"Listen, Anarchist!" A personal response to Simon Springer's "Why a radical geography must be anarchist"

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Abstract

Keywords

Simon Springer (2014) has written a lively and polemical piece in which he argues that a radical geography must be freshly anarchist and not tired-old Marxist. As with any polemic of this sort, his paper has its quota of misrepresentations, exaggerations and ad hominem criticisms, but Springer does raise key issues that are worthy of discussion.

Let me first make clear my own position. I sympathize (but don't entirely agree) with Murray Bookchin, who in his late writings (after he had severed his long-standing connection to anarchism), felt that "the future of the Left, in the last analysis, depends upon its ability to accept what is valid in both Marxism and anarchism for the present time and for the future coming into view" (Bookchin, 2014: 194). We need to define "what approach can incorporate the best of the revolutionary tradition – Marxism and anarchism – in ways and forms that speak to the kinds of problems that face the present" (2014: 164).

Springer, judging from his piece, would want no part in such a project. He seems mainly bent on polarizing the relation between anarchism and Marxism as if they are mutually exclusive if not hostile. There is, in my view, no point in that. From my Marxist perspective, the autonomist and anarchist tactics and sentiments that have animated a great deal of political activism over the last few years (in movements like "Occupy") have to be appreciated, analyzed and supported when appropriate. If I think that "Occupy" or what happened in Gezi Park and on the streets of Brazilian cities were progressive movements, and if they were animated in whole or in part by anarchist and autonomista thought and action, then why on earth would I not engage positively with them? To the degree that anarchists of one sort or another have raised important issues that are all too frequently ignored or dismissed as irrelevant in mainstream Marxism, so too I think dialogue – let us call it mutual aid – rather than confrontation between the two traditions is a far more fruitful way to go. Conversely, Marxism, for all its past faults, has a great deal that is crucial to offer to the anti-capitalist struggle in which many anarchists are also engaged.

Geographers have a very special and perhaps privileged niche from which to explore the possibility of collaborations and mutual aid. As Springer points out, some of the major figures in the nineteenth century anarchist tradition – most notably

Kropotkin, Metchnikoff and Reclus – were geographers. Through the work of Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford and later on Murray Bookchin, anarchist sentiments have also been influential in urban planning, while many utopian schemas (such as that of Edward Bellamy) as well as practical plans (such as those of Ebenezer Howard) reflect anarchist influences. I would, incidentally, put my own utopian sketch ("Edilia") from *Spaces of Hope* (2000) in that tradition.

Social anarchists have typically been much more interested in and sensitive to questions of space, place and environment (core concepts that I think most geographers would accept as central to their discipline). The Marxist tradition, on the whole, has been lamentably short on interest in such topics. It has also largely ignored urbanization and urban social movements, the production of space and uneven geographical developments (with some obvious exceptions such as Lefebvre and the Anglo-French *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* that began in 1977, and in which Marxist sociologists played a prominent founding role). Only relatively recently (e.g. since the 1970s) has mainstream Marxism recognized environmental issues or urbanization and urban social movements as having fundamental significance within the contradictions of capital. Back in the 1960s, most orthodox Marxists regarded environmental issues as preoccupations of petite bourgeois romanticists (this was what infuriated Murray Bookchin who gave vent to his feelings in his widely circulated essay, "Listen, Marxist!", from 1971's *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*).

Shortly after I got interested in Marx and Marxism in the early 1970s, I figured that part of my mission might be to help Marxists be better geographers. I have frequently joked since that it proved much easier to bring Marxist perspectives into geography than to get Marxists to take geographical questions seriously. Bringing Marxist perspectives into geography meant taking up themes on space, place making and environment and embedding them in a broad understanding of "the laws of motion of capital" as Marx understood them. Most social anarchists I know (as Springer admits) find the Marxist critical exposé and theoretical account of how capital circulates and accumulates in space and time and through environmental transformations helpful. To the degree that I was able, and continue to work on, how to make Marx's critique of capital more relevant and more easily understood, particularly in relation to topics such as urbanization, landscape formation, place-making, rental extractions, ecological transformations and uneven geographical developments, I would hope that social anarchists might appreciate and not disparage the effort. The contributions of Marxism in general and Marxist political economy in particular are foundational to anti-capitalist struggle. They define more clearly what the struggle has to be about and against and why.

Behind all this, however, there lies a fascinating problem. Elisée Reclus was one of the most prolific anarchist geographers of the nineteenth century. Looking at his nineteen volume *Geographie Universelle*, there is little trace of anarchist sentiments (any more than there were in Kropotkin's studies of the physical geography of central Asia). For this reason the Royal Geographical Society in London could plead

for the release of both Reclus and Kropotkin from imprisonment when they got into political trouble because they were first rate a-political geographers. The reason behind this was quite simple. Hachette, Reclus' publisher, would not tolerate any foregrounding of his politics (given the reputations of anarchists for violence at that time) and Reclus needed the money to live on. Reclus seems to have been either resigned or content with this. He could be content because he held that objective and deep geographical knowledge of the world and its peoples was a necessary condition for building an emancipatory life for the whole of humanity. A deep humanism encompassing egalitarian respect for cultural diversity and respect for the relation to nature are characteristic of his work (Fleming, 1988; Dunbar, 1978). In his open letter to his anarchist colleagues (which I cited in the concluding paragraph of *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 2009: 283), Reclus wrote: "Great enthusiasm and dedication to the point of risking one's life are not the only ways of serving a cause. The conscious revolutionary is not only a person of feeling, but also one of reason, to whom every effort to promote justice and solidarity rests on precise knowledge and on a comprehensive understanding of history, sociology and biology" as well as, it went without saying, the geography to which he had dedicated so much of his life's work (Clark and Martin, 2004). Anarchists might like to heed that advice.

When, however, Reclus wrote *L'Homme et la Terre* (1982) towards the end of his life, in which he freely allowed anarchist sentiments to flow into his geographical work, he could not find a publisher. Historically there has been a separation between geographical work and politics. This same problem is there, though for quite different reasons, in Pierre George's geographical work. George was a French communist geographer who worked assiduously to ensure that only party members got appointed to those French university geography departments over which he had influence. Yet his geography bears few marks of his communism, any more than the geographers in the Soviet Union produced politicized geographical texts (see Johnston and Claval, 1984). Geography, it seemed, was forever destined to fulfill the role of describing as accurately as possible the physical material base required for the exercise of political power, of no matter what sort. Everyone in political power (both state and commercial) needed accurate physical geographical information (the same way they needed accurate maps), but no one seems to have wanted it politicized. "Social" geography was avoided in Reclus' day because it smacked of socialism. Reclus was systematically excluded from the history of French geography by the followers of Vidal de la Blache for political reasons. Only recently has he been rediscovered and taken seriously in France (Pelletier, 2009).

