

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the rise of contemporary anarchism in recent years, analysed it as a social movement, and made theoretical interventions in some of the central dilemmas and areas of controversy that preoccupy activists in the present day. It has argued for a primary understanding of anarchism as a political culture, traced the movement's recent genealogy, and discussed the keywords of anarchist political language. The participatory research methods adopted in this thesis have proven invaluable in yielding a meaningful framework of explanation that would not have been available without the intimate connection with the life-world of activists.\* In discussing questions of power, violence, technology and nationalism, this thesis has attempted to display what anarchist theory can look like, once it resolves to remain in close critical engagement with contemporary anarchist literature and oral debate, while at the same time bringing into play the conceptual tools of political theory, as well as academic discussions and arguments which, while unfamiliar to anarchists, afford key insights into the very debates in which they constantly engage.

There are two main messages that this thesis would drive home to academic audiences. The first and most obvious one is that contemporary anarchism is to be taken extremely seriously, by social scientists and political theorists alike. The re-convergence of anarchist politics has given rise to what is arguably the largest and most coherent, vibrant and rapidly-evolving revolutionary movement in advanced capitalist countries.

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\* It should be noted that web-based search engines such as Google have proved to be *entirely unreliable* in their representation of the relative importance of anarchist nodes on the web. The first four points of call I would recommend for further research on anarchism are [indymedia.org](http://indymedia.org), [infoshop.org](http://infoshop.org), [agp.org](http://agp.org) and [slash.autonomeia.org](http://slash.autonomeia.org). A recommended search-engine is <http://www.activista.org/>

As such, it deserves close attention from researchers who wish to unlock processes of political expression, agenda setting, identity formation and ideological development in social movements, as well as from socially-minded political theorists who want to relate their conceptual endeavours to a broader and more integrated array of social criticism and proposals for change. As indicated in particular by the discussions of power, violence and technology, some radical academic philosophers are displaying orientations which are surprisingly harmonious with anarchism. An examination of the possible connection between specific theoretical agendas and the anarchist political project may provide meaningful insights and a platform for multi-issue thinking.

The second message, more specifically directed at socially-minded political theorists, is to encourage an unapologetic attitude to one's social agendas as a philosopher, and a strong connection between prescriptive enterprises and the investigative engagement with the needs of social movements. While there are fairly radical implications in much of recent political theory, especially in its egalitarian and democratic veins, such work still remains highly ambiguous about its own claim to relevance and possible contribution to social change. What is often assumed is that academic philosophical thinking is inevitably confined to the ivory tower and can have, at best, an accidental influence on society through its subliminal percolation into the thinking of policy-makers. A more militant approach to political theory would shift the intended audience to social movement participants, emphasise the social role of the philosopher as a facilitator for their thinking, and strongly encourage an appreciation of political culture in order to make theoretical interventions relevant to the activity of those who are taking a stand for social transformation.

In proposing avenues for further research, two topics immediately suggest themselves. The first and more narrow one is the relationship between the anarchist and animal liberation movements and agendas, particularly in Britain and the U.S. While cross-participation in the two movements remains very small, possibly due to different class backgrounds, they also clearly have shared attributes (a confrontational stance, use of direct action, extreme decentralisation, roots in the punk subculture). More recently, animal liberation groups such as SHAC have begun to target the corporate infrastructure of animal testing. While remaining a tactical choice, this also implies a deeper analysis of the connection between animal exploitation and other forms of domination – a direction explored in writing, with increasing intensity, in recent years (Dominick 1995, Anonymous<sup>9</sup> 1999, homefries 2004). Recent trends in state repression, including the narrowing of demonstration rights and legislation against economic sabotage, are beginning to generate meaningful solidarity and cooperation between the two movements. Additionally, individual activists from the animal rights movement have recently been making deliberate contacts with anarchists, a process which is beginning to create interesting cross-fertilisations that merit further study.

A second, broader topic for future research is the economic aspects of contemporary anarchism. This is not about abstract modelling or arguments between mutualist, communist, syndicalist or even free-market anarchisms – historical configurations that do not correspond to any divisions in the contemporary movement. Rather, and in line with the methodology suggested in this thesis, a discussion of the economic aspects of anarchism could do three things. First, it could draw on the concrete experience of anarchist networks in their alternative-building capacity, in order to construct a

working understanding of anarchist *economic culture*. This would investigate the orientations towards production, exchange and labour management with which anarchists are experimenting in their ongoing activities, from the collective economic behaviour of existing urban and rural anarchist communities to the circulation of goods and money in direct action networks. Since it inevitably operates within and as-against an overall capitalist environment, anarchist economic behaviour could also be studied with the aim of explaining dual-power strategies more broadly, especially regarding the processes of mutual contamination between dominant and antagonistic socio-economic realities. Second, it could point to new anarchist critiques of capitalism and work, particularly those focused on precarious and flexitime labour (Foti and Romano 2004, Mitropoulos et.al. 2005) and on the elaboration of zero-work agendas (Zerowork Collective 1975, Black 1986, Brown 1995). Third, it could draw attention to theoretical resources outside the anarchist movement, especially in contemporary critical Marxism, which anarchists would benefit from “pirating” into their own frame of thinking (Postone 1993, Holloway 2002, Nitzan and Bichler 2005).

As the anarchist movement re-awakens into the twenty first century, revolutionary politics faces many more questions than answers. The shifting landscape of social struggle, economic and environmental instability, and a volatile global geopolitics, all promise to keep anarchists on their feet for years to come, and to introduce many further re-configurations in their political repertoires and theories. Nevertheless, a certain level of stability and clarity seems to have been reached in the movement’s overall agendas for social change. A combination of efforts to erode the legitimacy of the system, construction of grassroots alternatives, and solidaristic networking and

cooperation between autonomous struggles, is by now a broadly shared strategical perspective among anarchists and their allies.

The recent years have also seen the credibility of arguments for “good government” wearing increasingly thin. Participation in elections continues to fall around the world, large publics see their manifest demands being ignored (consider the protests against war in Iraq), and the collusion between political and corporate interests is a matter of common knowledge. Under these conditions, the argument for “no government” may finally receive a fair hearing. Anarchism has not yet had its final word.

*Oxford, 2000-2005*