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# The Anarchists

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into what it might mean to 'change the world without taking power' (Holloway 2005). I have offered a glimpse into one such exploration in the Philippines — a unique case, though very much in line with anarchistic resurgences everywhere.

porary anarchists aspire to communities resembling neither nations *nor* states.

None of this can be understood without reference to the recent past. The twentieth century saw one revolutionary movement after another (whether communist, nationalist, or a mix of both) seize the reins of the state, only for each ostensible victory to be revealed in the end as a failure — at least in certain respects, since the dictators who assumed power would disagree. Despite Fanon’s forewarnings — ‘[W]e must find something different... let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies which draw their inspiration from her’ (Fanon 1961, pp 251, 254) — the postcolonial regimes that came to power throughout Africa and Asia in the Sixties and Seventies became barely distinguishable in their tyranny from the departed colonial masters. A change of heads had occurred, but the institutional body of the state stayed intact.

Gandhi (1998, pp. 120–121) claims that Fanon’s writings ‘are almost prophetic in their predictions’ about what would happen should anticolonialists continue along the trail first blazed by imperialists, but seemingly forgets that Fanon would have had, as a reference point, the nineteenth-century independence movements in Latin America. In regressing into statism-as-usual once securing self-rule, a precedent was set. Before Fanon, too, was the Russian anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin, who, in 1872, led a breakaway faction from Karl Marx’s International Workingmen’s Association over the issue of the state. While Marx believed the state could serve liberatory ends, Bakunin (cited in Barclay 1982) maintained that Marx’s so-called ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ would be ‘nothing else but despotic rule over the toiling masses by a new, numerically-small aristocracy.’ This was the original Red-Black split, of which today’s trends are recapitulations. If there is now a twenty-first century sequel, it is because Bakunin and Fanon were proved right about state-centric revolutionary strategies, thereby prompting new explorations

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society. It is merely clearing the soil from weeds and sagebrush, that it may eventually bear healthy fruit.

For Peter Kropotkin (cited in Kinna 2005, p. 8), anarchism similarly promised, against the ‘artificial’ order of the state, ‘the blossoming of the most beautiful passions.’ Perhaps the recurring use of ecological metaphors by seminal anarchist thinkers is not simply poetic fancy, but a reflection of a generative, earthbound ontology shared by Black and Green alike.

## Conclusion

To conclude, I will revisit a point first made in the prologue to this chapter; namely, that the anarchists’ key contribution to today’s cosmopolitan radicalism is their resolutely anti-statist perspective. I argued that this is vital for the precise reason that any project aiming to free social relations from the nation-state cannot rely on a critique of nationalism alone, but must also take aim at the nation-state’s in-built statism. While some political actors aspire to nations not premised on the state,<sup>10</sup> and others to states not premised on a single nation,<sup>11</sup> contem-

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<sup>10</sup> Early German anarchist, Gustav Landauer, for instance, wanted each ethnos to govern itself horizontally, sans an overarching sovereign. As Landauer (cited in Gordon 2008, p. 27) himself phrased it, ‘I do not proceed in the slightest against the fine fact of the nation... but against the mixing up of the nation and the state.’ Isabelo de los Reyes of the Philippines was another nineteenth-century anarchist to espouse a peculiarly anti-statist nationalism. By and large, nationalist sympathies have since been dropped from anarchism, with contemporary anarchists like Richard Day (2005, p. 178) now given to celebrating emergent forms of community that, by way of what he calls ‘affinity-based relationships,’ embrace the different and the non-self-similar.

<sup>11</sup> President Evo Morales, for one, has re-christened his country the *Plurinational* State of Bolivia (see Gustafson 2009).

trends I was picking up on could not have been put more tersely than when the Gasera Collective (2010, p. 4) in Manila declared '*Green and Black as the new Red*' [italics mine].

Green and Black each demonstrate a favourable view of difference. No longer the limitation that past activists often deemed it to be, contemporary anarchists and bioregionalists tend to maintain that diversity (whether cultural, political, biological, or otherwise) is essential to the vitality and health of a given community, and that to deny it is to thwart life itself.

Furthermore, both anarchists and bioregionalists imagine a future in which large-scale social aggregates presided over by a sovereign — not least of all, the imagined community of the nation-state — are broken up into smaller, self-governed polities, each at once more democratic and ecologically-sound by virtue of being predicated on local specificities. It does not follow, however, that each locality must languish in isolation, since what most activists in the anarchist and bioregionalist camps seek is to replace the Westphalian ideal of a community of nation-states with a new kind of world community: 'a million villages,' as Bill Mollison (1988, p. ix) likes to put it. A horizontal network of villages, balancing local autonomy and translocal solidarity without contradiction, would arguably make redundant national and supranational sovereignty alike.

Bioregionalism's emphasis on decentralisation — that is, on democratic decision-making at the local level, particularly as concerns natural resources — is such that one author even asserts that it is, in fact, a form of anarchism (Eckersley 1992). Conversely, anarchism may itself be considered a form of environmentalism, as seems to be suggested by Goldman (1963, p. 50):

Anarchism, whose roots, as it were, are part of nature's forces, destroys, not healthful tissue, but parasitic growths that feed on the life's essence of

Anarchism's history 'has been that of a suppressed alternative... forced to subsist in the shadows of Marxism' (May 1994, p. 44). This was true up until the Crisis of the Left; that point at which communist movements found the tide turning against them. This then opened a space for a revivification of anarchist projects worldwide. As anarchist anthropologist David Graeber (2004b, p. 330) observed,

[a]narchist or anarchist-inspired movements are growing everywhere; anarchist principles — autonomy, voluntary association, self-organisation, mutual aid, direct democracy — have become the basis for organising within the [Alternative] Globalisation Movement and beyond, taking the place that Marxism had in the social movements of the Sixties.

Although writing from North America, Graeber's assertions are not inapplicable to the Philippines, where, in the Eighties and Nineties, many defectors from the Maoist insurgency found that their critiques of the CPP-NPA strongly resonated with anarchism. Since that time, a succession of young Filipino activists, wishing to keep their distance from Maoism's legacy, have likewise gravitated in an anarchist direction. Replied one Filipina anarcho-feminist under the sobriquet of 'Ingrata' (cited in Dapithapon 2013, p. 72), when asked in an interview about what anarchism meant to her personally:

There is no other socio-political theory that I know of that has given equal weight to the problems of class inequalities, racism, sexism, homophobia and every form of domination which enslaves humanity than anarchism. It is so vibrant that the cycle of practice, criticism, validation and innovation does not cease... Being an anarchist

is an ongoing struggle for a society where all deterrents to genuine human freedom and aspirations like hierarchies, authority, discrimination are eliminated. But the bonus is you get to live it now!

Referred to herein are four of contemporary anarchism's core features: its intersectionality; its opposition to all hierarchies; its commitment to open-ended process; and its alignment of means and ends, encapsulated in the notion of 'living it now.' As a way of acquainting the uninitiated with anarchism, beyond caricatures of bomb-throwing nihilists,<sup>1</sup> I will expand on each of these features in respective order.

Firstly, with respect to intersectionality, contemporary anarchism has mostly dispensed with the kind of Oppression Olympics practiced by the Maoists (whereby national and class-based oppressions are ranked as more pressing than sexism, homophobia, environmental destruction, and so on), as well as by the so-called 'class war' anarchists of old. From its roots in working-class struggles, anarchism has since expanded into 'a vast umbrella movement, importantly radicalized by feminists, ecologists, gays and lesbians' (Kinna 2005, p. 4). As a feminist, Ingrata would have found that the anarchist movement was generally more receptive to gender issues than the traditional Left, which may have been what first drew her in.

Second is anarchism's opposition to all forms of hierarchy. In fact, the very word 'anarchism' derives from the Greek for

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<sup>1</sup> It should be acknowledged that such caricatures are not without basis, since some anarchists did partake in bombings and assassinations (then known as 'propaganda of the deed') for a brief period in the 1890s and early 1900s. Graeber (2013, p. 191) claims, however, that anarchism was also 'the first modern political movement to (gradually) realize that, as a political strategy, terrorism, even when it is not directed at innocents, doesn't work.' As such, anarchists have overwhelmingly eschewed violent methods for the better part of a century now.

The [GFM] in political terms... might be called "semi-anarchist" in the sense that we share with the anarchists a basic distrust for centralized power... Much of the Left (communism and socialism), well, they talk of "democratic centralism," so in that sense they're very power-oriented, very center-oriented. They talk of "centralized planning." So we are very distrustful when you concentrate power in a few hands... We believe more in the diffusion of power, which probably makes us kind of anarchist... but we also, we can accept some kind of a hierarchy, but not too much.

