this role within contemporary movements, however, is not readily apparent.

This article should be taken as a contribution to the weak case regarding the relationship between anarchist sensibilities and anti-corporate globalization activism, but I want to

extend the argument in several ways. First, I suggest that we can best understand this affinity by considering broader social trends, including the emergence of a cultural logic of networking associated with late capitalism. Second, given this context, anarchism is one among several related anti-authoritarian identities radicals adopt according to local contexts. In Barcelona, radical anti-corporate globalization activists alternatively identify as anarchist, libertarian, autonomist, or anti-capitalist, and often express multiple and fluid identities. Third, anti-corporate globalization movements are extremely diverse. Anarchist-oriented sectors thus constitute one branch within a wider movement field.²⁰ At the same time, anarchist principles of organization have also influenced more traditional sectors,²¹ which can be explained in terms of a networking ethic characteristic of informational capitalism as well.

Indeed, as various observers have noted, social movements are increasingly organized around flexible, distributed network forms.²² I employ the term “cultural logic of networking” to characterize the guiding principles, shaped by the logic of informational capitalism, which are internalized by activists and generate concrete networking practices.²³ These include: 1) building horizontal ties among diverse, autonomous elements, 2) the free and open circulation of information, 3) collaboration through decentralized coordination and consensus decision making, and 4) self-directed networking. However, networking logics are an ideal type. In practice, they are unevenly distributed and always exist in dynamic tension with competing logics, often generating a complex “cultural politics of networking” within concrete spheres.

At the same time, there is nothing *inherently* anarchist or even progressive about network forms and practices. Indeed, distributed networks have expanded more generally as a strategy for enhancing coordination, scale, and efficiency in the context of post-Fordist capital accumulation. Networks are decentralized, but they also involve varying levels of hierarchy and can be used for divergent ends, including finance, production, policing, war, and terror. Despite their structural similarities, networks differ primarily according to their protocols: their guiding values and goals. While networks of capital are oriented toward maximizing profit and police networks are concerned with

maintaining order, activist networks employ similar tools and logics in order to build mass-based movements for social, political, and economic change. Radical movement networks further emphasize openness, horizontality, and direct democracy. Although they are not *necessarily* egalitarian, distributed networks suggest a *potential* affinity with egalitarian values. It should thus come as no surprise that radical anti-corporate globalization activists increasingly express anarchist sensibilities, but this does not mean they are anarchist in the strict sense.

3. ANARCHIST PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

This section explores how anarchist principles, primarily from the communalist tradition, are expressed within contemporary Catalan anti-corporate globalization activism.

Non-Hierarchical Organization

Despite widespread popular belief, anarchism does not mean complete disorder. On the contrary, one of the threads uniting many diverse strands of anarchism involves precisely the importance of organization, but of a distinctly different kind: one based on grassroots participation from below rather than centralized command from above, as Bakunin wrote, “We want the reconstruction of society and the unification of mankind to be achieved, not from above downwards by any sort of authority, nor by socialist officials, engineers, and other accredited men of learning- but from below upwards.”²⁴ The anarchist rejection of the state derives from the critique of centralized power, as the Russian anarchist Voline argued in strikingly familiar network terms, “The principle of organization must not issue from a center created in advance to capture the whole and impose itself upon it but on the contrary, it must come from all sides to create nodes of coordination, natural centers to serve all these points.”

Anti-corporate globalization networks are organized along similar lines. In Barcelona, digital technologies have reinforced traditional cultures of opposition involving open assemblies, grassroots participation, and mass mobilization inherited from the anti-Franco movement and influenced by the region’s strong anarchist and nationalist traditions. At the same time, such technologies have led to a growing

emphasis on autonomy and decentralized coordination. This networking logic was evident in the organization of the Citizens Network to Abolish the Foreign Debt (RCADE), founded to organize a Zapatista style *Consulta Social* in March 2000 around whether the Spanish government should cancel the debt owed to it by developing nations. RCADE specifically involved a statewide network of local, autonomous collectives, which coordinated via e-mail lists and a central website. The network exhibited a clear affinity between classic anarchist strategies, including small-scale affinity groups and decentralized coordination, and the networking logic of the Internet, as Joan recalled: We organized ourselves as nodes, using the nomenclature of the Internet. This was completely new, because we were thinking in network terms. The nodes were the spaces where information was produced and made public, the physical embodiment of the Internet, what we might call affinity groups today. We took the idea, not of a platform- we didn’t want to work as a platform- but rather of a network.

