

# Sedition



A JOURNAL OF  
AUSTRALIAN ANARCHIST THOUGHT



Anarchists seek a society founded on cooperation, self-management, common ownership of wealth, democracy from below and production for the sake of need rather than profit. Instead of society based on political and economic exploitation of the many by the few, anarchists envision a socialist society in which hierarchical relationships of power and all forms of domination are avoided.



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Sedition is a mutual collaboration between three geographically disparate Australian anarchist collectives, **Melbourne Anarchist Club**, the **Jura** collective from Sydney, and **Organise!** – the Adelaide anarchist communist group. This project is a constructive medium for discussing the way forward for anarchist groups and anarchism in Australia, both in theory and praxis. We aim to establish better communication and organisational networks between our groups and to produce thought provoking literature.

The groups involved in creating Sedition do not necessarily agree with the articles published in this journal.

If you'd like to contribute with an article, art or respond to an article in this edition, or if you have any queries, please contact us at [seditionjournal@gmail.com](mailto:seditionjournal@gmail.com)

Responses may be published on [www.anarchy.org.au](http://www.anarchy.org.au)

This edition was edited by delegates Rebecca Winter (Melbourne Anarchist Club), Gabs (Organise!) and Nick A (Jura).

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# MEET THE ANARCHISTS

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## Organise!

**ORGANISE! IS AN ORGANISATION OF REVOLUTIONARY CLASS** struggle anarchists who share political positions, articulated in theory, strategy and tactics. Our purpose is to keep alive a revolutionary critique of capitalism, to assist in working class struggles, to attack all authoritarian practices such as racism and sexism, and to help build working class solidarity and militancy – willingness to fight for our class interests.

Contact at [organise@riseup.net](mailto:organise@riseup.net)

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## Jura

**JURA ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP & LIBRARY IS A COLLECTIVELY** owned and run space, which exists primarily to further progressive, anarchist change in society. We do this by providing a physical space within the current capitalist society where people can freely organise and express revolutionary ideas. At Jura Books, we are working to create a radically different world: one based on freedom, equality and justice for everyone, as well as environmental sustainability for all life on the planet. We believe this can only be achieved by an organised and politically conscious social movement, based on participatory democracy and workers control. Our collective aims to help to build this movement. We seek to bring the ideas of anarchism to ever-widening circles of people. We operate as an organised, participatory democratic, volunteer collective.

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## Melbourne Anarchist Club

**“ANARCHISM IS BOTH A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND** a social movement. As a social movement, anarchism aims to create a classless, non-hierarchical society; that is, a society ‘without rulers’ (anarchy). As a political philosophy, anarchism maintains that the creation of such a society is both possible and desirable. Anarchists are those who actively work towards realising this possibility.”

–*MAC Aims & Principles*

MAC collectively owns and manages a building that houses an anarchist library, holds regular meetings, reading groups, film screenings and social events. We seek to engage society to promote anarchist ideas and organising. The club supports other projects such as:

- ▼ Anarres Books (an anarchist book service),
- ▼ a radical theatre troupe
- ▼ the offices of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation.

We are open to the public just about every Sunday afternoon, with events held throughout the week.

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# ORGANISING IN AUSTRALIA

by Jeremy

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Making social change in Australia isn't easy. The Australian system of capitalism and government offers a range of comforts and opportunities to the exploited in order to keep us docile. At the same time, vast resources are channeled into an all-pervasive and self-sustaining system of thought control, disseminated through schools, universities, workplaces and mass media. The persistent message is that life in Australia is as good as it gets – or will be as long as we keep shopping. The whole edifice is underwritten by a ferocious exploitation of the planet and its people, and by the brute force of the State when necessary, with its administrative, surveillance, policing, and military apparatuses.

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**A NUMBER OF OTHER FACTORS COMBINE** to create the Australian context: the society's origins in dispossession and attempted genocide of the Aboriginal people; the wilful ignorance and suppression of our history of oppression and resistance; the dispersion of a small population over a vast geography; the sense of exceptionalism and isolation from the rest of the world; the tight control of migration to strengthen reactionary forces; the political culture steeped in passivity and representative disempowerment; and the heavily bureaucratized union movement that frequently accepts the morbid embrace of government and bosses.

It's not easy to organise in this context. We often try to impose tactics and strategies that worked in other times and places, but are ill-suited to our present needs. Instead, we need to understand and develop our own models of organising.

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## Why organise?

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Most of us actually agree on what that better world would look like. A world based on freedom, equality and dignity, where people control their own communities, work is meaningful and productive and human beings coexist peacefully with each other and sustainably on the earth. But how do we achieve this vision?

It's deluded to think that we can achieve this world through gradual reforms enacted through parliament. It's deceitful to argue that we can achieve it by seizing control of the government and using its essentially authoritarian apparatus to force people to be socialists. And it's a dream to think that the entire population will wake up one day, realise they're insurrectionists and spontaneously and instantly create the anarchist society.

We need to build a sustained revolutionary movement. A movement

grounded in long-term, politically-conscious, mass-based organisation that can achieve social revolution.

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### What is organisation?

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Organisation is a type of relationship between people. A relationship of solidarity, mutual aid, and common purpose. Organisation also implies a degree of structure, permanence and formality. Organisation does not have to be a political party.

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### Who is an organiser?

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There is widespread discontent and resistance among millions of people in Australia. They talk to each other and build networks and take a variety of political actions. In this sense many people (who don't think of themselves as such) are activists, agitators and organisers.

However I believe there is a role for those of us who have developed a particular interest in political activity.

Being an organiser doesn't mean appointing yourself as the leadership, intelligence or professional arm of the movement. Instead it means fostering the capacity of participants in the movement to manage their own struggle, to build organisational relationships with others, to develop their political ideas and communicate those ideas with others, to participate in the revolution.

Those who see any sort of organiser role as authoritarian or elitist might enjoy their purist critique from their armchairs. But it's extremely destructive to tell the few people in this world who are willing to commit themselves wholeheartedly to social change that they shouldn't do so because it's hierarchical. It is important to recognise our privilege as activists, but that's precisely why those of us with anarchist ideas should work to be organisers who devolve power and increase the participation of others.

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### The union organising model in Australia

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The union movement is the largest and arguably the most significant political force in Australia. It's worth understanding the union approach to organising, with its strengths and weaknesses.

Over the last fifteen years a strategy known as 'the organising model' has gained popularity in Australian unions. Most unions in this country now either

embrace or at least pay lip service to the organising model. The organising model was developed in order to reverse the crisis in unionism – the steep decline in union membership worldwide.

The organising model is usually contrasted with the 'servicing model'. In the latter, unions are basically insurance companies that charge members a fee in exchange for industrial advice and other services (from movie tickets to funeral plans).

The organising model draws a great deal on the union experience in the United States, where the union movement (although smaller and beset by many problems) is often more militant and connected organically with working class communities.

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“WE NEED TO  
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The Australian union organising model is characterised by a range of tactics and structures. The focus is on growing and building power in existing and new areas of membership. The union runs large, well-funded campaigns in areas significant for membership, economic, or tactical reasons. Specialist roles are created such as 'lead organisers' (who manage other organisers), corporate researchers, communications officers, and political (i.e. electoral) campaigners. Organisers work to develop activists and leaders amongst the membership who can solve problems for themselves, rather than organisers solving problems for members. Conversations with members are carefully structured and often scripted.

The organising model is a significant improvement on the 1980s when unions were virtually subsumed into government. It's also better than the 1990s when they scrambled to make sense of haemorrhaging membership and conservative attacks. It is the more progressive elements within the Australian union movement who champion the organising model. They have had some success transforming some unions from zombie-like institutions into active, growing, social movement organisations.

However the Australian union organising model has a number of failings. It is very hierarchical and centralised in its structure. Although it seeks to activate members and develop member leaders, the high level of professionalisation and specialisation of an elite union bureaucracy works to exclude members from deeper participation. Another fundamental plank of the organising model is higher union dues – to fund the glitzy campaigns and expert roles. This leads to a greater disjunction between rank-and-file members whose main contribution is funding, and the paid organisers and communications experts who run campaigns as a substitute for mass action. Higher fees can also reinforce a servicing mentality.

However the core problem with the organising model is that its set of tactics doesn't challenge the fundamental approach unions have towards capitalism, politics, and members. Organising model unions have been known to do deals with bosses that help the union grow, but at the expense of members involved. Even the best deals deliver only a small increase in pay or conditions, while strictly avoiding any deeper challenge to capitalism. They also talk about 'doing politics differently' but continue to function as an arm of the A.L.P. Unions also continue to function without real internal democracy – members vote once every few years (if at all) for the leadership instead of regularly participating in setting the union's direction.

