Tactics: Conceptions of Social Change, Revolution, and Anarchist Organisation

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Abstract

Tactics are the techniques and actions used by social movements that implement strategies for the purpose of achieving goals. For anarchist movements, tactics can assume a reactive, diagnostic, or destructive force for opposing hierarchy, repression, and inequality. Tactics can also assume a proactive, prognostic, or creative force that promotes horizontalism, liberation, and egalitarianism. The purpose of these tactics is twofold: intervening in society to immediately accomplish goals (also called 'direct action') and illustrating a vision for a better world (also called 'prefiguration'). Anarchist movements commonly have a protest repertoire that they regularly draw from, deploying one tactic or another from their 'toolkit', the choice of which depends on changing external conditions, participant interests, and coalition alliances. Tactics and other organisational forms are never imposed by anarchists upon others and thus must spread horizontally. Usually a combination of word-of-mouth, movement press, and stories of first-hand experiences help to diffuse these tactics from one location to another.

Introduction

Social movement tactics are all the things that movement participants do to achieve larger goals. In the day-to-day pursuit of goals, tactics fit into the general framework of a movement's strategy. If strategy is the broad organising plans for accomplishing goals, then tactics are the specific actions or techniques through which strategies are implemented.[1] Considered together, multiple tactics compose a protest repertoire[2]: the temporal, spatial, and cultural patterning of protest tactics into a toolkit of established approaches that movement participants use. Repertoires enable and often limit what people can do, although they do not guarantee any kind of action. Thus, repertoires are probabilistic, not deterministic. All the tactics within anarchist movement repertoires discussed below presumably contribute to the acquisition of anarchist goals and a more anarchistic future. However, anarchist movement tactics do no need to be deployed only by self-conscious anarchists; others can utilise 'anarchistic' tactics which sharply mirror those wielded by anarchists themselves.

Anarchist tactics aim to accomplish two things simultaneously. First, they oppose things that anarchists considered to be bad, such as hierarchy, repression, and inequality. In this respect, tactics serve a diagnostic function that negatively frames societal characteristics with an anarchist analysis. Second, anarchist tactics promote things that anarchists consider to be good, like horizontal relationships, liberation, and egalitarianism. Thus, tactics are also prognostic frames that suggest better, more positive forms of social organisation.

These two interpretations of anarchist tactics reflect Mikhail Bakunin's oft-quoted adage that 'the passion for destruction is at the same time a creative passion'. Anarchist tactics can literally be destructive: destroying anti-anarchist things and practices. Monkey-wrenching tactics are deployed deliberately to stymie the efforts of authoritarian or unjust institutions. But, the flip-side to this destructive impulse is the emphasis that anarchist tactics place upon creation and the nurturing of community. By designing social organisations that live up to anarchist values or building things for the purpose of expanding the number of pro-anarchist individuals, such as

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[1] D. A. Snow and S. A. Soule, *A Primer on Social Movements* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009).

[2] C. Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768–2004* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2004).

a neighbourhood-based temporary autonomous zone, anarchist tactics are proactive, as well as reactive.

Consequently, there are tactics that serve either revolutionary or evolutionary ends. Revolution is a bold—but not necessarily quick or dramatic—disruption of the status quo, that involves a shift to broadly new and radical lifeways. Often the result of crisis conditions and insurrections, revolution embraces confrontation with the old order, as seen through the emergence and actions of the Russian soviets and Spanish militias. In less momentous times, evolutionary approaches seek the slow modification of cultural values, living differently, and instilling radical traits into the daily practices of everyday people. Evolutionary tactics tend to 'attack' the old social order from behind and patiently, as through innovative alternatives like communes and worker cooperatives.

Anarchist tactics result in two main outcomes (from anarchists' perspectives) that either intervene in the bad or illustrate the good (or both). First, doing something to intervene in hierarchical practices and the daily work-to-live grind that most people experience tends to be imminently practical. For example, a street blockade that attempts to prevent a Nazi march, or delivery trucks from a military depot stand in direct opposition to regular, hierarchical norms. These kinds of anarchist tactics constitute a vanguard approach, acting immediately and without representatives. This intervening approach is often called direct action. Direct action is much broader than a typical barricade, though, as it refers to any immediate attempt to self-manage one's own affairs. Instead of asking other people to act on one's behalf, the philosophy of direct action encourages people themselves to act. Thus, people do the things that are needed, acting either individually or collectively. Direct action can be contrasted against indirect or representative action, which requires going through an intermediary, official, or lobbyist. Thus, as in a story told by Matt Hern, instead of lobbying a local government to install needed speed bumps in a residential street where children regularly play, neighbours could band together and install a speed bump themselves using cement and basic tools.[3]

The second outcome of anarchist tactics is illustrating a better way to live, particularly inline with anarchist values. Thus, anarchist tactics have a stark symbolic nature, as with a commune that represents the potential of collective power operating without centralised authority. The illustrative character of anarchist tactics is often called prefiguration. These tactics illustrate the desired future conditions with present-day actions. There is an explicit connection between means and ends; people act in such a way that the desired future is created, in miniature, in the current moment. This implies that the things anarchists do have dual purpose: they accomplish short-term goals, but also work to create the conditions for long-term goals in the present. Prefiguration means that anarchists advocate using value-appropriate means to pursue value-based goals.

