DIY Politics and World-making: Mutual Aid, Anarchism and Alternative Solutions

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Many are drawn to an anti-authoritarian organizing ethos after witnessing the hyper-controls of large organizations up close. After watching Nicaraguan Revolution of 1978-9, anthropologist Luis Fernandez (2012) concluded that the revolution had replaced one oppressive structure with another. So he turned to anarchism. "The classical anarchist thought began to help me explain that if you are not careful with certain human organizations, they tend to reproduce hierarchical relationships that end up reproducing these tendencies for human control," (Fernandez, 2012).

Anarchist, autonomist and grass roots organizations (AGROs) have fashioned countless approaches to community organization. Some involve anti-authoritarian impulses toward freedom extending into approaches to public health, urban development and social services. Others are born of a Do-It-Yourself spirit which says build what you can with what you have. Through such activities, social capital expands supporting alternate models of mutual aid. This paper considers this search for new models of organization and community development.

Do-It-Yourself to Create Counterpower

"The idea of just going out and doing it, or as it is popularly expressed in the underground, the do-it-yourself ethic..." notes Stephen Duncombe (1997)."Doing it yourself is at once a critique of the dominant mode of passive consumer culture and something far more important: the active creation of an alternative culture. DiY is not just complaining about what is, but actually doing something different." Throughout the last four decades, anti- authoritarian organizers, anarchists, and queers have found their way into countless social and cultural

movements with the spirit Duncombe describes. Through DIY culture, punks, poets, organizers, junkies and community gardeners have built their own projects, groups, and structures, and forums, using counter power to fashion spaces and counter institutions of their own design (Gautney, 2010).   Along the way, they fashion a world of their own creation within the shell of the old.

"By counter-power I understand the capacity by social actors to challenge and eventually change the power relations institutionalized in society," notes social movement scholar Manuel Castells (2007). "In all known societies, counter-power exists under different forms and with variable intensity, as one of the few natural laws of society, verified throughout history, asserts that wherever is domination, there is resistance to domination, be it political, cultural, economic, psychological, or otherwise."

This is very much an act of doing something. Rather than succumbing to despair, it helps social actors find a route to fashion a better world by building alternatives. "The DIY movement is about using anything you can get your hands on to shape your own cultural identity, your own version of whatever you think is missing in mainstream culture," writes Amy Spencer (2005, p. 11). "[T]he enduring appeal of this movement is that anyone can be an artist or a creator." Drawn into the action, those involved help create alternates, ideas, and projects with whatever tools they have. Much of this takes shape within a public commons – of music venues and meeting spaces - of the movement's own creation. Participants tend to follow a gut instinct "to create a new cultural form and transmit it to others," (Spencer 2005, p. 14). Here, use is valued over commercial exchange, as participants play with new social realities, creating a space for life, reflection, art and pleasure (Holtzman et al, 2004).

Efforts to create a new world have taken place in many venues and DIY cultural projects. Building on movements extending back to Dada and Emma Goldman's anarchism, queer groups and punks have helped create space which blur social boundaries. Take organizer and musician Bonfire Madigan. Influenced by the Riot Grrl Movement, Madigan starting playing music and putting out records when she was a teenager. "Riot Grrl is a cultural movement which is still happening really, in that it's a feminist based, DIY movement of empowering young women to take our lives into our own hands and sharing this with the world," explains Madigan. "I like to think it always had an anarcho-feminist bent and our heroines were people like Emma Goldman and Lucy Parsons. We held up images of Pippi Longstocking and Girl Power Now." Born as social organizing, the project took off from a spirit of creative direct action. "We organized big sticker making parties, where we had Girls Fight Back, with little girls with big fangs, we put them on the buses or at the hangout centers where the punk bands were. We saw no images of women empowered to participate in creating or defining our lives."