The organising model is a step forward, but ultimately unions continue to operate as if they are a sort of specialist business within capitalism. It is up to activists and agitators to join our unions, work to democratise them and bring anti-capitalist politics into the organising model.

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### Anarchist organising in Australia

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Anarchists in Australia have a varied approach to organising. Some of us spend a lot of time doing it, others reject it altogether. There are very few actions organised by anarchists, and very few organised political interventions by anarchists. This is partly because there aren't very many of us, but more because of the hostility towards conventional methods of organising that is fashionable with some.

The anarchist hostility to organising originates, I believe, from our experience of authoritarian forms of organising, such

as the union model described above, and Leninism. Leninist groups in Australia spend a lot of time putting up posters, handing out leaflets, selling newspapers, doing ring-arounds, talking to strangers and holding public forums. Through this work they reach a vast number of people. Anarchists rightly criticise Leninist organising as authoritarian, opportunistic, instrumentalist, and dishonest. Leninists often approach organising as if they are an enlightened, professional vanguard. They build the party at the expense of the movement. They treat people as numbers or sheep, to be recruited and then managed and used. What they say and write is often dogmatic, repetitive and mechanical. But the question is, are these problems inherent to organising itself? I would argue no.

It is possible to distribute material that is critical and opens up debate. It is possible to talk with people, and genuinely listen with a willingness to change. It is possible to involve strangers in the movement without seeking to rule them and use them. It's possible to organise without being authoritarian. And this is what we need to do. It is the task of conscious anarchists to develop these non-authoritarian forms of organising.

Small-scale, temporary, friendship-based organisation is important, but it's not enough. If we actually want to make change, we need to do the hard work of building accessible, long-term, formal organisations, linked into larger networks. This doesn't mean creating layers of bureaucracy or endless meetings, but rather creating active organisations that can facilitate ever-widening spheres of action and participation.

We need to develop an anarchist model of organising that is relevant to Australia today. We need to get out of our spaces and communicate about our ideas. We need to distribute material and put on discussions at times and places that are convenient for people we don't already know. We need to get out of our comfort zones and into our communities – broadly imagined. We need to learn from the methods of organising used by unions and others and reclaim what we can for libertarian purposes. Above all we need to talk to people. It's difficult, but immensely rewarding and powerful.

In the Jura Collective, we've been trying to put these ideas into practice. Over the last year we've organised about 30 stalls in suburbs all over Sydney and distributed approximately 13,000 flyers on anarchist ideas. We've organised

dozens of publicly advertised political talks at Jura and other locations. Our last three forums on Chomsky attracted 60, 80 and 100 people (at the University of New South Wales, Sydney University and University of Technology Sydney respectively). We've hosted dozens of gigs and other social events. We've made over 300 phone calls to our supporters and talked with them about what's happening politically and asked them to get more involved. We've put up thousands of street posters and published regular updates on our website, facebook and via email. We've built an email list of 1,200 people who receive our monthly anarchist newsletter. We've been open to the public five days every week, 5 hours each day. We've sold \$16,000 worth of anarchist books and pamphlets to members of the community. We raised over \$7,000 entirely through donations so that Jura could install a collectively-owned solar power system. Through all of this work we've managed to communicate anarchist ideas with thousands of people and begun to put anarchism on the political agenda. We've begun to create a social community around Jura. We've done all this with the aim of building a social revolution. The events we organise are democratic discussions, rather than dogmatic lectures. And all of this has been achieved by a small group of people – a collective of 10 to 15.

We can and must organise as anarchists. We must talk with people and build relationships based on solidarity and common purpose. We must create non-authoritarian organisation. It's vital that we continue to organise and develop anarchist models of organising. The circle A [A] illustrates it – anarchy is organisation.

# THINGS ANARCHISTS LIKE

by Jeff

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If anarchists don't like voting, then what do they like?  
The answer to that is direct action.

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**DIRECT ACTION CAN TAKE MANY FORMS,** and is defined as any sort of action that is a direct effort to change the state of affairs, outside political channels such as voting. The concept was made famous by Martin Luther King and Mohandas Gandhi.

You won't see anarchists marching in great numbers to usher in civil rights for ethnically oppressed people, or break away from imperial empires.

Instead, you'll usually see anarchists marching with anywhere from 5–10 people, trying to organise a transnational Fortune 500 coffee corporation. It's painfully clear this is only a marginally better alternative to voting, but don't tell them that. Anarchists also derive a sense of amusement from protesting, and this would deflate their pastime as well as enrage them.

Sabotage is also among the favourite weapons of direct action in an anarchist's repertoire. It's romanticised to be the act of destroying whole factory lines, but sadly it mostly works out to be clogging the break room sink for the fifth time with coffee grinds.

If a co-worker of yours always shames you when you go to Starbucks instead of the independent coffee shop down the block and is always trying to get

you to read a book called *The Conquest of Bread*, beware: you may have an anarchist in your workplace.

When the occasional G20 pops up, anarchists flock to the C.B.D. of that particular city in great number to participate mass-sabotage. The scene may look like a trip to Mecca, except with a lot of black bandanas, riot shields, tear gas, and molotov cocktails. Throwing bricks at windows is the most popular activity, and if the black bloc is particularly lucky, they'll get to destroy a police cruiser.

The day usually ends in a few really pissed off upper-middle-class McDonald's franchise owners who have to replace windows, and a few criminal records that are all the more longer. The events are always construed as a win because some anarchists will get arrested, which is a badge of honour for any political activist, and anarchist forums get new pictures of riot porn to fawn over the next day.

The fact that countries are still implementing austerity measures is bitter sweet. Sure, citizens are still being screwed over, but it also means there will be new riot porn.

# CASUALISATION & FLEXIBLE WORK: HOW FAR CAN THE BOSSES PUSH BEFORE WE SNAP?

by Gabs

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The Eight Hour Day was won by workers in the building trades in Melbourne on 21 April 1856. But One Hundred and Fifty years later, increasingly fewer workers in Australia can hold a 38-hour week to their name.

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**CASUALISATION IS THE PROCESS OF** shifting employment away from permanent full time engagement toward part-time and casual work, and it's been rising modestly for the last two decades. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 21% of employees were casualised in 1991 in comparison to 25% in 2007. Casual employment is a job where you have no paid leave entitlements: no paid personal or sick leave; no paid annual holidays; and no paid public holidays (if your workplace is shut). A permanent part-time worker is considered casual if they have no leave entitlements, even though they are still guaranteed the other rights of being permanent employees.

It's easy to see why employers prefer it – casual workers can expect to be sacked without warning, have no guarantee of hours to be worked, get called in to work when not rostered, and get sent home as soon as peak or busy periods finish.

We can also see how casualisation affects workers' social lives. While employers demand flexibility, landlords do not, neither do utility companies, and stomachs need regular filling. And as the nature of casual employment demonstrates, the flexibility doesn't work both ways, and flexibility for the boss is of course at the expense of security and stability for workers.

Under the Fair Work Act 2009, the right to challenge unfair dismissal has been severely limited. Outside of the race and sex discrimination laws, workers at small businesses (under 15 employees) can't make a claim for unfair dismissal unless they've stuck around there for a year, something nearly a quarter of casuals won't do. For big businesses, it's six months. As most casual employment is in unskilled or low-skilled jobs, it's not surprising that casuals, under the fear of getting sacked and replaced, can easily be made to work at unsafe speeds or do work dangerously.

Casualisation disproportionately affects women, who make up 56% of casual workers and earn on average \$400 a week, while men earn closer to \$600.

While the trend is generally towards further casualisation, there have been some explosive instances of workers fighting back against the trend. In December last year workers at Visy Cardboard manufacturers in Sydney and Melbourne struck over Enterprise Bargaining deals in which the Company wanted to further casualisation, amongst stripping of other conditions. Visy workers in Queensland and Western Australia put on overtime bans to pressure the company to budge on the deal. A picket at the Dandenong plant in Melbourne was broken up by Police, with 29 pickets arrested.

This comment by a striker (w.s.w.s. 2010) outlines the way Visy used casual workers' vulnerability to their advantage:

“What sort of a future can you build on a casual wage? If people are employed as casuals here for more than three months, they have to be made permanent. So the company just gets rid of them and brings in others. This is hopeless, but obviously the company thinks it's a worthwhile exercise because they don't have to pay them long-service or other conditions.”