Both intervention and illustrating outcomes may be present within any given anarchist tactic. Ideally, anarchist tactics accomplish both concurrently; thus they have practical effects and are visionary. For example, anarchistic Critical Mass bike rides indirectly monkey-wrench car culture by filling streets with cyclists, but they also illustrate what a bicycle-based transportation system could look like, with all its benefits such as quiet, camaraderie, safety, and health.

The confluence of intervening and illustrating can be found in what was called 'propaganda by the deed'. Popularly, this refers to late nineteenth-century attempts to assassinate wealthy and

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[3] M. Hern, *Common Ground in a Liquid City: Essays in Defense of an Urban Future* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010).

powerful individuals, with the goal of igniting revolutionary action. These *attentats* were often, but not always, committed by a variety of individuals who had some connection to anarchist movements.[4] They constituted 'propaganda' in that they delivered a message to anarchists and other working-class people, that anyone can resist dominators, but were embodied in a 'deed' that actually resulted in a definitive blow against the powerful. Presumably such an assassination was a blow struck against capitalism and the state. However, most anarchist tactics can be considered propaganda by the deed, not just these rare assassination attempts. For example, present-day actions, such as Food Not Bombs (FNB), are nonviolent propaganda by the deed, wherein the act of recycling discarded food and giving it away to whomever wants or needs it is propaganda in opposition to both militarism and capitalism, and a deed that advocates in favour of, and embodies, mutual aid and a gift economy.

The character of anarchist tactics is determined by anarchist values. Numerous values are imbued in anarchist theory and ideology, which are realised in action. Anti-authoritarianism is a value that emphasises how tactics cannot be owned or restricted—thus, no one person or small group can dictate the selection or execution of a tactic. Horizontalism requires that everyone have equal control over a tactic (insofar as people consent to participation); anarchist tactics aim to level the playing field for everyone, including those not participating in the tactic. Self-management implies that people who are acting ought to be able to determine for themselves how they reach their goals, especially in terms of short-term decisions. Thus, anarchist tactics are not only crafted with such anarchist values in mind but are also created and decided upon via these values, with the ultimate goal of extending such values to the rest of society, in a virus-like fashion where people are inspired to adopt anarchist tactics for themselves.

There are particular issues relevant to how anarchist tactics are used. First, which tactics are selected from an available repertoire? Ideally, tactics should fit the circumstances and match the force of the opponent. Second, who employs the tactics are the very people who selected and directly benefit from them (i.e., direct action). Lastly, how tactics are deployed depends upon the use of collective expertise, labour, and creativity. Thus, anarchist tactics reflect do-it-yourself principles, wielded by those who selected them, with the resources and tools they have at hand.

The ends served by anarchist tactics can be either offensive or defensive. Broadly speaking, anarchist tactics can be used to attack opponents. By knocking capitalists 'back on their heels' via strikes, expropriations, or propaganda by the deed, anarchists are choosing how they engage their opponents and seize opportunities in order to obtain 'the upper hand'. In protests, anarchists may push into police lines, in order to open up access to march routes that police have blocked-off. One could envision many ways in which anarchist tactics serve as attacks on all sorts of systems of domination (including patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, the state, militarism, and others). But, anarchist tactics can also have defensive purposes, too. Sometimes anarchists help people to survive capitalism and state violence, perhaps by squatting abandoned buildings, communal living, or cop-watching. Defensive tactics seek to protect against or evade the control of the above systems of domination.

Finally, anarchist tactics are accomplished via social capital, which involves the interconnections between people, the strength and diversity of those relationships, and the trust embodied in those networks.[5] Two types of social capital creation include social bonding and social bridging.

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[4] M. Abidor, *Death to Bourgeois Society: The Propagandists of the Deed* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2015).

[5] R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon Schuster, 2000).

Tactics that aim to reinforce the supportive bonds that already exist in anarchist communities are called social bonding. The goal here is to reinforce and rededicate people's concern for each other. This may be done through radical reading groups where anarchists discuss theories, ideas, and history or through parties and picnics wherein people can develop closer friendships through socialising and recreation. Social bridging is accomplished by extending concerns and solidarity to otherwise to non-anarchists or anarchists unconnected to a local anarchist movement. People are brought together in some kind of anarchistic action, like joining a community campaign (like the anti-poll tax movement in the UK) or working with the various 'plaza' or 'square' movements (such as Occupy Wall Street, the Spanish Indignados, or other encampments). Bridging requires building new connections between people, while bonding is about strengthening existing connections. Sometimes both bonding and bridging happen concurrently, such as with anarchist bookfairs: many individuals are attracted to a common event hosted by local anarchists and anarchistic groups and projects. The people attending share space together, whether they are fellow anarchist activists or curious outsiders who have been invited to visit, explore, and meet local anarchists in a 'safe' environment surrounded by books and ideas.