Riot Grrl was an expressive critique of repressive social mores. This ethos churned through the mix of passion, bodies, sweat, play, violence, and pathos of the punk scene. "Punk," writes Stephen Duncombe (n.d.), "was not just a music; it was an attitude, an ethic, and a sense of community." Punk's organizing an extension of DiY culture, notes Duncombe. "This value put on self-sufficiency came largely from necessity… DIY…is an ideal that transcends immediate need. It's an ethic that guides the punk outlook on the world, encompassing not only the logistics of a music scene, but also artistic creation and political action." Here, music, poetry, and cultural production serve as a basis for a community of resistance. "The scene is a place where punks can practice DIY most intimately, in constructing a community by and for themselves that offers up a system of values, aspirations, and behaviors in rebellion against those

of the mainstream society." It builds on cultural movements dating back decades. "The scene gives the support and reinforcement necessary to stand up and against the daily onslaught of the hegemonic culture. It's a safe space to experiment with new ways of being and doing." Here, those involved find support to experiment with new practices in living. "It's a place to reinvent yourself." Duncombe explains.

Spreading from Queens to Cairo, London to Long Beach, the punk scene found its way into spaces for organizing around the world. Take Positive Force, a Washington DC based is "party activist collective" that Mark Andersen helped to co-found in 1985. "We organize benefit and free concerts, art shows, film screenings, protests, and educational events while also doing direct work with people in need," explains its founder Mark Andersen. The group believes in building a community in which regular people support social change efforts. "People who want to fundamentally alter that system will not tend to have the majority of the money or the majority of the guns," explains Andersen. Yet they do have is "power and that is people. And that's really, really important. But how do you get these people reasonably coordinated and together? Well, you've got to be creative. You've got to figure out the way to draw people together. The divisive power of money and buying people off is immense. And of course the fear factor of the repressive force of the apparatus that defends that system is also immense. We need people and to get the people we need to be really creative." For Positive Force, creativity is a mechanism which challenges isolation; it churns through the group's work, transforming alienation into community projects. A few such projects include support for grocery delivery to elders, volunteer work at the syringe exchange, and support for sex workers.

In their own way, each punk show, zine, poem, film, zap, piece of art, gesture of direct action, form of guerilla media helps spread the word and create solidarity. For Bonfire Madigan,

punk shows were spaces where movements she cared about – from Riot Grrrl to Home Alive – found expression. Home Alive was a Seattle based anti-violence organization which helped teach women self-defense. At each show, they would set up teach-ins. People would get up onstage and show women in attendance how to do "eye, knees, groin, throat, where to hit if you're being attacked," Madigan explains. Their work served as an optimistic, performative response to world of violence. "Then there'd be girls on drums pounding along to this whole audience, in between band sets, on how to do self-defense as you get home that night." Rather than dictate, participants were invited to participate. As we learned earlier, sometimes cultural resistance is an ideal framework to make visceral breakthroughs possible (Kahn 1995). "People tell me that I compose the kind of music that makes them want to raise their fist and weep and shake their butt all at the same time," confesses Madigan proudly. "And I think how often do we have the opportunity to bring all that emotional, cerebral and tangible reality into our interacting in our lives?" In this way, everyday life becomes an arena for social change. With each show or piece of art, DiY culture helps those involved thinking about another way of seeing the world. But it is not by telling people what to think or hitting somebody over the head. "I also always have materials that are handmade, fanzines and music and homemade or handmade accessories and stuff," notes Madigan. At her shows, people connect with each other through self-made art, zines, and creative gestures. "It becomes a new shared culture," explains Madigan. "I call my work sometimes post-apocalyptic self-help music with this mantra of share or die. That's why I get so angry and frustrated with capitalism, it's robbed me of my ability to know how to cooperate and trust and love sharing." In this way, Madigan's work connects with a systematic critique and social movement. "It created whole new networks of allies," notes Madigan. "More so than ever I see young gay men joining forces with feminists, calling themselves feminists.

And I can only feel safer and more empowered to define my own life knowing there's people who want to see me and feminism have an opportunity to thrive." Over the years, the culture has evolved and changed. "More women are safer, have the ability to reach out, are fighting for things like reproductive rights. And also more young women are creating their own small businesses, making their own clothing and lives and ideas."