Between February and May, Maritime workers took strike action nationally a number of times demanding, amongst other concerns, a move away from casualisation, which stands at 60% for Patrick bulk and general worksites according to the Maritime Union of Australia (M.U.A.).

“This is not acceptable,” Paddy Crumlin, M.U.A. said. “Those casual workers have been stuck in limbo for, on average, five years – some for as long as nine.”

In December 2009 workers at Australia Post started what was meant to be two days of stoppages over a new enterprise deal. Australia Post claimed that its Christmas casuals, a few hired extras, and the use of admin staff, to scab, were enough to keep mail distribution centres running during the strike. Australia Post also won an application to Fair Work Australia to have the strike ruled illegal by day two, and won a separate case in the federal court to make the, also successful, pickets illegal – giving the impression that the ¼ workforce walkout and pickets did put significant pressure

on their operation. Although its effect was probably negligible in this instance, the will of the bosses to quickly mobilise casual workers as scabs is a worrying tactic, and a clear example of a 'divide and conquer' tactic by A.P.

Casualisation clearly provides a genuine and growing threat to workers in Australia, and if we are going to begin the struggle to do anything about it, we need to recognise it as exactly that. It is an issue of class struggle at its most basic – the bosses want casualisation because it means not only a cheaper workforce, but a workforce which can cop the slack for business downtime – and part of the expansion of one of capitalism's finest concepts – that workers should be made to pay when the bosses have problems.

As for some suggestions on how we could begin doing this:

- ▼ We should aim to deepen our theoretical understanding of this issue – it is complex.
- ▼ We should develop agitational propaganda that reflects this, and that encourages other workers to get together, form and join unions and challenge casualisation, workplace by workplace. Unionisation should be a first step, as the unions are prepared to fight the trend, and they provide the kind of institutional protection needed for this kind of struggle.
- ▼ Join and undertake union rep or delegate training with your union to get some hands on skills in workplace organisation. Of course, we need to place an emphasis on a culture of grassroots self-activity and control, as well as solidarity between each site of struggle and the next, as it's the most effective way forward in any scenario.

We only have the rights we have because our comrades and other workers have been fighting and dying for them for a hundred and fifty years. Definitely worth fighting for.

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Sources will be made available on [www.organisesa.org](http://www.organisesa.org)

# COMPLICITY, TRAITORS, COMPROMISE

## & OTHER MEDIA INTERACTIONS

by Nick A

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It is unequivocally clear that corporate media perpetuates the hegemony of the capitalist state. Ideally, we respond by constructing forms of anarchist communication powerful enough to render the capitalist media irrelevant. However, amongst anarchist communities, occasions arise where individuals and collectives make decisions to engage with corporate media.

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**THIS ENGAGEMENT IS OFTEN MET WITH** understandable concern, interest, derision and sometimes outright hostility. In this article then, I explore some of the tensions associated with media interaction by looking at a few brief examples. I conclude by suggesting that outright rejection of all interaction with corporate media limits some opportunities to reach a wider audience.

During the height of the Greek revolt in December 2008, a proposal was put forward at an anti-authoritarian/anarchist assembly in Exarchia, Athens: interrupt a major news broadcast by storming the studio, unfurl political banners, and then escape triumphantly into the streets. The proposal was generally not supported.

Some raised fears that this protest would ultimately serve the advertisers whose product appeared after the political action. Others were concerned that such an action would contribute to the *spectacle* of the mass media; where instead of living actual experiences,

viewers watch representations of their life on T.V. and in doing so become politically neutralized spectators. And yet others were furious that comrades would want anything to do with the dogs of the mass media – they argued that any engagement with the mass media signalled nothing less than complicity with capitalism, the state, and corporate media.

Regardless, the next week a different collective went ahead with the proposed action targeting N.E.T., one of Greece's biggest T.V. stations. On December 16th, after manoeuvres reminiscent of an Ian Fleming novel, the 3pm live national news broadcast on the N.E.T. channel was hijacked when activists stormed the studio. For two or so minutes, political banners were unfurled by a group of anarchists, anti-authoritarians and fellow non-defined activists. They read: *Everyone get out in the streets, Freedom to the Prisoners of the Insurrection and Freedom to Everyone.* With the desired goals of the action met,

the activists fled the building before the cops had a chance to finish their donuts ([youtu.be/PK9lpMk7fiY](http://youtu.be/PK9lpMk7fiY)).

I provide this short anecdote as a way of universalising some of the tensions associated with media interaction. Whether it is in the advanced anarchist milieu of Athens or – as I will shortly discuss – in Sydney, interactions with capitalist and state-owned media are everywhere fraught with complex political issues and are sources of tension.

For the rest of this article I offer examples from the infoshop Jura Books in Sydney. While these interactions are certainly different to the Athenian context, they still raise similar concerns.

Early last year, 2010, Jura organized the *People's World Cup*, a day of park-football and fun that humbly challenged the corrupt, capitalist, sexist and nationalist theatre that was FIFA's 2010 Male World Cup. This event caught the attention of a street mag called *1*, a paper located close to Jura. *C!ao* sells advertising alongside crappy local interest stories like *local food crazes and whether we've finally embraced Halloween*.

Some collective members agreed to be interviewed by *C!ao*. In the published edition, Jura was mentioned – the location, activities and a bit about Jura's anarchist politics, plus some chunky political quotes about the point of the People's World Cup. However, at the same time, anarchism was parodied. The cover of the magazine had a balaclava over the face of an anarchist, and the usual clichés were wheeled out. These included: for most anarchism means chaos; and anarchism and molotovs.

Opinion was strongly divided about whether this media engagement was a good idea. Some condemned the action. It was disrespectful to anarchists; it mocked the struggle of workers who had died for anarchism; and it degraded Jura by putting it alongside advertisements about property sales and new cars.

Yet others supported the action. It was never going to be fully complimentary. Jura got free publicity (in fact a cover) in a prevalent street magazine in the local area. Jura does hours and hours of outreach with stalls, events and door-knocks; it was nice for once to easily get anarchist ideas out into the community without having to invest heaps of time. And finally, anarchists are strong enough to handle a few jokes about them.

Despite these divisions, some Jura collective members have continued to be interviewed by street mags.

Favourable articles have appeared in *Time Out (Sydney)* and *City Hub*. While broadly progressive, both these papers sell advertising and are hardly anti-capitalist. Importantly and despite our best efforts, it includes readers who would just never be exposed to anarchist ideas or Jura Books.

Another example of media interaction and associated tensions arose in the middle of 2011, when Jura was contacted via email by a producer from *Mornings with Kerri-Anne* on Channel Nine. They were interested in doing a story on dumpster diving and wanted someone to talk to. So the collective forwarded the email to some anarchists involved with Food not Bombs – and left it at that. Some fellow activists agreed to take one of the co-hosts of the show out on a night of dumpster diving (scavenging through bins outside supermarkets searching for food that has been unnecessarily discarded), followed by a cook up of the food collected.

The segment highlighted the waste that supermarkets create and linked it to the inflated price of food in our consumerist society. But for sure, it gently mocked the process of rummaging through bins for food ([youtu.be/CYalAVQnAww](http://youtu.be/CYalAVQnAww)). As you can imagine, the decision to participate in this program caused some serious friction.

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On the one hand, some supported the decision to participate. It is important to cautiously take advantage of some opportunities, especially when they get your message out to a large group of people. And what a large group of people it was. The issue of supermarkets and food prices is very relevant to the wider population – and this action allowed activists to link it to waste, consumerism and a touch of capitalism. Viewers of this show are rarely exposed to any radical ideas from the Left – this was a freebie.

Yet others were furious. Some were concerned supermarkets would immediately lock dumpsters and people who desperately relied on this source of food would have to go without. Others were concerned with the broader issues of capitalist media

engagement. *Mornings with Kerri-Anne* is a horrible show that perpetuates sexist divisions in society. It is dogmatically conservative. It represents the worst excesses of a consumerist society, where advertisements for products are actually part of the show. What more, the story about dumpster diving would be nestled between these advertisements. This was an act of complicity with the capitalist machine and traitorous to the anarchist cause. Wrapped up in this, were some nasty accusations of corporate and capitalist complicity on the part of Jura, for passing on the email to other activists.

So what do we do when confronted with these sorts of options? Is it best to disengage completely with the mass media? Is it enough to go ahead and create independent sources of media at the complete exclusion of pre-existing capitalist and state media? Or should we do both? Should we use the mass media when it suits us, knowing full well that they can always screw us over; yet at the same time construct our own sources of media?

