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From the Zapatistas to Seattle

The 'New Anarchists'

Francis Dupuis-Déri

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chist revival, today anarchists in the streets of Athens may claim:
'We are an image of the future'.

eralism, global capitalism and the economic collusion of the post-colonial Mexican State with the United States. From an anarchist perspective, it might be less appealing to fight with the Kurds—but alongside the US army—against Islamists while overdeveloped countries are plagued by neo-Nazi groups and neo-fascist political parties playing the Islamophobia card.

Possibly inspired by the Zapatistas, the Kurds wish to convince liberal and anarchist intellectuals from overdeveloped countries that they are radical democrats or even anarchists, inviting foreign delegates to meet with movement leaders and instructors, to visit the Women's Academy and to talk about how the 'democratic confederalism' drafted by Abdullah Öcalan, their jailed leader, echoes Murray Bookchin's libertarian municipalism.⁵⁹ Some Western blackblockers have even volunteered for the Kurdish militia. One of them left to fight in Syria after watching 'a video on an anarchist website'. Back in Montréal after a few months in the Kurdish militia, one activist told a journalist: 'It is a system really close to anarchism'.⁶⁰

No one knows for sure what the future of neo-anarchism will look like, especially with our current arrogant rulers, cyber capitalism and climate change, with our nuclear plants and our thousands of nuclear warheads, with our perpetual 'war on terrorism', police militarisation, mass incarceration, mobilisation of reactionary 'angry white males', racism and Islamophobia. And yet from the Zapatistas of Chiapas to the Kurds of Syria, from the streets of Seattle to the squares of Madrid, there is a feeling that we are no longer embroiled in the pessimism of the 1980s anarcho-punks, who claimed there was 'No Future'. After more than two generations of anar-

⁵⁹ J. Biehl, "Revolutionary education: Two academics in Rojava", *Stateless Democracy* (Utrecht: Bak, 2015), 212–220.

⁶⁰ P. Teisceira-Lessard, "Des Black Blocs en Syrie", *La Presse*, March 6, 2017 [http://plus.lapresse.ca/screens/5ceee0c4-4bfb-4287-be6a-f62b9a237361%7C_0.html].

Abstract

In the early 2000s, some commentators such as Barbara Epstein and David Graeber wrote about the 'new anarchists', in the aftermath of the so-called Battle of Seattle, opposing the alterglobalisation movement and the police protecting the World Trade Organization (WTO) Summit. At the end of the day, the 'anarchists' had stolen the show, either by their civil disobedience non-violent collective action under the umbrella of the Direct Action Network (DAN), which prevented the Summit to open, or the spectacular hit-and-run action of the Black Bloc, which smashed tens of windows of infamous international firms (banks, coffee shops, fast food restaurants, etc.). The goal of the chapter is to explain what led the new activists to endorse, openly or not, anarchism and how this anarchism translated into their collective organisation, decision-making process, and collective action. While discussing the role of the anarchists within the alter globalisation movement, we deal more specifically with the 'fluffy vs spiky' debate (non-violence/violence) and explain how the movement developed the concept of 'the respect for diversity of tactics' (which is consistent with anarchism).

From the anarchists' point of view, the twentieth century started in 1911 with the Mexican revolution and more specifically with the armed struggle of the anarchist organisation known as the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM). Starting in February of that year, a group of internationalist anarchists, including members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the famous Flores Magón brothers, held several towns in northern Baja California until their eventual defeat in June.

For the anarchists, it was once again in Mexico where the twenty-first century truly began, on 1 January 1994, with the

uprising of the Zapatistas in the state of Chiapas. The rebels of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN—Zapatista Army of National Liberation) launched their offensive on the very day of the entry into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a regional neoliberal deal between the political elite of Canada, the United States and Mexico. ‘*¡Ya basta!*’ (Enough!) was the Zapatista slogan. The battle lasted about two weeks, followed by a ceasefire with the Mexican State, then years of skirmishes and counter-insurrectionary operations.

The Zapatistas succeeded in securing autonomy and direct democracy for the populations of the liberated towns, which included San Cristobal de Las Casas and Las Margaritas. Signs were posted to warn visitors: ‘You are in Zapatista rebel territory: here the people rule and the government obeys’. The Zapatistas also built international support around the world: they organised an Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in 1996, which resulted in the emergence of Peoples’ Global Action (PGA), a transnational network allowing for the more radical members of the alterglobalisation movement to express themselves.¹

A decade later, in *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, the anarchist David Graeber recalled that ‘[t]he Zapatistas do not call themselves anarchists [...] they are trying to revolutionize revolutionary strategy itself by abandoning any notion of a vanguard party seizing control of the state [...] instead battling to create free enclaves that could serve as models for autonomous self-government [...] into a complex overlapping network of self-managing groups that could then begin to discuss the reinvention of political society’. Then, Graeber asked, ‘who was listening to what they really had to say? Largely, it seems, a collection of

¹ <https://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/en/>.

Europe—are now attracted towards the Kurdish armed resistance against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Long-time Zapatistas admirer David Graeber now equates the war in Syria with the Spanish Civil War, recalling that:

In 1937, my father volunteered to fight in the International Brigades in defence of the Spanish Republic [...] I never thought I would, in my own lifetime, see the same thing happen again [...] The autonomous region of Rojava [...] has not only maintained its independence, but is a remarkable democratic experiment. Popular assemblies have been created as the ultimate decision-making bodies, councils selected with careful ethnic balance [...] there are women’s and youth councils, and, in a remarkable echo of the armed Mujeres Libres (Free Women) of Spain, a feminist army, the “YJA Star” militia (the “Union of Free Women”, the star here referring to the ancient Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar).⁵⁷

There are strong similarities between how Graeber talked back then about the Zapatistas and the current situation with the Kurds: ‘the young people are very enthusiastic. They’re not anarchists, but they embrace a lot of anarchist ideas; they’ve been reading anarchism. They’re anti-state, so what they call themselves doesn’t really matter from an anarchist position as long as you’re anti-state and anti-capitalism’.⁵⁸ However, the situation may be more complicated, from an anarchist point of view. The Zapatistas were resisting using (relatively) low-intensity guerrilla warfare to fight neoliberalism.