Several months after the *Consulta* RCADE-based activists joined their counterparts from squatted social centers, Zapatista support networks, environmental and feminist groups, and anti-Maastricht collectives within the Movement for Global Resistance (MRG), created to mobilize for the September 2000 action against the World Bank and IMF in Prague. Rather than top-down central command, MRG activists preferred loose, flexible coordination, with a minimal structure involving open assemblies, logistical commissions, and several project areas. A networking logic was inscribed directly into MRG’s organizational architecture, as the manifesto declared, “We understand MRG as a tool for collective mobilization, education, and exchange, which at the same time, respects and preserves the autonomy of participating people and groups, reinforcing all the voices taking part in the action.”

Anti-corporate globalization networks such as RCADE or MRG are not anarchist in the strict ideological sense. Rather than a specific political cast, they constitute broad “convergence spaces”²⁵ organized around basic guiding principles such as decentralization, grassroots participation, autonomy, and coordination across diversity and difference. Like their counterparts in other regions, radical anti-corporate globalization activists in Catalonia also favor

consensus decision-making and grassroots assemblies. At the same time, these ideals are often contradicted in practice. Indeed, as I explore elsewhere,²⁶ such networks tend to generate informal hierarchies, while contrasting visions and goals among participants often lead to heated micro-political struggles. As ideal models, however, these networks reflect an increasing confluence among classic anarchist principles and emerging networking logics.

Self-Management and Federation

Anarchists fervently believe in local autonomy and self-management, as Colin Ward (1973) explains, “The anarchist conclusion is that every kind of human activity should begin from what is local and immediate (58).” As a result, according to Voline, “True emancipation can only be brought about by the direct action of those concerned... and not under the banner of any political party or ideological body. Their emancipation must be based on concrete action and ‘self-administration.’”²⁷ In this sense, anarchist praxis means acting on behalf of one’s own local group or community, rather than another.²⁸ In contrast to representative democracy, Kropotkin thus promotes a mode of political organization that is “nearer to self-government, to government of oneself by oneself.” This does not mean larger associations are never justified, but rather that these should always be based on local needs and autonomy.

The level of emphasis on self-management varies among anti-corporate globalization activists, even within radical networks such as MRG. Some activists are more concerned with translocal ties and horizontal networking, while others stress local control.²⁹ In Barcelona, for example, this latter position is widespread among an informal network of militant collectives, including squatters, anti-militarists, and media activists, which emphasize self-management and confrontation with the state. For their part, although they ultimately split off from the network, squatters played a particularly important role in the formation of MRG. Squatting specifically involves a radical critique of free market capitalism and speculation through the reappropriation and collective self-management of abandoned buildings.³⁰ Squatted social centers also provide spaces for generating countercultural values and practices, reflecting the anarchist strategy of building alternative counter-institutions.³¹ Along with anti-militarists, squatters helped infuse Catalan anti-

corporate globalization movements with a radical critique of the state, commitment to self-management, and focus on direct action.

At the same time, anarchists are staunch internationalists, but they favor voluntary federations involving horizontal coordination among locally autonomous groups. Bakunin had envisioned a future social organization “carried out from the bottom up, by the free association or federation of workers, starting with associations, then going into the communes, the regions, the nations, and, finally, culminating in a great international and universal federation.”³² Networking logics involve precisely this conception of horizontal coordination among diverse, autonomous groups. Colin Ward views anarchist federations as distributed networks, explaining that communes and syndicates would “federate together not like the stones of a pyramid where the biggest burden is borne by the lowest layer, but like the links of a network, the network of autonomous groups.”³³ A truly anarchist society would thus involve a global “network of self-sufficient, self-regulating communities.”³⁴

Radical anti-corporate globalization activists in Barcelona share this utopian vision, while transnational anti-corporate globalization networks within which Barcelona-based activists participate, such as Peoples Global Action (PGA) and to a lesser extent the World Social Forum (WSF), are putting it into practice. PGA was founded in February 1998 as a tool for transnational coordination among local struggles against free trade and neoliberalism. PGA is not a traditional organization, but a flexible, distributed network. Indeed, PGA has no members, but rather seeks to help “the greatest number of persons and organizations to act against corporate domination through civil disobedience and people-oriented constructive actions.”³⁵ Anyone can participate as long as they agree with the hallmarks, which include: a clear rejection of capitalism and all systems of domination, a confrontational attitude, a call to direct action, and an organizational philosophy “based on decentralization and autonomy.”³⁶ Rather than a centralized coordinating committee each continent selects rotating “conveners,” which are responsible for organizing regional and global conferences, assuming logistical tasks, and facilitating communication, often with the help of various support groups.