As mentioned in the introduction, the preference and priority should always be for the construction and dissemination of anarchist media. Notwithstanding, I believe a dogmatic approach that simultaneously prevents all corporate media engagement is stifling: where opportunities can be exploited and limitations acknowledged then I think cautiously, we should be less hostile to engagement with this form of media. Sometimes we can be a bit insular with our forms of communication – concurrently I am all for getting anarchist ideas out to a wider audience. Compromise is not necessarily reformist. It is not necessarily anti-revolutionary. It is sometimes a tactical approach when your society is not even close to transitioning to an anarchist society.

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\* Schwartz, A G, Tasos Sagris & Void Network (eds) (2010). *We are an Image From The Future. The Greek Revolt of December 2008*. AK Press, Oakland.

\* My own experiences in Athens & at Jura Books.

# ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL & HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF ANARCHISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

by *Brendan Libertad*

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The nature of anarchism is always contentious; philosophically and doctrinally, it has never desired nor demanded the ideological uniformity of Marx and descendants, perceiving that uniformity as diametrically opposed to the creed and its ideals of social progress. Philosophically, anarchism reflects a political continuum that attempts to take into account, at one end of the spectrum, issues of individual liberties, whilst at the other end, stressing the need for social and communal approaches to organisation

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**MUCH LIKE ITS CONTEMPORARIES,** state-socialism and communism, anarchism is steeped within the traditions of the workers' and trade union movements, and in that sense it can be regarded as an ideology of the 19th century. However, whilst mutualist, collectivist and communist schools can at least agree on the fundamentals, any "anarchist" espousing capitalist forms of economic organisation cannot be considered an anarchist, and consequently, this discussion of the philosophical origins of anarchism will not include anything in relation to "anarcho-capitalism," which is intrinsically oxymoronic – and, we could add, moronic. Individualists, in a similar sense, whilst sharing a similar

philosophical heritage to strands of left-libertarian thought, have almost always been opposed to ideals of communitarian and collective forms of organisation and will therefore not be discussed to any large degree; however, their claims to legitimacy cannot be dismissed with the same theoretical ease as can the former. Nonetheless, that discussion requires an essay of its own which goes beyond the parameters of this foundational approach.

To begin, some writers have argued that anarchist ideas can be traced back to antiquity; however, anarchism is fundamentally an industrial movement. Nonetheless, seeds of libertarian and communal ideas can be perceived in early

writers, and are certainly present through various periods in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period during the English and French Revolutions. It is primarily during the Enlightenment when the political and philosophical fibres that became modern anarchism were first elaborated. Anarchism as a philosophy, however, is conditioned by a theoretical schism with classical liberalism, owing to industrial and capitalist development. Enlightenment liberals attacked the state as an anti-social institution and a hindrance on human goals of progress – much like anarchists – but this took place largely in a period of pre-capitalist development.

As capitalism developed throughout the 19th century, liberalism, concerned primarily in this regard with state power and, consequently, individual rights, met with socialism, concerned with private power and workers' rights. It is this synthesis that we call anarchism: recognising, as Bakunin articulated, "*freedom without socialism is privilege and injustice; socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality.*" It is of no surprise that anarchism evolved as a synthesis of liberal and socialist ideologies; realistically, anarchism can only be understood when placed within its historico-economic context: the demands of the masses – culminating in the Great French Revolution of 1789, and succeeded closely by the revolutions of 1848 – to limit the arbitrary power of rulers, did not suffice in destroying the arbitrary power of class. In fact, these transformations only replicated previous relations of production, albeit under a new productive mode. The old social order, hitherto one whereby the aristocratic privileged classes and that of the clergy subjugated the vast majority of the population, gave way to a new form of social and economic oppression. The new aristocrats were those of capital: land was replaced in large part by the factory, their chains to enslave the working majority were no longer those of feudal tillage but those of want.

Correspondingly, as industrial capitalism and the bourgeoisie developed, so did its counterpart – the proletariat – with new ideas of social emancipation and economic reconstruction. As Proudhon, and later Bakunin and Kropotkin, demonstrated, capitalism and industrialisation had brought significant and dramatic changes to human existence, not all malign or impedimentary: the capacity for production through the

new technologies was immense, and the prospects for humanity through industrialisation were unlimited. The material scarcity that characterised so much of human history prior could be overcome and eliminated through the utilisation of scientific and technological knowledge, if only the surplus created was applied toward the collective good. The goal, therefore, was not to destroy the industrial foundations of society – as the Luddites were attempting – or return to some past era of primitive communism – as John Zerzan would have us do today – but rather to harness the productive powers of industry in the interests, not of profit and the bourgeoisie, but the working masses.

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But the goals of this new movement, then in its infancy, went further than that. Beyond the scope of day-to-day survival was the understanding of humans as an inherently creative being; furthermore there was the realisation that humanity and society were progressing towards a future whereby that human potential could be fulfilled. Labour, hitherto such an alienating and dehumanising experience, could become the intellectual, social and creative fulfilment of humankind: "free intelligent work will become the glory of mankind, the source of its dignity and its rights" as Bakunin argued. The French anarchist Pelloutier elaborates that under such a system the workers "long believing themselves condemned to the role of instrument, seek to become intelligent creatures so that they may be at once the inventors and creators of their own endeavours." In attaining this higher social and economic order, the recognised aims were to replace the institutional structures of the state-capitalist system. The question, therefore, was what to

replace the system with and how to replace it.

On the question of the latter, parliamentarianism was dismissed by anarchists from the beginning. Proudhon, grandfather of anarchism, recognised that "politicians, whatever their colours, are insurmountably repelled by anarchism, which they construe as disorder: as if democracy could be achieved other than by distribution of authority and as if the true meaning of the word 'democracy' was not dismissal of government." Reformism, in hindsight so demonstrably guilty of destroying the vestiges of real progress from within the workers' movement, would never be capable of delivering the workers from their servitude, nor would it ever allow a genuinely democratic, egalitarian order and requisite redistribution of wealth. As Lucy Parsons' asserted, "never be deceived that the rich will let you vote away their wealth." The emergence of syndicalism as the foremost current within anarchist schools at the turn of the 20th century thereby became the viable alternative, distinguishing itself from Marxist partyism and parliamentarianism and bringing with it emergent notions of workers' organisation: the revolutionary trade union, the federation – within which it would organise production and consumption with other institutions party to this federation – and the commune.

In developing these institutional and theoretical ideals, the syndicalist school only added and enhanced the thought of Kropotkin, Malatesta, Berkman and others, and was in no sense distinct or removed from that ideal, but instead, complimented and invigorated its praxis. Bakunin, one of the earliest anarchist writers, had alluded to the trade union as a potentially revolutionary force. Syndicalists were, by and large, communists or collectivists as well – the distinctions were usually only in regard to methods. Its principal successes were in the development of theories of Direct Action: unlike the party perspectives of the various shades of Marx adherents, anarcho-syndicalist theorists developed the notion of creating the institutions of the new order within the old. The aim of this was to "sow in the very belly of capitalist society the seeds of the free producer's groups through which it seems our communist and anarchist ideal must come to pass." Thus, federations of revolutionary unions, organised under the same democratic principles within the capitalist order as they would

under anarchism, were created, serving two purposes in the process: firstly, by creating the institutional edifice within capitalist society, anarchists could point directly to existing examples of democratic economic organisation, thereby quelling the periodic concerns of naysayers and doubters; secondly, and of equal import, was that when the time came for a fundamental transformation of society, these structures would already be in place and be ready to begin the process of organising production. As representative bodies, these would operate under the Proudhonian precept of the mandat impératif: delegates elected and recallable by the various workers' and peoples' associations, thereby removing the isolation from their constituents that parliamentary representatives inevitably suffer.

The transformation of society by the proletariat, having thus recognised that bourgeois parliaments could never reform capitalism – being, rather, its primary aider and abettor – would have to take the same form as the bourgeois seizures of power before them: revolution. Again, on this point, the previously confused and theoretically inconsistent approaches of revolutionaries – Babouvist, Blanquist, Fourierist or Saint-Simonian – were superseded by the greatest tool in the proletarian belt: the General Strike. Despite its historic failures, May '68 and Britain 1926 immediately coming to mind, it is of little doubt that the General Strike was and is the most incisive and effective means of bringing down the established order, and it was adopted and championed not only by its foremost advocates, the anarcho-syndicalists, but also by foresighted left-Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg, who correctly envisioned how remarkable and revolutionary an instrument it could be if utilised and refined: “A general strike forged in advance within the fetters of legality is like a war demonstration with cannons dumped into a river within the very sight of the enemy.”