⁵⁷ D. Graeber, “Why is the world ignoring the revolutionary Kurds in Syria?”, *The Guardian*, October 8, 2014 [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/08/why-world-ignoring-revolutionary-kurds-syria-isis>].

⁵⁸ Real Media, “David Graeber: Syria, Anarchism and visiting Rojava”, *The Kurdish Question*, July 5, 2017 [<http://www.kurdishquestion.com/article/3959-david-graeber-syria-anarchism-and-visiting-rojava>].

modes of direct action are understood as ‘prefigurative politics’, that is, what one does and how one organises *here and now* is coherent with the ideal society one dreams about. Today, anarchists reconceptualise revolution itself, drawing—consciously or not—from nineteenth-century mutualism and individualist anarchism by claiming that the process itself is the goal, and that it is possible to live according to our ideals right here and right now (in a sexual or love relationship, a free commune, a squat, an affinity group, a political organisation, etc.). Anarchists are therefore active in the world, struggling in a process of self-emancipation while at the same time standing for and engaged with people in need of solidarity and mutual aid. This is what we learned from the Zapatista legacy.

To close the circle, the Mohawk activist and academic Taniai Alfred from the University of Victoria in Canada coined the concept of ‘anarcho-indigenism’ to facilitate ‘collaborations between anarchists and Onkwehonwe [original people] in the anti-globalization movement’. According to Alfred, ‘there are philosophical connections between indigenous and some strains of anarchist thought on the spirit of freedom and the ideals of a good society. [...] There are also important strategic commonalities between indigenous and anarchist ways of seeing and being in the world’.⁵⁵ Indeed, indigenous warriors and settler-anarchists have stood side by side in several collective actions in the 2000s, including the protests at the WTO in Cancun in 2003, the ‘No Olympics on Stolen Lands’ campaign in Vancouver in 2010, and the Ni Canada, Ni Québec (Neither Canada, nor Québec) network.⁵⁶

Although it is still too early to know how this will play out in anarchist histories and mythologies, many anarchists—especially in

⁵⁵ T. Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Orchard Park: Broadview Press, 2005), 46.

⁵⁶ A.G. Lewis, *Decolonizing Anarchism: Expanding Anarcha-Indigenism in Theory, mémoire de maîtrise non-publié, programme Cultural Studies, Queen’s University, 2012.*

teenage anarchists in Europe and North America, who soon began besieging the summits of the very global elite’.²

Such a statement suggests there was a link between the Zapatista uprising on the one hand and the ‘new anarchists’ of the so-called global justice or alterglobalisation movement on the other. And yet to grasp the spirit of neo-anarchism—both its *raison d’être* and *emotion d’être*—one should not forget that it is part of a web of historical references and relations going back to May ‘68 in Paris, and then re-stated over the years in such momentous manifestations as Seattle 1999, Occupy 2011 and even the Kurds’ armed resistance in 2017.

The New World Order Era: The Early 1990s

In the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet empire, the political and economic elite of the so-called ‘Free world’ was celebrating its victory against statist socialism. Anarchism in overdeveloped countries was a political and social force, and yet it was marginal and mostly unknown outside radical circles. It seems that most of the anarchists at the time had no hope of seeing a revolution in their lifetime, according to studies in France, the United Kingdom and the United States.³ At the time, anarchism was above all about ‘social justice’ and bringing people to see governments and corporations from a critical perspective (hence the popularity of books by Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein).

Anarchists were divided between the traditional currents of anarchism, such as anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-pacifism,

² D. Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), 103 and 105.

³ A. Chan, “Anarchists, violence and social change: Perspectives from today’s grassroots”, *Anarchist Studies*, 3:1 (1995), 45–68; S. Boulouque, « Les libertaires d’hier à aujourd’hui », *Recherche socialiste*, 11 (2000), 61–70; M. D. Pucciarelli, *L’imaginaire des libertaires aujourd’hui*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1999, 182–198.

anarcho-communism and anarcho-feminism. Organising in decentralised networks such as the Animal Liberation Front and Earth First!, anarcho-ecologists were probably the most militant and were soon labelled ‘ecoterrorists’ by intelligence services, in the United States. There were a few self-proclaimed anarchist networks, such as the Love & Rage Federation in North America (1989–1998—Canada, Mexico, United States), the Fédération anarchiste in France, and journals such as *Anarchy* (United States), *Freedom* (United Kingdom), *Le Monde libertaire* (France), and *Rebelles* (Québec). Anarchists also held international meetings, such as the Rencontres anarchistes internationales in Barcelona (1993). Most of the time, however, anarchists were isolated into small groups—the Food Not Bombs collectives, for instance—with specific priorities, such as anti-police brutality, anti-prison and solidarity with prisoners (Black Rose collectives), antiracism (Anti-Racist Action—ARA) and antifascism (Antifaschistische Aktion), and radical unionism (Confédération Nationale du Travail—CNT—and IWW). On the counter-cultural scene, the glorious years of the Autonomen squatters in Berlin were fading away. Lifestyle anarcho-punks were not dead, yet punk fashion was becoming increasingly commercialised.

Slowly but surely, however, anarchism was gaining influence by the very fact that the Marxist-Leninist ideologies and organisations had suffered a terrible setback with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Anarchism came out of the Soviet experience as politically and morally clean, offering a ‘new’ option for wannabe radicals and anticapitalist revolutionaries.

Even more significantly, anarchism was in tune with the so-called ‘new social movements’ that had roots in the 1960s and 1970s. Radical feminists, gays and lesbians, ecologists and anti-war and anti-nuclear activists had for decades been practising leaderless decentralised forms of organisation, direct democracy in deliberative assemblies and autonomous collective actions. Their tactics and organisational forms were drawn from the anarchist tradition often

this sort of deal has a name: selling out. More dramatically, what Fraser and Mouffe ask anarchists to do is to renounce their hopes and their reasons for fighting, to renounce what they are and what they want to be, to renounce to their very *raison d’être* and *émotion d’être*.