From the other side of the Green-Black relationship, Leon expressed similarly amicable sentiments towards his environmentalist allies:

I believe the [GFM], in some way or another, I believe they're sympathetic to the anarchist movement... They don't have a problem with us, with the [MMAC]. They actually keep in contact with us, and they're very kind... unlike with our former leftist friends, when it comes to protest actions in the streets, when we started to march, all of us wearing black, they started to quell us down. They want to keep us separated from their group. Well, this is how we experienced it with our former friends in the Left. They're very hostile to us.

Listening back to the recording, I noticed that as Leon was speaking these words, Procul Harum's 'A whiter shade of pale' was playing over the café's stereo. What came through in the interview was a greener shade of black, which complemented the blacker shade of green brought to light by Pedro. The

the Japanese embassy. Local actions elsewhere ranged from festive to militant, their differences in no way compromising their translocal solidarity.

With the kind of translocal networks and nonsovereign globalities being enacted by anarchists in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, the world itself becomes something of an archipelago — or better yet, an *anarchipelago*. All the better to challenge the new nesology in our midst: the island-continent of supranational sovereignty.

### **Green-Black solidarity**

Having riffed on the radical implications of archipelagic confederalism, I will change tack now to highlight its affinities with bioregionalism, the vision of community outlined in the preceding chapter.

As a first indication of the commonalities, one Filipin@ anarchist group proclaimed: ‘As anarchists, we are radical ecologists... Human beings are just part of the infinitely diverse global ecosystem; we are not above it’ (Gasera Collective 2010, pp. 3). Here, the anarchist critique of social hierarchy is extended to the hierarchy of human beings over nature. At the time of my fieldwork, rumour had it that a clandestine band of eco-anarchists were carrying out a campaign of strategic property destruction in northern Luzon, sabotaging bulldozers and logging trucks in order to prevent the even greater destruction that would have been wreaked on the region’s rainforests and social fabric. As much as I was tempted to pursue this lead, I had already committed to Metropolitan Manila as a fieldsite. My exploration of the Green-Black relationship was, as a result, largely confined to coffee shop conversations, inquiring into environmentalists’ perceptions of anarchists, and vice versa.

With respect to the former, Pedro described his organisation’s stance as follows:

‘without rulers’ (Graeber 2004a, p. 3). From its beginnings as a movement opposed to the twin hierarchies of government over the governed, and capitalists over workers, it has since gone on to counter the hierarchies of humankind over nature, man over woman, straight over gay, and cis-gendered over transgendered, among others. While relevant to the previous point about intersectionality, what I wish to highlight here is the key cleavage between Marxists and anarchists over the question of power. The former, in their efforts to seize state power, have usually only sought to substitute ‘new and better hierarchies for old ones’ (May 1994, p. 51). Hence Marx’s (1875) now-infamous proposal for a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat,’ in which the desire to overthrow a tyrant equates with the desire to occupy the tyrant’s place. Anarchists, in contrast — in their opposition to state sovereignty, as well as to forms of authority that, like patriarchy, are diffused throughout society — aim at ‘getting rid of hierarchic thinking and action altogether’ (May 1994, p. 51).

The third feature to consider is the anarchist commitment to an ongoing process of experimentation and innovation, the counterpart to which is an opposition to linear, teleological time. Clearly parting ways with Marxist teleology, the seminal anarchist agitator, Emma Goldman (1969, p. 63), emphasised as much when writing:

Anarchism is not, as some may suppose, a theory of the future to be realized through divine inspiration. It is a living force in the affairs of our life, constantly creating new conditions. The methods of anarchism therefore do not comprise an iron-clad program to be carried out under all circumstances. Methods must grow out of the economic needs of each place and clime, and of the intellectual and temperamental requirements of the individual... Anarchism does not stand for military

drill and uniformity; it does, however, stand for the spirit of revolt, in whatever form, against everything that hinders human growth.

This leads on to the final feature of contemporary anarchism to be discussed for now: the emphasis it places on aligning means with ends. This can be understood against the Marxist habit of putting hierarchical means at the service of anti-hierarchical ends. The building of a new society, so the argument goes, must wait until *after* the revolution; what is important for now is to resist the present order. To the idea of *negating in order to create*, anarchists pose the inverse alternative of *creating in order to negate*. Traditionally, this was termed 'building the new within the shell of the old' (Barclay 1982, p. 143), but is known today by the succinct phrase of 'prefigurative politics' (Gordon 2008, pp. 34–38). '[O]ne cannot create freedom through authoritarian means,' explains Graeber (2004a, p. 7); 'as much as possible, one must oneself, in one's relations with one's friends and allies, embody the society one wishes to create.' By 'living it now,' as Ingrata put it — or, by 'acting as if one is already free' (Graeber 2009, p. 203) — one subverts the old while simultaneously prefiguring the new. In practice, this translates into radically-democratic organising practices and a profusion of counter-institutions.

In contrast to the traditional Left, in which the institution of the political party predominates, I encountered in Manila's anarchist milieu an array of countercultural forms: anarcho-punk collectives, eco-anarchist collectives, a local chapter of 'Food Not Bombs' (see McHenry et al. 2014), alternative media collectives, self-publishing initiatives, diverse artistic projects, a grassroots think-tank, a cooperative bookstore, and a community library (or 'infoshop' in anarchist parlance). All aspire to 'cementing people's self reliance and developing grassroots networks... based on horizontal, non- hierarchical

The idea for the network first emerged at *Transmission Asia-Pacific*, described on its website as a '5-day camp for web developers and video activists about developing online video distribution for social justice, the environment and media democracy' (Transmission 2008, p. 1). The camp took place in the highlands of West Java in May 2008, with local Indonesian activists joined by delegations from the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, India, Australia, and elsewhere.

Among the participants was Leon, who informed me that following a presentation by Japanese activists organising against the Toyako summit, the campers collectively resolved to expand their scope beyond online video distribution to also mount coordinated anti-G8 demonstrations across the region. That the project took on a translocal flavour was owing, not solely to the participants' anarchist sensibilities, but also to their modest financial means: 'Because most of the Southeast Asian nations are poor, we cannot go to Japan to protest,' explained Leon, 'so what happened is we decided to just have our own local actions in our respective localities during the actual G8 summit.'

No prescriptions were issued; the idea was rather that each local group would decide for itself what its own particular action would look like. At the time of my fieldwork, the Manila event was still at the brainstorming stage: 'We're thinking of throwing a party as a way of protesting, rather than the grim-and-determined form of protest with just all these angry people; we're thinking of music, to just clog the whole traffic system with people dancing,' mused Leon. What ended up happening, though, was quite the opposite: a *silent* vigil outside

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Alternative Globalisation Movement, it has been targeted by activists as one manifestation of the supranational power structure underpinning and promoting global capitalism. Since the Crash of 2008, the G8 has been trumped in importance by the G20, which, in addition to G8 members, includes major developing world players such as Brazil, China, and India.



the land of our ancestors who brought down the Khmer empire, the Majapahit, and the maritime empire of the Sri-vijaya... The journal at the moment is just an idea... [H]opefully, with the help of our comrades in Indonesia who already have experience in producing local anti-authoritarian publications like *Apokalips* and *Jurnal Kontinum*, we could actualize the remaking of *balangay* and sail it again into the vast oceans of Malacca, Celebes Sea, South China Sea, Pacific Ocean, and to the corners of Indian Ocean and beyond.

The proposed journal has yet to eventuate, but the proposal itself nonetheless serves as a valuable text in its own right. What interests me is not the historical factuality or otherwise of Pairez's claims, but the way he weaves the raw material of history into a subversive, future-oriented narrative. Although encouraged by the pre-colonial past, his aim is not to retrieve a lost golden age, so much as to re-remember history in ways productive of alternative futures. As Ella Shohat (cited in Hall 1995, p. 251) maintains, the recuperation of the past need not equate with essentialist romanticism in all cases; sometimes, what is restored is multiplicity, not a 'static fetishized phase to be literally reproduced.' In Pairez's (2012) case — as well as in Umali's (2006) — pre-colonial cosmopolitanism is recalled only so as to enrich the radical possibilities of present-day cosmopolitanism. This helps to rob prevailing power arrangements of their air of inevitability, and renew confidence that things could again be otherwise.

A concrete example of anarchist translocalism is offered by the *ad hoc*, Asia-Pacific-wide network that formed in opposition to the G8<sup>9</sup> summit held in Toyako, Japan in July 2008.

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<sup>9</sup> The G8 or 'Group of Eight' is a forum for cooperation between eight of the world's largest economies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the US, and the European Union. Since the advent of the

co-operation with no need for any government, political parties, NGOs, [or] businesses (Anonymous 2013, pp. 3–4).