Despite frequent internal conflicts and power struggles,³⁷ PGA's hallmarks reflect an affinity between classic anarchist principles of federation and non-hierarchical organization and emerging networking logics. However, PGA is not strictly speaking anarchist.³⁸ Indeed, the network was designed with a diffuse, flexible ideological identity, in part, to facilitate communication and coordination among groups espousing very different political visions, goals, strategies, and organizational forms. While many participating groups from Europe and North America are smaller anarchist-oriented collectives, not all identify as anarchist, while the mass-based indigenous, peasant, and labor struggles from the Global South, including the formerly active Brazilian Landless Workers Movement, often have hierarchical structures.

With respect to the WSF, the global social forum process is driven by a centralized, representative body- the International Council. Yet, the WSF Charter of Principles expresses classic anarchist principles of organization articulated through the concept of "open space." The Charter thus defines the Forum as "an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences, and interlinking for effective action." It also declares that no one shall speak in the Forum's name, explaining that, "The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one... will be authorized... to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants... it does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants."³⁹ As with other networks, these principles are often contradicted in practice, given widespread micro-level struggles for power, closed organizing processes, and differing views of the Forum itself. At the same time, open space reflects the inscription of a horizontal network ideal within the Forum's organizational architecture.

Self-Organization

Anarchist thought and practice are also characterized by an emphasis on self-organization and the theory of "spontaneous order," involving what Kropotkin refers to as "the severe effort of many converging wills."⁴⁰ As with open source software development, cooperative forms of production are generated through horizontal collaboration and exchange among a multitude of autonomous participants

coordinating and interacting without the need for hierarchical structure or central command. Kropotkin theorized that in a society without government social order and harmony would emerge through "an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences."⁴¹ As Colin Ward argues, "cybernetics, the science of control and communication systems, throws valuable light on the anarchist conception of complex, self-organizing systems."⁴²

Emerging networking logics involve precisely this conception of self-organization through decentralized coordination among autonomous elements. Similarly, Graeme Chesters, employs the language of complexity arguing that, "What the AGM (Alternative Globalization Movement) seems to demonstrate is a set of *emergent* properties that are the outcome of complex adaptive behavior occurring through participative self-organization from the bottom up."⁴³ In a related vein, Arturo Escobar suggests that anti-corporate globalization movements are emergent, in that "the actions of multiple agents interacting dynamically and following local rules rather than top-down commands result in visible macro-behavior or structures."⁴⁴ Elsewhere I point out that complexity theory provides a useful metaphor for depicting abstract patterns of self-organization,⁴⁵ but such system-oriented language can also obscure the micro-level practices and political struggles that actually generate such patterns.⁴⁶

This need not be the case, but to avoid this tendency I recast self-organization as part of a wider networking *ethic*, inspiring concrete networking practices within particular social, cultural, and political contexts. In this sense, expanding and diversifying networks is much more than an organizational objective; it is also a highly valued *political* goal. Indeed, the self-produced, self-developed, and self-managed network becomes a widespread cultural ideal, providing not only an effective model of political organizing, but also a model for re-organizing society as a whole. Moreover, anti-corporate globalization activists increasingly express their utopian imaginaries through concrete organizational and technological practice. This self-organizing network ideal is reflected in the diffusion of distributed network forms within anti-corporate globalization movements as well as the development of self-directed communication and coordination tools,

including electronic listserves and collaborative projects such as Indymedia.

In Barcelona, RCADE activists self-consciously employed the idiom of computer networks to characterize their organizational architecture. In this sense, the Network was specifically composed of local, regional, and statewide “nodes.” Local nodes constituted the Network’s organizational and political base, and were specifically defined as “self-defined, self-managed, and self-organized spaces.” Local nodes further coordinated with their regional and statewide counterparts through periodic meetings and annual gatherings, as one early document explained, “We are building an organizing formation that is difficult to classify. We have called it a ‘citizens network’ formed by independent persons and collectives that adhere to the network and can take advantage of its structure. Many of these people are organized into local nodes, which determine the dynamic of collective action.”⁴⁷ The Network was “self-organized,” generated through the autonomous practices and collaborative interactions among participants distributed across a network of decentralized local nodes.

