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# **The direct action ethic**

## **From 59 upwards**

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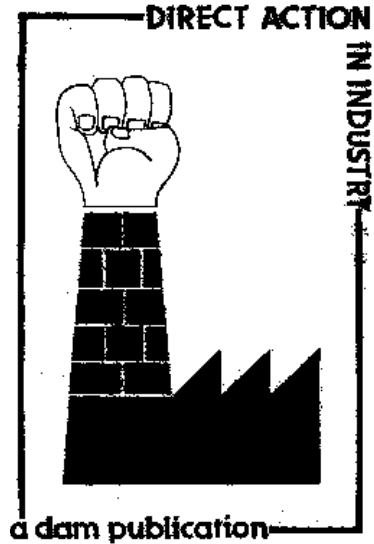
### **ABSTRACT**

Direct action has long been associated with European anarchism, from the industrial sabotage espoused by Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century anarcho-syndicalists to the anti-Poll Tax activities and DiY culture of more recent British movements. A particular ethic is identified within anarchist direct action, which has two features: The first requires that the means be in accordance with the ends (prefiguration); the second concerns the identity of the subjects involved in the act. Prefiguration distinguishes direct action from both Leninist consequentialism and the deontological approaches of liberal and anarcho-capitalist traditions. The identities of the agents involved and created through direct action illustrate important differences between anarchist direct action and that of right wing groupings such as the Rural Rebels. The paper not only clarifies the category of (anti-) political behaviours known as direct action, but also considers whether a prefigurative ethic necessitates non-violence. Additionally, the paper answers the question of why direct action is embraced by the anti-hierarchical anarchist tradition, explaining the attraction of such methods to contemporary movements, and illustrating parallels between contemporary anarchism and politically engaged post-structuralisms. Examples are drawn from recent actions; the publicity and discussion materials of contemporary groups and their critics as well as texts more centrally located within the academy.

### **INTRODUCTION**

‘Direct action’ has long had an association with anarchism, stretching back to the revolutionary syndicalist uprisings of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The link between the types of tactic covered by the term ‘direct action’ and anarchism continues today. The British anarcho-syndicalist, Solidarity Federation, was previously called the Direct Action Movement (DAM, see figure one), and even in its later manifestation continues to call their magazine by the phrase and radical environ-

mentalists produce a 'primer for direct action'.<sup>2</sup> So strong is the connection that the autonomist-Marxist<sup>3</sup> group Aufheben refers to the libertarian milieu as the 'direct action movement'. The Brighton-based Aufheben group identifies this category of political behaviour with the recent significant rise in self-assured anti-capitalist engagement, which they saw as originating from the highly publicised anti-roads protests of the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup> However, whilst direct action and the autonomous (anti-)political actions, described by George McKay as 'Do it Yourself' (DiY) is associated with the protest movements of the 1990s, it long predates the last decade.<sup>5</sup>



The first part of this paper seeks to explain why there is such a particular relationship between contemporary anarchisms and direct action. This involves an analysis both of recent libertarian movements and the category 'direct action'. The second, briefer section explores how direct action from other ideological groupings differs from anarchist direct action. The concluding section draws the implications of this difference in terms of politically engaged post-structuralisms, indicating why direct action might have grown in popularity.

## 1. DIRECT ACTION DEFINED

'Direct action' is a term that has been carelessly applied to a plethora of activities. The High Court judge Sir Michael Davies, for instance, mistakes it for criminal activity. This is an error as certain forms of direct action, as discussed below, have been legal.<sup>6</sup> Indeed many commentators and even some activists, seemingly share the judge's confusion considering direct action to be identical either with civil disobedience or with politically inspired criminality.<sup>7</sup>

To clarify the term, April Carter suggested two different approaches. The first is an analytical method. In her text *Direct Action*, originally written in 1962, but reprinted by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the early 1980s, Carter suggests analysing direct action in terms of the types of means, objective and identity of the agent using the tactic. By the time of her better-known text, *Direct Action and Liberal Democracy*, she suggests a phenomenological approach. The best way of 'understanding [...] what is entailed in the idea of direct action is to consider which movements have consciously used direct action, and what theoretical connotations surround their use of the phrase.'<sup>8</sup> The phenomenological approach suggests that understanding social action is carried out through observing

events and building theories of explanation, prior to forming judgements about them. While this phenomenological approach has much to commend it, it does appear to beg certain questions. A prior conception of direct action is required in order to focus the scope of the search and to determine which sorts of behaviour fit the description, even if it eventually proves that the primary description is too limited. So for present purposes, the approach adopted here is partly based on one that Carter dismissed as being 'sterile and misleading'. The category 'direct action' will be examined in the 'terms of method, goal or persons using it'.<sup>9</sup> Additionally by looking at how activists within and outside anarchist traditions use the term, areas of agreement and conflict will be indicated.

Carter herself points out one of the main weaknesses of the strictly phenomenological approach, namely that the term is so widely applied by certain groups, such as journalists, that it appears to exclude nothing. As discussed above, much reporting uses the term 'direct action' almost as a pejorative phrase expressing little but disapproval, or as the earlier quotation from Judge Davies has illustrated, as a synonym for 'civil disobedience'. Anti-hierarchical activists, by contrast, use the term in a different way.

Although the terms 'civil disobedience' and 'direct action' are often confused, they differ in a number of ways. The interpretation of 'civil disobedience' comes from the American civil rights and British anti-nuclear movements, which regarded their actions to be marked by a commitment to non-violence.<sup>10</sup> However, many activists find the pacifist claims to be highly questionable.<sup>11</sup> Direct action, by contrast, makes no such assertion. It should be noted that there is a subdivision of direct action, which declares itself as non-violent, but the fact that there is such a sub-category is indicative that direct action per se is not pacific. Second, civil disobedience necessarily involves breaking the law, even if the law itself is an unconstitutional one. Direct action by contrast, although frequently involving criminal activity, is not necessary illegal.<sup>12</sup> Industrial action, for instance, or squatting, may be forms of direct action that have previously not been contrary to the law.<sup>13</sup> Third, and most importantly, direct action is prefigurative, the means have to be in accordance with the ends. Civil disobedience is not necessarily prefigurative, and it is frequently consequentialist: acts are justified in terms of civil disobedience towards reaching a given end.<sup>14</sup> It is this rejection of consequentialism that particularly marks direct action out as especially anarchic.

The prefigurative element distinguishes direct action from symbolic and constitutional action.<sup>15</sup> Symbolic actions are those acts that aim to raise awareness of an issue or injustice, but by themselves do not attempt to resolve it. They are acts that signify other acts. There are many forms of symbolic action: parades, vigils, fasts, slogans, songs, festivals, badges, flags and salutes.<sup>16</sup> A possible criticism of the division between symbolic and direct action is that the latter too is symbolic. Direct action too presents a partial or temporary solution to a larger set of practices. It is here that the terminology of semiotics helps to provide a clearer basis for division. Direct action is *synecdochic*. A synecdoche is a symbol that

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contains a small part that represents a larger whole. For example, a half brick thrown during a riot is used to represent the whole insurrection. The term 'symbolic action' is used for those events that are not in themselves attempts to resolve the problem at hand directly but are *metaphorical*.

Political metaphorical symbols would include the red rose of the Labour Party or the lit torch of the Conservatives. Metaphorical symbols have no direct connection to the phenomena they are signifying, and carry their meaning through existing convention or social practice. Examples include a torchlit vigil outside a prison or detention centre.<sup>17</sup> Some acts can be both symbolic (metaphorical) and direct action (synecdochic) depending on the circumstance and the reception. Yelling slogans, acts which are apparently simply symbolic, may be used to raise courage or frighten the enemy, for instance prior to breaking through a police line (direct action). Shouting at the police with no intention of contesting their power would not be direct action, and remains purely in the realm of the symbolic.

Some symbolic acts which appear to refer solely to the representative realm, can alter the symbolic order, and inspire practical prefigurative action, thereby placing them closer to direct action. The political scientist David Apter identifies the way that symbolic actions affect the self-identification of those contesting and altering the meaning of symbols.<sup>18</sup> The *détournement*<sup>19</sup> of advertising hoardings and the manipulation of everyday language, such as the juxtaposition of previously unconnected words ('demand the impossible', 'senseless acts of beauty', 'irrational act of kindness') demonstrate the ideological hold of the dominant culture and can also be classed as direct action. Symbolic action, in contrast to direct action, has a prescribed reference or its signification is prescribed by an elite group, and remains within these limits.