Understanding its potential, organisations like the I.W.W., the anarcho-syndicalist influenced C.G.T. in France and the C.N.T. in Spain, set about recruiting, educating and organising workers towards the revolutionary goal of social transformation via the General Strike, while the socialist party proclaiming the greatest in number and strength in Europe, the German Social-Democrats, denounced the idea as “general madness.” Arguably one of the most visionary and

informative texts, that unfortunately rarely receives adequate credence, is Emile Petaud and Emile Pouget's *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution*, in which a fictitious account is given of a General Strike that leads to the eventual overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the state. As leaders of the revolutionary heartland of industrial syndicalism at the turn of the 20th century – the C.G.T. in France – the authors were in a theoretical and practical position to portray how a General Strike could realistically lead to a transformation of society. In many ways, the text foresees the upheavals that were to take place in Spain in 1936, and those of May '68.

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AND ECONOMIC  
RECONSTRUCTION.

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These upheavals, and those we are witnessing elsewhere in world today – Greece, for example – whilst it could be argued that they depart in some sense from the syndicalist ideals that were at their peak in the first half of the 20th century, owe much to the anarchist doctrines of days past. The philosophies developed by the likes of Proudhon, and those that followed, are arguably as or more topical today – in a period of untold wealth, and tyrannical private power in the form of multinational corporations – than in their times, when the factory had only just begun its journey towards the means of production for a world-system. Unlike various other doctrines, relevant only for the period in which they are constructed, and even then somewhat lacking, anarchism recognises the limitations in the ideals and practices of those who left this world long ago: it is in this sense, that we are not Proudhonists, nor Bakuninists, nor Kropotkinists, but rather anarchists. We are always opposed to private and state power, and our aims will reflect that; however, our methods, philosophies and deeds alter in accordance with social change, in much the same sense as they have in the past.

# OCCUPY SYDNEY

by Ash

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I have been involved in the Occupy Sydney camp, and along with a significant portion of my friends, have been extremely dissatisfied with the media coverage. To make it worse, the 'individual' (and I use the term loosely, perhaps I should say 'socialist party') spokespeople representing the movement have done a mostly terrible job of it. This is my attempt to bring forward some very important details that have been lacking.

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## Culture of entitlement

**FIRST AMONGST THE COMMON** criticisms of the movement has been that we are spoilt brats, demanding iPhones and laptops while we are supported by the hard working taxpayer. *The Daily Telegraph* even went so far as to fabricate a list of demands that we supposedly made for port-a-loos, free parking, electricity and WiFi for our protest. Whilst we were sleeping without shelter under police restrictions, being denied access to public toilets, and fined when we went to find a discrete tree, and charging our phones from a solar panel that we had brought to the protest. We are demanding one thing, and that is the right to live, and to do things for ourselves. The reason we hadn't already hired a port-a-loo was that the police had told us they would confiscate it if we tried, they attempted to confiscate our solar panel also, but it was rescued. Where the true culture of entitlement can be found of course is amongst the targets of our occupation (the banks) and those trying to shut us

down (politicians and police). We are not alone in being criticised by people who could more accurately direct their vitriol towards themselves. On the back of a huge scandal where UK MPs claimed thousands upon thousands of pounds for hotels, furniture, rugs and toasters, the same MPs are criticising mostly poor black males who stole things such as a bottle of water and a loaf of bread. The very thing we are protesting against is this culture of entitlement that exists amongst the elite of our society. Even the powerhouse of the Australian economy, mining, is born of the sense of entitlement that our generation appears to have to the limited and finite resources on this planet. And what are we asking for? Just that the authorities tolerate a hundred or so citizens occupying a few dozen square metres of their own city.

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## Professional protesters

Next they say that everyone has just come for the thrill of the protest. This is an old worn criticism, and a classic case

of projection. If we were professionals, I would certainly be demanding a pay rise right now. The proponents of the professional protester line claim that the diversity of messages amongst us is a sign that we don't have any cause to be there. We reply that we have so many causes because the system is so broken. Refugee rights, mineral exploitation, indigenous rights, imperialism, broken prison system, extreme inequality on a local *and* world scale are just some of the issues that have been raised in the movement, and with good cause. These are not the complaints of people who have nothing to complain about, they are all issues that affect the lives of countless across the planet. Many of these issues are about advocacy for people who suffer in ways that we do not. Yet if we are to be united (and this is the spirit of the '99%' slogan as I understand it) with all the oppressed people of the world, then these are burning issues that are killing our brothers and sisters as we speak. What people mean when they say professional protester, is that this person has put advocacy for change before their own capacity for income generation. The line is merely the scream of cognitive dissonance inside the head of someone who cannot understand anyone ever putting other people's interests in front of their career prospects.

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### **But Australia is rich!**

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However apparently everyone in Australia is doing okay, so why should we protest here? Maybe other people in the world are suffering, but surely we of the sun-burnt country have no excuse to complain. Well regardless of the fact that the world extends beyond our borders, there *are* certainly intense problems with structural inequality in Australia. It will suffice to consider only the plight of the traditional owners and inhabitants of this country. Only 48% of indigenous Australians aged 15-64 were employed in 2009; Aboriginal people make up 26% percent of the prison population in Australia, but only 2.5% of the population; trachoma, and infectious eye disease is found in up to 25% of aboriginal children, it has been eliminated completely in many third world countries; because of high pay rates in the mining industry, rent in remote communities such as Port Hedland, ranges from \$1,000-\$2,000 per week, leading to

severe rates of homelessness (see [www.creativespirits.info](http://www.creativespirits.info)).

Or consider the case closer to home, I am a homeless person who is also a student, because I cannot afford to rent a house in Sydney and study full time. I receive \$190 per week in AusStudy payments, yet rent for a single room in a share house ranges from \$175-\$320 per week.

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### **Homelessness**

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I am not the only homeless person to be involved in this protest, my entire household of ten people were evicted from an abandoned building just two days before the occupation began. There have been a number of homeless from around the Martin Place area (where Occupy was located), who have come to stay with us also. It is an important point to highlight that the laws used to evict us are laws designed to hassle homeless people.

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**POLICE HAVE HOWEVER  
MANAGED TO STEAL  
A LARGE AMOUNT  
OF PROTESTERS'  
POSSESSIONS. MY  
LAPTOP IS GONE, AS  
HAVE OTHERS' PHONES,  
LAPTOPS, BANNERS,  
FURNITURE, TENTS,  
BOOKS, AND MANY  
OTHER VALUABLE  
THINGS.**

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Capital does not like to be confronted by its own ugliness, and will always attempt to sweep it under the carpet. Yet if there is no right in this country for people to sleep without having paid for a space, then there is no right to simply exist unless one participates in the moneyed system. This becomes very problematic for those who oppose the effect that capitalist society has on the planet. Not to mention unjust, given that only a touch over 200 years ago this country was stolen from a people who had no word for money.

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### **Resistance**

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When questioned in one radio interview the day after the eviction, one of the self proclaimed 'organisers' of the occupation was at pains to justify how he and others in no way resisted arrest during the protest. This was despite having linked arms, as I and many others

did in an attempt to stand our ground and protect our things. I resisted being moved on, and I resisted being arrested. And I am proud of it. I broke no laws in being where I was, when Mark Murdoch, the police spokesperson was asked what law we broke in being there, he could only say that our 'protection' under the statutory offenses act had expired. That is akin to saying that we need protection through prior police approval for any act that might have some political point, no matter how benign or harmless. The movement in Tahrir square, supported apparently by the entire mainstream media, involved the burning of police vehicles, police stations and government buildings. It was also subjected to extreme police brutality.

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### **Police Brutality**

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In context, the most recent police raid came at 5AM, after many people had only gone to bed at 3AM, due to police harassment the previous night. Prior to the raid, police had been telling us that as long as we weren't putting up shelter or cooking on site, that we weren't breaking any laws. They announced over a megaphone while we were sleeping, that we needed to leave the area. We had been living in that space for eight days, and had many personal items to collect. This could only result in conflict. There is no way that a group of 60 or more people can wake up, pack away all their things and leave in five minutes on barely any sleep. The only choice for most people was to try to stand their ground while others packed away. The reason police chose to move in at 5AM was clearly because there would be no observers from the media, and camera footage would be obscure due to the darkness. Police claims that the top end of Martin Place were busy during the day, especially on a Sunday, are ludicrous. A simple Google image search for 'Martin Place' is enough to confirm this.

People were punched in the face, had their heads smashed against the ground, were stepped on and pain techniques were applied liberally. Screams filled the air during the eviction. Both individual police and those who planned this operation must be regarded as nothing more than petty thugs. The scale of course did not come anywhere near to matching Egypt, Tunisia or Greece, but only because it was not perceived as a threat on the same scale.