The Independent Media Centers (IMC, or Indymedia) is another example of self-organization in practice. First organized during the anti-WTO protests in Seattle, Indymedia is now a global process with hundreds of locally autonomous collectives around the world. The global portal is managed by transnational working groups, while local editorial teams make their own decisions about how to run their web pages, what software to use, how to fund themselves, and other technical and logistical issues. The global network involves a process of self-organized transnational collaboration, supported by new digital technologies. An activist in Barcelona recalled his experience with the global editorial group in this way: I learned how a group of people, some in the U.S., others in London, and others, who knows where, coordinated through a global listserv. Suddenly someone would send an email, “I think this story is important, what do you think?” In less than a week, ten people had answered, most feeling it was important so we distributed the tasks: “I’ll reduce it to so many characters,” “I’ll translate it into German,” “I’ll do Italian.” The next day we started working, and the messages began arriving: “Spanish translation done,” “Italian done,” “French done.” Then someone sent a photo, “What do you think?” The comments

went around, and someone sent another picture. Suddenly we had created an article! This ethic of self-organization is further exemplified by Indymedia’s open publishing software, which allows activists to produce and distribute their own news stories, constituting an innovative form of horizontal collaboration. Users fill out an electronic form, click “publish,” and the story instantly appears on the right-hand column. Readers can also make comments, which are posted below the original posts, generating an open forum for debate. Editorial groups then select the most relevant posts to build the feature stories in the central column. Open publishing reverses the hierarchy dividing author and consumer, empowering users to participate in the production process, as programmer Evan Henshaw-Plath points out, “people can exert power through egalitarian systems that will reproduce horizontal [and] cooperative social relations.” Open publishing reflects the confluence between classic anarchist principles and the values associated with the network as a political and cultural ideal: open access, horizontal collaboration, and the free exchange of information.

Direct Action

Another key anarchist principle, direct action, has also significantly influenced contemporary anti-corporate globalization activism.⁴⁸ In many ways direct action can be associated with the more individualist, expressive branch of anarchism, including the 19th century “propaganda by the deed” as well as the more recent turn toward highly mediated, theatrical, and carnivalesque forms of protest.⁴⁹ The mass action strategy itself has practical (stop the summit) and symbolic (communicate resistance) effects. Indeed, given the rise of a powerful media logic,⁵⁰ social movements increasingly engage in struggles for visibility.⁵¹ At the same time, the focus on prefiguration- living your vision of another world as you struggle to create it- means that direct action practices also express utopian values such as horizontal coordination, direct democracy, and self-organization.

The “diversity of tactics” principle, whereby activists divide the urban “terrain of resistance”⁵² into distinct spaces, reproduces a horizontal networking logic on the tactical plane.⁵³ At the September 2000 protest against the World Bank and IMF in Prague, color-coded zones were established for various protest tactics, from non-violent civil disobedience to

militant conflict. These included the use of vulnerable bodies to occupy urban space (Pink Bloc), festive dancing and drumming (Pink & Silver Bloc), physical and symbolic conflict (Blue and Yellow Blocs), and autonomous pack maneuvers (Southern Actions). Although the action did not stop the Summit, protesters used a “swarming” strategy⁵⁴ to block delegates inside the conference center, forcing leaders to cancel their proceedings a day early. Given the changing contexts and shifting police tactics such a clear cut victory has been difficult to reproduce, but the model continues to be employed during mass anti-corporate globalization actions, including the July 2005 protest against the G8 in Gleneagles, Scotland.⁵⁵

4. EMERGING POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITIES

The previous section explored how anarchist principles are manifested in practice within Barcelona-based anti-corporate globalization networks. Rather than anarchist per se, we saw how such networks reflect an increasing confluence between classic anarchist ideas and practices and emerging networking logics characteristic of late capitalism. At the same time, how do radical anti-corporate globalization activists in Barcelona actually identify? Do they define themselves as anarchist? If not, how do they characterize their political identities? To truly grasp the links between anarchism and contemporary anti-corporate globalization movements in Barcelona, it is important to listen to the voices of activists themselves.

On the one hand, when I asked activists from MRG, RCADE, and allied networks about their political visions and strategies, most expressed views consistent with anarchist principles. Contrasting parliamentary and networked politics, Pau thus explained, “We are promoting decentralized participation, making each group responsible for their part so decisions are taken among many people as opposed to the old politics where a small group has all the information and decides everything.” Networks are thus the most effective way “to balance freedom and coordination, autonomy with collective work, self-organization with effectiveness.” This focus on autonomous networking has gone along with the diffusion of anti-party sentiment, as Marc explained, “Political parties are filled with people who have objectives and modes of organizing radically different from ours.”⁵⁶ Consequently, radical

activists in Barcelona increasingly view social movements as directly democratic alternatives to representative democracy.