All of this changed in the radical movement in Anglo-American geography after 1969 with the founding of *Antipode* at Clark University (an initiative I had nothing to do with). That radical movement (which I became involved with in 1971) initially mixed together all manner of different political views and opinions – anarchist, Marxist, anti-imperialist, feminist, ecological, anti-racist, fourth-worldist, culturalist, and so on. The movement was, like the discipline from which it emanated, predominantly white and male heterosexual (there were hardly any women or

people of color in academic positions in geography at that time and the women involved were all graduate students, some of whom ultimately became powerful players in the discipline). This undoubtedly produced, as was the case in the broad left of the time, biases in thinking. Various hidden structures of oppression (on gender and sexuality for example) were certainly manifest in our practices. But we were, I think it fair to say, broadly united in one mission. Let the politics flow, whatever they were, into the kinds of geographical knowledges we produced while criticizing ruthlessly – deconstructing, as it was later called – the hidden oppressive politics in the so-called "objective presentations" of geographical knowledge served up by the servants of capitalist, state, imperialist and patriarchal/racist power. In that mission we all made common cause, even as we argued fiercely about the details and alternatives. This movement pushed the door open in the discipline of Geography for all sorts of radical possibilities, including that of which Springer now avails himself. The history of all this has been documented by Linda Peake and Eric Sheppard (2014).

Sadly, Springer's bowdlerized history eradicates all the complexity and the openness to new ideas that was involved. He makes it seem as if I wrote an influential paper in 1972 that inaugurated the radical turn which Steen Folke (1972) capped by insisting that radical geography had to be only Marxist. After that, my "prolific writings" imprisoned radical geography in the Marxist fold as my work "become the touchstone for the vast majority of radical geographers who have followed" (Springer, 2014: 250). Springer aspires, apparently, to liberate radical geography from this oppressive Marxist power so that it can return to its true anarchist roots.

Folke, however, was writing in the context of a highly politicized Danish student movement and, rightly or wrongly, none of us in the Anglo-Saxon world took that much notice of his essay at the time. So it seems mighty odd that Springer has elected to write a rebuttal to this not very influential piece some forty two years after its publication and without, moreover, paying any mind to its historical and geographical context. We, rightly or wrongly, were too wrapped up in providing the mutual aid (spiced with great parties and fierce arguments) across multiple traditions (including anarchist) that might allow us both to intervene in the trajectory of mainstream geography and to survive within the discipline while producing a more openly political geography.

Survival in the discipline was an issue. Having pushed the door open we had somehow to keep it open institutionally in the face of a lot of pressure to close it. Hence the founding of the Socialist Geographers Specialty Group within the Association of American Geographers. Given my situation, in a university that was ruthless about publication, the only way to survive was to publish at a high level. And yes I will here offer a *mea culpa*: I was from the very beginning determined to publish up a storm and I did emphasize to my students and all those around me who would listen that this was one (and perhaps the only) way to keep the door open. It was more than the usual publish or perish. For all those suspected of Marxist or

anarchist sympathies, it was publish twice as much at a superior level of sophistication or perish. Even then the outcome was touch-and-go, as the long-drawn out battle over Richard Walker's tenure at Berkeley abundantly illustrated. The Faustian bargain was that we could survive only if we made our radicalism academically respectable and respectability meant a level of academicism that over time made our work less accessible. It became hard to combine a radical pedagogy (of the sort pioneered by Bill Bunge in the Detroit Geographical Expedition) and social activism with academic respectability. Many of my colleagues in the radical movement, those with anarchist leanings in particular, did not care for that choice (for very good reasons) with the result that many of them, sadly, failed or chose not to consolidate academic positions and the space that we had collectively opened was threatened.

Springer should correct his erroneous view from "hindsight" as to what actually happened in radical circles in North America after 1969. We were a very diverse group, free to be radical in any way we wanted. The written record is much more biased initially to Marxism and anti-imperialism (reflecting understandable preoccupations with the Vietnam War), for reasons I have already stated, and the voices of women and minority groups often had difficulty being heard even though there was no specific hegemonic faction (as opposed to influential individuals). The idea that I "solidified what Folke had considered obligatory" (Springer, 2014: 250) is way off the mark. There was a brief period in the late 1970s when many geographers explored the Marxist alongside other radical options. But by 1982, when I published *Limits to Capital* (a book I had worked on for nearly ten years), that was pretty much all over. By 1987 I was venting my frustrations at the widespread rejection of Marxist theoretical perspectives. "Three myths in search of a reality in urban studies," published in *Society and Space*, was greeted with strong criticism from both friends and foes alike. In retrospect the piece looks all too accurate in what it foretold.

The radicalism that remained in the discipline (after many of my erstwhile colleagues had run for the neoliberal hills or, in the British case, to seek their knighthood) was thereafter dominated by the postmodern turn, Foucault, post-structuralism (Deleuze and Guattari along with Spinoza clearly displacing Marx), postcolonial theory, various shades of environmentalism and sophisticated forms of identity politics around race, gender, sexual orientation, queer theory, to say nothing of theories of non-representation and affect. During the 1990s, before the rise of the alter-globalization movement, there was little interest in Marxian political economy or Marxism more generally within the discipline or without. As always there were some islands of resistance in various departments. With the exception of *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989) – which stood out as a pillar of resistance within Marxist thinking to postmodern trends and which elicited fierce criticism from radical, particularly feminist, quarters within and without geography (as at the AAG in 1990) – most of my really "influential writings" have come out over the last ten years. Springer's bowdlerized history of Marxism in radical geographical thought suggests he is simply concerned to build a fantasy narrative of anarchism in

geography as victimized by Marxism to support his central objective, which is to polarize matters at this particular historical moment (for reasons I do not understand). Sadly, this comes not only at a time when the conjuncture is right for a revival of interest in Marxist political economy, but it also coincides with a political moment when others are beginning to explore new ways of doing politics that involve putting the best of different radical and critical traditions (including but not confined to Marxism and anarchism) together in a new configuration for anti-capitalist struggle.

So what are the main differences and difficulties that separate my supposed (but often suspect) Marxism from Springer's anarchism? On this I find Springer's discussion less than helpful. He caricatures all Marxists as functionalist historians peddling a stages theory of history, besotted with a crude concept of a global proletarian class who believe in the teleology of a vanguard party that will inevitably establish a dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of a communist state that will supposedly wither away as communism approaches its steady state to end history. Now it is undeniable that some communists and in some instances communist parties at certain historical periods have asserted something along those lines as party dogma (though rarely in so crude a form). But I have not personally encountered any geographer with Marxist leanings who thinks that way and there are a mass of authors in the Marxist tradition who come nowhere near representing anything of this sort (start with Lukacs, Gramsci and then go to E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton). And much of contemporary Marxist political economy is so busy trying to figure out what is going on with the crisis tendencies of contemporary capital to bother with such nonsense. But all we Marxists do, Springer asserts, is re-hash tired old themes which he (rather than any geographer with Marxist inclinations) has selectively identified and which have been so obviously disproven by historical events. Furthermore, when we Marxists look at anarchists the only thing we apparently see are people who are against the state as the unique and only enemy, thus denying that anarchists are anti-capitalist too. All of this is pure caricature if not paranoid nonsense. It crams all the actual and intricate complexity of the relation between the two traditions into an ideological framework defined at best by the fight between Marx and Bakunin in 1872, which occurred at a time when the bitter defeat of the Paris Commune poisoned the political atmosphere. Strange that Springer, the open-minded freedom-loving anarchist, should seek to foreclose on the intellectual and political possibilities open to us at this time in this way.