Anarchism, Mutual Aid, and Communities of Support

A foundation of DiY culture is the practice of anarchism. "[A]narchists work toward two general goals. First they want to dismantle oppressive, hierarchical institutions. Second, they want to replace those institutions with organic, horizontal, and cooperative versions based on autonomy, solidarity, voluntary association, mutual aid and direct action," notes anthropologist Luis Fernandez writes (2008, p. 53). "[A]utonomy, voluntary association, and mutual aid [are] central values," (p. 52). Through mutual aid, anarchism takes shape as a practice in care, exchanging resources and solidarity, information, support, even comfort, care, and understanding. People give what they can and get what they need. When a group comes together to push for a change; when social outsiders come together to share or explore ideas and new ways of living–these are all forms of mutual aid (Steinberg, 2004).

In an era of a dwindling welfare state with social safety net provisions crumbling (Saini, 2009), the importance of mutual aid and support networks could not be more important. The examples of such models are many. Clients at a syringe exchange share a place to stay. Such mutual aid networks helped keep many alive and off the streets, where they inevitably would have been swept up by police and sent to the de facto poor person's housing provider: city jail. In San Francisco, when people lose lovers to the AIDS crisis, neighborhood members formed a group called the Mary Widowers. This mutual aid group helps widowers cope with their losses,

find new spaces for care, work, love, art, and fun (Shepard, 1997). Mutual aid helps people survive.

Syringe exchange activist Donald Grove helped organize an underground syringe exchange program called Moving Equipment. "It was about creating a basis of mutual self-support from which we could do this other stuff." And much of that support was born of an ethos of care among social outsiders. "User organizing, people want it to be about political campaigns and stuff like that but what I see is that users are already organized in a hostile environment about just providing basic survival needs. To say that is not enough is to demand that everything and all political models act and look like the dominant political model." Sometimes self-care is enough.

Survival projects such as this build on direct action, direct care continuum born of an impulse to take solutions into one's own hands. "Direct action, or taking action based on one's beliefs," Luis Fernandez (2008, p. 53) suggests. "[I]t means solving the problem concretely and directly confronting authority if necessary." Rather than appealing for the state to change a policy (Graeber 2009), anarchist direct action is framed around creating solutions - serving free meals to the hungry, planting a community in a vacant lot, or squatting an abandoned building for those without anywhere else to stay. The point is creating a solution within one's own means, via creativity and a do it yourself spirit of cooperation, and care.

For Donald Grove, much of this takes shape as an impulse to support his community. "Moving Equipment was really this very positive, supportive environment. Within that framework we were able to get a select amount of work done." Countless movements and cultures have built on these traditions of mutual aid and community care (Graeber, 2009). After all, mutual aid is a practice which has existed for ages, note members of the Occupy Wall Street

May Day Mutual Aid Cluster. In essence, it is an exchange of resources and services in a way which is both voluntary and mutually beneficial to those involved. From this perspective, everyone has something to offer and share. Instead of relying on the state, groups this rely on one another. "We want to demonstrate that mutual aid is a viable alternative to capitalism," explain the MayDay Cluster. "Actions of mutual aid prove that scarcity is manufactured by capitalist structures that commodify everything from the environment to human life in order to build individual wealth, whereby mutual aid seeks to build community. Value is placed on a large spectrum, not just on monetary or material goods. Relationship and community building within the structures of mutual aid are of the highest value. We want to support those taking part in strikes and other actions on May Day through mutual aid."

Social welfare scholar Loretta Pyles (2009) witnessed the innovation born of necessity after Katrina and the flooding of New Orleans in August 2005. With the Lower-Ninth Ward, loaded with dilapidated houses, seemingly abandoned by government relief efforts, regular people took action, providing resources where there was little else, and neighbors shared resources with each other. Through such exchanges, those involved created new spaces, networks, and collectives (Crowe, 2012; Pyles, 2009, p 36). Such tradition hearkens back to the Black Panther food and survival programs of the late 1960's and early 1970's, which included medical services, free breakfast for kids, clothing, education, and prison support discussed earlier in section three. Such efforts are important because they emphasize empowerment of marginalized people and a social change agenda aimed at dislocating mechanisms of power which place an undue burden on the poor. Here social services are seen as one tool to provide essentials supplies to those in need, yet not an end in itself. Instead, they are seen as a first step in a process which emphasizes social change by challenging causes of oppression, exploitation,

and degradation (Pyles, 2009, p. 8). Part of the appeal of anti-authoritarian organizing to such practices is its open rejection administrative social controls in favor or a politics of freedom, the creation of new social relations and direct democracy. In this way, activists cultivate alternatives to spaces based on domination and hierarchy (p. 37).