Anarchist tactics also apply to the Leninist concept of dual power. Originally, Vladimir Lenin described dual power as the seizure of power through direct and indirect attack, working within government as well as in counter-institutions. Yet, anarchists modify Lenin's idea to not *take* state power, but rather to disable it and replace it with creative non-state alternatives. The Industrial Workers of the World union advocated creating a 'new society in the shell of the old'. For anarchists, dual power refers to strategic efforts to confront existing state power, while simultaneously creating other organisational systems and institutions that accomplish similar ends, but without resort to hierarchy and domination—a general practice known as prefiguration. Ideally, these alternatives can become powerful and substantial enough to serve as a direct challenge to the dominant institutions. Thus, applied to anarchist tactics, dual power may involve direct blockading of oil pipeline construction, while simultaneously creating alternative energy systems or decentralised, eco-friendly energy-use via permaculture practices. Anarchists might actively protest and try to disrupt the campaigns, elections, and rule of politicians while also nurturing face-to-face democratic practices and organising communal decision-making structures such as workplace councils and neighbourhood general assemblies. They might also take on specific hierarchical organisations and systems such as corporations or capitalism through embracing revolutionary syndicalism and general strikes, which can be paired with the creation of anarchistic, alternative institutions such as worker-run and worker-owned cooperatives (although most mainstream cooperatives may not aim for the destruction of capitalism or the removal of hierarchies).

Sources and Categorisation of Tactics

There are few purely anarchist tactics. Anarchists do things that participants of many other movements also do. Consequently, anarchists do not even have the monopoly on tactics that are popularly identified as 'anarchist tactics'. Thus it is debatable whether any of the tactics that are associated with anarchists were created or developed exclusively by anarchists. For example, general strikes were developed in the revolutionary syndicalist milieu—which included many anarchists but also others. Black bloc street tactics were developed by the Autonomist Left

in Central Europe, although strongly associated with anarchists and certain Marxists after the 1990s. Thus, anarchists were key advocates and popularisers of many things known as anarchist tactics, but in fact these tactics came from a broader ideological milieu. Moreover, often a tactic is developed in tandem with many different kinds of people or is refined by various groups until anarchists utilise it themselves, such as consensus decision-making in the US, which is an amalgam of Quaker-style meetings, indigenous communalism, and feminist-styled consciousness-raising circles. Tactics authentically become anarchist tactics when used in the context of an anarchist strategy.

The context in which anarchist tactics are used varies. Depending on the challenges faced by anarchist movements, some tactics may be preferred over others. The context is dependent upon whom the tactic is aimed at, and the nature of that interaction. For example, when facing the state, anarchists may assume an armed or unarmed stance. Since the state is always 'armed' or has the capacity and legal capacity for violence, the context is shaped by whether anarchists choose to meet the state on more comparable grounds. When anarchists assume a more aggressive orientation toward the state, either militant or military tactics may be aimed at the state. Although most anarchist activities do not involve weapons, armed conflict, or combat, a struggle occurs when anarchists engage directly and comparably with violent state actors. If anarchists assume a less aggressive, but still assertive, orientation toward the state, street-based tactics can be deployed. This is most likely in the context of protests or other public events, with the tactics chosen in respect to the police forces present. Or, if anarchists aim to engage non-state actors or potential allies, community-oriented anarchist tactics are often selected. In this instance, enemies may either be absent or everyone is unarmed.

Anarchist tactics vary depending on the era in which they were used. The two main periods of modern anarchist history can be crudely split by the inter-war period. Prior to World War I, the societal context in which anarchism survived was noticeably different than later periods. While this is not a clean delineation, the world wars serve to separate contemporary anarchism from its 'classical age', which can be said to have begun with the First International, as anarchists broke free of their Marxist brethren. During this earlier era, anarchist movements were more heavily synonymous with revolutionary workers movements, especially via the tendency eventually known as anarcho-syndicalism. After 1945 and especially after the defeat of the Spanish anarchists in 1939, anarcho-syndicalism became less of a prominent feature of anarchist movements. New anarchist movements prominently featured a wider set of issues and struggles, and an arguably more weakly structured international movement. Thus, anarchism was rejuvenated—especially in the West—as it became an important part of a broader, and largely Marxist, militant New Left in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Consequently, anarchist ideas have permeated many other movements.

Classic Tactics

During anarchism's classic age, a variety of military or militant tactics were deployed to engage state forces. Notably, various anarchist militias used decentralised organisational structures during the Spanish Revolution. For example, the Durruti Column and the Iron Column were known for their anti-authoritarian leadership, democratic decision-making, and improvised fighting tactics. Earlier, during the Russian Revolution, Ukrainian anarcho-communists led by Nestor

Makhno fought both the reactionary White forces and the Trotsky-led Red Army.[6] Outside the context of war and battles, violent tactics were also used by some anarchists to 'decapitate the leadership' of states and corporations. Thus, some anarchists attempted 'propaganda by the deed' or targeted assassinations on a variety of European and North American heads of state, police chiefs, and capitalist robber barons. Anarchists also used incendiary weapons (especially bombs and dynamite) against these adversaries. In such instances, bombs were used to not only attack and destroy the capacity of the state or capitalist adversaries but also to send a threatening message to other foes of the anarchists (as in the case of the Haymarket bombing of 1886). In the US, the Galleanisti (adherents of Luigi Galleanisti's insurrectionary anarchist philosophy) were responsibly for numerous bombings during the 1910s, including US Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's house (who coordinated raids that arrested or deported thousands of radicals) and J. P. Morgan's headquarters in New York City's Wall Street.