There are, of course, many anarchisms and many Marxisms. The identity of anarchism in particular is very hard to pin down. There is frequently as much bad blood between factions within these traditions (if such they are) as there is between them. By the same token, there are as many commonalities between factions across traditions as there are differences. These commonalities prefigure the potentiality for a new left force, maybe of the sort that Bookchin envisages and which I, too, find interesting to explore. For example, I share with Bookchin as I do with Erich Fromm and Terry Eagleton a deep commitment to the humanist perspective as opposed to

the scientism that dominates the Althusserian and scientific communism traditions. I also share with Bookchin a dialectical approach (which I think he learned during his early years in the Marxist corner and which he does not always stick to) rather than positivist, empiricist or analytical methods and interpretations. Our attitude is, for lack of a better term, historical and geographical (which is why I often refer to historical-geographical materialism as my foundational frame of reference). From his dialectical humanist perspective, Bookchin was hostile (in ways that only Bookchin could be) to the anarchist primitivists and deep ecologists as well as to those anarchists who he scathingly referred to as "lifestyle anarchists" (he would be appalled by crimethInc; see www.crimethinc.com). He was sympathetic to but also suspicious of the anarcho-syndicalism that was so dominant in Barcelona during the 1930s. Bookchin's favored anarchism was resolutely social and ecological but it also incorporated some features that elicited numerous attacks from fellow social anarchists in the 1990s.

In part in response to these attacks, Bookchin ultimately severed his links to the anarchist tradition, but he was also troubled and frustrated by the fact that anarchism, unlike Marxism, has no discernable theory of society:

> The problems raised by anarchism belong to the days of its birth, when writers like Proudhon celebrated its use as a new alternative to the emerging capitalist social order. In reality, anarchism has no coherent body of theory other than its commitment to an ahistorical conception of "personal autonomy," that is, to the self-willing asocial ego divested of constraints, preconditions, or limitations short of death itself. Indeed, today, many anarchists celebrate this theoretical incoherence as evidence of the highly libertarian nature of their outlook and its often dizzying, if not contradictory, respect for diversity" (2014: 160-161).

This lack of theoretical coherence is a criticism that can be made also of the Marxist autonomistas. As Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer argue, autonomy (no matter of what particular sort) is an "impossibility" in and of itself. It is theoretically and relationally defined solely by that which it seeks to be autonomous from. There is, therefore, nothing to stop "capital, the state and discourses of development continuously seeking to 'recuperate' autonomy and make it work for their own purposes" (2010: 26). And this is, of course, exactly what they have done.

Anarchists are fond, however, of arguing that anarchism is not about theorizing but about practices and the continuous invention of new organizational forms. But what sort of practices and forms? Horizontality, rhizomatic practices and decentralization of power are litmus tests it seems for anarchists as well as autonomistas these days. Springer asserts, however, "Every time you have ever invited friends over to dinner, jaywalked, mowed your neighbor's lawn, skipped a day at work, looked after your brother's kids, questioned your professor, borrowed your mother in law's car, disregarded a posted sign, or returned a favor, you have – perhaps unknowingly – engaged in anarchist principles" (2014: 265).

Now this is an extraordinary statement. It is tempting to parody it by imagining Springer setting off on his preferred insurrectionary path by borrowing his mother in law's car (with or without her permission he does not say). It contains some absolute principles like "disregarding posted signs" (such as "poisonous snakes are in this area") which, when coupled with that other absolute, that "all authority is illegitimate" (itself an authoritative statement that stands self-condemned as illegitimate), supposedly leads us to the anarchist heaven. Having lived in Baltimore where the population, being apparently anarchistically inclined, loved to run red lights (and having had my car totaled by someone who just happened, being a good anarchist, to have borrowed his brother's car without permission), I find such assertions ridiculous if not dangerous. They give anarchism a bad name, even as James Scott (2012) offers two cheers for anarchism when people pluck up courage to cross the street at red lights when there is no traffic in sight. Scott even suggests the abolition of traffic lights altogether might be a good anarchist idea. I am much more skeptical having witnessed 1st Avenue on Manhattan turned into a continuous roaring race-track northwards during a power outage, to the detriment of all those locked on the cross streets. And I certainly would not welcome a pilot landing at JFK proclaiming that as a good anarchist she does not accept the legitimacy of the air traffic controllers' authority and that she proposes to disregard all aviation rules in the landing process.

Historically, mutual aid societies (whether anarchist inspired or not) had, like the commons, codes and rules of behavior that had to be followed as part of the membership pact and those who did not conform to these rules found themselves excluded (a problem which marks the problematic boundary between individualistic and social anarchism). Perpetually questioning authority, rules and codes of behavior and disobeying stupid or irrelevant rules is one thing: disobeying all such mandates on anarchist principle, as Springer proposes, is quite another. No anarchist commune I have ever known would tolerate such behaviors. It would not survive more than a day if it did. The standard anarchist response is that rules and exclusions are ok provided they are freely entered into. The myth here is that there is some sort of absolute freedom that exists outside of some mechanisms of exclusion and even, sorry to say, domination. The dialectic of freedom and domination cannot be so easily set aside in human affairs (see Harvey, 2014: Chapter 14).

If I take a generous reading of Springer's statement it would be this: social anarchists are fundamentally concerned with the intricacies and problematics of daily life. The ultimate aspiration, says David Graeber (2002: 70), is "to reinvent daily life as a whole", though he conveniently leaves aside the thorny question of where does "the whole" begin and end. Marxists have, by way of contrast, historically been far too preoccupied with the labor process and productivism as the center of their theorizing, often treating the politics of realization in the living space as secondary and daily life issues as contingent and even derivative of the mode of production (this tendency was early on exhibited with Engels' otherwise interesting treatment of *The Housing Question* back in 1872). Being an historical-geographical

urbanist I have always been troubled by if not at war with this Marxist prioritization of production at the expense of the politics of daily life. Class and social inequalities are as much a product of residential differentiation, I have long argued, as they are of divisions of labor in the workplace, while the city as a "whole" is itself a major site of class as well as other forms of social struggle and much of that struggle occurs in the sphere of daily life. Such struggles are about the realization of value rather than its production (Harvey, 1975, 1977). As long ago as 1984 I was arguing that "a peoples' geography must have a popular base (and) be threaded into the fabric of daily life with deep taproots into the well-springs of popular consciousness" (1984: 7).