With the stage now set, I will, in the next part of this chapter, trace the ecotone between Red and Black; the transition in Philippine radical politics, that is, from revolutionary nationalism to anarchism. In so doing, I will rely more on oral history interviews than on written texts, since much of what follows is hitherto unwritten history. I then turn, in the second part, to the notion of the 'archipelagic confederation' (Umali 2006) — a *community-of-communities* that a section of Filipin@ anarchists is proposing in place of the Philippine nation-state. While contemporary feminists and environmentalists meld their critiques of nationalism with their critiques of androcentrism and anthropocentrism respectively, the contribution that anarchists make to the new cosmopolitan zeitgeist is to throw into the mix their uncompromising anti-statism. This is crucial for the very reason that, if one is to re-imagine community beyond the nation-state, one must take issue with both the nationalism and the statism inherent in that conjunction.

## Red to Black

Making contact with the anarchists in Manila was not as straightforward for me as it was with the environmentalists. Meeting the latter had been made a breeze by the FAEJI solidarity tour, but getting in with the anarchists took some groundwork. My first port of call was the now-defunct Manila Indymedia website — part of a global network of 'independent media centres' first sparked out of the Battle of Seattle in 1999, each functioning as an open publishing platform for the sharing of news, views, events, photos, and so on. While in the first seven years of its life, the Indymedia network served as a crucial tool for activists worldwide, it has since been eclipsed

by the rise of social networking platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

At the time of my fieldwork in Manila, however, Indymedia was still very much in use by local activists. I regularly trawled the newswire for local happenings, taking particular interest in the stories and reports posted by anarchist groups. I posted comments in response, introducing myself and my research and inquiring whether or not it would be possible to meet. I was ignored for several months, but did not take it personally. Security was (and remains) a real concern for Filipin@ activists, given the prevalence of political violence in the country. Eventually convinced of the sincerity of my intentions, Leon — the young Waraynon anarchist introduced in Chapter 7 — got in touch with me out of the blue to suggest a meeting at UP Diliman.

When the day arrived, Leon showed up over an hour late, bespectacled and short of breath after having ridden to campus on his bicycle. My impression was of a perceptive and good-humoured character, and what I imagined would be a short chat over lunch morphed into a lively, drawn-out drinking session that lasted until well past nightfall. Our setting was a grungy student bar named Sarah's, located in Krus na Ligas — a well-established squatter community across the road from the university. Against the din of the rain and traffic, our meandering conversation covered ample ground: the state of the Philippine Left, recent intellectual movements in the Philippines, anarchistic cultures in the archipelago prior to the Spanish invasion, anarchist theory, French poststructuralism, the Alternative Globalisation Movement, Leon's time as a migrant worker in Japan, my time as a migrant rights organiser in Australia, and so forth.

region. The Sulu Sultanate, for instance — at its peak in the late eighteenth century — brought parts of the Philippine and Indonesian archipelagos into a single regional polity centred on the Sulu Sea (Warren 1981). Philippine peoples also maintained trading ties with maritime communities in China and Indochina. Leon, being well aware of this history, commented in an interview:

It's really interesting because before Spanish colonization came to the Philippines' shores, there was no Philippines, but... there was already civilization going on. There was already a kind of globalized network at that time between different cultures... various regions in the Southeast Asian Rim.

Acknowledging that the Philippines has long been a 'cross-roads of cultural traffic' (Hogan 2006, p. 129) is one way of repudiating the perceived naturalness of the Philippine national community. Aside from the long-distance dealings of rulers and merchants, however, the seas were also plied by rebels and subversives. It was this aspect of maritime history that Filipino anarchist Jong Pairez (2012, pp. 1, 3) drew inspiration from in his proposal for an online journal of Asian anarchism:

Polynesia and Madagascar, regardless of its opposite-end locations on the map, culturally share its language and habits with people from Southeast Asia; it's the ocean that... provided the link... Metaphorically, I describe the journal as a *balangay* or pre-historic wooden boat of maritime Southeast Asia that transported subversive ideals... ceaselessly escaping the claws of governments, state and authority... By communicating our local struggles, I believe a contemporary grassroots brand of anarchism will emerge from

[A]narchist forms of organization would not look anything like a state... [T]hey would involve an endless variety of communities, associations, networks, projects, on every conceivable scale, over-lapping and intersecting... Some would be quite local, others global... [S]ince anarchists are not actually trying to seize power within any national territory, the process of one system replacing the other will not take the form of some sudden revolutionary cataclysm... but will necessarily be gradual, the creation of alternative forms of organization on a world scale, new forms of communication, new, less alienated ways of organizing life, which will, eventually, make currently-existing forms of power seem stupid and beside the point.

Anarchists in the Philippines, as much as those in the US with whom Graeber is most familiar, are challenging the notion that communities or societies should look like nation-states — ‘one people, speaking a common language, living within a bounded territory, acknowledging a common set of legal principles’ (Graeber 2004a, pp. 40–41) — and asserting the possibility of other, less confining forms of collectivity.

On top of translocalisms internal to nation-states are those that traverse national borders. ‘Transnational connections are important for anarchism,’ writes Kuhn (2010, p. 13); ‘After all, a key notion of anarchism is its opposition to the nation-state. Solidarity across borders and the desire to eventually eradicate these borders are inherent in the anarchist idea.’

Umali’s (2006) insights centred on maritime flows within the Philippine Archipelago, but history is also replete with flows linking the archipelago to its outside. James Warren (1981; 2002), for one, has consistently highlighted the historical interlinkages cutting across the broader Southeast Asian

I also learnt of Leon’s diverse involvements in alternative media, including in zine<sup>2</sup> and documentary film-making collectives, pirate radio, and the aforementioned Manila Indymedia. To my surprise, I found out that Perth Indymedia activists back home had played a pivotal role in helping their Manila counterparts get their own site off the ground in the early 2000s, providing them with technical support, server space, and the like, until they had sufficient resources and know-how to run it themselves. Not only was it a happy coincidence for me, given my Perth-Manila connections, but also a salient example of the kind of translocal collaboration I have been discussing in this thesis. International networking aside, Manila Indymedia also made sure to network locally, becoming, upon its formation, one of a couple of dozen member collectives of the Metro Manila Anarchist Confederation\* (MMAC).

Leon’s political activism was not always as colourful. In a past life, he was a militant with the Young Socialist League\* (YSL), which he was recruited to in the late Nineties during a campaign against fee hikes at his *alma mater*. Now inexistent, the YSL was the youth and students wing of the Alliance for Workers’ Solidarity\* (AWS) — an RJ, and more specifically, Trotskyist, organisation formed out of the great schism of the early Nineties. Even though the RA-RJ split had taken place before his time, the antagonisms of the older political generation still defined the environment in which he operated. He was taught to scorn the RAs for their authoritarianism, but grew tired of the authoritarianism within his own organisation as well. For this reason, he began gravitating in an anarchist direction, gradually dropping his YSL commitments in the early 2000s before making a decisive switch to the MMAC. As Leon recounted:

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<sup>2</sup> Zines (their name abbreviated from ‘magazine’) are self-published booklets reproduced via photocopier in a do-it-yourself (DIY), and often anti-capitalist, spirit. Their place in alternative culture was set in train by the anarcho-punk scene of the 1970s (Duncombe 1997).

If we wanted to organize our own local struggles at that time, they would always say, “Oh, coordinate it with the national committee of the student sector.” We always had to ask permission; that’s how it works. So yeah, eventually I got pissed off with this kind of authoritarian tradition, and I saw a different mode of expressing politics in the [Metro Manila Anarchist Confederation]... They’re very dynamic; they don’t need to have a party.

Leon’s turn from Marxism to anarchism also involved an embrace of the national attitudes to which contemporary anarchism is predisposed. He even declared in one of our interviews that ‘there is no such thing as “The Philippines,”’ or at least no primordial national community that pre-existed its forcible creation under the Spanish.

This is only the fast-forwarded version of the Red-Black transition in Philippine radical politics. To give a fuller account, I will rewind to the political tensions of the Eighties and early Nineties, and play it through again at regular speed.

### **The older generation**

As already recounted, the dissolution of the CPP in 1993 precipitated a flowering of feminism, environmentalism, and anarchism in the Philippines, all of which had been held in check by the Maoists’ hegemony over the Left. Every innovation at this time was informed, in part, by diagnoses of what went wrong with the Party. The RJs who found solace in non-Maoist forms of Marxism pinned the blame on Mao’s and Sison’s distortions of the supposed essence of the Marxist project (MRRC 1993; Nemenzo 1994). Meanwhile, born-again Social Democrats affirmed the ‘parliamentary road’ (Ciria-Cruz 1992) against what they saw as the excesses of revolutionary violence. Both tendencies, however, remained

at the local level, converging in popular assemblies that would be horizontally-networked to other such assemblies elsewhere. From Umali’s perspective, when local communities are able to manage their own affairs, as well as coordinate between themselves translocally, the need for an overarching sovereign becomes superfluous.