The position held by Fraser and Mouffe is a clear rebuttal of the Zapatistas and Seattle inheritance. For neo-anarchists, elections and political parties are no democracy at all. The goal is not to repair or renovate a failed regime, but to believe that another world is possible, and to create and build this new world through autonomous, horizontal organisation and direct action. As David Graeber explained in his text ‘The New Anarchists’, published in 2002 in *The New Left Review*:

In North America especially, this is a movement about reinventing democracy. It is not opposed to organization. It is about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization *are* its ideology. It is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties or corporations; networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy. Ultimately, it aspires to be much more than that, because ultimately it aspires to reinvent daily life as whole.⁵³

With the overall rejection of elections and parliamentarism, the politics of demand is dismissed to the benefit of the politics of action: resistance and confrontation.⁵⁴ Forms of organisation and

⁵³ D. Graeber, “The New Anarchists”, *New Left Review*, 13, January–February 2002, 70.

⁵⁴ R. Day, “From hegemony to affinity: The political logic of the newest social movements”, *Cultural Studies*, 18:5 (2004), 733 and “Why we don’t make demands”, *Rolling Thunder: An Anarchist Journal of Living Dangerously*, 12 (Spring 2015), 8–17.

institutions that regulate transnational interaction in a globalizing world'. Chantal Mouffe, another high-profile political philosopher advocating 'radical democracy', shares Fraser's contempt towards neo-anarchists and their refusal to get involved in official and hierarchical institutions:

What I call 'withdrawal from' [...] is the strategy of the Indignados in Spain or Occupy Movement, as the protesters say, 'we don't want anything to do with parties, with trade unions, with existing institutions because they can't be transformed. We need to assemble and organise new forms of life. We should try democracy in presence, in act.' The strategy that I oppose to that of 'withdrawal from' is a strategy that I call 'engagement with'—it engages with the existing institutions in order to transform them.⁵²

Mouffe is an advisor for the new Spanish political party Podemos. The interventions of both Fraser and Mouffe are in line with the never-ending debate within the broader socialist family between the so-called reformists (or parliamentarians) and radicals (antiparliamentarians or anarchists).

What remains of anarchist dreams in Fraser's political project? Not much. She ends up stating that we 'should incorporate neo-anarchism's best insights, while rejecting wholesale anarchism', yet she avoids identifying any of these best insights outright. Fraser and Mouffe offer anarchists a one-way deal. They ask them to enlist in official institutions, to become one among many rank-and-file volunteers focusing on the next election day. Some might get an executive office in the political machine. But among anarchists,

⁵² B. Đorđević, J. Sardelić, "A vibrant democracy needs agonistic confrontation"—an interview with Chantal Mouffe", *Citizenship in Southeast Europe*, May 2013 [<http://www.citsee.eu/interview/vibrant-democracy-needs-agonistic-confrontation-interview-chantal-mouffe>].

without even knowing it, or were re-invented through the collective imagination. The idea of the affinity group, for instance, was invented by Spanish anarchists at the end of the nineteenth century. It was then adopted by the anti-war movement in the United States in the 1950s, by the anti-nuclear movement in the 1970s, by Act Up (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) in the 1980s and by the alterglobalisation movement in the 1990s.⁴

Some anarchists, such as Spaniard Tomas Ibanez, who lived in France and participated in the events of May '68, acknowledge today that a new form of anarchism emerged in the late 1960s and reached its full potential with the Battle of Seattle in 1999, as well as with the Indignados movement and Occupy in 2011. Such 'neo-anarchism' exists without any open references to anarchism, yet embodying anarchist values and practices.⁵ Similarly, Barbara Epstein, who encountered anarchists while doing research on the US anti-nuclear mass mobilisations in the 1970s, claimed in her 2001 article 'Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization movement' that '[t]he current anti-globalization movement has roots in the nonviolent direct action movement', that is, the 1960s and 1970s radical social movements, 'with which it shares a structure based on small autonomous groups, a practice of decision-making by consensus, and a style of protest that revolves around mass civil disobedience'. According to Epstein, '[m]any among today's young radical activists, especially those at the center of the anti-globalization and anti-corporate movements, call themselves anarchists. But the intellectual/philosophical perspective that

⁴ F. Dupuis-Déri, "Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups", *Anarchist Studies*, 18:1 (2010).

⁵ T. Ibaniz, *Anarchisme en mouvement: anarchisme, néoanarchisme et post-anarchisme* (Paris: Nada, 2014), 23.

holds sway in these circles might be better described as an anarchist sensibility than as anarchism per se'.⁶

As Maia Ramnath noticed in her book *Decolonizing Anarchism*, such a tendency was also in motion outside the overdeveloped countries. In the 1990s in India, for instance, 'non-party people's movements' of women, peasants, ecologists and postleftist activists organised their antisystemic struggles outside political parties and traditional guerrilla groups, and they will soon get involved in the alterglobalisation movement.⁷ Maia Ramnath acknowledged that '[n]one of the movements discussed here is anarchist with a capital A', and yet 'the questions, themes, conflicts, and issues involved [...] are analogous to those that have characterized the anarchist problematic and lowercase *a* motif. They are not anarchists, but some of them—for example, Vandana Shiva and Arundhati Roy—are people whom anarchists appreciate',⁸ along with some of their concepts, such as Shiva's 'earth democracy'.

By the early 1990s, anarchism in overdeveloped countries was also in tune with the so-called 'postmodern' cultural mood of the time, related to the dismissal of Marxism and class-based analysis, the victory of liberalism and individualism and the consolidation of identity politics. More and more people felt alienated by national catch-all multi-issue political parties that claimed to be able to represent the entire nation, to deal with every issue and to implement global solutions (see the drop in electoral turnout from the 1960s to the 1990s). New activists were involved in non-partisan single-issue mobilisations, looking for direct action rather than a spokesperson who would claim to represent their will and speak in their name.