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### Police Thefts

Police have however managed to steal a large amount of protesters' possessions. My laptop is gone, as have others' phones, laptops, banners, furniture, tents, books, and many other valuable things. Some of this was compacted and sent to landfill, and other items have been lost after entering the police bureaucracy and disappearing. This is just another feature of the deliberate tactic of making legitimate protest so inconvenient that people will get sick of it and go back to comfortable silence.

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### What next?

These events can only radicalise already marginalised people. We have learnt about how the world works, and how the machinery of state oppression crushes and co-opts movements that challenge it. Our only option is to keep fighting. We will either be marginalised and crushed, or gain strength, numbers and support to become a real force for change. One thing is certain, we are not going to go away. Get used to us.

# UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE MELBOURNE ANARCHIST CLUB.

**INDIAN GENERAL STRIKE  
SOLIDARITY RALLY. 5:30-7:30PM,  
28/2/2012 AT FEDERATION SQUARE.**

**FANTIN READING GROUP, BLACK FLAME  
CHAPTERS AVAILABLE AT  
FANTINREADINGGROUP.WORDPRESS.COM  
FORTNIGHTLY ON SUNDAYS (26/2/2012,  
11/3/2012, 25/3/2012, 4/4/2012, 22/4/2012,  
6/5/2012, 20/6/2012) AT MAC**

**25TH BIRTHDAY OF THE MELBOURNE  
ANARCHIST CLUB  
FUNDRAISING DINNER. STARTS 6PM. 3/11/2012  
\$25 WAGED \$15 UNWAGED.**

**JOIN OUR ANNOUNCE LIST:  
MAC@ANARCHY.ORG.AU**

**62 ST GEORGES RD, NORTHCOTE  
ANARCHY.ORG.AU/MAC**



Note from the editors: This article submitted to Organise! (Adelaide) for publication. A response by Voltairine de Cleyre from the Melbourne Anarchist Club can be found on page 18.

# LIBERTY, EQUALITY & SOLIDARITY: ANARCHISM FOR HUMANS, OTHER ANIMALS & THE EARTH

*by Julie Jordan and Richard Bulmer*

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Anarchism is our best hope for the foundation of the new society, inspired by what Kropotkin called “the beautiful words: Liberty, Equality and Solidarity”.

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**ANARCHISM’S VALUES OF LIBERATION** and freedom, social equality, voluntary association and mutual aid are shaping struggles against oppression everywhere, and anarchist methods of organisation – horizontal and decentralised power relations, cooperatives and collectives, decision making by direct democracy, the carving out of autonomous spaces – underpin countless social movements.

This is the new society unfolding as the edifices of power, selfishness and greed are confronted.

Driven by a robust humanism, anarchism strives for liberty, equality and solidarity for all of humanity, the elimination of human over human domination, and the building of non-hierarchical relationships among people. This humanist bias, however, ultimately limits the potential of anarchism as a response to the challenges we face. It discounts the hugely oppressive enslavement, torture and murder of nonhuman animals, and the escalating plunder and destruction of our planet.

And it overlooks the interconnections and entanglements of all forms of domination and oppression.

The origins of hierarchy and domination are uncertain, but there’s a broadening view that they first emerged only ten thousand years ago when hunter-gatherers, who had evolved to be egalitarian and cooperative, began to settle in agricultural societies. Competition for food surpluses and divisions of labour initiated the first social hierarchies. Nonhuman animals meanwhile were being ‘domesticated’ (enslaved, dominated and exploited), and this would set the pattern for human over human domination. With control over their food supplies, humans began to see themselves as separate from and in control of nature, establishing the human dominator worldview. Throughout subsequent history, hierarchy and the habits of domination and oppression became firmly embedded in our culture, reaching

their ultimate extreme in today's global capitalism.

With these common origins and shared methods of controlling, limiting and destroying, all forms of domination and oppression – human over human, human over nonhuman and human over the earth – are closely intertwined. They are instilled in us with potent and destructive ideologies which devalue, discriminate and divide, and are promoted by elites for the ends of power and profit. Ideologies such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and the most potent and destructive, speciesism – underlying the institutionalised exploitation and killing of nonhuman animals on an industrial scale, and but one constituent of the overarching doctrine of anthropocentrism, which situates humanity at the centre of the universe, justifying human control and manipulation of the entire earth and all life.

Evidence of the entanglement of the various oppressions surrounds us. We cannot ignore how the victimisation and ostracism of oppressed human groups mirrors our victimisation and exclusion of other animals, how oppressed humans are denigrated with language labelling them as 'animals', or how the sexual subjugation of women is paralleled in the routine rape and perpetual pregnancy of dairy cows. When a rainforest is felled for corporate profit, the lives and habitats of nonhumans are destroyed as well as the livelihoods of indigenous humans. The industrial exploitation of animals for food not only takes the lives of countless nonhumans, it devalues and damages human workers, pollutes the earth and degrades the atmosphere. No form of domination or oppression can be considered in isolation. Our efforts to eliminate one require an effort to eliminate them all, in a struggle for total liberation – of all animals and the earth.

Building the new society calls for a new consciousness. An awareness of the pervasive totality of domination – seeing beyond human relationships to the human/nonhuman hierarchy of domination, and the 'oppression' of the natural world. This new consciousness will guide our refiguration of the new society. To expand on Gustav Landauer: all structures of hierarchy and domination are destroyed and the new society is built by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently – towards one another, towards other animals, and towards the earth. That is, extending the

anarchist values of liberty, equality and solidarity beyond human relationships. Acknowledging the individuality, intrinsic worth and fundamental equality of all sentient beings, and building solidarity with them in the struggle against our shared oppressors. Freeing the earth from human domination, respecting and nurturing the sustainer of all life.

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THEY REPRESENT.

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Building the new also requires dismantling the old, actively confronting the existing hierarchies of domination. Emma Goldman said:

"Anarchism... stands for direct action... [It requires] integrity, self-reliance, and courage. In short, it calls for free, independent spirits [and] only persistent resistance [can] finally set [us] free."

Our solidarity with other animals compels us to take action for their freedom – disrupting, subverting and dismantling the structures of their oppression and murder. Likewise we are bound to actively participate in liberating the earth.

How do we together organise this new society? The anarchist balance of the individual and communal good is traditionally maintained by broad participation in face-to-face decision making. This demands individual political autonomy, which humans may have in varying degrees. Clearly other animals and the earth are unable to participate and represent their own interests. The solution may lie with representation by dedicated advocates with deeply informed views of the best interests of those they represent. Advocates for nonhuman animals may discern their best interests through respectful interaction, and aim to secure those interests in society's forums. Similarly, advocates for the earth may make representations in its best interests.

Anarchism is our best hope, but it has to be an anarchism which confronts hierarchy, domination and oppression of every kind – including human over

nonhuman, and human over the earth. The beautiful words of liberty, equality and solidarity can inspire a society in which every individual, human and nonhuman, is liberated, and the earth is free from control and domination. Where there is equal intrinsic value of all beings, without hierarchies, authorities, or arbitrary control. A society of solidarity and cooperation, in which humanity steps back down from its pedestal to take its place in the broad collective of the earth.

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[Note from the editors: This article is a reponse to the preceding article, 'Liberty, Equality and Solidarity: Anarchism for Humans, Other Animals and the Earth' on page 16. The response was written by a member of the Melbourne Anarchist Club]

# ANARCHISM & ANIMALS: TOTAL LIBERATION OR TOTAL CONFUSION?

by Voltairine de Cleyre

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Society is the root, the tree, and liberty is its fruit  
– Mikhail Bakunin.

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**IN THEIR ARTICLE 'LIBERTY, EQUALITY** and Solidarity: Anarchism for Humans, Other Animals and the Earth' (featured in this issue of *Sedition*), Julie Jordan and Richard Bulmer argue that the consistent anarchist should extend anarchist principles beyond human relationships to our relations with other animals and the earth. The argument that we should seek the "total liberation" of animals and the earth, however, is far from uncontentious and ultimately serves to confuse more than it illuminates.