With respect to their visions for an ideal world many radicals expressed views similar to traditional anarchist visions of self-management and federation. Nuria described a planet composed of “small, self-organized, and self-managed communities, coordinated among them on a worldwide scale.” Sergi posited a similar ideal, where: Exchange is prioritized over commercial products or monetary relations. It would be a world without exploitation, with much more collaborative work, less competition among people and communities, something much more organic. And these regions wouldn’t be so nationalist, religious, messianic, or dependent on labor markets. There wouldn’t be banana republics. Regions would be self-sufficient and would have food sovereignty, but they wouldn’t close themselves off. Instead, they would articulate and work together through a kind of anarcho-eco-regionalist global government.

Indeed, new digital technologies make such visions seem increasingly plausible, as Pau explained, “the Internet makes it possible to really talk about international coordination from below. It allows us to interact according to models that have always existed, but weren’t realistic before.” In this sense, rather than generating entirely new political and cultural models, new technologies reinforce already existing ideals, including grassroots participation from below and horizontal coordination across diversity and difference.

On the other hand, when I asked radicals how they define themselves politically, many hesitated to identify as anarchist. Some objected to the prospect of having to identify themselves at all, as Manel protested, “It’s been a long time since I’ve been asked to do that!” Other rejected rigid labels, as Pau expressed, “I don’t have an ‘ism,’ it’s all about being open to what everyone can contribute, including those from a particular ‘ism.’ Above all I believe in participation... and making collective decisions.” Some did identify as anarchist, but often in a more visceral way, as Nuria explained, “I’m close to the anarchist position, particularly around self-organization. I have a lot of conflict with the issue of power, obedience, and injustice. I can’t give a precise definition. It’s more about how I was educated, my way of thinking- that you can build the

world you want.” Most exhibited significant ideological flexibility, combining various perspectives, including anarchism, socialism, and autonomous Marxism. Activists were particularly influenced by Barcelona’s anarchist past, the Italian autonomous workers movement, and the Zapatistas. When I asked about his political identity, for example Fernando explained, “I’m struggling to end inequality and injustice. I believe strongly in direct, self-managed action. You might call this libertarian communism, beyond the market and state.” He identified with the German and Italian autonomous movements, and the writings of Antonio Negri. He was also strongly influenced by Catalan anarchism, noting that, “During the civil war there were cultural houses, *ateneos populares*, and cooperatives. We haven’t come close to that, but we’re saying similar things. When I talk about autonomy, we have the example of the worker’s movement here and their experiences with popular, direct, and self-managed democracy.”

When I asked Marc how he identifies himself, he replied, “Political labels don’t mean much today, we should be defined by what we do, but for me the anarchist ideas from the beginning of the [20th] century were very important, and also the ideas of diffuse autonomy during the 70s and autonomous movements in the 80s. I’m also influenced by Zapatismo... a new way of doing politics that isn’t based on ideology.” Joan similarly explained, “For me, there is a Marxist component, of social description- the dynamics of what is happening, and a great deal of influence from the methodology of anarchism, although more lived, but if I had to define myself I would say I’m a European Urban Zapatista!”

Zapatismo has had a significant influence among radicals in Barcelona, which is not surprising given the prominent role Catalans have played within global Zapatista solidarity networks. Gaizka provides an excellent example of the impact of Zapatismo and the more general shift toward open, flexible political identities. Gaizka had identified as anarchist for most of his life and was involved in the efforts to reconstruct the CNT after the transition. He soon burned out on internal politics, and began working with a series of small, self-managed projects and collectives, before getting involved with the Zapatistas in the mid-1990s.⁵⁷ When I asked how he describes himself politically, he replied: A few years ago I said I was anarchist.

Now I say I come from the libertarian or anarchist tradition, but I don’t know where I’m going. Saying I’m a Zapatista makes sense to me, if not for everyone. I define myself as searching for new ways of doing politics, far from power, coming from anarchism, but I wouldn’t use a particular label.

In these quotes one detects a shift toward open, fluid political identities, combining influences from various political traditions shaped, in part, by a cultural logic of networking. Radical anti-corporate globalization activists in Barcelona are reluctant to classify themselves according to rigid ideologies. At the same time, many stress common themes: an emphasis on grassroots participation, autonomy, self-management, decentralized coordination, and horizontal networking, all principles associated with, but not *exclusive* to the anarchist tradition. If there *is* a label that most identify with, however, it is “anti-capitalist.” As Joan suggested, “Anti-capitalism was a prohibited word five or six years ago, but capitalism has become so brutal. Until recently I used to talk about neoliberalism, but today we all use anti-capitalism to characterize a diversity of positions.” Sergi explicitly linked his conception of anti-capitalism to an emerging network ideal, as he suggested, “The revolution is also about process; the way we do things as social movements is also an alternative to capitalism, no? Horizontalism is the abstraction we want, and the tools are the assembly and the network.”