Purely symbolic acts have their meanings determined by those with greater social power. Attack International, in an ironic swipe at such symbolic actions, recreated a mock leaflet for a dignified 'March Against Anything', which covered the main reasons for opposing such actions.<sup>20</sup> Particular targets are the organisers who seek to impose their interpretations on events:

Let us march as one to show our governments how cross we are about the state of the world.

But for this demonstration to be effective, we must march with dignity and unity. Comrades, a disciplined march is essential, if we are to avoid losing the support of the media, the international press and the police. So please remember to follow the rules of the demonstration [...] And please obey all commands given by the stewards and police, who will be working together throughout the afternoon to ensure peace.

At the end of the march, there will be a long rally, with speeches by several

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very important people. After the rally, please disperse as quickly as possible and make your way home peacefully...

With your co-operation, we can make today a massive success, and start building for a repeat performance next year.<sup>21</sup>

Not only do those in dominant hierarchical positions fix symbolic meanings, but also in securing these interpretations, the signs reflect this restraint. For instance, the highly structured and passive marches through indifferent streets symbolise less resistance to oppressive power than the passivity of the crowd. The demonstration does not resolve the problem it sought to highlight, but accents the political power of those who manage the march, and the liberality of the state which allows opposition (albeit toothless) onto the streets. The organisers do not facilitate the desired social change, as this would end their role of leaders of the campaign. The end result is that they control opposition and profit from it - an attitude characterised by the phrase 'Join the struggle buy the t-shirts'.<sup>22</sup>

Direct action, such as squatting, by contrast, does seek through the act to resolve the problem of homelessness or inadequate accommodation. This also makes it differ from constitutional action. Proponents of this category of political behaviours regard the lobbying of parliament to raise the question of housing provision as the most appropriate form of action. Constitutional methods do not practically resolve the social problem, nor are the agents of change - parliamentarians - the ones directly affected. Direct action is prefigurative, what is desired must also be involved in the methods of reaching that aim.<sup>23</sup> Direct action is, therefore, synecdochic; it contains elements of the object it is representing. It stands both as a practical response to a given situation, but also as a symbol of the larger vision of societal change.

As the example of squatting versus lobbying illustrates, another key feature of direct action is connected to the identities of the people using it. This is elaborated upon below, but for it to be properly 'direct', the act intends to effect the individuals carrying it out. For anti-hierarchical activists, this must be in the form of challenging practices that subjugate them, whilst for those that hold a vision of an enlightened future based on benign paternalism, direct action can be paternalistic, and by carrying out such tactics identifies them as the force for benevolent intervention.

Criticisms by libertarian activists have been advanced against sections of the anti-globalisation movement that rather than being liberatory, that is the oppressed themselves resisting their oppression, it is primarily acting on behalf of others.<sup>24</sup> The anti-imperialist sections of the Black Bloc in Seattle have been criticised not just for their 'violence' in smashing up Starbucks and Nike outlets (which is a different debate). Sections of the Black Bloc justified their actions on the basis that they were carried out to support sweatshop workers, but without the involvement of this group. This section of the Black Bloc were acting as a vanguard, and therefore hierarchically. The spectacle of activists acting *on behalf of* others,

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becoming an elite through whom the oppressed expressed their grievances replicates hierarchical relationships.<sup>25</sup> The destruction of corporate property, such as the vandalism against the fast-food multinational McDonalds on MayDay 2000, was not solely justified on paternalistic grounds. The supporters of such acts regarded their actions as benefiting themselves, through weakening the hold of oppressive capitalist property relations and building links of solidarity with other groups.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, even if their methods were flawed, they were at least attempting to prefigure non-hierarchical social relations.

An act alters its classification of whether it is symbolic or direct action, and whether it is paternalistic or non-hierarchical, depending on the identities of the agents involved. Carter provides plenty of examples of direct action: prisoners leading strikes, workers occupying factories as part of pay negotiations or to disrupt closure plans and black citizens boycotting companies that promote segregation.<sup>27</sup> The central unifying feature in all these cases is that it is the subjects who will benefit from the act who are primarily in control of the tactic. Thus, a tactic used by one group might constitute direct action, but when used by another might be symbolic. For example when a politician appears at a picket line, such as Shirley Williams at Grunwick, this has a different set of meanings from when members of the workforce appear. There are distinctive interpretations of direct action, ones that reject paternalism and those that embrace it, as will be discussed below, but the latter would be inconsistent with anarchism.

## 2. INTERPRETING 'ANARCHISM'

The importance of prefiguration, and the identity of the subjects performing the act, is also significant for class struggle anarchism.<sup>28</sup> It is because of these characteristics that anarchism is particularly associated with this category of (anti-)political behaviour. Although 'Anarchism', like 'direct action', is a highly contentious term, it is important nonetheless to attempt some form of clarification. Admittedly, some commentators, including David Miller, have contemplated surrender at the prospect of covering such a multitude of incompatible definitions and practices by a single term. Miller suggests that a definition of anarchism is impossible on the grounds that there are no core assumptions by which to identify the ideology.<sup>29</sup> There are good grounds for Miller's hypothesis; Tolstoyan pacifists, Nechayevian terrorists, hyper-capitalists, punk entrepreneurs and primitive communists, have all laid claim to the term. Indeed if we are to use the term, maybe 'anarchisms' is more appropriate than anarchism, even having restricted the term to a definable set of criteria. There are certain characteristics that can be used to distinguish a particular set of movements and groupings, which for the purpose of brevity will be called 'anarchism' (or 'anarchisms').

'Anarchism' is used here exclusively for the class struggle version of the movement (except where otherwise indicated in the text). This takes in the anarcho-syndicalists of the aforementioned Solidarity Federation and Black Flag, libertarian-

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communists such as Class War and the Anarchist Federation (formerly the Anarchist Communist Federation) and the radical sections of Movement Against the Monarchy. It also includes some of the activists and writers around Earth First! and the magazine *Green Anarchist*,<sup>30</sup> as well as the many localised and temporary groupings and networks such as Attack International and the co-ordinating bodies for anti-capitalist disruptions. Also included under the title 'class struggle anarchism' would be the Situationist-influenced currents, anti-state council communists such as the now defunct Subversion (and its partner the producer of *Proletarian Gob*) and the autonomist Marxist movements mentioned above, represented in the United Kingdom by the likes of Aufheben.<sup>31</sup>

The four criteria are drawn from the definitions of anarchism used by the groups themselves.<sup>32</sup> The first is a complete rejection of capitalism and the market economy, this demarcates anarchism from reformist politics; second, an egalitarian concern for the interests and freedoms of others as part of creating non-hierarchical social relations, this demarcates class struggle anarchism from Stirnerite egoism. The third criterion distinguishes libertarianism from parliamentary forms of socialism, including 'revolutionary' forms, for anarchists reject state power and all other quasi-mediating forces. It is however, the fourth criterion that is most important in the analysis of anarchisms' connections to direct action.

The fourth and last criterion that characterises contemporary anarchism is that actions have to prefigure the ends. It is this prefigurative feature that sets class struggle anarchism apart from many other socialist movements. James Guillaume, a colleague of Michael Bakunin, considered prefiguration the defining distinction between anarchism and orthodox Marxism. 'How could one want an equalitarian and free society to issue from authoritarian organisation? It is impossible.'<sup>33</sup> Methods and ends must be consistent. Such an approach is still shared by contemporary movements. The Anarchist Communist Federation, for instance wrote: 'Anarchists believe that there is a strong correlation between means and ends and this means that freedom is not something that can be granted to us by politicians.'<sup>34</sup> The methods involved have to embody the goals, and the appropriate agent performing the act is fundamental to the classification and assessment of that act.

These four criteria have a certain degree of overlap, but are used as an explanatory device because they are explicitly mentioned by other theorists (for example the historian of anarchism, John Quail)<sup>35</sup> and more importantly, are referred to by contemporary groups. These criteria can be characterised in a number of ways. For instance one formulation would be to consider them as being anti-representational or rejecting mediation. As anarchists seek to restrict as far as possible the ability of one group to control or speak for another, it is a rejection of forms of power that heteronomously construct subject identities. Alternatively, if 'Politics' in the broadest sense of the word means the ability to control other individual's realities, then these criteria indicate an anti-political stance.