At the core of Jordan and Bulmer's article is a problematic transferral of notions like liberty, equality and solidarity to animals, without any acknowledgement of the relevant differences between most animals and humans. To say that we should seek to liberate animals and the earth sounds nice, but has no substance to it. It does, however, raise an important question – what do anarchists mean when we speak of liberty? Jordan and Bulmer argue that we should extend liberty to animals and the earth. This argument is misleading, as it ignores the fact that for anarchists liberty is socially produced. Rudolf Rocker argues that liberty is a

cultural construction and exists "only when [it has] the ingrown habit of a people." Similarly, Emma Goldman writes that liberty is created by "persistent resistance" and conscious striving on the part of those who seek freedom. She argues that to be free one must "have a consciousness of self, of being different from others." Concepts such as liberty and solidarity imply subjectivity and the existence of moral agents. Such ideas describe relationships in which both sides participate. Thus the concept of liberty used by many anarchists is firmly rooted in the social (rather than natural) and assumes the existence of a subject who can evaluate and rationally comprehend their situation in life and strive to change it.

This idea of liberty does not seem to be easily transferable to animals. While a chicken may be healthier and happier outside of a cage, should we call this liberty? If we are to draw on the way many anarchists have conceptualised liberty, it seems we should not. Even if we were to adopt an altered version of liberty, problems remain. The lives of wild animals can scarcely be said to

be free when predation and starvation so often govern their lives. In human society, anarchists have rejected the idea that liberty can be found in a Hobbesian 'state of nature' scenario in which all are free to kill and be killed. Yet for animals such a state is the norm. The idea of a society without cruelty is a fundamentally unnatural concept, which is atypical of many animal relationships. It doesn't seem that if humans were to cease contact with other animals that they would be any 'freer', rather the reverse may be true.

The conflation between concepts relating to human society and those that relate to the lives on non-self-conscious animals is further illustrated in Jordan and Bulmer's comment that "the sexual subjugation of women is paralleled in the routine rape and perpetual pregnancy of dairy cows." This comparison is nonsensical. The sexual control of women by men as a result of living in a patriarchal society is significantly different – both in its origins and effect – from the forcible insemination of dairy cows. The latter is reprehensible when painful to the cow, but it is the potential pain inflicted, not the act itself, that is objectionable. In the case of sexual coercion and the sexual assault of women, however, even if no pain is inflicted, the non-consensual nature of the act is enough to make it a profound attack on the person's liberty and sexual integrity. Cows, however, lack such an idea of sexuality and hence a notion of sexual integrity or consent can have no meaning for them. These differences are not trivial and to overlook them is to severely obfuscate the issue.

If it is unclear if animals can be liberated, it is even less clear that the earth can be said to be free or unfree. Jordan and Bulmer argue that anarchists should seek a liberated earth, free from human "control and domination." This idea is simply confusing. How can the plants/soil/rivers be free or unfree? Given that such entities are not even sentient (they cannot feel pain) it is hard to imagine how they could be said to prefer one state over another or be limited in their choices. One might hope that such a usage of "liberate" is purely metaphorical, however, Jordan and Bulmer propose that "advocates for the earth" should "make representations in its best interests."

The notion that the earth must be 'freed' from human control is also problematic because it creates an arbitrary separation between humans and the environment. Human control over

the earth is not necessarily a bad thing. Evidently, some ways in which humans currently control our environment, such as our creation of nuclear waste and other forms of pollution, are hugely harmful – both for human and non-human inhabitants – but this does not mean that all forms of human control are harmful.

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THE NOTION THAT  
THE EARTH MUST  
BE 'FREED' FROM  
HUMAN CONTROL IS  
ALSO PROBLEMATIC  
BECAUSE IT CREATES  
AN ARBITRARY  
SEPARATION BETWEEN  
HUMANS AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT.  
HUMAN CONTROL  
OVER THE EARTH IS  
NOT NECESSARILY A  
BAD THING.

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Some examples of human control, such as the use of land for agriculture, are necessary to sustain human life. Other human endeavours such as attempts to avoid bush fires by removing brush cover are also examples of human control of the earth, yet these are often beneficial for humans and animals that might otherwise be killed or injured in bush fires. This is not to say that we do not need to seriously rethink the way we interact with the environment – we obviously do – but this will involve modifying the form of control we exert, not ceasing such control altogether. Rather than seeing humans as part of the earth's living community, Jordan and Bulmer present humanity as existing outside of nature. Jordan and Bulmer's argument risks supporting a dualistic view of nature where what is natural is pure and what is human corrupts.

Ultimately, the struggle to stop human cruelty to animals is a worthy one and the desire to have a sustainable relationship with our environment is increasingly essential. To my mind, though, it would be far more accurate and effective for anarchists to acknowledge the differences that exist between humans and non-humans whilst fighting for a world in which human cruelty towards sentient creatures is no more. However, this struggle is done few favours by a notion of "total liberation" which ignores the differences between animals and most humans, and anthropomorphises (attributes human characteristics to)

both animals and the earth. The result of such an approach is likely to be confusion rather than effective action.

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# INTER- SECTION- ALITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR ANARCHA-FEMINISM

by *Katrina*

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Credited to Kimberle Crenshaw in the late 1980s, intersectionality is the current buzzword of the mainstream feminist movement. It quite rightly recognises that all oppressions – from sexism and racism to classism and ableism – are merely categorisations of human identities, ranked against each other through social constructs that serve only to create layers of oppressions within society. Anarchists have long recognised the need to fight oppressions on all fronts, yet we have been ineffective in linking our discourses with mainstream feminist dialogue.

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**THE INAUGURAL F CONFERENCE HELD IN** Sydney in April of 2010 was a melting pot of feminism, where feminists across a broad spectrum of ages, ethnicities, sexualities, gender identities and political creeds came together to discuss and learn from each other's struggles. It seemed that on almost every panel, in all the workshops and at most bookstalls the references to intersectionality were front and centre.

It allowed the feminist community to recognise the broad range of inequalities that women-identifiers are struggling against, and the varying, multi-faceted approaches to these struggles. Although all activists cannot dedicate an equitable amount of time to all movements, we can at least be aware and supportive of our disparate social battles, and where

possible and practicable, incorporate them into our actions and campaigns. In particular, we can be careful not to unconsciously perpetuate other social inequalities in a single-minded pursuit of our own causes.

Yet anarchy-feminists have been blowing this very same horn for a century. At the turn of the century, anarchy-feminists like Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre fought fiercely against not only capitalism and the state, but also the shackles of marriage, gender roles, the futility of the suffragette's campaigns and racism within American society. Indeed, de Cleyre referred to herself as "an anarchist without labels", demonstrating her commitment to fighting oppressions of all persuasions.

This initial move by anarcho-feminists to separate themselves from the popular feminist movement at the time (that of the suffragettes in vying for the rights of middle-class white women with citizenship rights in the U.S.A. to vote), exemplifies the distance between anarchist and mainstream definitions of intersectionality. On the one hand, second wave feminism approaches intersectionality from the perspective of an individual's identity as part of society under the state. It is the markers of their identity (for example their age, gender, sexuality, and employment) that determine how they are placed on society's ladder. The campaign is then how to adjust the rules and attitudes of the state to neutralise this unequal treatment of individuals of a particular status.

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Anarcho-feminists on the other hand would approach intersectionality from a slightly different direction – what are the hierarchies that lead to this domination of one group in society over another? How can we eliminate this hierarchy without creating another group of disenfranchised people? In essence, it is a viewpoint that does not include the state as a vital component of society. Instead, it attempts to create space within society where we can have equal, yet not identical, opportunities to flourish – an interpretation based on autonomy and mutual aid.

Murray Bookchin is often credited with placing social hierarchy back at the centre of anarchist struggles, after decades of anarcho-syndicalist material positioned class struggle as the one and only mechanism of revolution. Through his experiences of Marxism between the 1930s and 1960s (including the Spanish Civil War), Bookchin reinterpreted the purely economic definitions of capitalism and redefined capitalism. In 1991, as an admonishment to the current generation of anti-capitalists, he wrote “that capitalism today has become a society, not only an economy”.

In books, pamphlets and speeches, Bookchin reasoned that no matter how full a Marxist revolution might be, there

would be a range of hierarchies, and their subsequent dominations, that would remain. What we need is not merely a world free from the exploitations of capitalism, but a social revolution that will address and eliminate social inequalities at their root.

Unfortunately, such a revolution is complex, requiring immense self-reflection and personal responsibility. How do we take politics out of it's separate box, as an external cause to which we dedicate ourselves, and instead live an expression of non-hierarchical theory, whilst not falling into the trap of “lifestylism”? The answers are yet to present themselves.

Intersectionality recognises that all of our struggles are interconnected, just like anarcho-feminism. Intersectionality recognises that it is impossible to determine who is most oppressed between a queer black man and a disabled white woman, just like anarcho-feminism. But up until now, anarcho-feminism has been unable to engage in effective dialogue with mainstream feminist movements to clearly define the root cause of our oppressions – hierarchy. This dialogue is sorely needed to consolidate our efforts in over-turning the tyranny of the state.