From an urban perspective even the production of value needs to be re-thought. For example, Marx insisted that transportation is value and potentially surplus-value producing. The booming logistics sector is rife with value and surplus value production. And while General Motors has been displaced by McDonalds as one of the largest employers of labor in the US, why would we say that making a car is productive of value while making a hamburger is not? When I stand at the corner of 86th and 2nd Avenue in Manhattan I see innumerable delivery, bus and cab drivers; workers from Verizon and Con Edison are digging up the streets to fix the cables, while down the street the water mains are being repaired; other workers are constructing the new subway, putting up scaffolding on one side of the street while taking it down on the other; meanwhile the coffee shop is making coffees and in the local 24-hour diner workers are scrambling eggs and serving soups. Even that guy on the bicycle delivering Chinese take-out is creating value. These are the kinds of jobs, in contrast to those in conventionally defined manufacturing and agriculture, that have increased remarkably in recent times and they are all value and surplus value producing. Manhattan is an island of huge value creation. If only half of those employed in the production and reproduction of urban life are employed in the production of this sort of value and surplus value, then this easily compensates for the losses due to the industrialization of agriculture and the automation in conventional manufacturing. This is the contemporary proletariat at work and Springer is quite right to complain that much of mainstream Marxist thinking has a hard time getting its head around this new situation (which, it turns out, is not wholly new at all). This is the proletarian world in which many social anarchist groups have been and still are embedded.

But we need to take the argument further. There is a big distinction in Marx's theory between how, when and where value is produced and how, when and where it is realized. Value produced in China is realized, for example, in Walmart and Apple stores in North America. There are perpetual struggles over the realization of value between consumers and merchant/property-owning capitalists. The battles with landlords, the phone, electricity and credit card companies are just the most obvious examples of struggles within the sphere of realization that pervade daily life. It is in such realms that the politics of refusal often make a lot of sense.

None of this is central in the standard Marxist theoretical cannon when clearly, to me, as an urbanist, it should be. I feel entirely comfortable with daily life perspectives and applaud the social anarchist position on this. I do, however, have a caveat: everyday life problems from the perspective of the individual or of the local neighborhood look quite different from everyday life in the city as a whole. This is why the transition from Kropotkin to Patrick Geddes, Mumford and the anarchist-inspired urban planners becomes an important issue for me. How to organize urban life in the city as a whole so that everyday life for everyone is not "nasty, brutish and short" is a question that we radical geographers need to consider. This aspect of the social anarchist tradition – the preparedness to jump scales and integrate local ambitions with metropolitan wide concerns – is invaluable if obviously flawed and I am distressed that most anarchists, including Springer apparently, ignore if not actively reject it presumably because it seems hierarchically inspired or entails negotiating with if not mobilizing state power. It is here, of course, that the Marxist insights on the relation between capital accumulation and urbanization become critical to social action. And it is surely significant that the urban uprisings in Turkey and Brazil in 2013 were animated by everyday life issues as impacted by the dynamics of capital accumulation and that they were metropolitan-wide in their implications.

It would be wrong to conclude from all this that Marxists do not work politically and practically on the politics of daily life or in the sphere of value realization. I meet such people all over the place all the time, involved in, say, anti-gentrification struggles and fights over the provision of health care and education as well as in right to the city movements. The Marxist critique of education under capitalism has been profound (Bowles and Gintis, 1977). This is a realm where Marxist practices often go well beyond the theoretical content (a gap which I as well as other Marxist geographers like Neil Smith (1992, 2003) and, from a somewhat different angle, Gibson-Graham (2006) have attempted to close). But it is also clear to me that many people working politically on these daily life questions do not care about Marxism or anarchism ideologically but simply engage in radical practices that often converge onto anti-capitalist politics for contingent rather than ideological reasons. This is the kind of world of non-ideological collective action that Paul Hawken (2007) writes so enthusiastically about. I have met workers in recuperated factories in Argentina whose primary interest was nothing more than having a job and activists within solidarity economies in Brazil who are simply concerned with improving daily life. Sure, most of those involved will praise horizontalism when asked, but for most of them that was not what spurred them into action (Sitrin and Azzelini, 2014). Those working in such contexts seize on any literature and any concepts that seem relevant to their cause no matter whether articulated by anarchists, Marxists or whoever.

If, as Springer (2014: 252) says, anarchism is primarily "about actively reinventing the everyday through a desire to create new forms of organization", then I am all for it. If it does not separate working, living, creating, acting, thinking, and cultural activities, but keeps them together within the seamless web of daily life (as a

totality) and tries to re-shape that life then I am totally with it. The search to re-shape daily life around different "structures of feeling" (as Raymond Williams might have put it) is as critical for me as it is for Springer and the autonomistas who have taken up biopolitics.

But the implications are, I think, even broader. What unifies all our perspectives is what I can best call "a search for meaning" in a social world that appears more and more meaningless. This requires a real attempt to live as far as possible an unalienated life in an increasingly alienating world. I admire the social anarchists I have known because of their deep personal and intellectual commitment to do just that.

Social anarchists are not, however, alone in this. I am all for it too. I featured alienation (a taboo concept for many Marxists of a scientistic or Althusserian persuasion) as the seventeenth and in many respects crucial contradiction in my *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (2014). You don't have to be either an anarchist or a Marxist to attempt to create a personal and social world which has meaning and within which it is possible to live in a relatively unalienated way. Millions of people are perpetually struggling to do just that and in so doing create islands of unalienated activities. This is what many religious groups do all the time. Many young people in the world today, faced with meaningless employment opportunities and mindless consumerism are searching and opting for a different lifestyle. Much of contemporary cultural production in the Western world is building upon exactly this sensibility and the broad left, both anarchist and Marxist, has to learn to respond appropriately.

The result, David Graeber suggests, is that:

> even when there is next to no other constituency for revolutionary politics in a capitalist society, the one group most likely to be sympathetic to its project consists of artists, musicians, writers, and others involved in some form of non-alienated production….Surely there must be a link between the actual experience of first imagining things and then bringing them into being, individually or collectively, and the ability to envision social alternatives—particularly, the possibility of a society itself premised on less alienated forms of creativity? One might even suggest that revolutionary coalitions always tend to rely on a kind of alliance between a society's least alienated and its most oppressed; actual revolutions, one could then say, have tended to happen when these two categories most broadly overlap (2002: 70).

Whether this was true in the past can be debated (I personally think there were elements of this configuration at work in the Paris Commune). But Graeber's statement undoubtedly captures an important feature of radical activism in our time and one that I both appreciate and relate to.

So what, then, is the central problem in the midst of all this positive feeling about the social anarchist approach to daily life questions? The answer for me lies in what Bookchin calls "the anarchist disdain for power" (2014: 139; as represented, for

example, in John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2010)). And behind this, of course, lies the thorny problem of how to approach the question of the state in general and the capitalist state in particular.