The four principles used to define anarchism are drawn from many of the



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main libertarian groups' self-descriptions, and as such they provide a model. These criteria consequently are a useful device for identifying the movements' inconsistencies and contradictions. Indeed anarchists themselves use such an immanent critique in their assessment of their actions and those of other anarchist groups. For instance some in Class War critically assessed their own practices for unintentionally excluding non-whites and women from their movement. Others have criticised themselves and other groups for commodifying revolt, recreating hierarchies and replicating Leninist structures, even if these were done for libertarian ends.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.1. AGAINST CONSEQUENTIALISM

Most revolutionary activity is portrayed as consequentialist. There is an end predetermined by the correct analysis. In "*Left Wing*" *Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin justifies first electoral boycotts of 1905, then electoral participation after 1906 on the basis that changing the tactic would increase the chance for revolution. The ultimate end, the seizure of state power or 'revolution', justifies particular types of political behaviour. Actions are judged by whether they assist or hinder the revolutionary goal. Likewise the model for a centralised party structure is also advanced on the same consequentialist grounds. Without strong centralised Party discipline, the Communist revolution will become petty bourgeois.<sup>37</sup> The end, the Bolshevik-endorsed revolution, justifies the means, even if the methods are autocratic.

Dave Lamb, a former member of the influential British libertarian socialist group Solidarity,<sup>38</sup> writing in the anarchist magazine *Animal*, explains the anarchist rejection of this instrumentalist approach to (anti-)political change:

[T]he distinction between *ends* and *means* has been drawn between humans and the natural world, masters and slaves, men and women, employers and employed, rulers and ruled. To be reduced to a means or an instrument is to be robbed of autonomy and responsibility and consequently to be of no direct moral significance.<sup>39</sup>

Lamb's criticism of Leninism captures the problem of consequentialist methods, namely that it undermines the autonomy of subjugated groups. Paternalistic socialism predetermines the objectives and imposes these ends onto the already subjugated classes. The client class, in Lenin's case, the proletariat, becomes the instrument to reach the desired end. This is not to say that the anarchist tradition is without those espousing similar consequentialist justifications for their actions: Johann Most for instance explicitly expounds a consequentialist approach:

Ethics? The end of revolution is freedom; the end justifies the means. The struggle for freedom is a war; wars are to be won and therefore to be waged

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with all the energy, ruthlessly [...] using all there is to be used, including the latest in technology [...] to kill oppressors forthwith.<sup>40</sup>

The tension between a strict consequentialism and prefiguration is evident in both other classical anarchists and more contemporary groupings. Peter Kropotkin infamously supported the Allies military intervention in the First World War on the consequentialist grounds that such bloody battles would lead to the defeat of German militarism,<sup>41</sup> whilst also arguing for a prefigurative ethic where, in Peter Marshall's words, the 'means inevitably shaped the end'.<sup>42</sup> Recent British anarchist groups, like Class War, have also been in tension between consequentialism and prefiguration, advocating on the one hand revolution 'by all means necessary' whilst also criticising revolutionary groups for using authoritarian means to bring about emancipatory ends.<sup>43</sup>

The division between means and ends is particularly problematic when revolutionary consequentialists employ the ultimate justification, the millennial aim of 'revolution'. Either the revolution never occurs or is so far advanced in the future that it provides no basis for choosing between methods, or if the social revolution does take place, it eventually turns autocratic, negating the methods justified as the successful emancipatory strategy. Consistent anarchists therefore reject the consequentialist approach.

### 2.2. AGAINST DEONTOLOGY

The major revolutionary traditions following the Bolshevik Revolution propounded a host of methods on the basis that they would bring about the social revolution.<sup>44</sup> It became clear that these were becoming increasingly authoritarian. Rejecting such tyranny of ends led post-war anarchists to rights-based theories. The militant, Giovanni Baldelli looked to Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics as a basis for anti-political action.<sup>45</sup> Kant in the *Foundation to the Metaphysics of Morals* regarded the autonomy of the individual, defended by the use of reason to be the foundation of moral behaviour. People should not interfere in how others wish to live, without special justification. This concept of rights, or areas of sovereignty in which others cannot normally interfere, were based for Kant on reason.

Without the use of our rational capacities individuals would be victims of their instincts. Through the use of Reason, argues Kant, we come to understand our duties to others and their rights.<sup>46</sup> It is only our ability to choose between acts that marks us out as sovereign moral agents, and makes the choice between different actions amenable to ethical consideration. Duties are obligated and rights are respected not on the basis of individual desire, but on the categorical imperative. This means that maxims, of which the act is an example, must be universalisable, that is to say it must be allowable for all people to act according to that rule.<sup>47</sup> Rights and duties that pertain to one individual must be common to all.

The instrumentalism of consequentialist ethics, which allows individuals to

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become simply appliances to the achievement of a goal, conflicts with the principle of autonomy. It is the respect for autonomy, the concept that rational subjects should be able to formulate their own objectives, and have sovereignty over their actions (restricted only by the categorical imperative) and not simply have goals thrust upon them by others, that attracts liberal anarchists. This rights-based approach is shared by liberal and anarcho-capitalists but is rejected by the main class struggle libertarian groups.

There are a number of grounds for this rejection of Kantian deontology. First because the rights-based approach still maintains this problematic division between means and ends, only this time placing the emphasis on the former. Kant's rights-based theory reverses the priorities of consequentialism, considering means to be the only important factor at the exclusion of ends. This is illustrated in the infamous example of a Kantian moral agent having to return a borrowed axe to a homicidal neighbour in order to keep a promise of returning property. The act of avoiding breaking a pledge is more important than the likely consequence of giving a lethal weapon to a deranged individual. Consistent anarchists reject such negligence, as such disinterest in the welfare of others is hardly prefigurative of a beloved community.

Additionally, as Lamb explains with respect to Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, the division between methods and goals cannot be easily separated. Means can become the ends. Just as the slave who mediates between the lord's desires (the ends) and the natural world becomes dominant over the lord, so too the means, for instance supporting the bureaucracy of the Bolshevik state which was supposed to be the instrument for achieving Communism, becomes the objective.<sup>48</sup> Direct action avoids the Hegelian dilemma of the substitution of means for ends because of its prefigurative character.

Prefiguration does involve some commitment to goals; direct action and its DiY offshoots have a practical aim, even if the goals are consciously only temporary. The anti-roads protests such as the 1994 Pollock action against the M77 are an example.<sup>49</sup> Local residents and activists from afar created a squatted site that was a 'welcoming environment', which became a centre for opposition to the destruction of one of the last green spaces in that region of Glasgow. For others involved it was also an act against the imposition of commercial imperatives (the speedy distribution of goods) over a healthy neighbourhood for working class people.<sup>50</sup> The fact that the road was eventually built does not lessen the importance of the site as an example of co-operative social relations that are in contrast to dominant hierarchical practices.

By partaking in direct action, new social organisations and identities develop. These may become fixed and discrete, like the neo-tribal groupings such as the 'dongas' in the anti-roads movement, and thus open to accusations of recreating hierarchies.<sup>51</sup> Yet the way that partaking in direct action alters identities illustrates another problem with deontological methods of assessment, namely that the agent in Kantian ethics is the fixed, detached, rational egoist, a view of the subject that is essentially analogous to economic liberalism. Direct action, although carried out

primarily to benefit the actor (in order to avoid paternalism), has a socialised concept of the self, and recognises that identities alter through the practice of such methods, in the most simplistic form - from passive victim to active resistor.

The liberal presupposition concerning the moral actor underpinning Kantian theory is open to a range of criticisms. Kant's ethics are dependent upon a particular view of human agency, and as a result on what constitutes, deontological, legitimate social structures. For Kant, the dispassionate rational, autonomous agent agrees to give up certain freedoms for the security of living under law. A prerequisite for this social contract is the equal opportunity to influence legislation.<sup>52</sup> Class struggle anarchists question both the general theory that relies on an ahistoric conception of the moral agent and secondly, the assumption that there is equivalence of opportunity to change the law. Class War, for instance, were extremely critical of such an assumption.<sup>53</sup> Post-structural theorists also criticise this essentialist assumption at the core of Kantianism, that supposes each subject is a rational egoist who is, as a result, responsible for the decisions they have freely entered into, without recourse to specific social context. Anarcho-capitalists, such as the Libertarian Alliance, by contrast accept the Kantian view on the abstract rational view of the moral agent.<sup>54</sup> If a person has agreed to labour for a given wage, then industrial action, which breaks that agreement, is unacceptable as free agreements are binding on all rational subjects. This is regardless of the fact that the vast majority of individuals have no other choice but to agree to work for an employer in order to survive. No consistent class struggle anarchist would accept this neo-liberal hypothesis, as they accept that individuals are constituted parts of wider social networks. Class struggle anarchists support for direct action, such as strikes and occupations rests upon recognising that different power structures are at work, which affect the social power of particular groups.