Donald Grove offers another example. "In 1997 at the San Diego needle exchange conference, there was a group called the Sex Workers of Toronto (SWOT). They were brilliant. They said look, 'our goal is to take care of each other. We don't have a political agenda. We're sex workers. And we're shooting drugs. And our thing is to make sure we have a place to live. And we do it for each other."

"I think that they ultimately all work together," explains Madigan. "I have to look at literally every day of my life as an art project. If I want to wear two different shoes that day I want to know that I'm going to be in the culture of life where I'm not going to be thrown in some crazy house or something...to me it's almost act of resistance, playful... We can be whole new human beings. We get to decide. Whose reality is this? We can perform out the lives we want to see right now we don't have to wait for some other world, or room, or reality, it's right here— take advantage."

A Politics of Freedom

Today, countless movements have come to think of other ways of looking at mental illness and reality. Rather than take more medications which fill the coffers of pharmaceutical companies, groups such as Mind Freedom call for alternatives for people being labeled with psychiatric disabilities. For example, the Icarus Project is a project which Madigan supports. They call for:

…a new culture and language that resonates with our actual experiences of 'mental illness' rather than trying to fit our lives into a conventional framework. We are a network of people living with and/or affected by experiences that are often diagnosed and labeled as psychiatric conditions. We believe these experiences are mad gifts needing cultivation and care, rather than diseases or disorders. By joining together as individuals and as a community, the intertwined threads of madness, creativity, and collaboration can inspire hope and transformation in an oppressive and damaged world. Participation in The Icarus Project helps us overcome alienation and tap into the true potential that lies between brilliance and madness (Icarus Project, 2006).

Looking beyond deficits based psychiatric models which emphasize diagnosis of pathologies over human agency, the Icarus Project (2006) seeks: "new space and freedom for extreme states of consciousness." Instead of more psychic prisons, "[w]e call for more options in understanding and treating emotional distress, and we advocate for everyone, regardless of income, to have access to these choices…" This call is consistent with research which recognizes that those with mental illness benefit from participation in decision making about their own lives (Linhorst and Eckert, 2003).

Icarus Project is very much a product of the DIY spirit, which translates art into ideas and actions. "All of us with a relationship to the punk scene brought something to it and took something from it," note Duncombe and Tremblay (2011, p.17). "Punk mattered, and it still matters. There is something to that, when it works, is incredibly effective." Out this movement grew: "punk-influenced political gestures like Reclaim the Streets, Food Not Bombs, and the Icarus Project or even the mass globalization protests, which applied punk style, strategy and infrastructure to other forms of organization," (p. 17). These cultural movements helped blur

lines between audience and performer; instead of looking for a leader, everyone could become involved, do more than complain, and create solutions. This was the spirit of community members planting gardens in rubble heaps, squatted buildings when they did not know how to fix buildings; and give out food even when they could not afford it; they helped occupy Wall Street when they did not know what else to do with inequality. Countless projects and mutual aid groups have taken shape within a similar vein over the years.

Social movements of the last five decades – from the Beats to Punk, Civil Rights to the Gay Liberation – helped serve as inspiration for social organizing. Personal freedom, autonomy, and self-determination serve as abiding principles for these movements (Fernandez, 2008). Over the years, they gained vitality through an embrace the insurrectionary power of pleasure and connection. Throughout the Gay Liberation Movement gay people met and cruised (Shepard, 1997). A part of going to a protest was meeting friends. Take New York organizer Tim Dooty. "It mixes cruising and public sex." he mused, describing his model of activism. "Queeruption is a great example of that, of people creating a space and doing it themselves, coming up with all these different activities, putting out workshops on things like survival shoplifting to trans activism. There was definitely a pleasure politics in there. One of the most amazing things for me in Queeruption, in addition to seeing all these colors of hair, the colors of the rainbow, all these spikes, was meeting a guy and going down to the old concrete slab in Dumbo and playing old Ani DiFranco songs. That was totally part of resistance. When we're not in the streets fighting, this is what we like to be doing."