Anarchists have participated in insurrections and have helped build barricades in places as varied as France, Germany, and Spain to Mexico, Russia, and Argentina. The barricades (dating back many centuries in French history[7]) served to protect insurrectionists in the streets from police, paramilitary, and army attacks, as well as a focal point to concentrate organising energy and socialising the revolutionary spirit. Free-speech 'fights' have involved the use of mass action in streets to challenge attacks on workers' ability (and right) to organise freely and speak in public. In the US, Wobblies flooded into towns, which prevented them from speaking in public gatherings, by the hundreds to fill-up jails in direct challenge of such policies. Those arrested during insurrections and free speech fights have been supported by networks of free anarchists who lobbied, raised funds for legal defence, and kept the morale high for the arrested and imprisoned. The Anarchist Black Cross (originally the 'Red Cross') was organised in support of imprisoned Russian anarchists. Finally, with the appearance of European fascist movements, anarchists (and other Left partisans) formed anti-fascist self-defence units that patrolled working-class neighbourhoods to guard against fascist attacks on Leftists. These militant fighting units refused to accept fascist attempts to intimidate, recruit from, and dominate new territory in Italian and German cities.

Militant tactics also included the sometimes-violent enforcement of labour strikes, in which many anarchists participated. In workplace organising struggles, workers sometimes not only went on strike but also engaged in other antagonistic activities against the workplace owners and managers. These included physical confrontations or fights with such individuals, attacks upon replacement workers (called 'scabs'), blockading of the workplace entrances, occupations, rowdy chanting, and other tactics. In the case of general strikes, anarchists and other workers aimed to get as many workers as possible to go on strike, across all workplaces and industries. This involved traveling around a city or region and encouraging people to go on strike, coordinating the provision of essential resources for people, and confronting police and company-hired strikebreakers and thugs who aimed to end the strike and force workers back to their jobs.

Anarchists were regular participants in labour struggles. Although not always playing formal roles in unions—which many anarchists critiqued for being reformist, anti-immigrant, racist, or authoritarian—anarchists all advocated the overthrow of capitalism. Thus, many saw an impor-

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[6] A. Paz, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007) and A. Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2004).

[7] M. Traugott, *The Insurgent Barricade* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

tant role for working-class people in not only their own liberation but also in the struggle against capitalism and the state. Anarchists helped to organise unions or other working-class organisations, plan and coordinate strikes and other campaigns, and worked to extend the reach and ideological sophistication of anarchist organisations, often through the creation of revolutionary federations. Since the time of the First International (the popular name for the International Workingmen's Association or IWMA), anarchists worked across nation-state boundaries with fellow radicals for the goal of coordinating agitation, campaigns, and attacks upon capitalism. The St. Imier congress occurred in the wake of the IMWA's 1872 Hague congress wherein Marxists on the General Council expunged anarchists and adherent's to Mikhail Bakunin's anti-statist ideas. Later congresses, such as the International Worker's Association (IWA) formed in 1922 aimed to unite various anarcho-syndicalists in a federation that sought anti-statist revolution. These efforts helped to systematise strategies and tactics, debate the next steps agitation should take, share resources, and channel news and propaganda throughout the world.

In revolutionary situations, such as during the Spanish Revolution, general strikes led to the expropriation of factories and workplaces from the capitalist class, giving workers control over their workplaces. These expropriations also extended to peasants seizing land for communal agricultural production from large landed estates and raiding armories for the defence of insurgents—as in the case of Barcelona where weapons were distributed to workers, who then formed militias to defend Catalonia from a military-led attempt aimed at overthrowing the Spanish Republic. These expropriated resources were taken by force from capitalists and the state, re-purposed for proletarian purposes, and self-managed. Ultimately these gains had to be defended against counter-attack by Franco (and Stalin's Popular Front forces), thus requiring the use of the aforementioned expropriated weapons. Expropriation also occurred outside of revolutionary situations, as in some American robberies that the Galleanisti initiated, or Argentinean anarchist robberies in the 1920s.

Various community-building tactics were employed by anarchists of the 'classical era'. Primarily these activities included the deepening and strengthening of the movement's autonomous culture, media production and sharing, and organising to reach out beyond the boundaries of the anarchist sub-culture. Anarchists engaged in cultural activities that had diverse purposes, such as theatre. Stage performances had the purpose of entertaining fellow anarchist comrades and others, as well as illustrating important anarchist values and voicing opposition to authority figures. Nudism was explored in some fringes of anarchist circles, which allowed participants to explore greater personal freedoms in their bodies. Anarchists also hosted picnics and other events that allowed for socialising and the socialisation of committed and neophyte anarchists.

From the initial period of the movement, anarchists were propagandists, journalists, and publishers. Most countries' anarchist movements had multiple working newspapers, journals, or publishing houses, although these often began and folded in quick succession, either due to issues of transience, burnout, or suppression by authorities. These media projects aimed to share information of relevance to anarchist audiences, those interested but not yet committed to anarchist ideas, and members of other social groups (like working classes or immigrant populations). The information delivered via these media included news on current events of interest (e.g., wars, labour struggles, political campaigns), anarchist-initiated campaigns and projects, and anarchist analyses and theorising on all manner of issues and subjects. These newspapers ranged from more theoretical to practical, sometimes assumed ideological orientations (e.g., anarcho-syndicalism,

illegalism, or individualism), and targeted different audiences (ranging from the general public to smaller groupings of ethnicities in specific languages).