⁶ B. Epstein, "Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization movement", *Monthly Review*, 53:4 (2001) [<https://monthlyreview.org/2001/09/01/anarchism-and-the-anti-globalization-movement/>].

⁷ M. Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), 224–225.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 241.

'anarchism reloaded'⁴⁸ or 'anarchism revived',⁴⁹ while others in cultural studies, arts and literature theorise about 'post-anarchism'. Although it is clearly a paradox—or even a contradiction—for a university professor to claim to be an anarchist, especially in a State-run university, many of us are trying to make our work (minimally) useful to activists, and to sustain an activist life despite a lack of time and energy, sly comments of reactionary columnists and threatening contempt from deans and tenured colleagues.

Nancy Fraser's charge against anarchism was actually a reply to Fuyuki Kurasawa, a sociologist from York University in Toronto who advocated, from an 'anarchist-inspired model of cosmopolitanism',⁵⁰ that an anarchist counterpublic should include not only anarchists but also subalterns. It should also critically withdraw from official institutions while contesting mainstream discourses and sustaining autonomous self-managed (direct democracy) organisations. On the contrary, Nancy Fraser stressed that anarchists must be pragmatic and join progressive (liberal) organisations and movements, including the Democratic Party itself (in 2016, Fraser supported the candidate for the Democrat primaries Bernie Sanders⁵¹). This is not a new concern for Fraser, who had condemned the radical feminists of the 1970s—the forerunners of the 'neo-anarchists'—who refused to deal with the State apparatus. On similar grounds, Fraser stated that 'anarchist tactics are not themselves sufficient to effect fundamental structural change [...] Better to fight to democratize, than to abolish, the

⁴⁸ U. Gordon, "Anarchism reloaded", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12:1 (2007), 29–48.

⁴⁹ L. Williams, "Anarchism revived", *New Political Science*, 29:3 (2007), 297–312.

⁵⁰ F. Kurasawa, "An alternative transnational public sphere? On anarchist cosmopolitanism in post-Westphalian times", in K. Nash (Ed), *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 79–97.

⁵¹ See the interview by A. Gylden, "Hillary Clinton, féministe sans âme", *L'Express* (Paris), October 18, 2016 [http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/amerique-nord/hillary-clinton-feministe-sans-ame_1841961.html].

Our people actually picked up *the anarchists*. Because we had with us steelworkers and longshoremen who, by sheer bulk, were three or four times larger. So we had them literally just sort of, a teamster on either side, just pick up an *anarchist*. We'd walk him over to the cops and say this boy just broke a window. He doesn't belong to us. We hate the WTO, so does he, maybe, but we don't break things. Please arrest him. And the cops wouldn't arrest anyone.⁴⁵

The next day, a campaigner against sweatshops stood in front of stores to protect their windows from the 'vandals'. She asked herself, 'Where are the police? The anarchists should have been arrested'.⁴⁶

More recently, the political philosopher Nancy Fraser, an influential socialist and feminist from the New School of Social Research in New York, published an article under the provocative title 'Against anarchism'.⁴⁷ Such a backlash by a high-profile scholar seems to testify to the growing influence of neo-anarchism in the streets, the public sphere, and even academia. Indeed, while older Marxist professors have turned their coats, sunk into silent melancholy or retired, many post-Seattle graduate scholars have made their way from the street to the campus, got hired and made enough noise that some are now talking about 'the anarchist turn' in academia, to recall the seminal book edited by scholars from the New School. Academic specialists of social movements talk about

⁴⁵ Emphasis mine M. Naim, "Lori's War," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 2000), 49.

⁴⁶ Quoted by T. Egan, "Talks and Turmoil: The Violence," *The New York Times*, December 2, 1999, sec. A, 1. In an article published later, "Window-smashing hurt our cause" [www.zmag.org/benjamin.htm], she claimed having been misquoted, but still criticized the anarchists' use of force.

⁴⁷ According to an e-mail exchange with the editor of *Public Seminar*, it seems that Fraser agreed about the title.

It was also a time for resistance against the neoconservative and neoliberal backlash and the 'New World Order' to recall the words of President George Bush Sr. uttered on 11 September 1991 in a speech about the war against Iraq. As a matter of fact, anarchists were actively involved in mass demonstrations against the war, where the Black Bloc tactic was apparently used for the first time by anarchists in the United States.⁹ Such a visibly militant form of activism draws people towards anarchism.¹⁰

The Zapatista Uprising and Neo-anarchism

It comes as no surprise, then, that the Zapatista uprising of 1994 was inspiring and attractive to so many anarchists—as well as many Trotskyists and liberals—from Canada, the United States and Europe.¹¹ In Mexico City, anarcho-punks set up a music show to collect food for the Zapatistas,¹² who embodied a new political alternative, the spirit of resistance against neoliberalism and global capitalism, and the ideals of a leaderless deliberative and direct democracy (i.e. horizontalism). As stated by Eloisa, a Zapatista woman, their opponents were 'afraid that we realize that we are able to govern ourselves'.¹³ *Changing the World Without Taking Power* was not only an anarchist catchphrase but also the title of a book by John Holloway with the Zapatista experience in mind. The famous Zapatista leader, Subcommandante Marcos, was a paradoxical anonymous icon, his face hidden under a black hood like all the Zapatista

⁹ J. Shantz, *Active Anarchy: Political Practice in Contemporary Movements* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001), 51.

¹⁰ P. Gelderloos, "A survey of the US anarchist movement", *Social Anarchism*, 40 (2007), 9–16.

¹¹ J. Lasky, "Indigenism, anarchism, feminism: An emerging framework for exploring post-imperial futures", *Affinities*, 5:1 (2011), 3–36.

¹² A. O'Connor, "Punk subculture in Mexico and the Anti-Globalization movement: A report from the front", *New Political Science*, 25:1 (2010), 43–53.