This creativity can also serve as a life force. Mark Andersen tapped into this energy to help his group, collaborate and share spaces with other communities. "It created a space first with our communal house. Well, actually first with our meetings at the Washington Peace

Center. And then with our communal house," explained Andersen. "Positive Force exists 20 years after it started and this whole time it's all volunteer, no one's ever gotten paid to do anything with Positive Force, somehow it all worked together—the music, the special community in D.C., the ideas behind it. Positive Force was never a narrowly ideological group; in a sense it functioned as a support group and as a necessity had to have fairly flexible, if clearly radical, politics."

Over time, Anderson helped link the efforts of Positive Force and services groups, providing services to the elderly, building bridges across communities in the city. "Positive Force has come to volunteer and through that they've been able to tie an essentially largely white suburban punk community to a by and large very low income, inner city African-American community and create spaces where people can start to build relationships across these kinds of boundaries. The aspect of building relationships or building family of some sort is so important. And naturally within that the playful element comes down, because all of a sudden this is not just simply, OK, we're here for this instrumental purpose of getting from A to Z. We're here because that's how human beings are meant to be. They're meant to be social creatures. When they get together they find joy in the encounter of another person." For Andersen, networks of care are born through these connections. "And that's part of when we can create these contexts where we can get to know each other and kind of build community and family, where the incredible potential that human beings carry within them becomes possible to be realized." These connections helped Andersen and company help create a punk space in the senior center

As Positive Force was growing, a global justice movement was inspiring new cohorts of activists, linking seemingly unrelated movements. Such movements, "remind us that resistance always lies just below the surface, waiting to rise when least expected," notes Fernandez (2008,

p.172). This movement connected different kinds of organizations interacting with local communities as well as the global economic forces. And in between the ebb and flow of convergence actions, cultural groups, such as Positive Force and Times Up! built on the lessons of punk and DIY culture to create new cultures of resistance out of a wide range of movements with influences, such as anarchism, dating back decades (Graeber, 2009).

A Short History of Anarchism

The roots of anarchism can be traced to Europe in the mid-1800's. The anti-statist, anti-authoritarianism of Mikhail Bakunin's work was hugely influential for the movement. Flashpoints include the 19th century Haymarket Riot, when labor activists were shot down in Chicago, Emma Goldman's struggles against efforts to control the body and imagination, and the Spanish Civil War as anarchists fought fascists (Gautney, 2009).

During the Spanish Civil War, women played a particularly important role in both the anarchist and resistance movements. The Free Women, or Mujeres Libres, aimed to end the subjugation of women to men, ignorance and capital, insisting social revolution should not be postponed. Bridging the gap between direct action and direct services, these Free Women provided free education, childcare and healthcare. And the movement spread influencing the new government. Frederico Montseny lead efforts to provide healthcare, even abortion services, as Minister of Health in the Republican Government. And at its peak, over 30,000 were part of this federation of women (Ackelsberg, 2004).

The efforts of the anarchist Mujeres Libres very much anticipated the women's movement. "The activists of 1960's were critical not only of capitalism, but also the patriarchal state and all forms of authority, over regulation, and social control," notes Heather Gautney (2009, 113). Throughout the period, "[f]eminists of all stripes founded their own abortion

clinics, shelters for rape, and victims of domestic violence, and formed consciousness raising groups to deal with issues specifically related to patriarchy and its manifestations in the lives of women," Gautney continues (p.122) "[T]hey also gave birth to punk, which resisted the cultural consensus of the conservative 1980s," (p.113).

