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This article tries to show the ways in which anarchism is both useful and not useful for the two related fields of degrowth and food sovereignty. These are both broadly speaking ecological movements/issues. Degrowth refers to positions which maintain that economic growth is incompatible with ecological sustainability and economies should be scaled-down, with a focus on qualitative wellbeing and connectedness rather than GDP. Food sovereignty is a slogan adopted by peasant and ecological movements seeking to localise food production, in opposition to global commodified food production. The article is marked by its limited engagement with specifically green forms of anarchism, and associates anarchism mainly with ancom, Proudhonian mutualism, and Kropotkin. It shows that anarchism is useful in showing limits to authoritarian and reformist projects and providing grassroots alternatives, but he thinks it is not sufficiently scalable or pragmatic.

This article examines tensions between anarchism, degrowth, and food sovereignty movements, particularly

regarding the role of the state, policy, and political strategy. The author denies any intent to posit anarchism as "the" path to degrowth, instead opposing arrogant certainty about solutions and calling for 'truth and facts'. He is interested in showing what anarchism is and isn't good for in terms of degrowth and food sovereignty. Although the author defines anarchism as 'libertarian socialism' (though with nods to mutualism and ancap as well), green anarchy is not really explored. The author stresses a desire for a "small a" anarchism not bound to overarching dogmas, i.e. a type of DIY activism. His interest in anarchism is articulated in constant hostility to authoritarian socialism with its certainties of the correct path and methods.

Anarchism is attractive for degrowth because of certain tendencies towards authoritarianism in the degrowth movement, with e.g. Bärnthaler arguing for a coercive state as the agent of degrowth. Anarchism instead sees the state as the origin of 'noxious growth', as manager of capitalism and repressive force targeting ecological movements. Roman-Alcalá thinks that if states can be made more ecological, social movements should push them to do so – but usually they undermine environmental initiatives, which clash with capitalist or state interests. Even ecologically legitimised state policies often end up damaging ecology. Power corrupts, by recuperating radical challenges into the systems they challenge. The focus should be on what states are known to do, not what they hypothetically *could* do according to theorists.

The article argues that many anarchists emphasize ethical living and prefigurative practices such as mutual aid over detailed policy frameworks, though policy can function as a defensive and transitional tool that improves material conditions through welfare provisions and public services. Anarchists seek to build a new world based on mutual aid, and do this directly, not via the state. They prefer direct action to any kind of mediated politics. Examples of movements with a

"degrowth now!" basis include the ELF, Ende Gelände, ZADs, the Hambach Forest occupation, top Cop City, Les Soulèvements de la Terre, and a number of indigenous struggles such as Standing Rock, the struggle to protect San Francisco Mountain, and the Tohono O'odham struggle against border walls. (He could have added here Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass, anti-GM crop protests, anti-road protests, the Cascadia forest occupation, Sea Shepherd, Rossport, Itoiz Dam, Earth First!, No-TAV, and many other examples, particularly from the 1980s-90s when green anarchy was at its peak). He also suggests that similar struggles happen in the global South, mentioning Sarayuku Kichwa resistance to oil extraction in Ecuador and Indonesia peasant union land occupations. He emphasises that state responses are often repressive, such as the bogus racketeering charges and the murder of a protester at Stop Cop City, and the brutal onslaught on protesters in Sainte-Soline, where 200 were injured or maimed. Anarchism has also proven effective in disaster responses, and cases like the Zapatistas and Rojava show that anarchism is a viable response to state collapse. Roman-Alcalá also notes that direct action is often used in combination with mediated strategies such as petitioning governments or companies, sometimes synergistically.