The best I can do here is to take up the most compelling historical example I have come across of the failure of an amazingly well-developed anarchist movement to mobilize collective power and to take the state when it clearly had the opportunity to do so. I rely here on Ealham's (2010) detailed and sympathetic account of the anarchist movement in Barcelona from 1898-1937 and in particular on its failure to consolidate the power of a mass movement in 1936-7. I propose to use this example to illustrate what seems to be a general problem with anarchist practices, including those that Springer advocates.

The Barcelona movement was based on the instinctive collective organizations of working class populations in the *barris* (neighborhoods) of the city along the lines of integrated social networks and mutual aid, coupled with deep distrust of a state apparatus that neglected their social needs and essentially criminalized, marginalized, and merely sought to police and repress their aspirations. Given these conditions, large segments of the working class fell in line with anarcho-syndicalist forms of organization as represented by the National Confederation of Labor (CNT), which at its height had over a million adherents throughout Catalonia. There were, however, other anarchist currents – the radical anarchists in particular – that often opposed the syndicalists and organized themselves (often clandestinely) through affinity groups and neighborhood committees to pursue their aims. But the overall structure of this working class movement was neighborhood based and territorially segregated. The CNT was "very much a product of local space and the social relations within it; its unions made the *barris* feel powerful, and workers felt ownership over what they regarded as 'our' union" (Ealham, 2010: 39). But it had great difficulty in thinking the city as a whole rather than in terms of those separate territories it did control. The militant affinity groups, for example, "were incapable of converting isolated local actions into a more offensive action that could lead to a powerful transformation at regional or state level" (2010: 122). The movement's central weakness in the run-up to the civil war, Ealham argues, "was its failure to generate an overarching institutional structure capable of coordinating the war effort and simultaneously harmonizing the activities of the myriad workers' collectives. In political terms, the revolution was underdeveloped and inchoate…..the revolution in Barcelona failed to generate any revolutionary institution……workers' power remained fragmented and atomised on the streets, dispersed among a multitude of *comités* without any coordination at regional or national level" (2010: 168; also Bookchin, 2014: Chapter 8). The reluctance of the anarchists of whatever sort to take state power for ideological reasons when it clearly had the power to do so left the state in the hands of the bourgeois republicans and their Stalinist/communist allies who bided their time until they were well-organized enough to violently crush the CNT movement in the name of republican law and order.

Even worse, the movement largely betrayed its own principles by practices that ignored the will of the people. The radical affinity groups pursued insurrectionary tactics that produced a "growing disquiet" about their "elitism" and the undemocratic ways in which they would launch continuous insurrectionary actions. They depicted their actions as "catalytic" rather than "vanguardist", but most people recognized this was anarchist vanguardism under another name. The insurrectionists expected and appealed for mass support (which rarely materialized) for actions decided upon by no more than at most a hundred but in many instances just a dozen or so members of a particular affinity group. This created problems for everyone else. The anarcho-syndicalists of Madrid and Asturias complained that the cascading insurrectionary actions of the radical anarchist "grupistas" in Barcelona were disruptive rather than constructive. "Our revolution" they wrote in their daily paper, "requires more than an attack on a Civil Guard barracks or an army post. That is not revolutionary. We will call an insurrectionary general strike when the situation is right; when we can seize the factories, mines, power plants, transportation and the means of production" (quoted in Ealham, 2010: 144). What is the point of insurrectionary action, they said, if there is no idea let alone concrete plan to re-organize the world the day after?

There are two broad lines of critique of the conventional anarchist position in Ealham's account that are relevant to my argument. Firstly there is the failure to shape and mobilize political power into a sufficiently effective configuration to press home a revolutionary transformation in society as a whole. If, as seems to be the case, the world cannot be changed without taking power then what is the point of a movement that refuses to build and take that power? Secondly, there is an inability to stretch the vision of political activism from local to far broader geographical scales at which the planning of major infrastructures and the management of environmental conditions and long distance trade relations becomes a collective responsibility for millions of people. Who will manage the transport and communications network is the question. The anarchist town planners (including Bookchin) understood this problem but their work is largely ignored within the anarchist movement. These dimensions define terrains upon which anarchists but not Marxists are fearful of operating (which is not to say the Marxists have no failures to their credit). And it is here that the whole history of anarchist influences in centralized urban planning deserves to be resurrected. This is a complicated topic that I cannot possibly probe into more deeply here. But this is clearly the most obvious point where anarchist concerns for the qualities of daily life and Marxist perspectives on global capital flows and the construction of physical infrastructures through long-term investments could come together with constructive results.

Springer prefers insurrectionary to revolutionary politics. He does so on the grounds that revolutionaries typically sit for ever in the "waiting room of history" endlessly planning for the revolution that never comes whereas the insurrectionists "do it now." Well sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. But much of the rhetoric these days about the "coming insurrection" (announced by The Invisible Committee (2009) in 2007 in France but yet to materialize) is just that: rhetoric. I

hope that Springer's version is democratically based and not elitist and that he does the detailed organizing required to keep the electricity flowing, the subways running and the garbage picked up in the days that follow. I personally don't trust continuous insurrections that spring spontaneously from self-activity, which are thought of as "a means without end" and predicated on the idea that "we cannot liberate each other, we can only liberate ourselves" (Springer, 2014: 262-263). Self-liberation through insurrection is all well and good but what about everyone else?

I find Bookchin's line on all of this interesting, even if incomplete. Resolutely opposed as he was to the state and hierarchies as unreformable instruments of oppression and denial of human freedom, he was not naïve about the necessity of taking power:

> Every revolution, indeed, even every attempt to achieve basic change, will always meet with resistance from elites in power. Every effort to defend a revolution will require the amassing of power – physical as well as institutional and administrative – which is to say, the creation of government. Anarchists may call for the abolition of the state, but coercion of some kind will be necessary to prevent the bourgeois state from returning in full force with unbridled terror. For a libertarian organization to eschew, out of misplaced fear of creating a "state", taking power when it can do so with the support of the revolutionary masses is confusion at best and a total failure of nerve at worst (Bookchin, 2014: 183).

Graeber's response is to insist that anarchist strategy "is less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from it" (2002: 73). Only within such autonomous spaces can true democratic practices become possible. From my perspective this means creating a parallel state (like the Zapatistas) within the capitalist state. Such experiments rarely work and when they do, as in the case of the paramilitary forms of organization that dominate in Colombia or the various mafia like organizations that exist around the world (e.g. in Italy), they are rarely benign (in fact they are typically hornet's nests of extortion, violence and corruption). Even left revolutionary guerilla movements (such as the FARC in Colombia) experienced defaults of this kind and there is no guarantee that any parallel power structure devised by anarchists will not suffer from similar problems. In any case, the present penchant for 'government by NGO' provides a classic example of how ruling powers can co-opt and de-fang the radical idea of autonomy for their own purposes.