Essentialism is not only identifiable in liberal theory but also in the works of the classical anarchists. Todd May, a writer on non-essentialist, post-structural anarchisms, recognises in the works of Peter Kropotkin and Bakunin a presumption of a fixed, benign human nature.<sup>55</sup> Dependence on this benevolent metaphysical, and therefore unknowable construct, constrains, rather than encourages moral evaluation. It suggests a universal actor independent of context and circumstance, and therefore such humanism ignores the routes of solidarity based, for instance, on shared interests in opposing similar forms of oppression. As will be discussed, the most consistent forms of contemporary anarchism share with poststructuralism a rejection of singular, fixed human essences, recognising that subject identities are fluid and diverse.

### 3. IDENTITIES AND DIRECT ACTION

Identity is fundamental to consistent anarchist conceptions of direct action, and the advocacy of tactics considered under this heading. Understanding the types of agency involved in the method are critical to the classification of the act because

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direct action must primarily be for the benefit of those who carry it out, and to be prefigurative, it must seek to equalise power relationships. However there is no single position on the identity of the appropriate moral agent in contemporary British anarchist writings. Some seem to reject any talk of class, whilst at the same time still regarding capitalism and capitalists as oppressive forces.<sup>56</sup> Some take a view closer to the Leninist interpretation of class, based on a single identity that is economically determined and determines all other relations.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, a coherent understanding of agency for class struggle anarchism is possible.

For consistent class struggle anarchists who promote anti-hierarchical social ambitions, direct action should primarily involve the oppressed overcoming, albeit perhaps only temporarily, their oppression. Direct action when successful, for the anarchists, is a form of liberation. Tactics of this form embody anti-hierarchical behaviour that prefigures the forms of social relationship that the actors wish to bring about. It is performed for their own benefit, inferring that the action resists oppression or represents self-creative behaviour attempting to avoid reproducing hierarchical structures.

Again, there are those anarchists who use the term in a different way. Libertarians active in animal rights movements, have referred to their actions as anarchic 'direct action'.<sup>58</sup> Yet these tactics, when done for the benefit of the non-human animals are paternalistic, and therefore, not properly speaking liberation. Liberation requires the oppressed themselves to overcome oppression. Similarly, those deep ecologists who seek to save nature by interfering with logging or dam construction, would not be involved in direct action, in a libertarian sense, as they are acting on behalf of others. However, if the same ALF-style action is carried out against oligarchical agribusiness by dissatisfied employees or those whose livelihoods are threatened by technologically-dominant modes of production or if those preventing deforestation do so because they see a connection between their well-being and the protection of nature then these acts still fits the anarchist conception of direct action. Motivations for the act shape the identities of the actor, although these may be fluid as the impetus for the tactic changes with circumstances. Actions that started out as symbolic and paternalistic may become direct and liberatory (and vice-versa). Whilst paternalistic methods which protect non-human animals or individuals incapable of acting autonomously, maybe just and desirable, they are not liberatory.

The aim of engaging those directly affected by oppression may lead to a concentration on campaigns surrounding local issues, as Trevor Smith, a commentator on radical action from the early 1970s reports.

[T]he need [is] to encourage individual participation [... T]o do this, issues must be selected which are close at hand. The world has become too complex for any individual to cultivate his own microcosmic view of it that might guide his action and possibly those of others; the only solution is to avoid such lofty considerations and concentrate one's energies instead at a level of society and within a range of issues, which one can fully comprehend.<sup>59</sup>

Smith is right that direct action tends to be micro-political engagements, but this does not necessarily mean that it lacks complexity, or is restricted to solely regional concerns.

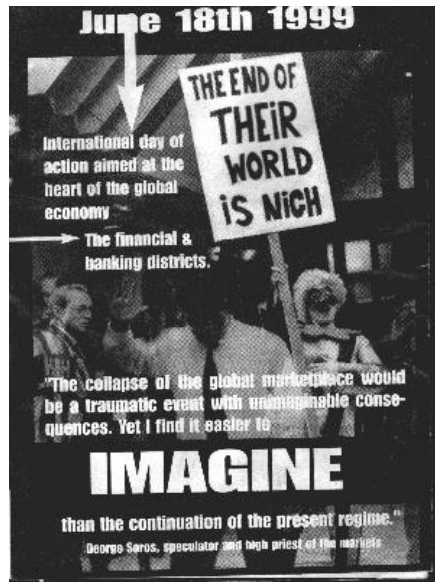
The slogan: ‘Think global - act local’ has long been associated with all branches of libertarianism from anarcho-feminism, environmentalism, communism and syndicalism, so much so that it has almost become a cliché.<sup>60</sup> This does not mean acting just at local centres of global powers, but that micro-political acts can have global effects, and can be highly sophisticated. A critical mass of localised direct action, without

being centrally organised can create more extended liberatory moments. The events of June 18 1999, a day of action called to correspond with a G8 summit, provide an excellent example of this (see figure two). There was no centralised grouping co-ordinating the myriad events of the day. Instead local and specific groups formed temporary networks, and joined together to target particular oppressive institutions. Simultaneously, other groups contested a range of different sites. Militant cyclist, environmentalists and partying hedonists (these are not discrete categories) blockaded roads, creating free spaces for social interaction where on previous Friday afternoons only rush hour traffic roamed. Congress House, the head quarters of the Trade Unions Congress headquarters, was occupied by activists angered at the bureaucratic leadership of organised labour’s complicity with the government and the LIFFE trading centre was invaded by joyous assortments of anti-market pranksters and class struggle radicals.<sup>61</sup>

With different sites attacked by diverse groups, no single location nor collective took priority and no single dominant struggle marginalised other groups. Because of such plurality, it became difficult for the events to be policed and effectively contained. On the same day parallel anti-capitalist protests were taking place on four continents, in countries such as Australia, Bangladesh, Korea and the United States.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4. ANARCHIST AND NON-ANARCHIST DIRECT ACTION

Not all direct action is anarchist. The last few years have not only seen the growth of direct action, as constitutional participation has gone into decline, but such



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direct action has also been used by groupings on the right as well as the libertarian left.<sup>63</sup> In September 2000, fuel tax protestors, concentrating on fuel depots in England and Wales blockaded fuel depots, without active interference from the tanker drivers or the police. More recently in Scotland, predominantly in the South West area of Dumfries and Galloway, sections of the Countryside Alliance have broken away to create a loose network of activists who aim to disrupt the workings of the Scottish Parliament.<sup>64</sup> They consider both Westminster and the Scottish parliament to be unsympathetic to rural concerns (in particular the decision to ban hunting with hounds). As a result they have blockaded roads as part of their protest movement. Further to the right, the American racist Andrew MacDonald's (William Pierce) in his book *The Turner Diaries* also espoused direct action on prefigurative grounds. MacDonald (Pierce) advocates the individual terror against members of ethnic minorities as these isolated assaults stand as examples of the author's ambitions for a more generalised assault on non-whites.<sup>65</sup>

Right wing direct action is, however, distinguishable from its anti-hierarchical namesake, on two grounds. First, the aims of non-progressive direct action is distinguishable from that of anarchists in terms of the ends that have to be prefigured. The organised racist cells that MacDonald celebrates use terrorist methods as consistent with their ideals. The use of a specialist racial vanguard is consistent with the ultimate aim of a specialist racial elite that survives global warfare to govern the chosen surviving group. Consistent anarchists, who reject hierarchical objectives, must choose methods of direct action that are consistent with their aims. As a result they have to avoid utilising tactics that coalesce into vanguard actions.