In this sense, openness and flexibility have given rise to a new anti-capitalism shaped by an emerging cultural logic of networking. Rather than identical, anarchism provides one among several related ideological coordinates around which radicals identify, while specific patterns of political identification vary according to local context.⁵⁸ For example, a stronger anarchist identity tends to prevail among radicals in the UK or even the US, while the influence of autonomous Marxism and Zapatismo appears stronger in Spain and Italy.

What seems most important for many activists, however, is perhaps the collaborative search for new political forms and identities itself. As Pablo suggested, “We’re in the moment of deciding exactly what kind of political subjectivity we want to create... a mix of the old and the new, a diffuse, an unknown subject; it clearly doesn’t have a name.”

CONCLUSION

This article has explored the relationship between traditional anarchist thought and practice and contemporary anti-corporate globalization activism in Barcelona. I began by using the work of Alvarez-Junco as a foil for making two points specifically regarding the resurgence of anarchist praxis in the current period. First, unlike Alvarez-Junco's portrayal of young libertarians during the 1970s, today's anti-corporate globalization movements are more influenced by principles of communalist anarchism. Second, despite the discontinuities between classic anarchism in Spain and Catalonia and contemporary anarchist sensibilities, the rupture is not as complete as Alvarez-Junco's depiction might suggest. At one level many radicals in Barcelona continue to draw on the city's anarchist legacy as an inspiration for present day struggles. At the same time, the history of anarchism together with the influence of Catalan nationalism has contributed to a unique culture of opposition characterized by grassroots participation, decentralization, and self-management. Rather than expressing a "natural" anarchist tendency, such values are produced, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, political, and historical contexts. The critical divide is not so much anarchist versus socialist, but rather institutional versus grassroots strategies for social change.

After positing the relevance of classic anarchist principles with respect to Catalan anti-corporate globalization movements, I went on to qualify this contention. Such an affinity does *not* mean that radical anti-corporate globalization networks are anarchist in the strict ideological sense. As others have noted, anti-corporate globalization movements exhibit a kind of anarchist sensibility, but these accounts fail to explain the logic of this connection. I have argued that anti-corporate globalization movements involve a growing confluence between traditional anarchist principles and emerging networking logics associated with late capitalism. As we have seen, radical anti-corporate globalization networks are characterized by a commitment to non-hierarchical organization, autonomy, and self-organization, all principles that are part of, but not *restricted* to the libertarian tradition. In this sense, networks such as MRG, RCADE, or PGA express traditional anarchist principles of organization, but do not identify as anarchist.

This openness and flexibility allows them to reach out to greater numbers and more diverse groups of activists than might otherwise be the case. Finally, I asked how radical anti-corporate globalization activists in Barcelona identify *themselves*. On the one hand, many radicals expressed political strategies and visions that were consistent with traditional anarchist views regarding political parties, the state, self-management, and federation. On the other hand, when it comes to political identity, many voiced discomfort with rigid categories. Indeed, most radicals in Barcelona are influenced by multiple perspectives, including anarchism, autonomous Marxism, socialism, ecology, and *Zapatismo*. Many pick and choose among a variety of positions including, but not restricted to anarchism. This suggests the rise of a new anti-capitalism based on an ethic of openness, fluidity, and flexibility associated with the network as a broader political and cultural ideal.

By way of conclusion I want to address two issues that emerge from this analysis. First, given the historical importance of anarchism in Barcelona and the continued relevance of classic anarchist principles within contemporary Catalan social movements, why do many radicals in Barcelona hesitate to identify as anarchist? Beyond a general networking ethic, are there reasons specific to the Catalan context? Three factors immediately come to mind. To begin with, and perhaps counter-intuitively, the presence of the CNT, which many activists in Barcelona view as "closed" and "sectarian," may actually serve as a negative referent point. Second, the region's cultural and geographic proximity to Italy as well as strong historical ties to Latin America, and Chiapas in particular, mean that alternative perspectives are readily available, in this case *autonomía* and *Zapatismo*. Anarchism remains important, but it is not the only option for those attracted to a radical, grassroots, anti-authoritarian politics. Finally, the impact of libertarian ideals within Catalan social movements means that there may be less of an impetus for radicals to define themselves ideologically. Many self-identified Marxists I interviewed were also influenced by libertarian ideals and were committed to assembly-based organizing and grassroots participation. The critical division in Barcelona is thus not ideology per se, but rather one's organizational praxis and relationship to institutional politics. Second, what difference does it make whether radical anti-corporate globalization networks are defined as anarchist or as simply reflecting