The anarchist and autonomista reluctance to take and consolidate power is rooted, I suspect, in the concept of the "free individual" upon which much anarchist and autonomista thinking rests. The critique of radical individualism runs as follows. The concept of the free individual bears the mark of liberal legal institutions (even of private property in the body and the self) spiced with a hefty dose of that personalized protestant religion which Weber associated with the rise of capitalism. To say, as Reclus did with great pride, that he had gone through life as a free individual, was to place himself firmly in the liberal and protestant tradition (Reclus' father was a protestant minister and for a while Reclus trained for the ministry; see

Chardak, 1997). His sort of anarchism has its roots in liberal theory and the Judeo-Christian tradition even as it constructs its anti-capitalism through the negation of the market and a critique of the class and environmental consequences of liberal theory and capitalist practices. There is nothing wrong with this (Marx also constructs largely by way of negation of classical political economy and its liberal and Judeo-Christian roots). But the result is an awkward overlap at times (which exists in both Marx and Proudhon) in which the critique incorporates and mirrors far too much of that which it criticizes. There is a real problem here which Springer evades by denouncing as "oxymoronic" anyone that places anarchist thinking too close to its liberal (and by extension neoliberal) roots as defined, for example, in Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). This is an issue that has to be rationally unpacked because it has had and potentially will continue to have real consequences.

In 1984 two MIT professors, Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, for example, published a book called *The Second Industrial Divide* (1984). Back in 1848, they argued, industrial capitalism faced a moment of technological possibility in its organization in which it could either move towards mass factory production of the sort that Marx predicted and embraced or take the path that Proudhon advocated, which was the linking together of small, independent workshops in which associated laborers could democratically control their work and their lives. The wrong choice was made after 1848, they claim, and thereafter mass factory production, with all of its evils, dominated industrial capitalism. But in the 1970s new technologies and organizational forms were emerging which posed that same choice anew. With flexible specialization and small batch and niche production, Proudhon's dream was once more a possibility. Piore and Sabel became fierce advocates for the new forms of industrial organization – termed "flexible specialization" – most classically represented at that time by the emerging industrial districts of the Third Italy. Both Piore and Sabel, armed with their reputations, their MacArthur grants and supported by so-called progressive thinkers and institutions of the time, set out to persuade the unions to embrace the Proudhonian vision rather than oppose the new technologies. Sabel became an influential advisor to the International Labour Organization. Many of us on the Marxist left were deeply troubled by this turn. I added my voice to the critics by arguing in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989; as well as at the AAG in Baltimore in 1987 when Sabel and I clashed fiercely), that flexible specialization was nothing other than a tactic of flexible accumulation for capital. The campaign to persuade or cajole (via the International Monetary Fund) countries to adopt policies for the flexibilization of labor was a sign of this intent (and it still goes on through IMF mandates, as now in Greece). In retrospect it is clear that this scheme, supported by Piore and Sabel and given an aura of progressive radicalism in the name of Proudhon, was a core element of neoliberalization, with all the consequences that flowed for the disempowerment of labor and labor's declining share of gains from productivity. This left nearly all of the newly produced wealth in the hands of the one percent. We badly need to disabuse ourselves of what Bookchin calls the "Proudhonist myth that small associations of producers….can slowly eat away at capitalism" (2014: 59). The

autonomistas, along with Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapelin in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2007), even go so far as to suggest that it was the working class practices of the autonomistas and the anarchists that were taken over by capital to create new forms of control and new networked organizational forms during the 1970s.

Capitalist anarchism is a real problem. It has its coherent central theory as set out by Nozick, Hayek and others, and a doctrine of market freedoms. It has turned out not only to be the most successful form of decentralized decision making ever invented – as Marx so elegantly demonstrated in Capital – but also a force for an immense centralization of wealth and power in the hands of an increasingly powerful oligarchy. This dialectic between decentralization and centralization is one of the most important contradictions within capital (see my *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*) and I wish all those, like Springer, who advocate decentralization as if it is an unalloyed good would look more closely at its consequences and contradictions. As I argued in *Rebel Cities* (2013a), decentralization and autonomy are primary vehicles for producing greater inequality and centralization of power. Once again, Bookchin sort of agrees: "at the risk of seeming contrary, I feel obliged to emphasize that decentralization, localism, self-sufficiency, and even confederation, each taken singly, do not constitute a guarantee that we will achieve a rational ecological society. In fact all of them have at one time or another supported parochial communities, oligarchies, and even despotic regimes" (2014: 73-74). This was, by the way, my main problem with the stance taken by Gibson-Graham in their pursuit of totally decentralized anti-capitalist alternatives.

While left anarchism of the Proudhon sort has no coherent theory, right-wing capitalist anarchism has a coherent theoretical structure that rests upon a seductive utopian vision of human freedom. It took the genius of Marx to deconstruct this theory in *Capital*. Small wonder that Marx in deconstructing it would find Proudhon's vision so unintendedly reactionary.

Which brings me to the question of the relations between Marx and Proudhon. I have freely recognized (e.g. in the companions to Marx's *Capital*, 2010: 6, 2013b: 189) that Marx drew far more from the French socialist tradition (including Proudhon) than he acknowledged and that he was often unfair in his criticisms of Proudhon (but then he was also just as unfair in his criticisms of Mill, Malthus and even Ricardo – this was just Marx's way). But Marx drew as much from the Jacobin Auguste Blanqui (who I think coined the phrase "the dictatorship of the proletariat", which Marx rarely used and should have put in scare quotes, thereby saving us from a lot of trouble), as well as Fourier (the opening of the chapter in *Capital* on the labor process is a hidden dialogue with him), Saint-Simon (who Marx admired to the degree that he saw the association of capitals in the form of the joint stock company as possibly a progressive move), Cabet, as well as Robert Owen (Blanqui's defense before the court of assizes in 1832 is an astonishing statement; Corcoran, 1983). But Marx's dependence on these thinkers, as was also the case with his dependency on

classical political economy, was marked for the most part by fierce critical interrogation as Marx sought to build his own theoretical apparatus to understand how capital accumulated. What Marx accepted and what he arrived at by negation in his interrogations from any of these people is a complicated question.