Without wishing to deny its novelty, Umali’s re-imagining of social space along archipelagic lines did not take place in a vacuum, since translocalist tendencies have been present in anarchism more or less from the beginning. The pioneering anarchists, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin, for example,

stressed the idea of federalism, designed to facilitate relations between increasingly larger and more widespread groups of people. The initial building blocks of the federalist plan are the local, “face to face” groups, either neighbours or persons with common occupational interests – in any case they have a common mutual interest in working with each other for one or more ends... In order to facilitate these ends they “federate” with other similar groups to form a regional federation and in turn regional federations join with others to form yet a broader federation. In each case the power invested in the organised group decreases as one ascends the different levels (Barclay 1982, p. 16).<sup>8</sup>

322 That a similarly translocalist imaginary persists in contemporary anarchism is discernible in the following passage from Graeber (2004a, p. 40):

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<sup>8</sup> In the liberal-democratic tradition, by contrast, power *increases* as one ascends.

in ways they see fit — hence the archipelagic confederation. Community for contemporary anarchists is not a homophilic unity, but a xenophilic multiplicity.

## Translocalism

Accompanying the rise of xenophilic values in Philippine anarchism is a translocalist spatial imaginary, which the trope of the archipelago likewise embodies. Anarchist translocalisms function in resistance, not solely to the insularity of the nation, but also to the hierarchy of the state. As raised earlier, contemporary anarchism's contribution is to combine cosmopolitan critiques of nationalism with anarchist critiques of statism, thereby addressing both halves of the nation-state form.

'The hierarchical nature of the state,' said Umali (2006, p. 6) 'inevitably creates a bureaucracy that concentrates governance and decision-making in a few representatives, akin to the institutional arrangement of the red bureaucracy.' The CPP, to which Umali was referring, is infamously hierarchical, as became clear to me when, atop an archival copy of one of Sison's (writing as Liwanag 1992b, p. 1) papers, I noticed the following edict: 'This is an internal party document. No Party cadre receiving a copy can reproduce it without authorization from a higher organ.' I took it as a small, though nonetheless indicative, instance of the kind of centralism being increasingly shunned by the younger generation.

Against the CPP's legacy, Umali (2006, p. 8) calls for a renewed radical politics that would allow for 'active, creative, imaginative and dynamic participation.' In the archipelagic confederation, collectives of 'peasants, fishers, women, youth, indigenous people, vendors, tricycle drivers, jeepney<sup>7</sup> drivers, homeless, gays, neighborhood associations, religious groups and other formations' (Umali 2006, p. 8) would self-organise

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<sup>7</sup> A form of public transport unique to the Philippines, originally made from decommissioned US army jeeps.

invested in the nation-state paradigm. My contention is that those who effected a more fundamental break were not those who quarrelled over the correctness of one Marxist theorist or another, or who argued for a reformist rather than revolutionary approach, but those who called into question the very logic of sovereignty within which all were complicit.

The journal *Kasarinlan* was the forum for many of these debates, both in the lead-up to and in the wake of the CPP's collapse. It was within its pages that an article entitled 'Re-imagining Philippine revolution' (Serrano 1994) appeared, perturbing many at the time. Its author, Isagani Serrano, was very much in the minority amongst his fellow CPP defectors for his divergent, anti-statist perspective. He critiqued his former party for being 'statist through and through,' challenging, in particular, its tendency 'to reduce revolution to the capture of state power' (Serrano 1994, pp. 80–81). When an RJ acquaintance commented to me quite seriously one evening, 'I just hope I'll still be alive on the day of the victory,' he was referring to revolution in this same sense — a cataclysmic seizure of power so as to bring about an ideal society from the top down. In contrast, Serrano (1994, p. 81) stressed the need for a social, rather than merely political, revolution. Where the 'political revolution' effects a simple change of management within the state apparatus, the 'social revolution' erodes the state by 'dispersing power across the social spectrum' (Serrano 1994, p. 81). Elsewhere, he explained that a 'community can come to power without actually taking power. Slowly you pulverize centralized power by breaking it up and taking control' (Serrano cited in Broad & Cavanagh 1993, p. 149).

Serrano re-imagined revolution as a process rather than an event; more an *undercutting* than an overthrowing. This is the precise approach taken by present-day anarchists in their building of counter-institutions and their efforts to cooperativise all that capitalists would wish privatised and that statists would wish nationalised. Said Leon, for one, 'I consider revolution

as an everyday struggle — the revolution of everyday life.’ Although Serrano never professed an affinity for anarchism, his anarchistic intuitions were palpable.

Serrano was in fact advocating for Popular Democracy, as distinct from the National Democracy of the Maoists. From this perspective, the true locus of democracy lies, not in the state, but in civil society (Serrano 1994, p. 75). The ‘Pop Dems’ (as adherents of this approach were known) began coalescing in the wake of the People Power Revolution of 1986, when widespread disillusionment with the CPP-NPA first set in. A tension soon emerged, however, between those Pop Dems who still saw a role for the state, even if a very minimal one, and those who wanted to do away with it altogether. While the former current has since been absorbed into electoral formations, the latter persists in community empowerment initiatives, whether driven by NGOs, POs, or explicitly anarchist outfits (Törnquist 2002, pp. 48–55).

One NGO inspired by the anti-statist strain of Popular Democracy is the Philippine Institute for Popular Education\* (PIPE), active throughout the country but based in Manila. Through the FAEJI solidarity tour, I was able to meet one PIPE educator, formerly an NPA guerrilla, whom I shall call Edwin. In a fascinating talk, Edwin reflected on how he and his NPA comrades did little to empower the people in whose interests they were supposedly operating. On the contrary, they actively contributed to their disempowerment by positioning themselves as leaders and the masses as mere followers. On this topic, it would be worth citing Edwin at considerable length:

When I was with the Maoist movement... I realized most people would come to me as the fountainhead of knowledge in the *barangay*, because I represent the revolution. So if a couple has a domestic spat, they come to me to settle this problem — and

free society.’ This can be contrasted with the intolerance of divergence often present in traditional leftist institutions. As Graeber (2004b, p. 329) observes, Marxist and revolutionary nationalist parties tend to ‘organise around some master theoretician, who offers a comprehensive analysis of the world situation and, often, of human history as a whole. From this one official truth, an official path of action is prescribed. Anarchist groups, on the other hand, accept

the need for a diversity of high theoretical perspectives, united only by certain shared commitments and understandings... [E]veryone agrees from the start on certain broad principles of unity and purposes for being in the group; but beyond that they also accept as a matter of course that no one is ever going to convert another person completely to their point of view, and probably shouldn’t try; and that therefore discussion should focus on concrete questions of action, and coming up with a plan that everyone can live with and no one feels is a fundamental violation of their principles... Just because theories are incommensurable in certain respects does not mean they cannot [co-]exist or even reinforce each other, any more than the fact that individuals have unique and incommensurable views of the world means they cannot become friends, or lovers, or work on common projects (Graeber 2004a, pp. 8–9).

The anarchists’ valorisation of difference extends to the rainbow alliances that they frequently involve themselves in, as well as to the future society they wish to create. Generally speaking, their goal is not to convert the masses of non-believers to anarchism as a prerequisite for a better society, but only to encourage communities to self-organise

moving from one place to another, most especially to a place where the culture is totally different from yours, and how you are able to adapt and learn from this, and create something new out of it... We were raised to embrace nationalism, but I was able to broaden my mind and then accept cultures other than mine, or beyond my own identity, and it made me something else. I became different... I don't think very exclusively now; I think inclusively... Some anarchist groups in the Philippines, they would say "I'm against nationalism" and all that, but actually, they still have this nationalist attitude... You can get very exclusive, you know? And you actually dispel other individuals and people who would have a possible interaction with you... I was able to hook up with other cultures, like Sri Lankan and Brazilian communities in Japan, so the idea of nationalism just suddenly dissolved, you know, talking with other cultures, with other people... You forget the idea of being a Filipino; you feel like you have this "multi-belongingness" [laughs].

What stands out here is that Leon speaks, not merely of interacting across difference, but of interactions that themselves *give rise to difference*. In loving the Other, we become something other than what we were. To love, therefore, is to become. 319 Beyond the embrace of ethnic and cultural diversity, an expanded xenophilia would be equally as receptive to different genders, sexualities, bodily abilities, and even political viewpoints. It is pertinent to raise this in relation to anarchism, since, as Gordon (2008, p. 5) writes, 'diversity is by itself today a core anarchist value, making the movement's goals very open-ended. Diversity leaves little place for notions of revolutionary closure or for detailed blueprints and designs for a

I was twenty-three years old and single! Given that particular context I was in, I would say... "All these problems between husbands and wives are the problems of colonialism and imperialism," because I had nothing else to say... [Another] part of our work at the time was going to the small landlord in each town... and asking them to lower the interest rate of the loans that the farmers made, or increasing the farmers' share of the harvest... Because we were armed, because we were guerrillas, the landlords would be shaking in fear, because in the rural areas, they wouldn't have any recourse to military intervention. We were in power in the area... "Can you increase the peasants' share of the crop?" and he would say, "sure, sure." He'd be really shaking with fear. And then one of the guys who was in a key position in the movement at the time wondered about something very crucial. He said "We are not doing revolutionary work with the peasants... We are doing something for them, but they are not doing it for themselves... Do we call this revolutionary work? Why don't we try asking them to do it?... to talk to the landlord about changing the sharing patterns?" If only the guerrillas do it, things can change, but if the people do it, you get different results... Left groups would talk about empowering people. I keep wondering how that empowerment happens, or if it's really happening... Sometime in the late Eighties, I became an NGO worker. That whole thing I experienced in the NPA was foremost in my mind whenever I'd do NGO work... I was always asking myself... "Is it perpetuating dependence?" It's entirely possible that some sort of dependency has shifted from one entity to you, as an NGO worker.