anarchist principles? On the one hand, there is an issue of analytic precision. Unless a network identifies as anarchist, then it should not be considered anarchist in the strict sense. Moreover, claiming an *identity* rather than an *affinity* may obscure larger processes at work, including the rise of a broader networking logic. At the same time, neglecting the flexibility and fluidity in the way activists identify misses a critical point regarding the nature of contemporary political subjectivity. On the other hand, this analysis also has important political implications. To the extent that networks such as RCADE, MRG, PGA, or the WSF process have been successful it is because they are broad spaces where activists from diverse political backgrounds converge. The attribution of a specific ideological cast would exclude those with similar values and practices but do not identify in the same terms. What most characterizes anti-corporate globalization movement in Barcelona and elsewhere is the rise of a new anti-capitalism defined by openness, fluidity, and flexibility, and the accompanying search for new political forms and practices.

NOTES

¹ MRG-Catalonia was ultimately “self-dissolved” in January 2003 as a response to declining participation and a political statement against the reproduction of rigid structures.

² See Smith, A., “Barcelona through the mirror,” in [Smith, A.] *Red barcelona*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 32.

³ Chesters, G. “Shape shifting,” *Anarchist studies* 11(1): 42-65, 2003; Epstein, B. “Anarchism and the anti-globalization movement,” *Monthly review* (53) 4, 2001; Farrer, L., “A revolt to live,” *Anarchist studies* 14 (2): 131-155, 2006; Graeber, D. “The new anarchists,” *New left review* 13 (January-February 2002); Juris, J. *Networking futures*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2008.

⁴ Alvarez-Junco, José, “Los dos anarquismos,” *Cuadernos de Ruedo Ibérico* 55-57: 139-156, 1977.

⁵ Research in Barcelona was supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Social Science Research Council (with Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funding). In addition, I also conducted previous and subsequent fieldwork and activism in the San Francisco Bay Area.

⁶ Alvarez-Junco, José, “Los dos anarquismos.”

⁷ Bookchin, M. *Social anarchism or lifestyle anarchism*, Oakland, CA, AK Press, 1995.

⁸ Alvarez-Junco, J., “Los dos anarquismos,” p. 150.

⁹ Alvarez-Junco, J. “Social movements in modern Spain,” In [Laraña, E., Johnston, H. and Gusfield, R.] *New social movements*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994, p. 311.

¹⁰ Cohen, J. “Strategy or identity,” *Social Research* 52: 663-716, 1985; Offe, C., “New social movements,” *Social Research* 52: 817-868, 1985.

¹¹ All quotations are from personal interviews unless otherwise indicated. Pseudonyms have been used to protect individual identities.

¹² Historians have noted a general affinity between Catalan nationalism, federalism and anarchism given their shared distrust of a centralized state (Balcells, A. *Catalan nationalism*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1996; Carr, R. *Spain*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966).

¹³ Fishman, R. M. *Working class organization and the return to democracy in Spain*.

Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 100.

¹⁴ Chesters, G., “Shape shifting,” Farrer, L., “A Revolt to live;” Mueller, T., “Empowering anarchy,” *Anarchist Studies* 11(2): 122-149, 2003.

¹⁵ Chesters, G., “Shape shifting,” p. 43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁷ Epstein, B., “Anarchism and the anti-globalization movement.”

¹⁸ Graeber, D., “The New anarchists.”

¹⁹ See Goaman, K. “Globalisation versus humanization,” *Anarchist studies* 11(2): 150-171, 2003; Grubacic, A. “Towards another anarchism,” In [Sen, J. et al.] *World social forum*, New Delhi: the Viveka Foundation, 2004; Welsh, I. and Purkis, J. “Redefining anarchism for the twenty-first century,” *Anarchist Studies* 11(1): 5-12, 2003.

²⁰ The Catalan anti-corporate globalization field is comprised of four sectors: institutional actors, traditional Marxists and Trotskyists, network-based movements, and militant anti-capitalists. The anarchist influence is most evident among the latter two, but many Marxists and Trotskyists are also influenced by libertarian ideals (Juris, J., *Networking futures*).

²¹ See Chesters, G., “Shape shifting.”

²² Arquilla, J. and Ronfeldt, D.F. *Networks and netwars*, Santa Monica, CA, Rand, 2001; Castells, M. *The power of identity*, Malden, Mass., Blackwell, 1997; H., Michael, and Negri, A. *Multitude*, New York, The Penguin Press, 2004.

²³ Juris, J. *Networking futures*.