This rejection of hierarchical forms such as methods that promote a universal vanguard leads to the second fundamental difference between anarchic and non-anarchic forms of direct action - the agents involved. The Rural Rebels and the Petrol Boycott campaigners, do consider themselves to be members of oppressed groups. In the first they are rural people attacked by an urban elite, in the latter businesspeople subject to retrogressive taxation that was harming their enterprises. However, their 'oppressed' identities are certainly distinct from those considered legitimate by anarchists.<sup>66</sup> In both cases the activists are predominantly landowners and businesspeople who wish to reinforce the hierarchies of capital relations to maintain their position, not subvert or undermine them.<sup>67</sup> An indication of the elite status the Rural Rebels hold for themselves, is that they make no effort to create links of solidarity with other oppressed groups.<sup>68</sup>

Right wing groupings do not have a monopoly on versions of direct action that are paternalistic and/or repressive. Leninism has a different conception of the revolutionary agent to that of overtly reactionary movements, but it is also distinct from anarchist movements. Leninists have a singular conception of the revolutionary agent. There is one group who will carry out the revolutionary programme and that is the industrial section of the working class.<sup>69</sup> This section of the working class has the universal role in leading the struggle to global

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emancipation. As a result this means that their actions have to take priority over those of other oppressed groups.<sup>70</sup> Indeed direct action by other oppressed groups, should be consequentialist, done not to limit their own oppression, but undertaken in support of *the* revolutionary subject, the industrial proletariat.

Leninist use of direct action as a consequence differs from anarchist direct action in two main regards. First legitimate actions are restricted primarily to those of the industrial working class. Whilst other forms of direct action are celebrated in Leninist texts, such as those where the agents are identified in terms of patriarchal or racial oppression, these are subordinate to the 'real' struggle of the industrial working class. As *Aufheben* notes, Leninist groups justified participation in the campaigns against the 1994 Criminal Justice Act (a piece of legislation aimed at marginal groups, involved in DiY, such as travellers, hunt saboteurs and house music ravers) by claiming 'unconvincingly that its [the Acts] real targets was workers' picket lines.'<sup>71</sup> It was this section of the working class whose actions needed to be defended. Direct action was defensible in so far as it supported the eventual strategy of proletarian revolution.

Consistent anarchists, by contrast, consider all forms of non-hierarchical resistance to oppressive forces as potentially liberatory. It recognises a variety of oppressions and therefore different oppressed subjects. It therefore promotes a wide variety of interventions that are tailored to the particular location and oppression. Direct action, for anarchists, highlights and attempts to overcome hierarchical practices, rendering them visible so that other groupings can contest power relations. These areas of contestation and zones of autonomous behaviour create nodes where prefigurative, supportive relations can be formed.

Such diversity does not rule out the possibility that in most contexts and maybe in all economic oppression might be a significant type of dominating force, it is not the only one. In different locations, different types of hierarchical practice operate, creating different types of oppressed agent. The ACF for instance notes that patriarchy is not reducible to capitalism as the first predates the latter.

Equally important is the division between the sexes, which first appears before history and was the blueprint for latter forms of oppression, such as class, race and disability. The ideology of hierarchy is practised in the home, the workplace, the school, indeed in all relationships ...<sup>72</sup>

Like the ACF, Attack International recognise that gender divisions are not solely the result of capitalism, even if dominant economic classes manipulate these forms of division. 'Beyond the division of rich/poor, white/black etc is the division of power that runs through all these relationships, and that is the oppression of women. Women are repressed regardless of what class, colour or age they are.'<sup>73</sup> *Green Anarchist* too is critical of other anarchists for trying to reduce all forms of domination to a single origin. '[A]lthough capitalism has deepened certain forms of oppression such as racism and sexism it's a complete lie to see it as being the



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sole cause.<sup>74</sup> As oppression is complex and multiform, reaction to it will require different agents in the varied contexts, realising different, changing desires.

The former Black Panther Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, now an anarchist militant, indicates some of the confusion in anarchist thinking. He claims variously that capitalism is the sole cause of racial oppression,<sup>75</sup> that racism pre-existed capitalism<sup>76</sup> and near the end of his tract, that capitalism was the product of other forms of oppression.<sup>77</sup> Such confusion is hardly surprising. For activists like Ervin what matters is how class and racial oppression are experienced in the here and now, and how to resist such domination, rather than discerning its origins (this latter task may well be impossible). As different groups face a divergence of disciplining forces, in the variety of contexts, so different agents of change are required. As a result, as agency is context dependent, whether an act constitutes anarchist direct action is equally only locally determined. As Ervin explains, Black working class groups should take the lead in confrontation with racist forces, but prefigurative, non-hierarchical action against other forms of oppression requires different structures, methods and agents.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Attack International argued that women should dictate the forms of direct action against patriarchy.<sup>79</sup> There is no universal oppressed group whose interests supersede all other subjugated classes. Different groupings, and distinctive identities take priority dependent on context.

### 5. CONSEQUENCES OF POSTSTRUCTURAL ANARCHISM

There are a number of similarities between the coherent forms of class struggle anarchism and politically engaged poststructuralisms. In this final section, I shall draw out possible consequences of these resemblances in terms of tactics and future direction. These shared characteristics are, at least in part, due to the anarchist commitment to prefiguration, which is a fundamental feature of direct action.

Anarchism, in its most consistent form, rejects consequentialism, a characteristic of modernism. For consistent anarchists it is impossible to predetermine the oppressive practices that operate in every context.<sup>80</sup> It is therefore impossible to predict what form liberation from these repressive conditions would take. To use May's terminology from his excellent text *The Political Philosophy of Poststructural Anarchism*, contemporary anarchism is tactical rather than strategic. Tactical philosophies, such as anarchism, acknowledge a multitude of oppressive irreducible powers with no objective position that can identify how they would operate acontextually.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's rhizome metaphor is useful in understanding how power operates. Rhizomes work through 'connection and heterogeneity'. Their stems intersect and sometimes merge, the combined roots of the rhizome create a new structure that is distinct from its constitutive parts. Social space, argues Deleuze and Guattari is constituted out of a complex of intersecting networks of power.<sup>81</sup> Unlike trees whose branches stem from a single origin, rhizomes spread out roots that connect to other roots such that no single tuber constitutes the source.

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Consequently as May explains, the multiple forms of power do not operate uniformly, or to the same degree, so different political identities develop.<sup>82</sup>

More traditional Marxist and social democratic traditions, by contrast, regard social space as having one prime mover. They are, in May's terminology 'strategic'. They propose that there is one central struggle that can be understood scientifically.<sup>83</sup> Leninism, claims May, asserts for itself an objective position from which it assesses situations and prescribes solutions for the client group. Whilst there are examples of strategic anarchism, such as those from traditional anarcho-sindicalist backgrounds who argued that a single general strike would bring about the millennial revolution, consistent anarchisms, do not regard one single conflict to be the universal site for liberation.<sup>84</sup>

The rejection of strategic approaches does not imply eliminating all long term planning. Many anarchist tactics have involved significant planning over a considerable period. Major anti-globalisation events, such the aforementioned J18 or at Seattle (November 30, 1999, otherwise known as N30) or Prague (September 26, 2000), Gothenburg (June 14, 2001) or Genoa (July 20-21, 2001) or Barcelona (14-16 March 2002) were organised against the major bodies of liberal capitalism. The imposition of neo-liberal guidelines is a major constitute of many forms of oppression. These huge demonstrations, which provided opportunities for direct action against the World Bank, G8, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organisation, not only involved long term planning, but sophisticated organisation. For the libertarian sections of this protest movement, such organisational structures also attempted to prefigure their ends.<sup>85</sup> The rejection of strategy means the refusal of a singular, central problematic whose successful outcome resolves all problems. For tactical politics, there is no central location of power, but different oppressions operate in different forms. These might require longer term, prefigurative methods to overcome.<sup>86</sup>

There are a number of influences of this prefigurative approach to (anti-)political activity from poststructural anarchisms. These can be listed as 1) Practicality 2) Networking and 3) Diversity and Unpredictability.

### 5.1. PRACTICALITY

The rejection of a schema in which a final millennial event justifies all preceding actions means that tactics are assessed on how far they embody their objectives. This presents direct action as a pragmatic response to social problems, as exemplified by the DiY protest movements that grew up around environmental and civil liberties issues throughout the 1990s. Given the association of anarchism with utopianism, the importance of practical responses may seem surprising.

