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In their call for nuance on the issue of indigenous nationalism, Emmi ends up writing[1] in ways I find quite dangerous,

> The nationalism that we oppose is Westphalian. It is neoliberal. It is authoritarian communist. It is anti-cosmopolitan. Its roots are in the sociopathic protection of geographic kin at the expense of those deemed "other" as a means of justifying colonial exploitation and expansionism. The nationalism we oppose is predominantly settler and colonial even if its ideological roots and practices are much older than the modern nation-state.

Sure we oppose those things, but that is hardly the full breadth of what we should oppose about nationalism. In fact the limited condemnation of nationalism here honestly takes my breath away.

[1] https://c4ss.org/content/51335

I would be remiss if in response I didn't emphasize the militantly individualist insights of anarchism.

Nationalism is bad at root because it is defined by collectivism and segregationism. These can be oppressive even without anything remotely like colonial exploitation and expansionism. Nationalism encourages us to subdivide all minds in the world into arbitrary groups, to identify with, to prioritize, and to reify these groups. One doesn't have to conquer an out-group in order for that division to do harm. Further the mechanisms by which nationalism usually functions are the valorization of traditions, collective narratives, and ossified relations over the agency of actual individuals. These lurk and reemerge timelessly in human psychology.

Nationalism is a pretty universal tendency of human cognitive biases. A facebook group can fall prey to nationalistic thinking. So can a gaggle of boys heading out to get pizza. And it is certainly not exclusive to modernity or western societies. As radicals we need to work to strike the root, not just some particularly apparent and egregious (ie political) branches. The dominant instantiations of nationalism today are copies of the western colonial model. It is particularly horrific, and especially visible. We must kill it, but hacking off one branch will be useless if some new and different branches can grow back to take their place.

A commune, organization, or club is not necessarily a full fledged outbreak of nationalism, but they are always dangerously on their way. Anarchists can sometimes make a fraught and suspicious peace with such social organisms, but we should always have our individualist daggers sharpened and at the ready.

When you summon a monster to do a task it is your ethical responsibility to keep it from growing too powerful to be banished. This is certainly true when we speak of informal cliques and or things like infoshops. And "too powerful" is not merely a matter of size or armaments. The price to maintain freedom is constant vigilance.

We in the west failed miserably to contain our monsters. They grew with such voracity that they nearly consumed the world, causing unfathomable genocide and devastation. For a long time now we've sought to fight the monsters we'd created by summoning *more monsters*. The relative uniqueness of our experience is a direct appreciation for the ease with which that mistake can be made.

In the 1920s Korean anarchists collaborated with and critically supported nationalists likewise seeking to resist the horrors of Japanese colonialism. They made a simple calculation that anarchist ethical purity was not worth a fractured resistance and that Korean nationalism was of such a different character, informed by a different history and culture, that it would not replicate the same evils seen in western nationalisms. Today nearly every Korean anarchist thinks that collaboration was an embarrassing mistake.

Similar stories can unfortunately be told about myriad underdog nationalisms. More undoubtedly lie in our future.

Today it's common for indigenous activists to use "nationalism" in self-identification. The conscious embrace of the western term was intended to emphasize an equal status that westerners didn't recognize with terms like "tribes". Nationalism is seen as a language and framework that can be appropriated and redefined. Further many see it as one thrust upon them. But unsurprisingly this usage causes a lot of suspicion and ire from anti-nationalists. What has become common in indigenous nationalist rhetoric is a kind of proclamation that their nationalism is so categorically different from westphalian nationalisms as to be impervious to any similar critique. But this just demonstrates an anemic critique of nationalism.

It is understandable for those most directly under the thumb of genocidal machines of dispossession to focus on the most horrific mechanisms, but these ultimately arise from the same core cognitive biases that every human is subject to. The problem of nation-

alism is most decidedly NOT a recent phenomenon, but an eternal one that we must actively resist on many scales.

Of course a lot of rhetoric that seeks to distinguish "indigenous nationalism" from western nationalism falls back on sweeping and erasing narratives of uniform indigenous experience that denies the variety of cultures and social norms found across the first nations of the western hemisphere not to mention the world. It also collapses the vast diversity of perspectives that I've heard from my indigenous friends and comrades. There is unquestionably a vast wealth of insights and socio-cultural technologies in indigenous communities to combat instances of power and nationalism that anarchists would do well to learn from if and when indigenous activists have the time to teach us.

We should of course be nuanced in how we attack nationalism, how we distinguish and interact with expressions of "indigenous nationalism," and what critiques we prioritize with our time.

But at the same time the usage of certain rhetoric or narratives around "indigenous nationalism" in the broader left constitute a pressing danger to the discourse and many broader struggles. Years ago the radical left finally kicked out indigenous activist Vince Reinhart and his "national-anarchist" entryism once examples of his homophobia and misogyny became too hard to ignore, but these were simply one potential rotten fruit of his nationalist seed.

Critiques that paint such "national-anarchism" as wrong merely because it happens to arise from fascists and align and collaborate with outright neonazis miss the deeper issue. One can still abandon westphalian nationalism, not to mention ethnic constructions, and retain the poison of nationalism. The "national-anarchist" or neoreactionary image of a world broken apart into a patchwork of small discrete tribes or communes is fundamentally at odds with the positive human freedom enabled by the diffuse and fluid interconnection of individuals.

There are of course significant differences between variants of "indigenous nationalism," "global south nationalism," and the direct colonial settler nationalisms of the west. Many more important subdivisions, distinctions, and addenda are possible. Pragmatism and strategy are frequently called for. Even while anarchists should resolutely say what only those with our aspirational values can say, there is a place for collaboration and holding our tongues.