¹³ In J. Baschet, *Adieux au capitalisme. Autonomie, société du bien vivre et multiplicité des mondes* (Paris: La Découverte, 2014), 70.

rebels—fashion Mexican anarcho-punks equate with Black Bloc activism. More importantly, he claimed to be learning while walking and serving while leading, and he identified with anyone fighting injustice, claiming to be ‘a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a Jew in Germany, a Gypsy in Poland, a Mohawk in Quebec’ and ‘an anarchist in Spain’.¹⁴

Like many anarchists in overdeveloped countries, Marianne Enckell, organiser of the Centre International de Recherches sur l’Anarchisme (CIRA—International Centre for Research on Anarchism) at Lausanne, recognised her ideals in the Zapatista experience.¹⁵ Yet anarchists were not the only ones to find inspiration in Chiapas. Radical French feminist and sociologist Jules Falquet complained ironically that no one in Europe cared about ‘things that have been said for decades by feminists, but also, for example, *by anarchists*’, but ‘when the Zapatistas say the same things, it’s great: we never heard of it, it’s so interesting, it’s so new!’¹⁶

In Chiapas, anarchists saw vivid proof that another world is possible, to recall the alterglobalisation slogan, and even that anarchy may actually work.

Many anarchists made the journey to be on the ground with the Zapatistas, acting as ‘internationals’ to defuse the tension between the rebels and the military and participating in global assemblies. And yet, according to Alex Khasnabish, ‘[r]ather than simply importing the model of the Zapatistas’ struggle, activists in other

daily occupation of the Place de la République (Nuit Debout) and (3) a wave of protests by *lycéens* (high school students). The latter launched the network ‘Génération ingouvernable’ (Ungovernable Generation), known to be sympathetic to anarchism. In my own research about democracy and contentious politics in high schools in Québec, many of the young rebels are anarchists if not in their minds, at least in their hearts. They organised themselves autonomously and spontaneously, calling a general assembly in the cafeteria or in a nearby park, where they voted for one or two days of striking. While I thought at the beginning of my research that they had followed the lead of older student activists, it was in fact the other way around: after they collectively decided to organise and mobilise, they went to a university student association to ask for help, for instance, for money to buy materials. More importantly, most of them came out of their first political experience with no respect for formal student councils—those embodiments of the powerless elected institution—and with a strong sense of defiance towards electoral politics in general (so-called representative democracy). Among those who were old enough to appear on voting lists when they talked to me, many do not vote.⁴⁴

Backlash Against Neo-anarchism

Neo-anarchists have been targeted not only by the police—thousands of arrests in the streets—but also reviled by politicians, journalists and pundits, as well as by spokespeople and intellectuals who claim to be reasonable liberals, and by ‘peace-police’ fellow demonstrators. In Seattle, Lori Wallach, an American lobbyist and director of Global Trade Watch, explained that some ‘anarchists’ apparently wished to break windows the day before the opening of the WTO meeting, while the French peasant José Bové was distributing Roquefort cheese in front of a McDonald’s.

⁴⁴ This is a work-in-progress research project.

¹⁴ N. Klein, “The unknown icon”, *The Guardian*, March 3, 2001. [<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/mar/03/politics>].

¹⁵ M. Enckell, “Fédéralisme et autonomie chez les anarchistes”, *Réfractio*, 8 (2002), 24.

¹⁶ My emphasis. Sabine et Olivier, “Mouvement zapatiste et lutte des femmes: entretien avec Jules Falquet”, *Flagrant délit*, no 10, 1999 [<http://1libertaire.free.fr/FemmesZapatistes.html>].

in 1968 in Berkeley, Paris, Mexico⁴¹ and elsewhere. In 2017, Paolo Gerbaudo published *The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenism and Global Protest*, a book equating new mobilisations such as Occupy (2011) and Nuit Debout (Paris, 2016) with the neo-anarchist tradition running from ‘the self-management ethos of the ’68 occupiers to the self-government of the Zapatistas in Mexico [...] [to] anti-globalization activists’.⁴² Paolo Gerbaudo also quotes Egyptian activist Mahmoud Salem who claimed that occupations of public squares and places in Egypt in 2011, but also in Madrid, Tel Aviv, New York and so on, were ‘anarchist without knowing it is anarchist’.⁴³

Many self-proclaimed anarchists have been involved in recent years in anti-austerity mobilisations in Greece, probably the country with the most vivid anarchist movement, but also in the Occupy mobilisation, the anti-cut movement in the United Kingdom in 2011, the Brazilian mobilisations for free public transportation in 2013 and against the football World Cup in 2014, as well as anti-Trump and anti-fascist protests in the United States in 2017, without forgetting the anarcho-hacking and cyberactivism of Anonymous. And while we may trace the roots of this movement to Paris, some of this new generation of activists have started using the slogan: ‘Fuck May 68! Fight Now!’

Neo-anarchism is what many young people make of their contentious movement. In France in 2016, waves of protests were occurring simultaneously, including (1) a national union mobilisation against the new Loi du Travail (Work Law) while the ‘cortège de tête’ (head procession) of their street protests was hijacked by hundreds of blackblockers and their friends and accomplices, (2) a

⁴¹ Massacre ’68 is an old punk band in Mexico, named in reference to the students who were killed on October 2, 1968, in the plaza of the Three Cultures (A. O’Connor, ‘Punk subculture’, 47).

⁴² Paolo Gerbaudo, *The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenism and Global Protest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 6.

⁴³ Ibid., 65.

places in the north of the Americas have sought to translate this resonance in ways that make sense within their own contexts’.¹⁷

Such was the case with Sarita Ahojja, a Montréal-based activist who went to Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala and Mexico to participate in indigenous social movements, particularly with indigenous women. She then came back to Canada to be part of the alterglobalisation mobilisations, but also to participate in collective actions with refugees and migrants, such as No One Is Illegal, and with First Nations activists. Sarita Ahojja and many of her contemporaries¹⁸ noticed how settler-anarchists too often focus on so-called ‘paradoxes’ while indigenous people agree to talk with state representatives. They also saw how the anarchist catchphrase ‘No Gods, No Masters’ has led many Western, urban anarchists to dismiss the practice of spiritual rituals, thereby discounting the experience of many indigenous people and especially women. Sarita Ahojja is also critical of the cultural imperialism involved in branding indigenists as ‘anarchists’. Yet she claimed that indigenism is inspiring for anarchists with regard to values, principles, discourses and practices. More importantly, she stated that anarchists should stand by indigenous people as allies, auxiliaries and accomplices in their struggles against state colonialism and capitalist imperialism.¹⁹

¹⁷ A. Khasnabish, «Anarch@-zapatismo: Anti-colonialism, anti-power, and the insurgent imagination», *Affinities*, 5:1 (2011), 71.