But to go from this recognition to suggest that Marx plagiarized everything from Proudhon in particular is indeed totally absurd. The idea of the exploitation of labour by capital, for example, was far more strongly articulated by Blanqui than by Proudhon and was completely accepted by the socialist Ricardians. It was obvious to pretty much everyone and Marx made no claims of originality in pointing to it. What Marx did was to show how that exploitation could be accomplished without violating laws of market exchange that theoretically (and in the utopian universe of classical political economy) rested upon equality, freedom and reciprocity. To promote those laws of exchange as the foundation of equality was to create the conditions for the centralization of capitalist class power. This was what Proudhon missed. When Marx pointed to the importance of the commodification of labor power he may well have been drawing on Blanqui without acknowledgement but even here it was Marx and not Blanqui who recognized its significance for the theory of capital. Marx's critique in the *Grundrisse* of the Proudhonian conception of money and of the idea that all that was needed for a peaceful transition to socialism was a reform of the monetary system was accurate (and of course Proudhon's free credit bank was an instantaneous disaster though it may have been bourgeois sabotage that made it so). Marx's critique of Proudhon's theories of eternal justice is also penetrating. It is here precisely that Marx points out how theories of justice are not universal but specific, and in the bourgeois case specific to the rise of liberal capitalism. To pursue the aim of universal justice as a revolutionary strategy ran the danger of simply instanciating bourgeois law within socialism. This is a familiar problem, as everyone working critically with notions of human rights recognizes. When Marx appealed, as he often did, to ideas of association he was almost certainly drawing more on Saint-Simon than Proudhon.

While Proudhon undoubtedly had important things to say, there are dangers of viewing him as representative of some perfected social anarchism. He had a weak grasp of political economy, did not support the workers in the revolution of 1848, was against trade unions and strikes and held to a narrow definition of socialism as nothing more than the association of workers mutually supporting each other. He was hostile to women working and his supporters campaigned vigorously in the workers commissions of the 1860s in France to have women banned from employment in the Paris workshops. The main opposition came from the Paris Branch of the International Working Men's Association led by Eugene Varlin who insisted upon women's equality and right to work (Harvey, 2003). Proudhon's book, *Pornography: The Situation of Women*, is, according to his biographer Edward Hyams, full of "every illiberal, every cruelly reactionary notion ever used against female emancipation by the most extreme anti-feminist" (1979: 274). OK, so Marx was no saint either on such matters. Both anarchism and Marxism have had and

continue to have a troubled history on the gender question but on this topic Proudhon is an extreme and ugly outlier.

What is really odd is that before the Commune, in the 1860s, Marxists and anarchists were not at logger-heads in the same way as they later became. Reclus and many Proudhonians attended the meetings of the International Working Men's Association and I recall reading somewhere that Marx asked Reclus if he would be willing to translate *Capital* from German into French. Reclus did not do so. I do sense, however, that Marx felt that Proudhon was his chief rival for the affections of the French revolutionary working class and in part concentrated his critical fire against him for that reason. But the clash of ideologies within the Paris Commune was between many factions, such as the centralizing and often violent Jacobinism of the Blanquists and variations of the Proudhonian decentralized associationists. The communists, like Varlin, were a minority. The subsequent appropriation of the Commune by Marx, Engels and Lenin as a heroic if fatally flawed uprising on the part of the working classes does not stand up to historical examination any more than does the story that it was the product of a purely urban social movement that had nothing to do with class. I view the Commune as a class event if only because it was a revolt against bourgeois structures of power and domination in both the living spaces as well as in the workplaces of the city (Harvey, 2003). Who "lost" the Commune became, however, a major issue in which the finger-pointing between Marx and Bakunin played a critical role in creating a huge gulf between the anarchist and Marxist traditions (a gulf that Springer seems concerned to deepen if he can).

The individualism that lies at its emotional base does not, of course, lead social anarchism to ignore the importance of collective activities, the construction of solidarities or building a variety of organizational forms. As Springer puts it, "Anarchist organizing is limited only by our imagination, where the only existent criteria are that they proceed non-hierarchically and free from external authority…..This could include almost any form of organization, from a volunteer fire brigade for safety, to community gardens for food, to cooperatives for housing, to knitting collectives for clothes" (2014: 253). There is, however, something deceptive about such lists. Having experienced the "joys" of living in a housing coop in New York City I can assure everyone that there is nothing particularly liberatory or progressive about it. The standard anarchist response to this is to say that this would not be so if the anarchists were in charge. This, of course, begs the question of which organizational forms are truly anarchist as opposed to just convenient for any form of hegemonic power (including that of the anarchists). The rule, here, seems to be that all forms of social organization are possible except that of the state.

For this reason anarchists are often drawn to adopt indigenous communities as one of their favored forms of association because of their ability to pursue communal forms of action without creating anything that resembles a state. This underpins Chomsky's embrace of the Mapuche in Southern Chile (the Mapuche kept the Spanish invaders and the Chilean government at bay for hundreds of years) and

James Scott's characterization of the indigenous populations of Highland Southeast Asia as prototypical anarchist in form. In some ways this is an odd coupling because for most indigenous populations the radical individualism that underpins much of Western anarchism is meaningless given their relational collectivism and their general appreciation of harmony and spiritual membership as core cultural values. Unfortunately in the case of the Mapuche, the penetrations of commodification, money and merchant capitalism are currently doing far more damage than either Spanish colonialism or the Chilean state ever did to their core cultural values. As Marx puts it, "when money dissolves the community it becomes the community" and what is happening to many indigenous societies is exactly that. While these social orders and their value systems are of great merit, I fear that a political program that argued for the populations of North America and Europe to live like the Mapuche, the highland tribes of Asia or the Zapatistas would not go very far and in any case would do little or nothing to curb the avaricious practices of capital accumulation through dispossession that are currently at work in Amazonia and other hitherto relatively untouched regions of the world. And in some instances, such as Otavalo in Ecuador or even more spectacularly in El Alto in Bolivia (with more than a million people mostly indigenous Almara), the embrace of the market produces a vibrant indigenous culture with entrepreneurial merchant capitalist characteristics.

This is, however, a good point to take up the question of the state as perhaps the conceptual rubicon that neither side is prepared to cross. For most anarchists and many non-anarchists, opposition to and rejection of the state and of the hierarchical institutions that support and surround it (like parliamentary democracy and political parties) is a non-negotiable ideological position. This is not to say that anarchists do not on occasion engage with the state (they often have no choice in the face, for example, of repressive police actions) or even vote (as many did in the 2015 Greek election for example). But after his break with anarchism, Bookchin continued to view the state as a structure set up from the very first in the image of hierarchical domination, exploitation and human repression, and therefore unreformable.

I disagree with that view. The state was the subject of a huge and divisive debate (in which Holloway was a major protagonist) within Marxism for two decades or more. I still think Gramsci and the late Poulantzas worth reading for their insights and Jessop nobly continues the struggle to adapt the Marxist position to current realities. My own simplified view is that the state is a ramshackle set of institutions existing at a variety of geographical scales that internalize a lot of contradictions, some of which can potentially be exploited for emancipatory rather than obfuscatory or repressive ends (its role in public health provision has been crucial to increasing life expectancy for example), even as for the most part it is about hierarchical control, the enforcement of class divisions and conformities and the repression (violent when necessary) of non-capitalistic liberatory human aspirations. Monopoly power within the judiciary (and the protection of private property), over money and the means of exchange and over the means of violence, policing and repression, are its only coherent functions essential to the perpetuation of capital while everything else is sort of optional in relation to the powers of different interest groups (with

capitalists and nationalists by far the most influential). But the state has and continues to have a critical role to play in the provision of large-scale physical and social infrastructures. Any revolutionary (or insurrectionary) movement has to reckon with the problem of how to provide such infrastructures. Society (no matter whether capitalist or not) needs to be reproduced and the state has a key role in doing that. In recent times the state has become more and more a tool of capital and far less amenable to any kind of democratic control (other than the crude democracy of money power). This has led to the rising radical demand for direct democracy (which I would support). Yet even now there are still enough examples of the progressive uses of state power for emancipatory ends (for example, in Latin America in recent years) to not give up on the state as a terrain of engagement and struggle for progressive forces of a left wing persuasion.