In terms of food sovereignty, anarchism focuses on self-organisation, horizontalism, and voluntarity, often seeks localisation, and does not support existing landownership regimes, meaning it overlaps with food sovereignty movements oriented to food and land 'stewardship' (e.g. Via Campesina). Grassroots farming builds the "power-to" of non-elite groups. There are also overlaps with indigenous practices, even though neither indigenous people nor food sovereignty activists are necessary anarchists. However, existing food sovereignty movements can be criticised from an anarchist point of view for their 'largely Gramscian' strategy of seeking state reforms and focusing on intergovernmental

organisations. These strategies have yielded successes in the rhetoric, policies, and principles of organisations, but these have only occasionally been acted-on, suggesting the strategies were ultimately not very effective. The author also criticises socialist pro-peasant measures both historically (China, USSR) and today (Mexico, Nicaragua). Socialist states continue to push large extractivist development projects opposed by peasants and indigenous people, such as Mexico's *Tren Maya* and Nicaragua's canal project. States have also pursued food sovereignty, but in ways which tie people into state power and funding.

The main limitation the author sees in anarchism is its inadequacy to what he calls 'the politics of normalcy', i.e. in conditions other than crisis. Many people have an attachment to normalcy (i.e. the economy, modernity, consumerism, stability, available services) even if this depends on structural violence. Anarchism also struggles to be relevant to people who expect society to keep functioning the same way it does today, and this includes a global supermajority. Local, voluntary projects look too limited to scale-up. While libertarian socialist models such as participatory economics (Parecon) demonstrate that anarchists have engaged with planning, the author contends that anarchist theory often lacks nuanced approaches to policy and large-scale institutional change. The author also says anarchism has little to offer in terms of legal or policy manoeuvring or political compromise. Economically, he suggests that mutualism has a more developed theory than ancom or insurrectionism, which is compatible with food sovereignty and degrowth. He is also concerned that anarchists reject long-term 'visioning'.

The author further argues that anarchism alone may be insufficient to build food sovereignty because many food system movements rely on legal frameworks, human rights discourse, and state-based policy tools. While anarchists critique international law and state institutions as instruments of power, the

usual are possible, that conformity is self-defeating, and maybe also that conformity is unethical. It weakens us by empowering our enemies, trusting to the benevolence of power-holders who cannot be trusted.

The author also dips a toe into an issue which I think is much deeper than he realises. He notices that most people find anarchism unappealing or non-salient to themselves. But his explanations for this are rather superficial: richer people cling to the system because they like having nice things, and poorer people are fatalistic realists who don't expect radical change. These are both true, but involve closed-mindedness and ideological effects, rather than truths anarchism needs to adapt to (or be rejected because of). We're in the field of neo-Marxist ideology theory, discourse analysis, and the Stirnerian theory of spooks/phantasms, and I won't rehearse all the different arguments here. But, suffice to say that there are social and discursive conditions for all these outcomes. Poor people are fatalistic because of experiences of continual oppression, but they also engage in everyday practices which prefigure something else; they simply don't join the dots between these, or connect them to a wider vision. Or else they do, but the vision is tucked away in the hidden transcript, waiting for a chance to come out.

Better-off people may think they desire the system, but there is also often fatalism involved; it's not clear they really flourish in modern society, only that others are worse-off than they are. It is not clear that the good things provided by the system outweigh its alienating and repressive effects even for those who do relatively well within it.

In both cases, people need to be conscientised to think in a broader plane of imaginal possibilities, on the basis of their own desire, and to think concretely in terms of ways to exercise whatever power they have to realise these desires. They are resistant to doing this because they are afraid of the powerful and/or attached to phantasms which limit what they can think. The main barrier to scalability of local, voluntary, grassroots projects which are easily replicated, is that normies do not copy them! (Although, there are times and places where for example cooperativism involved millions of people). Strategically, anarchism needs to show people that alternatives to business-as-

text suggests these arenas can still yield meaningful gains and should not be dismissed outright.

The text contrasts anarchist skepticism toward state power with authoritarian socialist claims that only states possess the coercive capacity necessary for large-scale expropriation of capital. Historical nationalizations rarely transformed production toward ecological or democratic goals and often preserved hierarchical structures or compensated elites. Although some communist revolutions achieved extensive expropriation, they were accompanied by repression, ecological neglect, and prioritization of growth. Consequently, the debate between statist and anarchist strategies remains unresolved, especially regarding the role of force in degrowth transitions. The text concludes that successful transitions require mass movements, strategic engagement with both disruptive action and institutional opportunities, and efforts to make transformative ideas more visible, credible, and politically viable.