At this point, Edwin offered a word of caution for us, as young diasporans getting involved in Philippine affairs:

I noticed many Fil-Americans who come over... would naturally say, “in the States, things don’t happen that way. Why don’t you do it this way?” And that usually produces two kinds of reactions: One is resentment, right? But the majority reaction is “Oh yeah, he’s right. Why don’t we do it his way?... Things are better there. They do things better in the States. Ah, I wish we could do that here.” So what I’m saying is when people have recommendations for how things should get done — and I’m sure a lot of goodwill is inherent in the recommendations — one has to be conscious of how it impacts on people’s consciousness, given the context of dependence... What does [FAEJI] bring into the community?... Projects and programs and material things? That’s all good, but try to do something else too — a notion of dialogue, so that you don’t tell people what to do, but actually try to listen.

Edwin then related this to his own work as a popular educator with PIPE:

It’s a good thing to present an alternative to the current state of affairs, but it’s also a good thing to help people articulate their discourse on a particular issue. And then we might help people retell the story... Discourses are not static... People would say: “Ah, mayor so-and-so is a good person... He may be stealing from the coffers, but he sends my kids to college.” But if there’s less corruption, it might be possible they could send more

You’re not just you — me as a Waraynon, for example — but you can also be something else, somebody else, when you have this interaction with other people, other cultures, and other backgrounds. And from here, evolution is very much present. You evolve, you learn. The intellectual capacity of these cultures... [becomes] healthier, because of this idea of diversity... The people are diverse, the cultures are diverse, and I guess if people from below would organize their own communities, from there, they could organize a kind of confederation’

‘So we can build solidarity without necessarily being “one” or homogenous?’ I asked.

‘Yes, exactly. It’s not necessary actually... If you talk with others who have a different background than yours, it doesn’t mean they should be the same as you.’

Having repeatedly heard such sentiments expressed to me in the field, I found I lacked a word that could adequately encapsulate them. That was before I hit upon ‘xenophilia,’ which seemed an ideal fit. In the excerpt above, Leon was advocating for *intra-xenophilia* in particular; that is, for an embrace of the Philippines’ cultural and ethnic diversity, which homophilic notions of Filipin@ness usually paper over.

What, though, of *inter-xenophilia*?; of forms of collectivity inclusive of Filipin@s and non-Filipin@s alike? Not until Leon spent four years in Japan as a migrant worker did he learn of this second sense of togetherness-in-difference. It should firstly be noted, though, that his departure from the Philippines was not an entirely voluntary one. Shaken by the assassination of one of his comrades just a hundred metres away from where he was standing, he felt it would be best to lay low for a while overseas. His trauma notwithstanding, he discovered in Japan a ‘solidarity of multitudes that transcends nationality’ (Gonzaga 2009, p. 11):

It was really kind of a paradigm-shift actually...  
I felt the real experience of being a migrant...



Crucially, the same sea by which languages and cultures disseminate also acts as a medium for cross-fertilisation across difference. The embrace of difference — in a word, xenophilia — figures at the heart of archipelagic confederalism. In contrast to the nationalist imperative of subordinating diverse communities to a homophilic unity, the archipelagic confederation would ‘accommodate highly diverse interests, views, conceptions and identities in a horizontal manner,’ both within and between localities (Gasera Collective 2010, p. 3). Given that, according to Umali (2006, pp. 7–8), revolutionary nationalist formations are incapable of attending to the diversity of peoples and places in the Philippine Archipelago, the solution is for each local community to govern itself, connected to others in horizontal fashion but free from an overarching sovereign.

Leon explained it as follows: ‘The progressive movement in the Philippines... is very much preoccupied with the idea of national liberation. And, for me, I think this is fascism in the making, because they’re building a nation and a state which is nothing but a replication, a mirroring of what the imperialists did to them. They’re actually proto-fascists because they want the idea of nationalism injected into the people, the archipelagic formation of the Philippines... They want to inject the idea of one whole something, which basically, for me is — well, it’s kind of irrelevant because, I mean, we have forty languages, we have different cultures, diverse from one another. And if you impose nationalism in these very diverse communities, you would kill the diversity and, worse, you would create some kind of regional conflict or ethnic conflict...’

‘If we consider the idea of power from below, organizing without leaders, this is very much practical in the Philippines because we’re very diverse. So the question of national identity is not that important anymore. What’s important is how you would enable solidarity with other cultural groups, with other ethnicities, with other people, which I think goes way beyond national identity. You become multiple in a sense, you know?’

kids to college. If we could help people find such fissures and cracks in their discourses, then I think that’s a good thing we can do for people... Our community programs in [PIPE] are basically of an education type, but aside from the usual notion of education, what we do is try to help people articulate such discourses so that they themselves could re-tell their discourses in a new way — hopefully. And this is basically cultural work... cultural-political work. Identifying strong points in their culture and helping them to find the cracks, so that when they try to fill them in, the whole discourse changes towards something more progressive.

Intrigued, I asked Edwin during question time about how he arrived at his ideas. Were they solely a product of his experiences, or were there certain theorists that influenced him as well?

In 1986, we were still good Maoists, loyal Maoists at that time... but we were already reading [Paulo] Freire. And the senior cadres were discrediting us for reading Freire... I think after three years, they got tired of us... They simply severed us and that was the end. After that, some of us started discovering [György] Lukács and [Antonio] Gramsci... [and the] postmodernist writers. And then the senior cadres were branding us as anarchist, but we didn’t even know what anarchism was... So we started reading up on anarchy and anarchism and realised: “Yeah, we’re anarchists! They’re right!”

Anarchism was fitting, given Edwin’s already-cogent critiques of hierarchical power relations. His intuitions were echoed by Roberto Garcia (2001, p. 94), another former NPA soldier who developed anarchistic leanings:

The [National Democratic] revolution thrives in its critique of iniquity and the hierarchical distribution of wealth, power, and decision-making in society. But the movement itself is patently hierarchical. The whole party structure is vertically organized and all major decisions are done at the top.

From the *de facto* or accidental anarchism of former Maoists, I will turn next to the adoption of anarchism proper amongst the younger generation.

### The younger generation

Owing to the enmities of the older generation, and the fluctuating realignments resulting therefrom, the Nineties were a bewildering time to be young and radical in the Philippines. 'The political Left at that time had these factions,' recalled Leon. 'Every year, there's like splits going on... Because of this, we got frustrated with how the authoritarian leftist tradition was affecting us.' No sooner did Leon find his place in the YSL, a group formed out of the RA-RJ splits, than it was torn apart by a split of its own, with a quarter of its members bolting *en masse*. The dissidents' point of contention was that the YSL's parent organisation, the AWS, should transform itself into a fully-fledged, Bolshevik-style party; one that would aim at the kind of hegemony over the Left that the CPP enjoyed in the Seventies and early Eighties. The loyalists, meanwhile, felt that the group should remain a 'pre-party formation,' and that, as Leon narrated it, a new party 'should not be formed until we reconsolidate our forces.' Those who defected did eventually establish a new revolutionary party, the *Partido para sa Rebolusyong Sosyalista*<sup>3</sup> (PRS), only to see it disappear just a few years later.

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<sup>3</sup> This translates as: 'Party for Socialist Revolution.'

along archipelagic rather than nesological lines was a key manoeuvre:

Myriad historical accounts indicate that the bodies of water surrounding different islands connected rather than separated them from each other, and that economic, social and political activities of the inhabitants were developed due to the interconnectedness of their immediate environment... [T]he rich natural endowments of the archipelago allow diverse cultures to flourish and develop in heterogeneous ways, yet [remain] connected by mutual cooperation.