Practicality is not the same as reformism. Reformism is rejected as it looks to hierarchical authorities, such as Parliament, to act. Although some reforms are welcomed which reduce oppressive practices,<sup>87</sup> direct action provides an immediate practical alteration in power relations. Even if the act is not wholly successful

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participants have benefited from the involvement. For instance the anti-roads protestors developed new craft and communication skills as well as experienced new ways of living. Chris Atton's analysis of *Green Anarchist*<sup>88</sup> illustrates that it was more open to readers' contributions and for sharing skills and resources than orthodox Leninist newspapers.<sup>89</sup> Anarchist magazines that are more overtly class struggle, such as *Contra Flow* and *Counter Information*, not only invite readers to send in articles, but also invite them to attend editorial meetings and share information.<sup>90</sup> The sharing of skills, whether in word-processing, writing or in camp building or climbing, helps to create solidarity and trust as well as reducing hierarchies based on competencies.<sup>91</sup>

### 5.2. NETWORKS

Strategic analysis imposes links of solidarity, whilst anarchic direct action suggests the agents themselves find their own links of solidarity. The model of the temporary network has consequently appealed to direct action communities. There is no binding agreement between sections in a network. Groups come together on mutually desired projects, allowing those concerned to explore it in their own way, the relationships being as permanent or as temporary as the mutual interests and desires that maintain it. Like desirable mutually beneficial relationships, how the network forms and between whom cannot be predicted beforehand. Just as friendships cannot be imposed and just as it is impossible to predict how long a love affair will last, so too no one can externally will the forms of solidarity between subjugated groups. In the same way that relationships can become romances, life-long partnerships or develop into intense but transitory liaisons, so too can groups and collaborations be continuous, occasional or temporary depending on context and subjects.

Under strategic politics, e.g. where economic class is seen as the sole determinant, working class victims of homophobia are expected to join a proletarian party, which might not be the most appropriate structure for confronting this particular form of oppression. The Situationist-inspired writer Larry Law warns against making inappropriate links, such as when superficial similarities are confused with shared interests and desires. "Don't worry", said the trees when they saw the axe coming, "The handle is one of us".<sup>92</sup> As direct action takes place, and identities change (such as 'activist' and 'tribal' identities), this necessitates changes in the forms of solidarity.

Examples of unexpected but practical forms include the networks of support created by radical environmental groups such as Earth First! and Reclaim the Streets and made with traditional working class groups such as the striking Liverpool dockers, links that culminated in the March for Social Justice in April 1997. These links were further developed with the J18 'Carnival Against Capitalism' and other anti-globalisation events. These networks and how they developed were incapable of being predicted even just a few years prior to their appearance.

## 5.3. DIVERSITY AND UNPREDICTABILITY

It is impossible for those external to movements, such as academics or journalists, to be able to predict their development. However it is also difficult for participants to determine with whom they will be combining with in the future. Whilst it is true that some co-operative arrangements can be predicted with some degree of certainty, it cannot be taken for granted, nor can the depth of the relationship be assured. Direct action, such as the anti-roads protests, created links of solidarity between previously unlikely groupings. For instance at Newbury, during the anti-roads protests there was co-ordination, at various times, between nomadic protestors, local residents, climbers and archaeologists furious at the destruction of important sites and the down-grading of their jobs.<sup>93</sup> Even when the battle for the by-pass was finally lost, the radicalisation of certain archaeologists and climbers remained. Successful direct action suggests new links of solidarity as well as changing the identities of those involved.

For anarchists all forms of oppressive power must be confronted. To concentrate on just one root of the rhizome would allow others to flourish unchecked. Consequently anti-sexist struggles, for instance, which failed to take into account the ways capitalism has been encoded into social practices would merely reform the economic order ensuring class domination continued. Similarly capitalist activity that did not recognise other forms of repression would recreate hierarchy. What is required is diversity of tactics.

Consistent anarchisms avoid universalising any single method; the multiplicity of forms of oppression requires diverse forms of resistance. A problem for libertarians in the anti-globalisation movement is that the street rioting that broke the symbolic order on J18 and in Seattle for N30, has now become expected. State power now knows how to contain it. Rather than disrupting established arrangements forms of protest become contained within it. Some acting in the apparent street insurrections might feel that they were successfully disrupting commercial activity, but their radical actions are merely gestures without impact. The half bricks bouncing off the well-protected police or heavily fortified windows no longer disrupt the dominant symbolic order. Instead the anti-globalisation protests are growing increasingly strategic.

The move away from multiple sites of struggle towards a strategy aimed at global meetings of the IMF and so on acts as a constraint on the wider disruptive possibilities of direct action based on local protests. Whilst N30 is probably best remembered for the Seattle insurrections, direct action against more local forms of oppression took place across many continents, with local groups co-ordinating their own events. Interventions against tube privatisation and the issue of trade liberalisation took place for instance in London and Nottingham. In Iceland there were protests against US military bases. Dijon in France saw a blockade of financial institutions whilst in Holland activists occupied part of the airport. Outside of Europe in Bangalore there were protests against Monsanto and genetically modified crops and in Melbourne the business community was subject to disruption.<sup>94</sup>

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However, more recently there has been a greater tendency to strategise. The WTO or IMF meeting is regarded as the primary location and activists are encouraged to attend the main event. The local actions are increasingly seen as supportive of the key location, rather than having autonomy. Further, as Tommy, a protestor at Genoa, identifies, the anti-globalisation protests are being used by growing sections, in particular Globalise Resistance and the Socialist Workers Party, as part of a consequentialist politic. Leninist groupings regard the movement not as an opportunity for creative, immediate direct action but for encouraging constitutional politics and hierarchical Party building.<sup>95</sup>

Repeating tactics, reifying them as *the* route to liberation, not only creates a vanguard whose actions are supposed to bring us all emancipation, but enable dominating groups to contain and discipline revolt. The effectiveness of the method is diminished, making the act more-or-less symbolic. To counter this recuperation, activists are aware of the need to construct new methods and new alliances to remain 'one step ahead'.<sup>96</sup> Finding original forms of co-operation and communication are indicators of the successes of the anti-hierarchical direct action movements.

### 6. CONCLUSION

Direct action can be best understood as a prefigurative action whose political or anti-political role can be identified and assessed through the ends it foreshadows and the identities of the agents undertaking it. It is particularly attractive to libertarians because of the shared commitment to prefiguration. A prefigurative ethic avoids the oppressiveness of consequentialism and rejects the abstract individualism of deontology. Instead, in the anarchist form, it recognises the primacy of oppressed subjects themselves overthrowing the forces of their subjugation. As such anarchism seeks to avoid mediating forces.

As oppression is considered to be multiform and diverse, so too oppressed subjects and their forms of resistance are diverse. The fêting of multiform responses is not just a contemporary manifestation. David Miller identifies this fluidity in the anarchist movements of the 1880s.<sup>97</sup> It is also apparent in the declaration of the First World War anarchist Robert Grave:

Society teems with abuses; against each abuse, there must rise up from that group of those who most suffer from it in order to combat it... Not only groups struggling against that which exists, but attempts to group together along the lines of the future, with a view to producing faith, well-being, solidarity, among like-minded individuals [Q. Grave, Miller. 1984, 131].

The vibrancy of liberatory movements depends on their ability to respond inventively to constraints as well as the new freedoms they create. The strengths and weaknesses of direct action movements can be assessed by how quickly they adjust, and the degree to which these new tactics correspond, to the prefigurative ethic.

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### END NOTES

Please note that some anarchist publication have no publisher listed (npb) or place of publication (npl). Where no date of publication is given one is estimate indicated by (e). Some lack pagination, in these cases the front cover is counted as page one.