Contemporary Tactics

Modern era anarchism has seen less deployment of military tactics, due in part to the lack of anarchistic revolutions and the trend away from modern revolutions generally. Still, numerous anarchist tactics qualify as militant and engage police or other hierarchical institutions directly. The most dramatic tactics used by anarchists have been the deployment of Molotov cocktails (thrown petrol bombs in glass bottles) in street confrontations with police. While anarchists have used these devices in countries such as Mexico, Canada, and Greece, they also have been used by non-anarchists—in fact, state forces and paramilitaries have a long, documented record of using Molotov cocktails, too. Fire-bombings have been initiated by anarchists against non-police targets, like Canada's Direct Action fire-bombing stores that sell violent pornography and a military contractor, and the Earth Liberation Front's arson of suburban home developments and SUV cars sold by auto dealers. These latter instances emphasise not only the practical destruction of their targets but also the anti-authoritarian and anti-domination values that anarchists advocate against those targets, as the ELF issues communiques denounce the environmental devastation caused by sprawl and automobile culture.

Less destructive, but equally militant, tactics continue to be used by anarchists in protest confrontations with police in the streets. One of the tactics most widely associated with post-1990 anarchism is the use of masks to conceal identities. Drawing inspiration from the Zapatistas (who 'hid their faces in order to be seen') and security measures that many non-conformists use, anarchists use masks (often coloured black) to subvert surveillance, generate common solidarity, and to deflect some of the more noxious counter-measures police sometimes use (such as pepper spray and tear gas). German radicals known as 'autonomists' first used an all-black uniform with masks in their support of various squatted buildings in the 1980s. When formed in large groups during a street march, these were referred to as 'black blocs'. Since their German origins, black blocs have formed at protests around the world. The colour black not only deflects stains and dirt but also matches anarchist's symbolic preference for black flags. Black blocs are typically formations in which participants are willing to engage physically with police (whether due to police officers' harassment of people or police curtailment of free movement). Such marches may be faster moving, more physically hostile toward police, and throw projectiles at police to drive them away from the bloc. This militancy sometimes allow black blocs to achieve their radical tactical objectives more often than less mobile marches that do not challenge police restrictions; but black blocs also face stronger and more violent police efforts to control them. Since militant marches tend to attract the state's wrath, black blocs have a social norm of 'de-arresting' participants who are snatched by police. People who are placed in police custody face legal repercussions that other bloc members do not. Therefore, black bloc members may try to grab physically a comrade who is being detained by police and pull them back into the crowd's mass. If there is a great size differential between bloc participants and police, this job may be easier, as participants can overwhelm police with attempts to liberate an arrestee.

Militant street protests (such as black blocs) may involve targeted property destruction. State and corporate storefronts along roads serve as ideal targets for black blocs, which may smash

front windows, deface the building facade, write oppositional graffiti messages on the building, and even ransack its contents if the crowd can gain access. Favourite targets of anarchist black blocs include corporate chain stores, banks, police stations, and military recruiting offices. This property destruction not only causes inconvenience to those institutions and a monetary cost for repair but sends a very clear message about the bloc's opposition to it—people who witness the destruction understand not only anarchists' disapproval of the target but also that anarchists are willing to go to destructive ends to display that disapproval.

Property destruction does not only occur during militant marches. Numerous other groups have acted to destroy inanimate objects, usually those associated with or directly responsible for hierarchy and domination. For example, anarchistic Plowshare and Catholic Worker activists in the US and Europe have regularly broken into military facilities and destroyed warheads, fighter planes, and computer systems with hammers and other tools. In some cases, radical nuns have thrown their own blood on these war machines to symbolise their willingness to make personal sacrifices in order to prevent future bloodshed. Often, but not always, these actors are nonviolent activists who are willing to be arrested. Also, as with the Earth Liberation Front, other radical environmentalists have destroyed machinery that is used to ravish natural habitat, such as bulldozers and logging trucks. Early Earth First! Tactics included tree-spiking to dissuade logging by chainsaw, which could kick-back upon hitting an undetected spike buried in a tree designated for logging. As this could easily also injure the logger, Earth First! eventually moved away from this tactic toward nonviolent actions that would not harm individuals.

Less aggressive (but non-passive) street actions also include blockades and 'disobedient' tactics. For the former, anarchists may 'lock-down' across a street, using chains, 'sleeping-dragons', lock-boxes, or simply by linking arms, thereby blocking traffic or access to a given location. Human blockades like this have been used to try to shut down an entire neighbourhood, prevent access to meetings of heads of states and capitalists (e.g., in Seattle 1999 at the World Trade Organization conference), or to blockade a railway line, forest road, or other thoroughfare. Blockades also can involve inanimate objects, as with Reclaim the Streets (RTS), wherein a road may be blocked by a derelict automobile or other difficult-to-move object, like a large tripod, while simultaneously being surrounded by a large crowd of people engaged in collective behaviour (such as a dance party in the streets). Moving blockades have included the decentralised bike ride known as Critical Mass (CM) that involves bicyclists (perhaps numbering in the dozens, hundreds, or thousands) biking slowly through a city's streets, thereby slowing-down and sometimes completely blocking the flow of fast-moving automobiles. A movable swarm like CM or a fixed swarm like RTS provides a substantial challenge for police, who must find a way to move a crowd of celebratory, but defiant, individuals.