¹⁸ E. M. Lagalisie, “Marginalizing Magdalena’: Intersections of gender and the secular in Anarchoindigenist solidarity activism”, *Signs*, 36:3 (2011), 653–678; Aragorn!, “Locating an indigenous anarchism”, *Uncivilized: The Best of Green Anarchy* (Green Anarchy Press, 2012).

¹⁹ S. Ahojja, “Les anarchistes et la lutte pour l’autodétermination des Autochtones”, in R. Bellemare-Caron, É. Breton, M.-A. Cyr, F. Dupuis-Déri, and A. Kruzynski (Eds), *Nous sommes ingouvernables: Les anarchistes au Québec aujourd’hui* (Montréal: Lux, 2013), 187–201.

From Chiapas to Seattle

For many commentators, the anti- or alterglobalisation movement was initiated by the Zapatistas in 1994, but for others it was born in the streets of Seattle on 30 November 1999. In fact, this global movement emerged and consolidated throughout the 1990s with a series of campaigns and mobilisations against the globalisation of capitalism, neoliberalism and the structural adjustments imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) (loans provided in exchange for public debt reduction and austerity policies). The ‘movement of movements’ was a loose constellation of a variety of local social movements and activist groups ranging from anarchist affinity groups to Christian transnational organisations such as Oxfam, as well as unions, peasant organisations, student associations, communist parties, ecologists, Indian women opposing dam projects funded by the World Bank, autonomous media taking advantage of the new World Wide Web and so on.

According to the more radical activists in the movement—anarchists, autonomous communists, ecologists, radical feminists and queers—parliamentarism and capitalism cannot be reformed. Among the statements of the Black Bloc after their riot in Genoa during the G8 Summit in July 2001: ‘We don’t want a place at the table to discuss with the masters of the world, we want there to be no more masters of the world!’²⁰

Throughout the 1990s, anarchists encountered allies and accomplices within the alterglobalisation campaigns and mobilisations. For instance, some feminist activists and writers acknowledged that radical ‘feminist global justice activists’ were feeling, thinking, talking and acting more or less like anarchists, although they might

²⁰ “Communiqué d’un groupe affinitaire actif au sein d’un Black Bloc lors de la journée d’actions et de la manifestation des 20 et 21 juillet 2001 à Gênes, in Communiqués des Black Blocs”, Lux, 2016, 82 [<https://www.luxediteur.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Communiqués-de-black-blocks.pdf>].

of the Americas, made the decision to adopt the principle of respect for a diversity of tactics, a choice of significant importance during the seven-month-long student strike in 2012 known as the ‘Maple Spring’.

Another way to respect a diversity of tactics was to identify timeframes for different kinds of demonstration. For instance, a demonstration may start as a peaceful protest, then a group may split off to strike at symbols of capitalism or to clash with the police. This is what happened during the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto. During the Maple Spring in Québec in 2012, ‘manifs nocturnes’ (night protests) were called anonymously on the Web and were held every single evening at 9 p.m. for months. These night protests were leaderless and were known to be an open space for confrontation with the police and destruction of state and private property (however, ‘peace-police’ protesters sometimes physically attacked blackblockers).

The respect for a diversity of tactics is also grounded on the fact that anarchists and other anticapitalists were not restricted to the Black Blocs. Anarchists were also part of the Pink and Silver Blocs, the street medics units, the independent media crews, the samba bands such as the Infernal Noise Brigade,⁴⁰ the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army and so on. It thus came as no surprise that UK Prime Minister Tony Blair called the alterglobalisation protests an ‘anarchist travelling circus’.

Seattle’s Daughters and Sons

Almost 20 years after Seattle, a new generation of activists have gotten on board the ‘neo-anarchist’ train that started its journey

⁴⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3_48e42Kfo.

radical demonstrators with different views and feelings about how to protest.

In Québec City, the CLAC identified three zones: green (chill out), yellow (peaceful civil disobedience) and red (confrontation). Even Starhawk, a well-known pagan pacifist, feminist and an instructor in civil disobedience strategies, came to see the Black Bloc as a friendly tactic, especially after the police violence in Québec City. Talking about ‘the movement for global justice’ in her 2002 book *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising*, she suggested that the challengers of the new world order tend, overall,

to be young, to be aligned with *antiauthoritarian and anarchist visions* [...] They mostly work outside of formal organization. In North America, the groups they do form are direct action oriented. They include CLAC, the Anti-Capitalist Convergence [...] And they don’t advocate violence, but rather a diversity of tactics. Diversity of tactics, in part, means flexibility, not being locked into strict guidelines. It means support for every group to make their own decisions about what to do tactically and strategically.³⁹

The police would occasionally attack designated ‘green’ zones, but still, in the months that followed the Summit of the Americas, Anticapitalist Convergences sprang up in New York, Washington, Chicago, Seattle and Calgary, adopting the same ‘basis of unity’. In Québec, the most vivid and militant national federation of students, Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ—Association for Student Union Solidarity), which was founded in February 2001 in the wake of the mobilisation against the Summit

Burton-Rose, and G. Katsiaficas (Eds), *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches From a Global Movement* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004), 126–133.