1. Carter, 1973, 137.
2. *Urban attack: A primer for direct action*, available through the *Green Anarchist* magazine.
3. Autonomous Marxism has its roots in the post-war Italian revolutionary tradition, and includes amongst its ranks Toni Negri and the American Harry Cleaver. The major distinction between autonomist and the main Leninist traditions is that the first place greater emphasis on the autonomy of the working class in its struggle against capital, rather than the class struggle being determined by the dominant economic conditions. The agent who will bring about change is not just the industrial proletariat, but like anarchism, includes those not formally involved at the point of production. Autonomists also stress the autonomy of various groups of workers rather than regarding class action as an amorphous whole. See Cleaver, 1979, 63 & Wright, 2002. Autonomous Marxism has more in common with consistent class struggle anarchism than the orthodox Marxist tradition as indicated in Cleaver's discussion of Peter Kropotkin [Cleaver, 1993].
4. See *Aufheben*, No. 3, 14-5, 23; *Undercurrents* 8, 12-13.
5. McKay, 1998, 3.
6. See 'Head to Head: Making Waves', BBC News Online, July 29, 1999, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk/newsid\\_405000/405883.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk/newsid_405000/405883.stm).
7. See for instance the BBC television programme *Heart of the Matter* (BBC 1, 23 September 1997). In the film insert by the environmental activist Merrick Godhaven and in the panel discussion afterwards 'direct action' and 'civil disobedience' were used interchangeably.
8. Carter, 1973, 3.
9. *Ibid*, 3.
10. Carter, 1973, 9, 65. See too Welsh, 2000, 175-6.
11. See for instance Class War quoted in Booth, 1996, 102 and the Anarchist Federation's magazine *Organise!*, No.36, 5-6. Pastor Reinhold Niebuhr provides an excellent critique at the claims of 'non-violence' from supposed pacifists such as Gandhi, arguing that the favoured methods such as boycotts are coercive and harmful activities, but nonetheless still justified [Niebuhr, 1942].
12. Welsh suggests that accepting the consequences of breaking the law, such as arrest and punishment, is a criterion of civil disobedience. He cites the Clamshell Alliance who employed a tactic of accepting arrest and imprisonment as way of overburdening the State's penal resources [Welsh, 2000, 154 & 164]. Not all civil disobedience, however, involves acquiescing to the State. The destruction of Genetically-Modified crops which some, such as the French radical farmer's leader Jose Bove, consider 'civil disobedience' often involves protestors actively avoiding arrest [BBC News Online, 'French protesters destroy GM crops' [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid\\_1510000/1510463.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_1510000/1510463.stm), Sunday, 26 August, 2001, 16:38. *Do or Die!* No.8, illustrates how activists wear protective masks to avoid recognition and often attempt to flee capture by the police rather than announce themselves to the authorities [*Do or Die*, No. 8, 89-90].
13. Carter, 1973, 24 and 95-6.

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14. This problem of interpretation is illustrated by the quotation from the activists Corrine and Bee, quoted by McKay. '[C]ivil disobedience is "a political act in itself, and its efficacy and the cause it serves are of less importance... the value of civil disobedience lies not in 'the effect' of a long-term strategy to bring about political goals, but in itself as an act of non-compliance, an act of authenticity to one's own beliefs: propaganda by the deed' [McKay, 1998, 5-6]. Bee and Corrine provide an interpretation of civil disobedience' that is neither accepting of legal consequences nor pacifist, but better fits the category of Direct Action.
15. Carter, 1983, 3-4 and 22.
16. Carter, 1983, 23 and 27.
17. *Taking Liberties* No.16, 2.
18. Apter, 1971, 9-10.
19. 'détournement' is a term used by the Situationists for interventions that draw attention to the way dominant cultural forms operate and thereby undermine them [Plant, 1992, 86-7, see also Debord, 1989, 8-14].
20. 'March Against Anything' is an updated version of an early 1980s Situationist-inspired publication, see Marcus, 1989, 54-5.
21. *Attack, Attack Attack Attack*, 1987, 9.
22. Ibid.
23. Carter, 1973, 19. Colin Ward borrows David Wieck's distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect action' in which the first is prefigurative while the latter is justified only consequentially [Ward, 1982, 23].
24. 'Anti-globalisation' is a hugely problematic term. As Toni Negri and Michael Hardt explain the term cannot adequately cover the diversity of interests that have created this movement. Hardt and Negri qualify the term because the protestors, on the whole, advocate globalising solidarity, as they are not isolationist or nationalist. Hardt and Negri, 2001, 102.
25. See *Aufheben* No. 10, 8 and SDEF!, 1999, 4-5
26. See for instance Melancholic Troglodytes, 2000, 17, an anonymous message in the same volume speaks of McDonald's practices that effect the writer as well as those which do not, but are nonetheless exploitative, p20.
27. Carter, 1973, 6-7, 19 and 95.
28. The designation 'class' in 'class struggle anarchism' does not necessarily infer that economic categories always take prominence.
29. Miller, 1984, 3.
30. Richard Hunt, one of the editors of *Green Anarchist* before leaving to found a magazine with neo-fascist tendencies, nonetheless propounded a class based analysis of workers exploitation under capitalism [PNR, 1992, 16]. More contemporaneous activists involved in *Green Anarchist* appear to reject class analysis whilst others support concepts that are linked to class struggle, in particular the position that anti-capitalism requires those who are oppressed by that set of economic practices to overcome it. See for instance *Green Anarchism* No. 34, 5-7 and *Test Card F*. The latter was written with the assistance of Green Anarchist movement members but uses conceptual tools developed by class struggle Situationist movements [Booth, 1996, 110, Institute for Social Disengineering, 1994]. For evidence of an analysis from sections of EF! which are consistent with sophisticated class approaches see SDEF!, 1999.

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31. It should be noted that some of the groups included under the broad title of 'class struggle anarchists' are unhappy with the designation. For a discussion of the Situationist International's attitude to anarchism see Jappe, 1999, 98. A recent Situationist-inspired text, *Two Hundred Pharaohs, Five billion Slaves* considers anarchism to be 'the ideology [...] pioneered by the world's bourgeoisie' [Reknaw/Repetitive Fame Injury, 1999, 42]. Class War's Chris Causey also criticised the title 'anarchism' in his article 'The end of Anarchism', suggesting a critical distance between his group and the 1980s anarchist movement, especially the then still influential liberal, pacifist anarchists [Causey, 1988e, 5-7]. Nonetheless all these groups participate in overtly anarchist groupings like the Anti-Elections Alliance and the Anarchist Bookfair.
32. See for instance the definition of anarchism provided in 1967 by the Solidarity group, reprinted in the *Anarchist 1992 Yearbook*, the shorter description of anarchism found in the *Anarchist 1993 Yearbook*, or the statements of Aims and principles found in most anarchist publications, e.g. *Organise!* No. 52, 23 *Class War*, No. 39,13.
33. Q. James Guillaume, Bakunin, 1984, 7.
34. As a writer in the magazine *Black Flag* notes in discussing Argentina's popular rising against IMF policies, 'Means and ends are linked, with direct action being the means of generating combative working class organisations and preparing people to directly manage their own personal and collective interests.' *Black Flag*, No, 221, 20. See too *Organise!*, April - June 1992, No. 26, 20, Amster, 1998, 101 and Chan, 1995, 56 where the prefigurative characteristic of anarchism is claimed for a pacifist position.
35. Quail, 1978, x.
36. *Class War* No. 73, 7-9 and 13. For other instances see the criticisms of the relatively short-lived Anarchist Workers Group, by the Anarchist Communist Federation (now called the Anarchist Federation) *Organise!* No. 29, 11.
37. Lenin, 1975, 21-22 and 31-2.
38. Solidarity has no connection to either the Polish free trade union, or the right wing Labour Party grouping of the same name. Solidarity was formed in 1960 by former Communist Party members who left following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and had strong links to Cornelius Castoriadis's *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group. Both the Situationist Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard attended *Socialisme ou Barbarie* meetings. Former members of Solidarity also played a major role in the formation of other anarchist groups such as Class War.
39. Lamb, 1997, 12.
40. Q. Most, Trautmann, 1980, 99. Nechaev too took a wholly instrumental approach, arguing that anyone could be used as an instrumental to achieve the predetermined end of revolution. See for instance Nechaev, 1989, 4-5 and 9.
41. Woodcock, 1975, 202-3.
42. Marshall, 1992, 336. There is the suggestion that Kropotkin considered mutual aid to be both the means and the end of a liberated society. He argues, for instance, that mutual aid helps promote progress and social well being and that the sign of this progress is further mutual co-operation and support, Kropotkin, 1939, 230-1.
43. See for instance Class War's sub-heading 'class war by all means necessary' on the front page of *Class War* No. 47 as well as their range of t-shirts bearing the slogan 'class unity by all means necessary' pictured in *Class War* No. 72, 10 and their rejection of consequentialist revolutionary politics in *Class War* No. 73, 10
44. Lenin stated shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution:



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[T]he victorious dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia has clearly shown even to those who are unable to think, or who have not had occasion to ponder over this question, the absolute centralization and the strictest discipline of the proletariat constitute one of the fundamental conditions for victory over the bourgeoisie [Lenin, 1975, 6].

45. Peter Marshall and the Canadian writer Robert Graham share Baldelli's liberal interpretation of anarchism, Baldelli, 1971, 19; Marshall, 1992, 38; Graham 1996, 71.