Of note is that the sea is not seen as a barrier, but as a connective tissue crossed by perpetual flows. Just as Hau'ofa (2008, p. 31) wrote with respect to the South Pacific, Umali (2006) regards the Philippine Archipelago less as a collection of isolated patches of land than an interconnected 'sea of islands,' each inseparable from the fluid relationships between them. For Benítez-Rojo (1996, p. 2) too, the Caribbean is composed, not of stable islands, but of 'unstable condensations, turbulences, whirlpools, clumps of bubbles, frayed seaweed, sunken galleons, crashing breakers, flying fish, seagull squawks, downpours, nighttime phosphorescences, eddies and pools, uncertain voyages' (Benítez-Rojo 1996, pp. 2).

In each of these cases, attention shifts from hermetic island space towards the *relational* space of the sea. This is apt considering that ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines do not map with particular islands, but with particular maritime regions. For example, the Cebuan@ language is endemic, not just to the island of Cebu, but also to the eastern portion of Negros and the western portion of Leyte, both of which face Cebu. Likewise, Waray-Waray is spoken on the island of Samar as well as in eastern Leyte which faces Samar. Indeed, *no culture is an island*.

state nor conformed to any monolithic, archipelago-wide identity. Only with colonialism were diverse communities forcibly integrated under a single apparatus of rule (Dagami 2010, pp. 20–21; Gasera Collective 2010, p. 1). The invention of a homophobic national identity went hand-in-hand with this process. Although political power has shifted over the years from Spain to the United States to the Philippine elite, nationalist and statist logics have remained constant throughout — not only on the part of rulers, but also on the part of those, like the CPP-NPA, seeking to take their place.

Umali (2006) concedes the importance of nationalism in the Philippine Revolution of the 1890s, but maintains that to subscribe to nationalism today is to do violence to alterity and perpetuate the colonial mindset, even in spite of anticolonial intentions. A similar sentiment comes through in a poem entitled ‘Naming archipelagos,’ in which Catherine Candano (2007, p. 9) laments the lingering impact of colonialism on the cultural diversity of the Philippines. With the Spanish invasion came the ‘erosion of the countless names for surface soils... each granule sinking into sea-bed, and then reborn, thrust forth — *eto* [this], an island itself...’ The archipelago, in effect, was reduced to a single island. What was and remains a multiplicity became discursively naturalised as a unitary community, with one people and one history. For RJ scholar, Marie Guillermo (2000), the search for a ‘national bond among diverse communities’ is still ongoing.

Recently, postcolonial theorist Antonis Balasopoulos (2008, p. 9) coined the term ‘nesology’ to refer to the ‘discursive production of insularity’ — its prefix deriving from *nesos*, the Ancient Greek for ‘island.’ The ‘bounded morphological schema of the island’ (Balasopoulos 2008, p. 13) becomes the analogue and archetype for the range of entities customarily seen as discrete and self-contained: the individual, the academic discipline, and the nation-state amongst them. Breaking from such anachronisms, Umali’s (2006, p. 2) recasting of the Philippines

While some in this milieu let their disillusionment get the better of them, others grew eager for an alternative outside the political culture in which they had been raised. A handful of them found just such an alternative in anarchism, becoming key players in the formation of the MMAC at the turn of the millennium.

According to Leon, the rationale behind the MMAC’s founding was as follows: ‘Why not just build a network of individuals and collectives who will work together through action, rather than thinking of building a party?’ This was in the wake of the Battle of Seattle, which demonstrated to the world the power of anarchistic, network-based forms of organisation.<sup>4</sup> A co-founder of the MMAC whom I corresponded with by e-mail cited Seattle as a ‘major inspiration.’ He was inspired, too, by the anarchist federations already in existence in the Philippines: the Davao Anarchist Resistance Movement in Mindanao and the Far South Resistance Movement in southern Luzon. The achievement of the MMAC was to bring together diverse, anarchist-inspired collectives from across Metro Manila — students, punks, adventurers, zinesters, anarcho-vegans, alternative globalisation activists, and so on — into a common arena for collaboration.

Leon was still with the YSL when the MMAC came into being, but the more estranged he grew from his own organisation, the more he contemplated as a viable option for himself the trail from Red to Black blazed by his former comrades (notwithstanding their detour through the failed PRS). In time, as touched on earlier, Leon came to reject the RJs’

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<sup>4</sup> Contrary to popular misconceptions, anarchism is not opposed to organisation and order in general, only to forms of organisation premised on coercive, centralised authority (Heckert 2013, p. 513). Anarchists stand instead for voluntary, decentralised, and self-regulating relationships between equals, which they believe constitute a much more ordered way of life — hence the slogan ‘Anarchy is order; government is civil war,’ attributed to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (cited in Kinna 2005, p. 5).

self-designation as the ‘Democratic Left’ and their description of their RA rivals as the ‘Authoritarian Left,’ concluding that both were just authoritarian as each other. The MMAC appealed for the reason that it took traditional leftists to task for reproducing the hierarchies of wider society within their own organisations. Leon was surprised to find informal hierarchies at work within the MMAC as well, but figured that at least there was a general commitment to mitigate them.

What also drew Leon into the anarchist fold was its culture of conviviality and creativity, so different to the humourless militancy he was used to:

I was inspired by [the MMAC’s] work, you know? Way back in 1999, before the Battle of Seattle broke out, they already had their own community space where different youth, people from different communities, used to converge... They had these once-a-week skill-sharings – from Food Not Bombs to making zines, anything DIY. So I was observing their activities and I was kind of “Wow.” That was it; I decided to join them.

For Leon, the anarchist ethos of ‘living it now’ was an antidote to the life-denying values demanded by the traditional Left – discipline, sacrifice, and the idea that ‘one has to be sad in order to be militant’ (Foucault 1972, p. xiii). Leon had sacrificed a lot for the YSL, dropping out of university in order to become a full-time organiser. Upon joining the MMAC, however, he decided to resume his studies, this time in art rather than advertising. Once there was no longer any leftist bureaucracy in the equation, Leon felt free to pursue more life-affirming endeavours in his activism and studies alike.

Returning momentarily to Benedict Anderson’s *Under three flags* (2007), a line of affinity was drawn in that book between the contemporaneous anticolonial intellectuals José Rizal and José Martí, who agitated against Spain from the Philippines and Cuba respectively. Today, similar lines of affinity can be drawn between postcolonial intellectuals in the same two countries. I was surprised to discover, for instance, the resonances between Bas Umali’s archipelagic imaginary and that of Cuban writer Antonio Benítez-Rojo (1996). For the latter, the Caribbean is a ‘meta- archipelago’: a space of immense ‘sociocultural fluidity’ with ‘neither a boundary nor a center’ (Benítez-Rojo 1996, pp. 3–4). Intriguingly, Benítez-Rojo (1996, p. 4) points to the archipelagic isomorphism between the Aegean Islands (the ancient Greek name for which was *Archipelagos*, this being the very origin of ‘archipelago’ in modern English), the Caribbean, and the ‘great Malay archipelago’ (inclusive of present-day Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, Malaysia and Singapore).

As with ideas emanating from the West Indies, Umali (2006) re-imagines the Philippine Archipelago, if not the wider East Indies, as a centreless mesh of cultures and communities, held back by being held too tightly together by nationalist and statist impositions. Taking the trope of the archipelago as my starting point, I will, in the following sections on xenophilia and translocalism, build on Umali’s work by further relating it to a range of kindred thinkers, mostly anarchist, who are concerned likewise with re-inventing community beyond the nation-state.

## **Xenophilia**

Xenophilia as a nascent or renascent political value can be understood against the homophilic impositions it seeks to undo. In the pre-colonial era, the diverse peoples inhabiting the islands of present-day Philippines submitted to no overarching

The way I felt was “You know, if you don’t like it, it’s not something we’re forcing on you.” In fact, the only thing we’re forcing is “Let’s talk about this, and hopefully something comes out of it... something that’s both yours and ours.”

Such dissension could be taken as testament to the anarchist movement’s vibrancy. Unlike in the traditional Left, no anarchist would ever expect another to toe a particular line, since the idea of a formal leadership structure enforcing official tenets is anathema for anarchists in the first place. Instead, ideas are produced, circulated, and contested in a much more open and flexible way.

Gordon (2008, p. 6) asserts that the anarchist movement is ‘a setting in which high-quality political thinking — indeed political *theorising* — take place’ [italics in original]. At the same time, though, he emphasises that ‘anarchist literature is not supposed to look like academic political theory. Much of it appears in self-published, photocopied and pirated booklets and zines’ (Gordon 2008, p. 9). This was the case with Umali’s piece on archipelagic confederalism, which was self-published on an anarchist website.

Although much of anarchist theory bypasses academia, it should not be seen as any less important. In fact, it fills a conspicuous gap in the Philippine intellectual landscape, with ‘embedded intellectuals’ (Bratich 2007) in the academe still very much beholden to nation-state precepts. ‘Here at the university,’ said Leon during one of our meetings at UP Diliman, ‘they always propagate the idea of nationalism, without even thinking that nationalism kills other people.’ The work of critically re-examining the inheritances of the national liberation era is therefore being left to non-academic intellectuals like Umali — a *de facto* postcolonial scholar in a country that, as noted in Chapter 2, is curiously lacking in postcolonial studies.