Our fights against autocratic dictators, exploitative bosses, environmental vandals and sexist pigs are not mutually exclusive. They are our attempts to overturn expressions of hierarchy and domination in capitalist society.

Until we are all free...

# IMPORTING ZAPATISMO: MEXICAN REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS & THEIR RELEVANCE IN AUSTRALIA

by Christopher David Absell

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In this land of immense historical significance, cultural diversity and natural beauty, unarmed Predator drones, normally used for killing disagreeable Arabs in the Afghani sun, hover the skies above the frontera, scouring the horizon for any sign of malicious activity, while the desperate members of the unregulated N.A.F.T.A. (North American Free Trade Association) reserve army of labour clamour for entrance tickets to the Confederate States (U.S.A.).

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**SINALOA CARTEL MEMBERS, GIVEN THE** green light by the illegitimate administration of President Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa, drag the bodies of meddling journalists, illegal South/Central American immigrants, enemy cartel members and drug treatment clinic staff into mass graves.

Private security firms flower like cacti in the Chihuahuan desert and dark-hearted entrepreneurs make a killing selling electric fences to those terrified of losing their heads, or having the letter Z carved into their chests.

The institutionalised regime of accumulation by dispossession, legislated into reality by N.A.F.T.A., directs the human traffic from the countryside towards the metropolis, filling the city streets with vendors of whatever can be sold, and providing foreign and local capital, including the *narcos*, with a labour

force which, for some reason or another, chooses not to join the exodus to the north.

Although this is but a sample of the contemporary state of Mexico, I do not believe that the time has come to write a eulogy for this mortally wounded country. For amidst this shuddering swamp there drifts an enclave of resistance; beyond the electric fences and the tinted windows (behind tinted windows makes it sound like it is the wealthy talking) there is a voice that cries: '*¡Ya basta! ¡No más sangre!*' – Enough! No more blood!

Take the Zapatistas: the voice of the voiceless given volume by a French educated Mexican intellectual; 'Chiapas Indians fighting against N.A.F.T.A. by means of their alliance with ex-Maoist militants and liberation theologians...'; an experiment in autonomy and participatory democracy in the Lacandon

Forest. Positive resistance: no car bombs, no dictatorial army, and no offensive tactics. [I'm pretty sure the Zapatistas did capture one government official in the 1990s, then released him after a few months. Not the recent politician – it was back in the 1990s and during negotiations with the government.]

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### The ideological & organisational characteristics of Zapatismo

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Although it is not possible to do justice to the complex ideological and organisational nature of Zapatismo in a few paragraphs, I have endeavoured here to give the reader a simple idea of its core elements. These include:

- ▼ an organisational structure of participatory democracy,
- ▼ the utilisation of a diverse array of communication strategies,
- ▼ the construction of solidarity networks.

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### Structure of participatory democracy

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Clientelism and paternalism characterise the hegemonic form of contemporary democracy. Special interests are catered for over the interests of the wider population. The masses are divorced from the realities of government. Capital rules. In this context, Zapatismo is characterised by an outright rejection of this hegemonic form of democracy. Instead it stresses an alternative form of participatory democracy which, while demanding much more of the individual, is certainly much more representative. The development and success of such a system requires training in democracy (the experience of “being government”) and the obligation to participate. Such an approach is designed to give community members the experience of governing in order to demystify the process of government. There are no barriers to access (apart from being a Zapatista, of course) and the work is not paid. Elected representatives and their families are supported by the community during their time in ‘office’.

The organisational structure consists of three levels. The first is occupied by the *Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena* (Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee) which represents the entire Zapatista community. It is largely responsible for general organisational (such as political and military) functions, which are defined through a long process of consultation

with the population. The members of the Committee are drawn from the second level, which consists of five regional *juntas de buen gobierno* (Good Government Juntas [also translated as Councils of Good Government –Eds]) which represent certain geographical areas (divided by language, including *totzil*, *tzeltal*, *chal*, and *tojolabal*). The Juntas provide coordination among the assemblies of the autonomous municipalities, and its members are drawn from these municipalities which form the third level. These municipalities are represented by municipal councils, which are constituted by elected individuals. Representation to municipal councils is open to all members of the community and is elected in community assemblies by open ballot. These elected representatives form a rotational pool for the regional juntas and the Committee.

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### Communication strategies

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The ‘success’ of the Zapatista uprising against the Mexican State in 1994 [the original ‘Zapatista’ uprising was in 1910, this may confuse some of our readers], against the institutionalisation of a US-led regime of accumulation by dispossession through N.A.F.T.A., was largely due to its effective communication strategies.

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The Zapatistas utilised the delicate political circumstances and the government’s (predictable) reaction towards the uprising to their advantage. The internet was used to channel information to news agencies and to build networks of support throughout the world, which effectively provided collective protection against the government’s repressive behaviour. In such a way they were able to force negotiation and to highlight the conditions of the indigenous communities. In this context,

the Zapatistas have been described as the ‘first informational guerrilla movement’ (by Manuel Castells).

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### Solidarity networks

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As mentioned above, the Zapatistas have constructed a comprehensive solidarity network that connects social movements and pockets of positive resistance groups in over 70 countries. This has been achieved on an international level through the periodic invitation of representatives of other movements from all over the world to meet in “intergalactic” or international meetings. This is perhaps the most fundamental aspect of Zapatismo. As one Zapatista observed in the group’s official publication *Rebeldía*:

“Seventeen years after the Zapatista insurrection, it seems that little by little they are drawing conclusions regarding what is fundamental to this process: organisation.”

Only through the construction of solidarity between disparate resistance groups can the nefarious forces of capitalism and the corresponding manifestation of bourgeoisie democracy be transformed. In such a way, Zapatismo is profoundly inclusive and egalitarian. It calls out to all those who possess a grievance to come together in order to change the structural and normative aspects of a system which causes so much destruction and misery. It calls out to ‘bring Zapatismo home’.

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### Importing Zapatismo

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As the *gran caciques* (great chieftains) of capital continue to drag the fast decaying corpse of neoliberalism around the ‘newly globalised’ world, it has become embedded in certain key areas, Mexico and Australia being two of them. While this may have temporarily provided relief to some of the major blockages in the capitalist system (whether that be a form of profit squeeze, under-consumption, or the occasionally annoying regulatory tendencies of the state), it has also provided plenty of fuel for resistance. Unlike Australia, however, the very nature of Mexico’s insecurity has added further legitimacy to forms of positive resistance. Zapatismo has become a catchy descriptor of such resistance; it has become an instrument for prying out the embedded tentacles of neoliberalism from state institutions;

it has become a powerful organisational and ideological device.

Regardless of the relative wealth of Australia (in terms of gross domestic accumulation and the redistribution of this wealth per capita), it suffers from the same malady which affects Mexico: it remains, like all countries of the world in the 21st century, subject to the exploitative and rationally irrational laws of capitalism. No matter the nature of her resource endowment, her export alliance with the rapidly developing future hegemons of East Asia, or her high (and absolutely meaningless if you care to ask the Aborigines) human development index rating, Australia will continue to suffer from the exploitative tendencies of the economic system and the exigencies of the capitalist class (no matter its heterogeneous nature).

So the million dollar question is: do we sit and wait for the nefarious tendencies of capitalism to sharpen as its blockage points become more and more difficult to overcome, or do we learn from the experiences of the poorest and most exploited sections of society and incorporate their methods of positive resistance into our revolutionary agenda?

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As mentioned above, perhaps the most fundamental aspect of Zapatismo is the construction of a solidarity network that incorporates disparate groups along a horizontal organisational structure. If the experience of the Zapatistas has taught us anything, it is that solidarity networks can triumph against the ideological apparatuses of the bourgeoisie nation-state. They can encourage and add legitimacy to positive forms of resistance. And most important (as we are witnessing, with certain caveats, in Latin America) they can successfully place pressure on the State to deepen the process of democratisation.

This is an international project. Importing Zapatismo means rejecting our inherent condescension towards the practices and discourses of poorer (or undeveloped or Third World or Southern or whatever you want to call them) peoples of the world and learning from their experiences. Importing Zapatismo means rethinking our approach to positive resistance; it means creating alliances with other (not necessarily anti-capitalist) resistance groups; it means circumventing forms of domination, not only those found within the capitalist system but also those present in our own revolutionary discourse. But most importantly, it means effective two-way communication: not only speaking our own personal truths, but also listening to those of others.



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