³⁹ Emphasis mine. Starhawk, *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising*, Gabriola Island (British Columbia), New Society Publishers, 2002, 207–208.

have good reasons not to brand themselves as such.²¹ While radical feminists may share certain political interests with anarchists, they rightly denounce the phenomenon of ‘manarchists’—activists who confuse anarchist identities and masculine attitudes—as well as the male domination and sexual aggressions within anarchist networks and groups, which are almost always followed by a backlash against the survivors and their allies. Nevertheless, anarchists have tried to implement principles of anti-oppression in their milieu, and claim to be against sexism and homophobia. In the late 1990s, anarchists were part of the No Border Network, which set up temporary autonomous camps to protest racist immigration policies in Europe, and they also took part in Reclaim the Streets in the UK, which organised carnivals against capitalism, such as the Global Street Party in May 1998 to protest the G8 Summit in Birmingham.²² Then came Seattle.

Early in the morning, activists from the Direct Action Network (DAN) occupied crossroads and chained themselves around the convention centre where the WTO meeting was about to begin. The Ruckus Society had trained them so well in techniques of non-violent civil disobedience that the police were unable to break through their lines to allow the congresspeople access to the building. As Clive Gabay noted in the text ‘What did the anarchists ever do for us? Anarchy, decentralization, and autonomy at the Seattle anti-WTO protests’, ‘whilst the majority of demonstrators themselves were not anarchists, anarchist values and methods in fact played an integral part in the highly drilled

²¹ B. Maignashca, “‘They’re talkin’ bout a revolution’: feminism, anarchism and the politics of social change in the global justice movement”, *Feminist Review*, 106 (2014), 78–94; A. Kruzynski, “De l’Opération SalAMI à Némésis: le cheminement d’un groupe de femmes du mouvement altermondialiste québécois” and D. Lamoureux, “Le féminisme et l’altermondialisme”, both in *Recherches féministes*, 17:2 (2004), 227–262 and 171–194.

²² G. Grindon, “Carnival against capital: A comparison of Bakhtin, Vaneigem and Bey”, *Anarchist Studies*, 12:2 (2004), 147–160; G. McKay (Ed), *DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain* (London: Verso, 1998).

non-violent demonstrations that shut down the WTO Seattle meeting'.²³ Indeed, the DAN embodied anarchist principles and forms of organisation: leaderless direct democracy, consensus-based decision-making, affinity groups, direct action and so on. Under pressure from the White House and with President Bill Clinton on his way to Seattle, the police started to club, pepper spray and tear gas peaceful protesters. Around 11 a.m., the police ran out of ammunition and was forced to resupply from suburban police stations. At this moment, far away from the convention centre, about 200 masked, black-clad protesters—the Black Bloc—targeted symbols of transnational capitalism, smashing windows of banks and stores such as Nike, McDonald's and Starbucks. Around noon, the 'united' march organised by the unions and NGOs left the stadium, walked in a circle far from the convention centre and came back to its starting point. Many rank-and-file participants in that march bypassed the marshals to join the 'kids' in the streets.²⁴

The situation was compared to the Japanese military attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, to highlight the extent to which the police had been taken off guard. A curfew was enforced by the National Guard to restore law and order, but that did not prevent riots in the residential neighbourhoods to which the crowd had been pushed. Neighbourhood residents joined the protesters in the streets, expressing their outrage about the clouds of tear gas. About 600 protesters were arrested but not even 5% were found guilty. The Seattle Chief of Police resigned. Several class action lawsuits were launched, which only proved successful several years later.²⁵

²³ C. Gabay, "What did the anarchists ever do for us? Anarchy, decentralization, and autonomy at the Seattle anti-WTO protests", in N. J. Jun and S. Wahl (Eds), *New Perspectives on Anarchism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 121.

²⁴ P. F. Gillham and G. T. Marx, "Complexity and irony in policing and protesting: the World Trade Organization in Seattle", *Social Justice*, 27:2 (2000), 212–236.

²⁵ L. Wood, "Reorganizing repression: policing protest, 1995–2012", in M. E. Beare, N. Des Rosiers, and A. C. Deshman (Eds), *Putting the State on Trial: The Policing of Protest During the G20 Summit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 56.

heat and light. A building facade becomes a message board to record brainstorm ideas for a better world. After N30, many people will never see a shop window or a hammer the same way again.³⁵

Despite this heated debate, anarchists and some alterglobalisation activists managed over time to work together to build solidarity. One of the giant fairies of the Tactical Frivolity collective, part of the Pink and Silver Bloc in Prague in 2000, dismissed the 'fluffy vs spiky' debate, wondering, 'what is violence anyway when the State is like killing people every day, man. And the people in the World Bank eat Third World babies for breakfast, so if they get bricked then hey, that's their fault'.³⁶

One way to defuse the tension was to identify several protest zones in the same city. The goal was to establish, as Amory Starr explained, a 'separation between permitted and non-permitted events by time and space to ensure safe space for internationals, high risk folks or others who want to be assured of avoiding police repression in any form'. The goal was also to foster a 'sense of unity between all aspects of the action whether permitted or non-permitted'.³⁷ Aware of the debate, the activists of the Montréal Convergence des luttes anticapitalistes (CLAC—Anti-Capitalist Convergence), a group founded by three anarchists to organise radical demonstrations against the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Québec City, coined the principle of 'respect for a diversity of tactics', in their 'basis of unity'.³⁸ They aimed to bring together

³⁵ https://depts.washington.edu/wtohist/Research/documents/black_bloc_communique.htm.

³⁶ K. Evans, "It's got to be silver and pink: On the road with Tactical Frivolity", Notes from nowhere, *We are everywhere* (London: Verso, 2003), 293.

³⁷ A. Starr, "... (Excepting barricades erected to prevent us from peacefully assembling': so-called 'violence' in the Global North alterglobalization movement", *Social Movement Studies*, 5:1 (2006), 67.

³⁸ For accounts of these events see C. Milstein, "Something did Start in Québec City: North America's Revolutionary Anticapitalist Movement," in E. Yuen, D.

(in reference to Molotov cocktails).³³ In the United Kingdom in the early 1990s, the debate was known as ‘fluffy vs spiky’. Yet, the underground magazine *POD* claimed that ‘[t]he whole Fluffy/Spiky debate was seen by most activists as a fuss about nothing’.³⁴ This never-ending debate attests to the sacralisation of the law and the fear of transgression even amongst the most radical dissenters, but also to their very high ethical standard: anarchists may debate for weeks about the ‘violence’ of a rock thrown at a window or of a wirecutter used to enter the site of a nuclear plant. Clearly, any head of state, liberals included, would not express similar ethical concerns about political ‘violence’.