## Organising without leaders

One major reason for Leon’s turn to anarchism has yet to be discussed; namely, the dashed hopes following the 2001 uprising that swept then-president Joseph Estrada from office. Commonly known as ‘EDSA II,’ the follow-up to the first EDSA revolution of 1986, this episode was a turning point in Philippine radical politics — not for its apparent success, but for its failures. The events of 2001 revealed to Leon, and many others like him, the ideological bankruptcy of the traditional Left, making anarchism a compelling alternative. To tell this story, I will begin in the most unlikely of places: Leon’s surprising connection to renowned historian Benedict Anderson, who, although most well-known for his writings on Indonesia, has also developed a significant body of work on the Philippines.<sup>5</sup> Odd though it may seem at present, all will make sense in good time.

It was over beers at Sarah’s that Benedict Anderson first came up as a topic of conversation. Leon had yet to get his hands on a copy of Anderson’s latest book, *Under three flags* (2007), but I had just finished reading it myself and imagined it would be of great interest to him. I summarised it for Leon as a study of the rich exchange that took place in 1890s Spain between three sets of people: European anarchists, Cuban émigrés fighting for Cuban independence, and Filipin@ émigrés

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson turned to the Philippines after being banned from Indonesia by the Suharto dictatorship. Part of the appeal was the impending dissolution of the Philippines’ own dictatorship in the mid- Eighties. He recalled that at this time ‘many of my best students at Cornell University were deciding to work on the Philippines, for political as well as scholarly reasons. I more or less tagged along behind them’ (Anderson 2003, p. viii). In an e-mail to one of his former students, Patricio Abinales, now a noted scholar in his own right, Anderson gave a further reason for his interest in the Philippines: ‘I think that living in America, and having long experienced... the katarantaduhan [‘nonsense’ in Tagalog slang] of Washington in other places, made me think I should really study the American colony’ (Anderson cited in Abinales 2003, p. xxvi).

fighting for Philippine independence (or at least for greater autonomy). The treatise concludes with a curious postscript hinting at parallels between the ‘early globalization’ of the 1890s and the ‘late globalization’ of the current era (Anderson 2007, pp. 3, 234). In it, Anderson (2007, p. 234) writes:

In January 2004, I was invited to give a preliminary lecture on some of the themes of this book by the famously radical-nationalist University of the Philippines, where the influence of (Ilocano) José Maria Sison’s Maoist “new” Communist Party, founded at the end of 1968, remains quite strong. Arriving much too early, I filled in time at an open-air campus coffee-stall. A youngster came by to hand out leaflets to the customers, all of whom casually scrunched them up and threw them away once he had left. I was about to do the same when my eye caught the title of the one-page text. “Organize Without Leaders!” The content proved to be an attack on the hierarchies of the country – boss-ridden party-political, corporate capitalist, and also Maoist Communist – in the name of “horizontal” organized solidarity. The leaflet was unsigned, but a website was appended for further enquiries. This was a serendipity too good to keep to myself. I read it out loud to my audience, and was surprised that almost everyone seemed taken aback. But when I had finished speaking, many hurried up to ask for copies... I feel certain that Isabelo<sup>6</sup> would have been enchanted by the leaflet

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<sup>6</sup> Anderson is referring here to Isabelo de los Reyes – the Philippines’ first self-declared anarchist. Arrested by Spanish authorities in 1896 for his involvement in the Philippine Revolution, he was sent to prison in faraway Barcelona, largely in order to isolate him from fellow Filipin@s over whom he held considerable sway. Not to be isolated from radicals of other nation-

apparatus. ‘For me,’ he said, ‘the root cause of the problem is authority itself – and hierarchy. Even though you have this revolutionary government run by whatever leftist factions, if hierarchy and authority is present, you don’t resolve anything.’

After several return visits to Manila’s anarchist community during the write-up of this thesis, I saw that support for the prospective archipelagic confederation continues strong. Moral support has also come from afar, with Gabriel Kuhn (2010, p. 15), a writer-activist from Austria who visited Manila in 2006, positing that the Philippines could play a vital role in bringing much-needed Third World perspectives to the global anarchist movement: ‘Recent essays published by Bas Umali,’ he said, ‘are just one proof of this.’

Of course, Umali has not escaped reproach. His critics have come from the Right and Left and even from within the anarchist milieu itself. As Danny, a scholar-activist with the AIDD and masters student in philosophy, explained to me in an interview:

I think Bas... he’s trying to stake a claim on how we can localize anarchism, and as such, I think it’s a good effort... It’s another flower – let it bloom. But a few anarchist groups took offense in the sense that... the paper was trying to say that “this is Filipino anarchism,” when I guess what Bas was really trying to say was “this is a form of anarchism we should think about,” and at that level, I share that with him... The response was “Why are you trying to organize us?...” Many of these anarchist groups fear large formations, and obviously, that paper was in favour of a network of free communities, which is a large formation. And, you know, I’ve never had a problem with that, but many of them do... They feel that it’s a small step towards the loss of their autonomy.

Democracy (AIDD) – a grassroots think-tank comprised of a small but energetic cadre of dissident intellectuals – delivered a landmark seminar on the political crisis in the Philippines following EDSA II. Their argument, recounted Leon,

was that *Laban ng Masa* adheres to the idea of top-down politics. Although they try to look like they want to make some kind of significant change in Philippine politics... it's just about reform. They want to reform the electoral system through the TRG... They don't actually believe in grassroots organizing. They don't have such a thing, where you have organized political power from the communities... We believe that the communities, like the slum areas, like the urban poor communities, have their own way of fulfilling their needs, so we thought we could build our collective power without depending on a Transitional Revolutionary Government. So when AIDD brought this critique and suggested the archipelagic confederation, we thought that "Yeah, it could be possible"; that we start organizing from below, build up the power from below, and then eventually disregard the government and the state, you know? You have your own autonomous assemblies... popular assemblies, instead of a national government.

The RJs, in drafting the TRG programme, had tried to make amends for their missteps during EDSA II, but anarchists were unimpressed. While TRG exponents believed themselves to stand for 'systemic change and not the mere changing of the government' (Akbayan 2005, p. 5), Leon was one with the AIDD when countering that there can be no systemic change if politics continues to be restricted within the nation- state

and rushed to his laptop to explore the website *manila.indymedia.org*. He would have found that this website is linked to dozens of others of similar stripe around the world. Late Globalization?

Leon could hardly believe it when I relayed this story to him, since the 'youngster' with the leaflets was none other than Leon himself. I was surprised by the coincidence of it all, and Leon by the fact that Anderson had seen fit to refer to their mundane (though at once momentous) encounter in his work. Manila Indymedia was only six months old at that point, so Leon and his comrades were still working hard to inspire popular participation in the newswire. What better occasion to spread the word, they figured, than a Benedict Anderson lecture on anarchism and anticolonialism? Funnily enough, Leon had no idea who the foreigner at the coffee shop actually was – 'I saw an old, fat, white guy sitting there,' he recalled; 'I didn't think he would be care, but I gave him a flyer anyway, just to piss him off' – until around an hour later when he saw the same man appear at the front of the lecture hall to speak.

The relevance here is that the Indymedia flyer in question was adapted from a statement first distributed by anarchists during the 2001 uprising against Estrada. Likewise bearing the title of *Organize Without Leaders!*, it recommended that people ignore the various political parties that were attempting to capitalise on the movement, and self-organise instead. While

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alities, his Catalan anarchist inmates so impressed him that, before long, he himself took on an anarchist identity. For de los Reyes (cited in Anderson 2007, p. 201), anarchism was about 'the abolition of boundaries; that is, *love* without any boundaries, whether geographic or of class distinction... with all of us associating together without any need of fraudulent taxes or ordinances which trap the unfortunate but leave the real criminals untouched' [*italics mine*]. Returning to Manila, de los Reyes brought with him the first anarchist texts to reach the Philippines and quickly resumed his militant organising, albeit this time against the new American regime (Anderson 2007, p. 7).

the RAs and RJs dreamt about coming to power, President Estrada's more conservative opponents simply wanted him replaced by another member of the political-economic elite. For the anarchists, in contrast, the issue was not who was in power, but power itself. They maintained that if the problems afflicting Philippine society stem from an anti-democratic, hierarchy-ridden political culture, then solutions must take radically-democratic, non-hierarchical forms — hence their proposal for an archipelagic confederation, which emerged directly out of the post-Estrada context. For this to make any sense, it will be necessary to examine EDSA II and its aftermath in greater detail.