Here, groups, such as Mark Andersen's Positive Force helped bridge the gap between cultural resistance, direct action, and organizing. "One of my basic ground rules as an organizer is you start with your community that you are part of," notes Mark Andersen. "It's just logical. You have a certain credibility and knowledge there that enables you to be successful in doing this. Now, clearly the organizing ultimately has to go beyond subcultural niches, you also have to build alliances with other communities. And also, help to foster that same organizing and empowerment there." In this way, the practice of anarchism takes shape as an interaction between organizing, resistance movements such as punk, services and connection among community members.   Such a practice is often described in terms of a set of prefigurative practices and approaches to living, shared by organizers whether they "identify as anarchists" or not suggests Heather Gautney (2009,   p.112). Elements of this "anarchist praxis" include "decentralized organization, voluntary association, mutual aid, direct action, and a general rejection of the idea that a movement's goals could justify authoritarian methods for achieving them," (p. 112).   And there is good reason for this.

The game of politics often leaves people cold or embittered (Duncombe, 2007; Zinn, 2002). So organizers in the anarchist tradition suggest the way we get there matters—it's got to be fun to organize. Emma Goldman is associated with a famous quote (which she did not actually say) "If I can't dance, it's not my revolution." Many look to a more a more free flowing, rambunctious ludic approach (Shepard, 2011).   Take French social theorist Henri Lefebvre.

After being expelled from the French communist party, Lefebvre developed an increasingly festive, exuberant, even playful Marxist urbanism. Asked if he had become an anarchist, he is known to have replied, "I'm a Marxist, of course... so that one day we can all become anarchists," (quoted in Merrifield, 2002: 72). This playful disposition resonates throughout anti-authoritarian organizing circles.

Rejecting the coercive approaches to organizing seen in NGO's or state party politics, anarchist inspired organizing tends to dedicate its energies toward "movement building and challenging illegitimate forms of authority that deflect power away from everyday people," notes Heather Gautney (2009, 112). "Many autonomists and anarchists believe that radical change and ultimately, freedom and the good life, can be discovered through direct action (protests, but also "squatting") and the development of cooperative projects and counter cultural communities, and not through the realization of of predetermined revolutionary movement or participation in electoral processes abstracted from the conditions of everyday life," (p.112). This sentiment is better understood as a set of practices than any one social or political movement.

Graffiti in the streets of Paris in 1968 called for "all power to the imagination!" This message inspired generations of anarchists. Hopes and dreams help us realize it, hence the concept of "imaginal machines." For anti-authoritarian thinker Stevphen Shukaitis (2009, p.13), "imaginal machines" are "are composed by the affective states they animate, reflecting the capacities to affect and be affected by the worlds that are contained within them. They activate a cartography of thought," (2009, p.13). Such mechanics propel regular people to dream. "Themes of imagination, creativity and desire run throughout the radical left movements,'" explains Shukaitis (p.13-14). Such thinking ties projects from Mujes Libres to today's Critical Mass bike rides. "[T]hey exist within a secret drift of history that runs from medieval heresies to

bohemian dreams of the Big Rock Candy Mountain in the 1930s. It is a drift that connects Surrealism with migrant workers, the IWW with Dadaism, and back again." (p. 14). Often neglected, these ambitions, "find channels of influence in collective dreams and a pervasive yearning for freedom," (p.14).

In order to contend with these hopes for a better life, many anarchists turn to the concepts of everyday life and autonomy. Why everyday life? It is a way to stay clear of fixating on the spectacular moments of history at the expense of so many more enticing moments. Many could not make it to Paris in 1968 or Seattle in 1999. Yet, they still took part in their own delirious struggles for jobs, play spaces, and autonomous communities. "Following the ideas of the Situationists and many related currents of thought, the idea is to refuse to fetishize particular dramatic, visible moments of trans- formation," (Shukaitis, p.15). The struggle is for freedom and autonomy in everyday rather than a totality. Here, "autonomy broadly refers to forms of struggle and politics that are not determined by the institutions of the official left (unions, political parties, etc.)," (Shukaitis, p.17). At its core, such a politics steers clear of party politics; it functions as, "a rejection of the mediation of struggles by institutional forms," (p.17). Instead autonomous organizing projects tend to be characterized by, "self-organization… non-hierarchical organization, horizontal communication and relationships," (p.17). The concept of autonomy is particularly appealing for those favoring a politics of freedom and self-determination. While it is hard to imagine anyone opposing such politics, many of the professional left as well as the right tend to oppose such organizational practices.