²⁴ Bakunin, Michael, “Letter to the Internationalists of the Romagna” 28 January 1872 (cited in Ward, C. *Anarchy in action*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1973, p. 22.

²⁵ Routledge, P. “Backstreets, barricades, and blackouts,” *Environment and Planning D* 12: 559-578, 1994.

²⁶ Juris, J. *Networking futures*.

²⁷ Voline. 1955. *The Unknown revolution, 1917-1921*, New York (cited in Guérin, D. *Anarchism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970, p. 37.

²⁸ Franks, B. “The direct action ethic,” *Anarchist studies* 11(1): 13-41.

²⁹ This is one of the defining characteristics that distinguish network-based movements (MRG, RCADE, etc.) from militant anti-capitalists. The

former stress horizontal networking, while the latter emphasize local self-management in the sphere of everyday life, although the distinction is more a question of relative emphasis.

³⁰ Martínez López, M. *Okupaciones de viviendas y de centros sociales*, Barcelona, Virus, 2002.

³¹ Pallares, J., Costa, C., Feixa, C. "Okupas, makineros, skinheads, graffitis, grifotas, okupas," in [Feixa, C., Costa, C., and Pallares, J.] *Graffitis, grifotas, okupas*, Barcelona: Ariel, 2002, p. 32.

www.spunki.org/library/intro/faq/sp001547/secA5.html, p.3.

³³ Ward, C. *Anarchy in Action*, p. 26

³⁴ Ibid, p. 134. Ward is citing here from Ecologist Magazine's Blueprint for Survival, published in the January 1972 edition.

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www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/cocha/principles.htm, accessed October 2, 2006.

³⁶ See PGA Hallmarks (www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/gender/desire/nutshell.htm, accessed October 2, 2006).

³⁷ See Juris, J. *Networking futures*; Routledge, P. "Convergence of commons," *The Commoner* Autumn/Winter 2004, www.commoner.org.uk/08routledge.pdf (accessed May 19, 2004); Wood, L. J. "Breaking the chasms. In [Bandy, J. and Smith, J.] *Coalitions across borders*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002, pp. 95-120.

³⁸ Contra Mueller, "Empowering anarchy," p. 142.

³⁹ WSF Charter of Principles, www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2 (accessed January 3, 2006)

⁴⁰ Raymond, E. *The Cathedral and the bazaar*, O'Reilly Media, 2001, p. 52.

⁴¹ Cited in Ward, *Anarchy in action*, p. 52 from an article on Anarchism written by Kropotkin in 1905 for Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition.

⁴² Ibid, p. 5

⁴³ Chesters, G. "Shape shifting," p. 54

⁴⁴ Escobar, A. "Beyond the third world," *Third World Quarterly* 25 (1): 207-230, 2004, p. 222.

⁴⁵ See also Chesters, G. and Welsh, I. *Complexity and social movements*, London: Routledge, 2006.

⁴⁶ Juris, J. *Networking futures*.

⁴⁷ Cited from an early proposal regarding RCADE working groups and commissions.

⁴⁸ See Graeber, "The New anarchists' and Franks, "The Direct action ethic."

⁴⁹ See Farrer, "A Revolt to live" and Goaman, "Globalization versus humanization"

⁵⁰ Altheide, D. L. and R. P. Snow. *Media worlds in the postjournalism era*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991.

⁵¹ Thompson, J. *The Media and modernity*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1995.

⁵² Routledge, "Backstreets, barricades, and blackouts"

⁵³ See Juris, *Networking futures*.

⁵⁴ Arquilla and Rondfeldt, *Networks and fetwars*.

⁵⁵ See Farrer, "A Revolt to sive"

⁵⁶ Such attitudes can be traced, in part, to the transition, which many grassroots activists continue to view as top-down and reformist, which has generated strong anti-party feelings and a focus on civil society as the locus for social change. In addition, by the end of the dictatorship the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), and PSUC in Catalonia, had succeeded in imposing their leadership on the new political actors that had emerged, including ecologists, pacifists, feminists, and students (Alvarez-Junco, J., "Social movements in modern Spain), reinforcing a widespread critique of political parties and a commitment to autonomy and diversity within subsequent movements.

⁵⁷ See Roca Martínez, B. "Anarchism, anthropology and Andalucía" *Anarchist studies* 14(2):

106-130, 2006 for a discussion of the division within the CNT following the transition over whether it should participate in work-place elections. This debate led to a split between the CNT and the General Labor Confederation (CGT), the latter ultimately becoming part of the formal labor relations process.

⁵⁸ See Farrer, "Revolt to live," p. 146.