Disobedient actions during the Global Justice Movement included Ya Basta! of Italy and the WOMBLES (White Overalls Movement Building Libertarian Effective Struggles) in the UK. These formations involve activists who wear heavily padded objects (e.g., helmets, knee pads, shin-guards, inflatable tubes, and other items) to protect them from police-administered truncheon blows. Once their physical safety from police violence is guaranteed, a disobedient crowd can be more assertive when around police. They can collectively push through police lines, endure police charges and attacks, and remain in the streets thanks to the protection they are wearing. Such crowds are able to get access to a location where more civil disobedience and blockading can thus occur.

Direct action street tactics also engage with non-police, too. For example, anti-fascist organisations like Anti-Fascist Action, Anti-Racist Action, and Red and Anarchist Skin Heads are prominent in their confrontation of white nationalists. When white nationalists like the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, or racist skinhead gangs try to organise rallies to recruit new members, anti-fascist organisers participate in efforts—commonly called 'antifa' actions—to converge large masses of people in opposition. This opposition focuses upon trying to shutdown far-right and other white supremacist rallies, believing that every person recruited and every inch ceded to white supremacists constitutes a threat to freedom. Since the legacy and memory of fascism is particularly strong in countries of Central Europe, antifa anarchists point to a very recent history of unbridled fascist power and advocate no tolerance for its current manifestations.

Other public direct action efforts target the social power of everyone from corporate executives, government bureaucrats, reactionary news reporters, and even former progressive activists. For example, using a popular cultural idea of insult via pie-throwing, activists affiliated with the Biotic Baking Brigade aimed to 'bring down a notch' the powerful through the same associated with a pie in their face. People as diverse as free-market propertarian theorist Milton Friedman, capitalist Bill Gates, heads of the World Trade Organization, and even former anarchist Daniel Cohn-Bendit have been pied by activists who aim to 'touch the untouchable', modifying the public's perception of them as infinitely powerful.

As with their classical predecessors, contemporary anarchists also tend to participate in many activities that are non-street-based and more community-oriented. Often these efforts aim to achieve short-term goals as well as create a pathway toward a longer-term, more anarchistic future. For example, projects like Food Not Bombs (FNB) can be viewed as public demonstrations of anarchist values—against war and hunger, and for community-sharing and peace—as well as survival programmes. FNB helps to provide immediate food for people (in particular, but not exclusively, the homeless) while showing that societies' priorities upon war-making are misplaced. Capitalist excess produces enough food that could keep the world's poor from being hungry, but ownership and the market prevents and limits access to that food. Thus, FNB serves as a rebuke of misplaced priorities and models how to provide mutual aid for each other via 'survival programmes pending revolution' (as the Black Panthers referred to their Free Breakfast programmes). Similarly, German anarchists have been known to converge en masse and raid grocery stores to re-distribute food to those in need.

Cooperatives are organisations created for the purpose of sharing resources, reducing risk for individuals and expanding benefit for collectivities, and encouraging a non-competitive economy. In particular, worker cooperatives help to provide goods and services for local people in an equitable fashion for those who need those things, as well as justly compensating workers. In worker cooperatives, the people who make goods or provide services either own their workplace themselves or control the decision-making apparatus of that workplace, or both. Anarchists view worker cooperatives as organisations that practise direct democracy and worker self-management, and can (but do not necessarily always) challenge capitalist exploitation, as they still tend to function within the capitalist marketplace.

Contemporary anarchists continue the long tradition of revolutionary propaganda initiated by their classic-era peers. However, more media are now available beyond print journalism and public speaking to advocate for the anarchist ideal. Thus, contemporary anarchists utilise a wide variety of formats to advocate for anarchist values, for participation in anarchist movements, and to illustrate anarchist practices. Public propaganda continues to utilise newspapers and mag-

azines, which, while widely available to anarchists, have limited circulation in most societies. With the advent of the Internet, many of these periodicals are accessible for free online, as well as huge archives of earlier anarchist writings. For example, most of the major works of famous anarchist theorists (and propagandists) such as Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta, and Emma Goldman, as well as contemporary writing, are easily attainable through a variety of websites. Anarchists have branched out into radio broadcast, hosting local radio programmes on many stations throughout the world as well as via low-power pirate radio projects. Other anarchist radio projects broadcast online or make their programmes available via online conduits for re-broadcast on traditional radio. Numerous anarchist video projects have taken footage from street demonstrations, community campaigns, and anarchist interviews to create compelling digital propaganda that can be easily shared. As in the past, many small anarchist presses publish books and pamphlets about the anarchist movement, anarchist ideas, or written by anarchists available to varied readerships. While some of these publishing houses have limited distribution, the Internet has made many of them considerably more accessible than in the past. Informal networks of distributors and tablers (those who provide reading materials from a temporary table) exist, who appear at local community, cultural, and political events, to make these writings available to attendees who might otherwise not search for them.

Less conventional and forbidden efforts have to take the form of guerrilla media. For example, 'billboard improvement' consists of activists who modify the content (whether imagery, words, or both) on a large, unattractive advertisement in order to subvert its intended meaning and direct it toward revolutionary ends. Similarly, graffiti artists and street artists regularly contribute anti-capitalist, anti-state, anti-white supremacist, anti-militarist, anti-imperialist, and anti-patriarchal messages to walls, buildings, and other structures in cities around the world.