The odd thing here is that the more autonomistas and anarchists grapple with the necessity to build organizations that have the capacity to ward off bourgeois power and to build the requisite large-scale infrastructures for revolutionary transformation, the more they end up constructing something that looks like some kind of state. This is the case with the Zapatistas, for example, even as they hold back from any attempt to take power within the Mexican state. Bookchin's position on all of this is interesting. On the one hand he argues that the notion that "human freedom can be achieved, much less perpetuated, through a state of *any* kind is monstrously oxymoronic" (2014: 39). On the other hand, he also holds that anarchists have wrongly "long regarded every government as a state and condemned it – a view that is a recipe for the elimination of any organized social life whatever". A "government is an ensemble of institutions designed to deal with the problems of consociational life in an orderly and hopefully fair manner." Opposition to the state must not carry over to opposition to government: "The libertarian opposition to law, not to speak of government as such, has been as silly as the image of a snake swallowing its tail" (2014: 13). Consensus decision making, he says, "threatens to abolish society as such." Simple majority voting suffices. There must also be a "serious commitment" to a "formal constitution and appropriate by-laws" because "without a democratically formulated and approved institutional framework whose members and leaders can be held accountable, clearly articulated standards of responsibility cease to exist…..Freedom from authoritarianism can best be assured only by the clear, concise and detailed allocation of power, not by pretensions that power and leadership are forms of "rule" or by libertarian metaphors that conceal their reality" (2014: 27). All of this looks to me like a reconstruction of a certain kind of state (but this may be nothing more than semantics). Hardt and Negri have also recently recognized the limitations of horizontalism, the importance of leadership, even suggesting that the time may be ripe to reconsider the question of taking state power. In the course of this, Negri has publically noted a certain evolution and convergence between his and my views on some of these questions (2015).

Let me conclude with a commentary on how Springer misrepresents my critique of certain forms of organization that anarchists currently advocate. "Harvey," he writes,

> scorns what he refers to as the 'naïve' and 'hopeful gesturing' of decentralized thinking, lamenting how the term 'hierarchy' is 'virulently unpopular with much of the left these days'. The message rings through loud and clear. How dare anarchists (and autonomists) attempt to conceive of something different and new, when we should be treading water in the sea of yesterday's spent ideas (2014: 265).

My central complaint in *Rebel Cities* from which his initial citation is drawn is that the "left as a whole is bedeviled by an all-consuming 'fetishism of organizational form'" (2013a: 125). I make common cause on this with Bookchin who writes: "No organizational model, however, should be fetishized to the point where it flatly contradicts the imperatives of real life" (2014: 183). Springer and many other anarchists and autonomistas consider the only legitimate form of organization to be horizontal, decentered, open, consensual and non-hierarchical. "Just to be clear," I wrote, "I am not saying horizontality is bad – indeed I think it an excellent objective – but that we should acknowledge its limits as a hegemonic organizational principle, and be prepared to go far beyond it when necessary" (2013a: 70). In the case of the management of the commons, for example, it is difficult if not impossible (as Elinor Ostrom's work had demonstrated) to take consensual horizontality to much larger scales such as the metropolitan region, the bioregion, and certainly not the globe (as in the case of global warming). At those scales it was impossible to proceed without setting up "confederal" or "nested" (which means inevitably hierarchical in my view but then this too may just be semantics) structures of decision making that entailed serious adjustments in organized thinking as well as forms of institutionalized governance.

I cited both Murray Bookchin and David Graeber in support of this point. The latter had noted that decentralized communities "have to have some way to engage with larger economic, social or political systems that surround them. This is the trickiest question because it has proved extremely difficult for those organized on radically different lines to integrate themselves in any meaningful way in larger structures without having to make endless compromises in their founding principles" (Graeber, 2009: 239). I was interested in taking up what some of those endless compromises might have to be. I then went on to suggest that Bookchin's proposal for municipal libertarianism organized confederally was "by far the most sophisticated radical proposal to deal with the creation and collective use of the commons at a variety of scales" (2013a: 85). I supported Bookchin's proposal for a "'municipal libertarianism' embedded in a bioregional conception of associated municipal assemblies rationally regulating their interchanges with each other as well as with nature. It is at this point," I suggested, "that the world of practical politics fruitfully intersects with the long history of largely anarchist-inspired utopian thinking and writing about the city" (2013a: 138). There were, however, some limits to extending Bookchin's organizational ideas all the way (although there

are apparently current attempts to do so under the auspices of the Kurdish PKK to the recently liberated Kobane; see TATORT, 2013).

And I thought it important to state what these might be. Looking more closely at the organizational forms that were animated in the revolutionary upsurges in El Alto in the early 2000s, I suggested that we might need to look at a variety of intersecting organizational forms, including those favored by the "horizontalists", which cut across other more confederal and in some instances vertical structures. I ended up with a fairly utopian sketch of intersecting organizational forms – both vertical and horizontal – that might work in governing a large metropolitan area such as New York City (2013a: 151-153).

This is what Springer considers "treading water in the sea of yesterday's spent ideas" (2014: 265)!! The problem here, I submit, is Springer's fetishization of consensual horizontality as the only admissible organizational form. It is this exclusive and exclusionary dogma that stands in the way of exploring appropriate and effective solutions. I accept what Graeber calls "the rich and growing panoply of organizational instruments" that anarchists of various stripes have adopted (or in some cases adapted from indigenous practices) in recent years. These have contributed significantly to the repertoire of possible left political organizational forms and of course I agree (who could not) that the critical aim of reinventing democracy should be a central concern. But the evidence is clear that we need organizational forms that go beyond those within which many anarchists and autonomistas now confine themselves if we are to reinvent democracy while pursuing a coherent anti-capitalist politics. I support Syriza, for example, as did Negri and several Greek anarchists I know, and Podemos not because they are revolutionary but because they help open up a space for a different kind of politics and a different conversation. The mobilization of political power is essential and the state cannot be neglected as a potential site for radicalization. On all these points I beg to differ with many of my autonomist and anarchist colleagues.

But this does not preclude collaboration and mutual aid with respect to the many other common anti-capitalist struggles with which we are engaged. Honest disagreements should be no barrier to fertile collaborations. So the conclusion I reach is this: let radical geography be just that: radical geography, free of any particular "ism", nothing more, nothing less.

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