Those who support such practices face in any number of obstacles: first and foremost, the world of work and neoliberal economic forces, which seems to have rigged the game. "Questions around how the nightmare of capitalism began, how the horrors of capitalist

accumulation were set in motion, are in many ways a logical starting point for a consideration of the existing state of affairs and how to escape from it," notes Shukaitis (p.33). "We begin, from a scream of terror formed in the realization that the daily horrors and suffering around the world are not props in some B-movie but are all too real" (p.33). The point of organizing is remind us there is still room for agency. "It is possible to find not fear, but hope, in the apocalypse: to turn the process of the subsumption against itself and to create a new basis for radical politics from the reclaiming of the flesh of zombified struggles," Shukaitis follows (p. 49). It is up to us to move beyond the B movie, the same old script. There are many stories out there. "The everyday life of revolution – the ceaseless movement of the radical imagination is premised not only upon creating and embodying new desires for liberation," notes Shukaitis, "but also working from the social energies unleashed all around us, and redirecting their course," (p.49).

Through such efforts, anarchists revel in a joy in resistance. There are zaps, temporary autonomous zones and spaces for the imagination to conjure other realities. Sometimes they begin with dancing in the streets. This is a space for a full, authentic expression of self. There are moments for music, ritual, time out of time, and even the sublime. There are beaches beneath the streets. We create them every day we ride our bikes in groups, sharing music, creating that alternate world within our daydreams, as the imaginal machines churn forward in between graffiti, the radical marching bands, punk shows, and Sun Ra. Through such escapades, the city really does become a work of art. While the struggle is anything but simple or linear, there is room for agency. Imaginal machines help remind us that we are not passive spectators of history. There are other ways of living. It is up to us to recreate them and set out a path toward different kinds of stories.

Anarchist Social Services

While the anarchist movement is traditionally viewed as anti-statist, today many "acknowledge that states can play an important role in providing social welfare services and protections against the detrimental effects of unregulated capitalism" (Gautney, 2009, p. 126). As the stories of Positive Force, the ACT UP Syringe Exchange, Moving Equipment, and even the Mujeres Libres remind us, anarchists have long been involved with anti-authoritarian, radical social services (Ackelsberg, 2004; Gilbert 2004). "While anarchists concede that states are often times more well-equipped than grassroots movements to ensure a sound infrastructure and social welfare for ordinary people," Heather Gautney is quick to note, "they are critical of the system of coercion that undergirds state authority, which for them ultimately limits its potential to serve as an agent of liberatory change" (Gautney, 2009, p. 127).

Many strive to create alternate programs in spaces such as abandoned buildings, warehouses, which serve as social centers (Holtzman et al 2004). "Social centers involve a diverse array of social subjectivities," notes Gautney (p. 130). These spaces serve as outlets for social networking, art, organizing, bike repair, community meetings, and even radical social services. "[A] common thread among contemporary social centers is their desire and effort to take back what neoliberalism has taken away" (Gautney p. 130). To this end, "social centers tend to offer as assortment of vital services, including housing and documentation services for immigrants and homeless people, condom distribution for prostitutes, daycare or housing for homeless children, counseling and care giving for battered women, and many others" (p. 130). People are starting them from Barcelona to Bushwick in Brooklyn. A group of students in my community projects started one in an abandoned building last year, generating support from a local church and the community.