As in the first EDSA revolution of 1986, millions of Filipin@s again took to Manila's Epifanio de los Santos Avenue in 2001 to demand the resignation of a president whose rule they no longer found tolerable (see Image 17). Estrada was a charismatic former movie star who came to power in a landslide election victory just two and a half years prior. Before long, he revealed himself to be a walking contradiction: a populist plutocrat who, despite his pro-poor rhetoric, siphoned from the public purse somewhere in the range of 63–71 million US dollars (Burton 2001, p. 16; Larmer & Meyer 2001, p. 10). On top of this, he was a chronic gambler and notorious womaniser who boasted of mistresses and illegitimate children (Spaeth 2001, p. 22). His dubious moral character made it easy for Manila's business elites, who had long despised the president for his anti-elitist posturing and economic mismanagement, to enlist the Catholic Church in their calls for Estrada to step down. The Left joined in too, once the extent of Estrada's graft and corruption came to light. The opposition was hence composed of seemingly incommensurable forces: 'both management and organized labor; the Right and the Left' (Bello 2001, p. 4).

The movement reached flashpoint in early 2001, such that it began to feel like the sequel to 1986. Estrada remained defiant, insisting he had the backing of the country's poor, but

side of the Pacific, but it also took on its own unique flavour in light of local political circumstances.

The anarchist critique of the Philippine revolutionary tradition, 'highly influenced by red bureaucracy' (Umali 2006, p. 2), gained significant traction after 2001, when even the Rejectionists, who had been considered the benign alternative to the Reaffirmists, were discredited in the eyes of many. Anarchist writer, Bas Umali (2006, p. 1) ventured that the RJs 'offer no substantial difference [to the RAs], for they all adhere to the state and capturing political power.' It was on this basis that Umali (2006) formulated his vision of a stateless alternative: the archipelagic confederation.

## Archipelagic confederalism

Given that a majority of Filipin@ activists from across the political spectrum have long deemed the nation-state as incontrovertible, Umali's re-imagining of the Philippine Archipelago along non-nationalist and non-statist lines could be seen as something of a game-changer. In his own words, the archipelagic confederation would be an 'alternative anarchist political structure... that connects and interlinks politically and economically every community in the archipelago... not in a hierarchical or top-down orientation, but rather... [on the basis of] mutual cooperation, complementarity and solidarity' (Umali 2006, pp. 1, 9). Here, a spatial imaginary born of the Philippines' unique, island-studded geography becomes the locally-specific vehicle for an old anarchist idea: a 'federation of free communities' (Rocker cited in Davis 2014, p. 224) autonomous from sovereign authority.

My first exposure to archipelagic confederalism was in conversation with Leon in 2008. Leon, in turn, first learnt of the concept at an anarchist festival two years prior, where Umali and his fellow delegates from the Anarchist Initiative for Direct



thereby coming to an awareness of the rift between the Left and the very people in whose interests it supposedly operated.

I cannot say what effect EDSA III had on the RAs, since I had very little to do with them in Manila, but as far as the RJs were concerned, many whom I spoke to felt greatly humbled by it. EDSA III was swiftly crushed by the new Arroyo regime, but it continues to serve as a reference point for leftists seeking to lessen the gulf between themselves and the poor. Edgar and Jorge, for example, now renounce their earlier complicity in EDSA II, claiming EDSA III to have been the only true uprising of the oppressed. Dalisay also shared with me that, in light of the events of April 2001, the so-called 'spontaneity of the masses' is now embraced within LNM. This is to say that, rather than the downtrodden always having to follow the Left's lead, there is a novel recognition that it should sometimes happen the other way around.

Leon was still with the RJ Left in early 2001, but when its inadequacies were laid bare by the upheavals of January and April, he became convinced that the way forward was with the anarchists. 'EDSA II,' remarked Leon,

was actually terrible, you know, because it was an uprising of the middle class and upper class opposition, so there was no significant change... What happened to the Left movement is they just followed the political elites... And then what happened was now; this is the future of those political dealings and all that. This is what they asked for. From then on, I got involved in the [MMAC].

The *Organize Without Leaders!* document that anarchists circulated during EDSA II was a breath of fresh air for Leon, which was why he thought to adapt it for Manila Indymedia's purposes a few years later. As mentioned, many of the ideas it contained were inspired by the Battle of Seattle on the other

when his cabinet defected and the military withdrew support for his regime, he had little choice but to resign. Estrada's departure on January 20, 2001, provoked spontaneous dancing in the streets, but what came next inspired far less celebration. In line with constitutional writ, power was handed to the vice-president: US-educated economist, Gloria Arroyo. The constitution turned out to be a convenient alibi for corporate elites, since, of all the options put forward by the broad-based opposition, it was Arroyo whom they felt would best serve their interests (Burton 2001).

Already in late 2000, leftists were fearing that 'it is the faction of Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo that is pushing the situation in their favour... She can never be part of the solution as she is in fact equally a part of the problem... [given her record as] a staunch promoter of the neo-liberal agenda of global capital' (PARE! Unity Assembly 2000, pp. 1-2). This prognosis proved correct, with Arroyo faithfully serving the capitalist establishment over her nine-year tenure as president. Her economic policies and repression of the Left even earned her comparisons to Margaret Thatcher, with commentators dubbing her the 'Iron Lady of Asia' (Cabacungan, Andrade & Morelos 2011, p. 1). It later came to light that Arroyo was scarcely less corrupt than her predecessor, having been arrested twice since departing the presidency for electoral fraud and theft of public funds (Ranoco 2012).

Owing to the dashed hopes of one uprising after another, there is now widespread talk amongst progressives of a veritable 'EDSA fatigue': a disillusionment with the timeworn revolutionary exercises that merely result in a change of management within the same structure of power. One acquaintance at UP Diliman captured the mood when he sighed: 'We made a revolution, and look what happened: all we got was Gloria!' During my fieldwork, several leftist groups were pushing for a new EDSA-style revolution against Arroyo, but even their own members at times seemed cynical about the prospect. Dalisay,

for instance, lamented to me one rainy afternoon over coffee that rallies demanding Arroyo's ouster were dwindling in numbers and lacked a certain fire. 'The EDSA strategy isn't resonating anymore,' she said. 'Our rallies feel too much like a routine.' I was later reminded of this when encountering Juris's (2008) argument that the more that protest events become habituated, the less effective (and affective) they become.

Like EDSA I, EDSA II 'resulted in the consolidation rather than the weakening of the elite's hold on Philippine politics, governance, and society' (Akbayan 2005, p. 1) (see Image 18). Some RJ groups did modify their strategies after the failings of EDSA II, although not in any fundamental way. Rather than reflect on the limitations of state-centric, sovereignty-bound politics, the one major lesson that RJs seemed to draw from the experience was that any future post-revolutionary government would have to annul the existing constitution and draft its own — this, in order to prevent a simple transfer of power to the vice president, as with what happened with Arroyo. It was thus that LNM proposed that in the event of a future presidential ouster, a Transitional Revolutionary Government (TRG) be installed — in effect, a temporary dictatorship with the paradoxical aim of bringing about greater democracy. One LNM member group explained that the proposal for a TRG

is meant to emphasize that the current crisis is a systemic crisis that cannot be resolved within the confines of the current political system... The biggest argument for extra-constitutional means is the set of radical reforms that we want. These reforms cannot be delivered under the constitutional order. The elite in political institutions cannot be expected to put a check on, much less lessen, their political power and prerogatives (Akbayan 2005, pp. 1, 4).

This scheme could be read, in part, as an effort to atone for the embarrassment of the RJ Left's tactical alliance with the Right during EDSA II. There was also the embarrassment of the anti-Estrada movement's well-to-do composition. As Walden Bello (2001, p. 1) observed, 'the mass base of this transfer of political power was the middle class. The lower classes largely sat it out.'

This class fault-line was brought into stark relief by a dramatic backlash of the poor, triggered by Estrada's arrest in April 2001 on charges of plunder. Although life had changed very little for the millions of impoverished Filipin@s who voted for Estrada, many remained loyal to him for the seeming reason that most other politicians failed to grant them even a modicum of dignity as he did. Land reform, squatters' rights, redistribution of wealth, and other important issues for the poor were neglected during Estrada's term, but he did present the illusion that they were being addressed (Severino 2001, p. 4).

With their champion behind bars, hundreds of thousands of rural and urban poor descended on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue to stage an uprising of their own: EDSA III (see Image 19). 'It appeared to be a mirror image of the anti-Estrada protests, with the same location for the stage, political banners hanging from the overpass, and even the same songs,' wrote Howie Severino (2001, p. 2). The key difference was that there were 'no college students or office workers in evidence. This was the so-called masa [masses]' (Severino 2001, p. 3). Deeming EDSA II to have been a protest of the rich, those in attendance sought, not solely to defend Estrada, but also to decry their marginalisation in a devastatingly unequal society.

No leftist group participated in EDSA III in an official capacity, though many individual leftists, their curiosity whetted, did head down to watch the surprising turn of events unfold. There, they witnessed the poor self-organising without them,