46. Kant, 1983, 64-5.

47. Kant, 1983, 68.

48. Lamb, 1997, 13.

49. Begbie, 1996, 68.

50. McKay, 1998, 46-7; Plows, 1998, 161.

51. What started as a way for a loose coalition of people to unify under the name of a tribe that resisted Roman rule, became reified. It became a badge of commitment, placing those in a position to organise their whole lives around the campaign over local activists and those with other responsibilities [Wall, 2000, 69-71 and *Do or Die*, No. 8, 155].

52. Kant, 1959, 73.

53. *Class War*, 1992, 44 and 47.

54. Some liberal anarchists from the group that produce the newspaper *Freedom*, such as Donald Rooum, the cartoonist of the Wildcat cartoon, regard the appropriate agent as the abstract rational individual, Rooum, 1986, 56. Andrew Koch like Todd May provides an account of anti-essentialist anarchism that draws upon Stirner, Nietzsche and the politically-engaged post-structuralists to undercut the essentialist conceptions of the individual that sustain Statist political theories [Koch, 1993, 343-6].

55. May, 1994, 63, see also Morland, 1997, 3 and Call, 1999, 100.

56. See for instance *Green Anarchist* No. 34.

57. See for instance *Proletarian Gob*, 1993, 6; Anderson and Anderson, 1998, 72.

58. See for instance the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) magazine *Direct Action Against Bloodsports*.

59. Smith, 1972, 310.

60. See *Contraflow* No. 24, Jan-March 1998, 2.

61. *Do or Die* No. 8, 1-17, G. Lancaster, 1999, 6-9.

62. 'J18 Global Ambush of Capitalism' <http://www.infoshop.org/june18.html>, see also the publication *Reflections on J18*.

63. Electoral turnout at the 2001 general election fell to 59% 'The turnout in the 2001 General Election could be the lowest for more than 80 years' BBC Online, 'Turnout at 80-year low', Friday, 8 June, 2001, 04:26 GMT 05:26 UK, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid\\_1376000/1376575.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid_1376000/1376575.stm)

Labour Party membership was 360,000 in 1999, 31100 in September 2001 and is now about 280,000. BBC Online 'Labour membership down 10%' Monday, 28 January, 2002, 13:04 GMT, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk\\_politics/newsid\\_1786000/1786686.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk_politics/newsid_1786000/1786686.stm) and 'Labour membership "drops below Tories"', Saturday, 8 September, 2001, 14:14, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk\\_politics/newsid\\_1531000/1531932.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk_politics/newsid_1531000/1531932.stm)

'John Strafford, chairman of the Campaign for Conservative Democracy [...]: "The membership of the Conservative Party, and indeed the Labour Party as well, has been

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- in long-term decline for 50 years.' 'Tories deny membership decline', Friday, 21 April, 2000, 16:44 GMT 17:44 UK, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk\\_politics/newsid\\_721000/721930.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk_politics/newsid_721000/721930.stm)
64. It should be acknowledged that direct action has always been a part of the Countryside alliance's methods, threatening riots and blockading food distribution should bloodsports be banned, Lucas, 1999, 16.
  65. MacDonald, 1980, 9.
  66. 'Bruce Heywood (a Countryside Alliance demonstrator), 59, who runs a 140-acre sheep farm on Exmoor, Devon, said: "We have become an oppressed minority that no-one cares about." Paul Gallagher, 'Rural Rebels step up fight' in *The Scotsman*, 17.12.01, <http://www.thescotsman.co.uk/index.cfm?id=1694562001>
  67. See *The Dumfries Courier*, 30.11.01, page 15; the profiles of the main protagonists in the petrol boycotts 'The men behind the fuel protests', BBC Online, Friday, 3 November, 2000, 13:15 GMT [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk/newsid\\_1003000/1003552.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk/newsid_1003000/1003552.stm),
  68. Lorraine Mann of the Highlands and Islands Alliance party and SNP member for North East Scotland Richard Lochhead, critics of the Rural Rebels, complain that the rebels are willing to go to prison for the right to hunt foxes, but not to save rural services such as schools from closing. See 'Growing pains' in the *Sunday Herald*, <http://www.sundayherald.com/20918>. For a discussion of the racist undertones in the discourse and structure of organised groups promoting country pursuits, see Lucas (1999), 'New Alliances on the Right', *Animal*, No. 3, 16-18.
  69. As Lenin explains '[T]he proletariat is the only class that is consistently revolutionary, the only class able to unite all the working and exploited people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, in completely replacing it.' Lenin, 1976, 30.
  70. More recent British Leninists share Lenin's view on the specificity of the proletariat. Chris Harman, a leading theoretician of the Socialist Workers Party, explains that it is only the proletariat who are capable of overthrowing the current economic order. This is because they are brought together in sufficient numbers by the production processes of industrial capitalism [Harman, 1979, 16 and 38]. The importance of the industrialised section of the working class for successful Communist revolution is also stressed by the founder of the SWP, Tony Cliff, he explains away the 'anti-democratic' turn of the Bolsheviks following the October Revolution on the subsequent decline of the industrial proletariat following the insurrection [Cliff, 1996, 61-2].
  71. *Aufheben* No. 10, 2002, 10.
  72. ACF, 1990e, 1-2.
  73. *Attack, Attack, Attack, Attack*, 1987, 5.
  74. *Green Anarchist* No. 35, 9.
  75. '[It] is the capitalist bourgeoisie that creates inequality as a way to divide and rule over the entire working class. White skin privilege is a form of *domination* by Capital over White labour as well as oppressed as oppressed national labour' [Ervin, 1993, 10].
  76. '[C]apitalism used the system of white skin privilege' [Ervin, 1993, 3].
  77. 'The capitalist system was created by and maintained by and is maintained by enslavement and colonial oppression' [Ervin, 1993, 59].
  78. Ervin, 1993, 5 and 19-20.
  79. *Attack Attack Attack Attack*, 1987, 15.
  80. This characteristic of post-modernity, rejecting grand instrumentalist planning is also

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recognised by Harvey, 1996, 12-14. Harvey also notes that post-structuralism embraces the metonym (of which the synecdoche is an example) as opposed to the metaphor of modernism. Harvey, 1996, 43

81. Deleuze and Guattari, 1992.

82. May, 1994, 96.

83. May, 1994, 11-12 and 20. May is not the only theorist to recognise an anarchism shorn of humanism and scientific rationalism. Lewis Call suggests a post-structural anarchism can also be discerned in the works of Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, see Call, 1999, 100.

84. As the Charter of Amiens (1906) expounds:

[S]yndicalism [...] prepares for complete emancipation, which can be realised only by expropriating the capitalist class: it sanctions the general strike as its means of action and it maintains that the trade union, today an organisation of resistance, will in the future be the organisation of production and distribution, the basis of social reorganisation... [The Charter of Amiens, can be found at Anarcho-Syndicalism 101: Class Struggle Online, Website, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> November 2002, <http://www.anarchosyndicalism.org/documents/amiens.htm>]

85. 'You cannot fight alienation by alienated means.' SDEF!, 1999, 5.

86. May, 1994, 11.

87. See for instance the celebrations surrounding the abolition of the Poll Tax; *Class War* No. 46, 4; Burns, 1992, 177.

88. Whilst *Green Anarchist* is not a class-struggle magazine it is one which is close to such groups participating with them on Anti-Elections Alliance and MA'M activities. Some writers and editors have also espoused class-based analysis, as a result the analysis provided by Atton does provide a useful guide.

89. Atton, 1999, 33.

90. See for instance *Counter Information* No. 35, 4 and *Contra Flow* No. 22, 2 and 4

91. Merrick, 1997, 47 and 79.

92. Law, 1983, 16.

93. Merrick, 1997, 68, 79, 81.

94. SchNews on Urban 75, <http://www.urban75.com/Action/schnews01.html>, Melbourne Actions Against WTO, <http://www.antimedia.net/melbn30/>, and Global Action, <http://flag.blackened.net/global/>

95. Tommy, 2001, 105-7.

96. Bash Street Kids, 2000, 5. See to Massimo De Angelis's comment that the movements protesting against neo-liberalism despite, or even because of their 'contradictions, limitations and ambiguities' are 'already patiently and with effort building another world' Angelis, 2001, 115.

97. Miller quotes a French anarchist from the 1880s.

We do not believe.... in long term associations, federations, etc. In our view, a group.... should only be established at a precise point, for an immediate action; once the action is accomplished, the same group reshapes itself along new lines, whether with the same members or with new ones... [Q. in Miller, 1984, 96].