Perhaps the most famous example of anarchist inspired social services is Food Not Bombs, a group which has distributed free food, even in the face of multiple objections from state authorities. "FNB chapters are indeed diverse, and they do not employ formal leaderships or central apparatuses," explains Gautney (p. 131). "They recover food that would otherwise be thrown out and serve fresh, vegetarian meals to hungry people free of charge" (p. 130). Food Not Bombs started was a direct-action food distribution program started in 1980 by anti-nuclear activists in Boston. Today, it has autonomous chapters throughout the world. "Most of the time, they would be supporting people at actions," San Francisco activist Starhawk explained. "But for quite a long time in San Francisco, they would be serving food right in front of City Hall, where the homeless people hang out. And they literally got beaten up by the cops every week." Police would pull activists out of the Civil Center area and arrest them feeding the poor. In 1987 alone, 725 volunteers associated with the group were arrested for giving away food without a permit (Vitale and McHenry, 1994). "It was encouragement," Starhawk explains. "It was an embarrassment to the city that the area around City Hall was full of homeless people. They were going to get them out of there and clean up that area."

Yet, the group has stayed the course and grown. Today, Food Not Bombs is one of any number of anarchist survival service programs. Poor people in cities around the world took part in the Occupy movements, organizing spaces, providing food for each other and the movement.

When looking at the threads between direct action, anarchism, queer organizing, DIY politics and social services, it is easy to wonder what they have to do with each other. Yet, they share a great deal of common ground, including most importantly an impulse towards freedom. Theoretically social services are driven by a similar impulse toward helping people be free and healthy. Do services accomplish this? Not always.

Anarchism actually supports social services in many ways. One, it's an anti-authoritarian ethos. From Emma Goldman to queer theory to anarcho-feminism, an abiding anti-authoritarian disposition that says 'the state is off my back, we can do this ourselves' propels anarchism. Social workers could borrow this thinking in terms of rejecting certain intrusive models of care. The second point is mutual aid; people supporting each other. It's a principle in social work and anarchism. The third involves the idea of a prefigurative politics. Anarchism really says that we should build the world we want to live in within our organizing. Yet, all too often that doesn't happen in service provision. All too often people do not feel free when they receive services. Finally, the fourth and fifth points overlap. At its core, a democratic, bottom up principle propels anarchism. Those that have a need organize themselves. Such a principle is very much consistent with empowerment based schemas of care which suggest clients benefit from input into treatment decisions (Cowger 1994; Lindhorst and Eckert, 2003). This is a do it yourself politics extending from syringe exchange to community gardens.

So, why are there so few examples of anarchist inspired social services? There are some age old conflicts. In the history of social welfare there are competing impulses. While services start off with this impulse toward supporting client health and freedom, many quickly find themselves caught in a familiar bind as they try to assess the worthy vs. unworthy poor. There's a dichotomy between providing services to help people not be poor, and controlling those with illnesses or suffering from poverty. If someone is hungry and goes to a soup kitchen but they have to say a prayer before they may eat a meal, this kind of experience seems to have more to do with social control than freedom of bodies and support for self-determination. Over and over again service providers are caught in a conflict between supporting those in need and controlling them, between helping people get better and tracking people, between organizing

around individual needs and looking at root causes, between one-on-one counseling and challenging broader issues.

So what would alternative models look like? A few principles are worth reviewing. First, many would say alternative models involve not taking money that's going to control the way they provide services. A second would be, they're flexible, which means they're not as ideological as much as that consumers who need service can get services the way they need them. It's a bottom-up model, so consumers drive the organizing, building the service model. Third, the emphasis is on staying on mission rather than chasing whatever funding trends take programs new directions. Forth, there's an explicit rejection of social controls and prohibitions around funding. And finally, such groups move away from this idea that direct action is an alternative to service provision. For many people direct action is a kind of freedom. In terms of providing services, it gets the goods. As this chapter highlights, countless organizations continue to use direct action to help people get the services they need and find their own voice as citizens.

As this chapter highlights, examples of anti-authoritarian mutual aid networks social services support abound. The free health clinics from the San Francisco Haight-Ashbury to Berlin (Danto, 2005), the Rock Dove Collective, Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and New Alternatives for LGBT Youth which build communities around mutual aid and support services—all are groups that are very much interested in what their consumers are saying.

These anti-authoritarian efforts overlap into a large scale multi-issue organizing project. Rather than favor one identity or another, much of this organizing is practiced intersectionally, between movements and organizational cultures. As these movements churn forward, such

activism offers a route toward a richer, more democratic, and meaningful experience of living for everyone.