Other guerrilla tactics can be found in the ways that anarchists act to utilise unused space. In addition to squatting abandoned buildings, anarchists have dug up both publicly and privately owned land and planted gardens. These newly transformed spaces help to beautify local areas (which may otherwise be blighted) and preserve a sense of local control and agency, as well as provide fresh food for residents.

The organisational structures and decision-making protocols used by anarchists are also key tactical tools. The majority of anarchist projects involving a significant number of participants operate on the basis of either direct democracy or consensus. This means that all participants contribute their ideas and can enact their will within group decisions either through popular, direct voting, or through processes designed to bring a group toward a rough consensus. Anarchists prioritise either leaderless (no one is officially in charge), leaderful (everyone is in charge), or anti-follower (no one is subordinate to anyone else) models. To accomplish this, facilitators often guide a group toward a decision, while being expressly forbidden to contribute and steer the group according to their own designs as an authoritarian leader would. Other roles that groups may use include note-takers who transcribe the decisions of a meeting and vibes-watchers who focus on the emotions and collective mood of the group to recommend possible course changes. Groups may use a variety of tactics to brainstorm and summarise ideas, and ultimately find consensus, without coercion. Participants do not casually block consensus, except in the event where a decision would violate the overall goals or values of the group. In place of consensus, other groups pursue direct democracy. This approach usually involves active participation of all individuals with decisions made via the support of the vast majority. Ideally, a super-majority of

people should be in agreement with any decision and a small, dissenting minority should give a group pause.

The organisational configuration best suited to consensus decision-making is the affinity group. These organisations officially date back to militant configurations before and during the Spanish Revolution (similarly styled groups have existed for most of anarchist history, although not always called affinity groups). Affinity groups are family-like units composed of a small number of individuals—usually 5 or more, but less than 20—who share a variety of commonalities. An affinity group may have a common purpose or goal (e.g., to publish a newspaper, support strike picket lines, or provide free food at protests), common background (having a similar political outlook or ideological sub-variant), or simply share a long-term association and friendship. This configuration was reintroduced to anarchist movements in the 1960s as a way of fostering autonomous creativity, collective empowerment, and stable security. Anarchists (and others) who work in affinity groups can direct their own projects or plan events independent of the wider movement around them, thus fostering a flowering of diversity within that movement, while also maintaining the freedom and autonomy desired by anarchists. Affinity groups also aim to build power by being collaborative enterprisers: the members are there to support each other and the group's objectives, to find effective ways of achieving success, and are a tangible way to participate in the broader anarchist movement. Finally, affinity groups are adapted to prevent outside surveillance, particularly by law enforcement and other state agents. They are impervious to outside intrusion because outsiders are prevented from being full-participants and membership often requires long-term trust, something that is difficult and costly for states intent on subversion to invest in.

Organisational forms are dependent upon the strategic choices made by anarchists. A double-pronged strategy has long-existed in anarchist movements, wherein strictly anarchist organisations are combined with mass-based organisations that are not explicitly anarchist. The former organisations are a social place for anarchists to gather and coordinate activities, particularly regarding their role and efforts within the latter organisations, which aim to involve large numbers of people who are not politically committed to anarchism, but are not opposed to acting in anarchist-compatible ways. Working together, these two types of organisations are presumed to influence each other: mass-based organisations are able to accomplish much more social change, while the strictly anarchist organisations provide committed anarchist partisans and the ideological training to operate amongst non-anarchists in the mass-based organisations. A prime example of this strategy can be found in the classic-anarchist era Iberian Anarchist Federation of Spain and its efforts to keep the National Confederation of Labor on an anarchist path toward revolution.

An active community of computer programmers and hackers has existed for decades that both creates free and liberatory software for anyone's use, and provides tools for people to protect themselves against state surveillance and attack. The 'free software' community practices are anarchistic at heart, and have evolved to inspire the creation of online 'tech collectives' (such as Riseup.net, Mutualaid.org, Squat.net, Sindomino.net, and Resist.ca), real-world computer-sharing spaces called 'hacklabs' that allow people to use computers running free software, and political hacktivism. This latter group of hacktivists are people who use computer tools to both defend Internet freedoms and attack state and corporate adversaries using a variety of tactics. Some tactics of defence involve the creation of anonymising networks and protocols like TOR (the onion router) and off-the-record messaging, advocacy and innovation of encryption systems,

and actively denying corporations access to activists' data by refusing to use their systems of storage (instead using the aforementioned tech collectives). Hacktivists' offensive measures have been varied, but a popular technique has been 'dedicated denial of service' attacks that submits thousands of website requests per second, thus overwhelming a target's webserver, rendering it unusable to actual users.

Meaning and Diffusion of Tactics

As with other radical movements, anarchist tactics implicitly *mean* something once manifested. Anarchist tactics embody at least three fundamental things: principled values, collective direct action, and the notion of taking and retaining space. Each of these meanings can be located in the general repertoire of anarchist tactics, but one or multiple meanings may be present in any specific action.