What it means for radicals: The article is good for what it is: an attempt to show the usefulness and limits of *socialist and mutualist forms of* anarchism to *current degrowth and food sovereignty movements* on the basis of *the author's own view of the path to effective change.* It is limited in a number of ways, particularly in that the background disagreements about the nature of real power and structures are either unresolved or resolved by fiat. Anarchists think that working through institutions recuperates or fails; prefigurative leftists think that it is often effective, even if the gains are partial or slow – how do we determine who is right?

The two biggest limitations are in the scope of anarchist theories and of movements considered. In terms of theories, the author almost entirely ignores the green anarchist and anti-civ currents which peaked in the 1980s-90s, and the post-left field more broadly. Aragorn! does get a mention (to validate Kropotkin's relevance!), and the ELF get a mention, but Hakim Bey/Peter Lamborn Wilson, John Zerzan, Ward

Churchill, John Moore, Fredy Perlman, CrimethInc, Earth First!, Trapese Collective, Derrick Jensen, the magazines *Green Anarchy* and *Green Anarchist*, Desert, Ivan Illich, Jacques Ellul, and many other sources are simply absent. This is important because these strands of anarchy are the most explicitly and extensively engaged with issues of degrowth and food sovereignty – indeed, they arguably represent the most radical *forms* of degrowth and food sovereignty, before these terms existed. They also definitely have theoretical and strategic answers to the questions Roman-Alcalá asks of anarchism, such as issues of scaling-up and support for the system. The same applies to social movements: Roman-Alcalá is quite aware of current or recent movements, but does not seem to realise that eco-protest with a green anarchist component was widespread in Europe, America, Australia, and Britain in the 1980s-90s. Again, this larger movement had answers to questions of scalability and strategy, but these tend to have been marginalised because of the movement's decline and the rise of new forms of COIN.

Roman-Alcalá is therefore in effect trying to reinvent the wheel, to create a green anarchy from scratch by linking together other forms of anarchism with contemporary green movements. I don't think there is any ill intent here; it seems more that he is unaware of the history of green anarchy. However, there's a background political context here which is relevant. Current strands of degrowth, and other relatively mainstream ecological discourses, became increasingly statist from the 2000s onwards. This happened because of the decline of the eco-protest scene, the increasing repressiveness of the state (which seemed to make grassroots change harder and top-down change easier), and the recuperative effects of the Third Way, the post-Washington Consensus, and the inclusive transnational discourses of this period. Thus for example, discourse around climate change was very different before states accepted that it is actually happening and needs to

be prevented; critiques of modern living were very different before they got hitched primarily to an imperative duty to prevent climate change. The shift may also have reflected older activists selling-out or burning-out. That this position emerged *as a recuperation of* a more radical, anarchic ecological scene is not widely acknowledged, and the history of the green movement is thus elided. It is only because green politics moved in reformist, pessimistic, or authoritarian directions in the 2000s that green anarchy is academically invisible.

Degrowth and food sovereignty both emerged as slogans before they were movements, and the context for this is also important. As I understand it, the idea of degrowth was a response to ecological modernisation theory, which posited that continued growth was compatible with increased ecological sustainability. Ecological modernisation theory was accepted by the Third Way in the 2000s but was gradually falsified by scientists, leading to calls for degrowth. The slogan is new, but it captures aspects of green ideas which have existed since at least the 1970s. Food sovereignty was an attempt to frame peasant political issues – land rights and land reform, defence against commodification, land occupations, support for small-scale farming – in a way disconnected from Marxist class politics and appealing to nationalism and security framings. Local food production does indeed increase both national sovereignty (a nation-state becomes less dependent on imports of food, oil, equipment, etc.) and security from various kinds of shocks (the local food system becomes more resilient). In both cases, however, a somewhat conservative framing has been adopted so as to articulate pre-existing political agendas with the hegemonic neoliberal/statist discourse and gain greater visibility with elites. It is no surprise, therefore, that groups using these slogans tend to be what the author calls Gramscian or reformist. More radical groups use more radical labels.