Even if our historical failure has always been *too much* and *too naive* of collaboration with those who do not share our values or radical perspectives fully, I recognize that it is precisely our anti-nationalism that bends us continually back to such. And there is virtue in nuance and attentive listening. One can and should prioritize some critiques or interventions over others.

But in no sense should our critique of nationalism itself ever be watered down or hedged around. The dangers of silencing from our critique or misrepresenting it are severe. When someone says "oh but we only oppose modern western nationalisms" they are giving up the entirety of our radicalism, the root of our critiques, leaving only the barest afterimage. This is dangerous in ways that extend everywhere, opening doors to all sorts of unchecked monstrosity.

Our critiques of nationalism should be nuanced to the present world, its major lines of power and historical context, but they should also damn well be radical. This doesn't have to be a trade-off, but if it is made one we shouldn't ever shy from our values and analysis.

Whenever a discourse turns to fetishizing discrete "communities" the nationalist creep is present. It is not remotely enough that there are no militarized border walls and people can leave voluntarily, because the all encompassing nature of the commune makes such a choice a catastrophic binary. You are either in or you are out. There is, for example, no room for fluid levels of involvement or repositioning between simultaneous multiple communities. When individuals are entirely at the mercy of one community — when their only options beyond it are total exit and restarting in another community — they are left very little counterpower against the tyranny of the collective. Decisions become all or nothings.

When quasi nations like communities, communes, organizations, cliques, and projects do not monopolize you at the exclusion of others you are left with more agency and your more fluid or gradual decisions to associate more or less transmit more information to everyone else. This is hard when one's community takes discrete spatial forms or is attached to land.

Radical leftists are already way too inclined to retreat to land projects. One of the most pernicious effects that the valorization of certain takes on "indigenous nationalism" has had in broader radical spaces has been the way said veneration becomes justification for this very reactionary model of isolation as well as de facto empowerment of the collective over the individual. What also seems to follow this is a veneration of elders that reinforces ageism and social capital, as well as a focus on tradition and "institutional knowledge" that ends up stifling access and dynamism in myriad ways.

Obviously indigenous communities have had quite varied and rich experiences, and some with longstanding anti-authoritarian inclinations have the benefit of long histories that have shaped and forged better tools for dealing with these failure modes.

But the ethical vigilance of anarchism means that these issues and proposed mechanisms to resolve them deserve explicit detailed critical engagement rather than just "it works" handwaving — at

least when adopted by leftists outside of indigenous communities or when championed before outsiders. We are radicals rather than reactionaries (in the truest sense of both terms) precisely because we never accept what is handed down as common sense or tradition from anyone, but seek to consciously break apart, analyze, and have informed agency in such structures.

It is all too easy to fall into the reactionary mode of thinking, to say "these worked for ages so we don't need to revisit or explicitly defend them." I for one am certainly guilty of this when I get annoyed at new anarchists who don't accept positions that have become settled consensus in our networks (like on "non-violence" or "left-unity"). Sometimes the kids want to painfully reinvent the wheel for themselves, but stopping them by venerating received wisdom risks limiting us when there actually is a positive mutation we can adopt. And where there are persistent hidden power dynamics, it risks having them fester.

I am not urging western anarchists to intrude on indigenous activists like some kind of colonial anthropologist to sneer and offer peanut gallery advice from immediate perceptions. Those of us on the outside of any tradition or culture or discourse should generally follow the lead of those anarchists on the inside. Becoming familiar enough with a space to critique in detail productively rather than wasting people's time is an arduous journey.

But being attentive isn't the same thing as being an unthinking stooge or turning off our vigilance. Even while we must be cautious in our analysis, our critical support for the YPG or Zapatistas for example should remain critical. Because just as our groups and communities can fuck up and not catch it, so can they, in ways apparent enough to outsiders and worthy of note. Most importantly we must reaffirm, deepen, and strengthen our critiques of nationalism. Trying to tiptoe around indigenous activists by casting our rejection of nationalism as merely a rejection of its westphalian flower is horrifyingly inadequate and dangerous.

A truly radical or anarchist critique of nationalism needs to go so much deeper. It needs to tackle the cognitive biases and emergent social strategies that generate nationalistic tendencies wherever there are humans. It needs to examine network structures of societies to oppose not only discrete land-specific communities, but the oversimplified representations of individual human relations that organizationalism encourages. It needs to say that even social clustering is dangerous and can replicate insularity and power law hierarchies of network connectivity — that individuals should work to develop an expansive net of friends and relations who aren't incestuously all friends with each other in some closed community.

When fascists came creeping into the counter-globalization movement and said "what we want is what you want: a world of small communes and tribes" that should have been the final wakeup call to anarchists everywhere. The creep shouldn't have to look like white men with poorly concealed swastika tattoos for us to be concerned about the general ideological failure mode they represent, to learn our lesson. What we want is a distributed interconnected world, not merely one decentralized into little parochial jails.

Pushing back against the limited carrying capacity of their environment, peoples of the great plains sought to transcend and surpass the micronationalisms of tribes, coming together in great cosmopolitan convergences. This attempt to move beyond nationalism is deeply inspiring. Just as there were empires and problematic societies across Turtle Island before the genocides, so too were there myriad projects of human liberation shining through. But it is absolutely and critically imperative that we explicitly recognize that all attempts to kill nationalism are partial. The work of those who share anarchist values is always unfinished.

Nationalism, like statism, is a matter of degree. Something that compounds when left unchecked and grows in often unique but inevitably destructive ways.