The systematic demands by state and corporate journalists for alterglobalisation spokespeople and activists to distance themselves from these troublemakers resulted in a recurring debate within the alterglobalisation movement about whether to condemn these radicals and denounce their violent tactics. Struggling to explain and justify their deeds, some blackblockers chose to explicitly define what they understood as violent, and why they believe property destruction is legitimate. The activists of an affinity group of the Seattle Black Bloc known as the ACME Collective released the *N30 Black Bloc Communique*, in which they stated:

We contend that property destruction is not a violent activity unless it destroys lives or causes pain in the process [...] When we smash a window, we aim to destroy the thin veneer of legitimacy that surrounds private property rights [...] By ‘destroying’ private property, we convert its limited exchange value into an expanded use value [...] A dumpster becomes an obstruction to a phalanx of rioting cops and a source of

³³ G. Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), 91.

³⁴ G. McKay, *DiY Culture*, 15.

According to an observer:

The true heroes of the Battle in Seattle [were] the street warriors, the Ruckus Society, *the Anarchists*, Earth Firsters, the Direct Action Media Network (DAMN), radical labor militants such as the folks at Jobs With Justice, hundreds of Longshoremen, Steelworkers Electrical Workers and Teamsters who disgustingly abandoned the respectable, police sanctioned official AFL-CIO parade and joined the street warriors at the barricades in downtown.... The main march withdrew in respectable good order and dispersed peacefully to their hotels.... Fortunately the street warriors won.²⁶

For the anarchists and other alterglobalists, the Battle of Seattle has since been much mythologised. There are claims that the WTO negotiation process failed because of the protests (in fact, the protests simply forced the meeting to be postponed for a few hours; the negotiations failed because of internal disagreements). The coverage of the protests by state and corporate media was widely contemptuous, connecting anarchism to violence, riots, chaos and disorder, and associating anarchists with troublemakers and thugs. The media also wrongly stated that the police violence was a reaction to the Black Bloc’s action.²⁷ In fact, the media showered so much attention on the black-clad activists that anarchist websites such as Infoshop got flooded by visitors on the days following the protest (an increase of 300%). As two scholars explained, ‘[t]here is no question, however, that [the Black Bloc] has played a critical role in re-establishing the public visibility of the anarchist movement. This in turn helped anarchists to overcome the access prob-

²⁶ Emphasis mine. A. Cockburn, “So who did win in Seattle? Liberals rewrite history” [<http://www.ainfos.ca/99/dec/ainfos00350.html>].

²⁷ C. Gabay, ‘What did the anarchists ever do’, 123.

lems of the Web, allowing anarchists online to tap the potential of the medium to expose a wider audience to their views'.²⁸

In the following months and years, and despite intense police repression, anarchists protested the International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings in Washington (April 2000) and Prague (September 2000), the Summit of the Americas in Québec (April 2001), the European Union meeting in Gothenburg (June 2001) and the G8 Summit in Genoa (July 2001). Before each international summit, intelligence services and security forces as well as state and corporate media focused on the threat of the Black Bloc, labelling its participants 'violent anarchists' or 'anarchist criminals'. Thousands of police officers were mobilised, preventive arrests of 'ringleaders' were made, 'no protest zones' were fenced off to prevent demonstrations from coming too close to the global elite meetings.²⁹

According to some participating anarchists, those demonstrations or riots gave them the opportunity to publicly express their outrage against the system, to disrupt the media staging of the global elite, to draw attention to their messages, to show combative disobedience and resistance in face of the new world order, and to bring people to join them in the streets, or in their groups and organisations.³⁰ The PGA seized the opportunity presented by those international events to call for a Global Day of Action. While people were protesting in Seattle, for instance, demonstrations were also taking place in 14 other US cities, as well as in Manila, Paris and Seoul. In Mexico City, many activists were arrested and tor-

²⁸ L. Owens and L. K. Palmer, "Making the news: Anarchist counter-public relations on the World Wide Web", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 20:4 (2003), 355–356.

²⁹ L. A. Fernandez, *Policing Dissent: Social Control and the Anti-Globalization Movement* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

³⁰ K. Goaman, "The anarchist travelling circus: reflections on contemporary anarchism, anti-capitalism and the international scene", in J. Purkis and J. Bowen (Eds), *Changing Anarchism: Anarchist Theory and Practice in a Global Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 167–168.

tured by the police for protesting against the imprisonment of Seattle demonstrators.³¹

Some participants complained about 'summit hopping', arguing that such manifestations take too much time and energy, and often leave local groups to deal with the aftermath of a transnational mobilisation: criminalisation and repression, burnout and trauma and so on. And yet anarchists are still involved in the alterglobalisation movement almost two decades after Seattle, protesting the G20 summit in Toronto (2010) and the G20 summit in Hamburg (2017).

Violence vs Non-violence: The Never-Ending Debate

The idea of using so-called 'violence' as a protest tactic was at the core of the most heated debate about anarchist involvement in the alterglobalisation movement. This was nothing new. Barbara Epstein recalled a similar debate in the 1970s when the Clamshell Alliance organised a mass demonstration against the construction of a nuclear plant in Seabrook, about 40 miles from Boston. An anarchist affinity group named Hard Rain wanted to bring a wire-cutter to get through the fence to enter the site, but the proposal was opposed on the grounds that it was violent in and of itself, and would invite police repression at the protest.³² There were similar debates in the 1980s in West Berlin among the anticapitalist squatters of the Autonomen movement. These debates pitted hippies or 'Müslis' (in reference to the health cereal) against punks or 'Mollis'

³¹ G. Katsiaficas, "Seattle was not the beginning", in E. Yuen, G. Katsiaficas, and D. Burto-Rose (Eds), *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2001), 29.

³² B. Epstein, *Political Protest & Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 69–81.