Principled values are latent throughout all anarchist tactics, as they reflect anarchist priorities and ideas. Outsiders can easily witness such tactics and implicitly learn about anarchist values by those actions. For example, Really Really Free Markets—where people give away objects to whomever would like them—reflect both anarcho-communist and gift-economy values. When radical pacifists like the Plowshares or Catholic Worker destroy military weaponry, their anti-militarism is on open display. Similarly, eco-anarchists who engage in the destruction of bulldozers, blockade logging roads, or disrupt pipeline or road construction projects are expressing a concern for the Earth and future generations of life, as well as a willingness to go to jail for their beliefs.

Collective direct action is embodied by anarchist tactics when people seize the moment to create with other people new forms of community, without intermediaries. As opposed to voting, individualistic acts, or lobbying efforts, anarchists aim to use collective strength to create the ends they want. These collectivities could be relatively small (as with an affinity group), may involve a community (perhaps inside a neighbourhood), or consist of a general insurrection that includes large numbers of very diverse people (most of whom are likely not conscious anarchists). For example, unpermitted marches allow people to pick the time and place to flex their collective muscle and voice their grievances. Wildcat strikes enable workers to resist managers and owners in their workplaces, without relying on professionalised or bureaucratic mechanisms such as collective bargaining negotiations or interacting via union leadership. Anarchist street 'parties' (e.g., Reclaim the Streets in the 1990s) allow large numbers of people to feel their collective power in the safer context of a festive atmosphere. And rebellions clearly demonstrate collective power and the efficacy of direct action both to participants and many observers, whether through a riot in response to poverty or police violence, or a declaration of military invasion or political *coup d'état*. In such rebellions, anarchists are participants who help to both educate fellow conspirators on effective tactics and to inspire resistance through example.

Anarchists take and retain space to both embody their values of liberation and justice, as well as to demonstrate the empowerment felt through collective direct action. Anarchist tactics render ideas visible and create community in a physical territory. Such tactics help to provide a space to congregate, disseminate ideas, plan collective action, and practise liberatory social relations (whether through direct democracy or other forms of decision-making). For example, land or building occupations secure a space for movements to use for their own purposes, as

with bank occupations in the Argentinean financial crisis of 2001, or the plaza and Occupy movements of 2011–2012 in Greece, Puerto Rico, Wisconsin, New York City, Spain, and elsewhere. The formation of community or neighbourhood assemblies provides people the venue to take control of their localities with their fellow citizens or residents. Political squats have been able to provide a space for people to live, cook, conduct meetings for activist organisations, and provide cultural entertainment for large numbers of people—in particular, social centres in central and southern Europe have played this role, inside of unused, privately owned buildings that activists have squatted in. Likewise, infoshops and radical bookstores are locations of radical information sharing and an epicentre of organising activities in local communities. Finally, militant protests can themselves liberate streets for participants to create community, empower individual action, and re-envision and resist the hegemonic ways that space is typically used by private and government actors.

Regardless of meaning, anarchist tactics can be spread, across time and location, in a variety of ways. However, as no central coordinating anarchist organisation exists to require one group of anarchists to adopt a particular repertoire of tactics, tactical diffusion occurs horizontally and is decentralised. There are no 'legitimate' anarchist tactics or official standards to compare anarchist tactics against, so all individual anarchists and organisations tend to utilise tactics because they believe them to be effective, suitable for the situation, and embody anarchist values.

Even though diffusion occurs horizontally and through decentralisation, there is much commonality in anarchist tactics across time and space. Anarchist tactics and organisations often have numerous similarities, despite there being no effort to coordinate such similarities. These similarities can be seen within organisational directories, like the Anarchist Yellow Pages, which listed many entries for Anti-Racist Action or Anti-Fascist Action, Critical Mass, Earth First!, Food Not Bombs, and Independent Media Center. In each instance, multiple organisations exist, across the planet, which have similar (if not identical) values and practices at the local level. While these organisations often network with each other, no top-down umbrella organisation exists. These anarchistic franchise organisations are not necessarily composed totally of anarchists, although each organisation behaves anarchistically and has anarchist values. It is a 'franchise' because it spreads through copying and mimicry—but, unlike many other franchise organisations, there is no headquarters that approves of new organisations or coordinates its activities.[8]

Anarchist organisations and tactics diffuse through numerous avenues. The simplest method of diffusion is for people who have participated in certain kinds of organisations or used certain tactics to re-use them in different times, places, and with other groups of people. If someone is not able to re-create an organisation or tactics because they have not participated in it themselves, they can borrow ideas from people they know who have. This presumes a social network of anarchists who share stories and analysis of their experiences, reflecting upon the efficacy, efficiency, practicality, and successes and failures of their efforts. Unlike with people who have themselves participated in such tactics, emulating the actions of friends and comrades assumes trust for their interpretations and understandings of what they witnessed, as well as the ability to translate it to local conditions. More distantly, anarchists can work from stories and ideas they witness in mainstream media—this is most reasonable in areas where anarchists have been excluded or isolated from others, especially in the pre-Internet days. Mainstream media has the

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[8] D. M. Williams, *Black Flags and Social Movements: A Sociological Analysis of Movement Anarchism* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2017).

tendency to foster weird interpretations of social movements (especially radical movements such as anarchism), to report on them incompletely or inaccurately, and to water-down the results of those tactical deployments. A stronger source for manifesting a media interpretation of anarchist tactics is activist media. If anarchists are connected to specialised media outlets (whether print, video, web, or others), they receive less-filtered analysis of anarchist tactical choices, experiences, and results.

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