

Anti-capitalism and poststructuralist anarchism¹

Introduction

Social anarchism has a long reputation as a disparate and incoherent ideology. Commentators, sympathetic and objective alike, have frequently accused social anarchism of being too diverse to constitute a singular, recognisable ideology at all (Chomsky, 1970; Miller, 1984; Ball and Dagger, 1991). To a degree this is true: social anarchism is a loose and diverse ideology that may be too elusive for some commentators to categorise neatly and clearly. However, other commentators, myself included, have taken the view that there *is* sufficient rigour and coherence within social anarchism to label this as an identifiable ideology (Morland, 1997; Woodcock, 1975). Notwithstanding that social anarchism is fraught with difficulties as an agreed academic construct, the task of defining anarchy itself remains problematic. Having progressed from nineteenth-century social anarchism, the last century witnessed the proliferation of a number of divergent strands within anarchist thought. Principal among these is social ecology, expounded largely by Murray Bookchin, but there are many other strands, including primitivism (e.g., John Zerzan) and poststructuralist anarchism (e.g., Todd May).

Differences concerning the definition of anarchy and social anarchism permeate anarchist thought and writings. Consensus is usually achieved, however, over what anarchists oppose. A common starting point is the issue of power. Drawing on rational choice theory, Michael Taylor (1982: 11–13) defines power as the ability to change the range of available actions that face people. In this respect, threats or rewards are instances of power. However, as Taylor acknowledges, power is also to do with the position of groups within society and their capacity to secure their own preferred outcomes. This corresponds to Marshall's understanding of the types of power within society: traditional power based on custom; newly acquired power grounded in the law, the State or the military, for example; and revolutionary power, frequently associated with vanguard political parties (Marshall, 1992: 45–6). Certainly, power is central to anarchist theory, and anarchists, whether old or new, are united in their belief that it should, wherever possible, be uprooted and eliminated. In particular, social anarchists have

attacked power where it is most concentrated, in the hands of the State. Indeed, power is integral to social anarchists' critique of Marxism and its insistence on the dictatorship of the proletariat as pivotal to the success of revolutionary strategy. Similarly, anarchists are occasionally defined by dint of their opposition to the State. This accounts for social anarchism's reputation as an anti-State ideology. For most, if not all, anarchists, social anarchism is equivalent to constructing a future society without the State. (See, for example, the classic statement by Malatesta from the 1890s (Malatesta, 1974).) In etymological terms, anarchy refers to the absence of rule or government. Therefore, when we talk of anarchy we generally talk of 'a stateless society' (Carter, 1993: 141).

This chapter is not an attempt to resolve or settle the difficulties associated with defining anarchy or social anarchism. It will suggest that, when situated alongside the practices of new social movements associated with the recent anti-capitalist protests, the poststructuralist perspective affords insight into how new modes of anarchist practice are emerging. Bookchin attempted to delineate this debate in *Social anarchism or lifestyle anarchism: an unbridgeable chasm* (1995) thus denouncing postmodernism or lifestyle anarchism. Unsurprisingly, Bookchin's analysis is not accepted universally within anarchist circles, and a trenchant critique of that work may be found in Bob Black's *Anarchy after Leftism* (1997). In focusing on the relationship between social anarchism and poststructuralist anarchism, it is not my intention to make proprietorial claims about the nature of anarchism *per se*. This purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the importance of broadening the understanding of social anarchism. The intention is not to dismiss or discount other modes of anarchism, but simply to highlight how anarchist theory and practice (focusing on its postmodern and/or poststructuralist manifestations) is evolving into something distinct and is, at the same time, nurturing contemporary modes of resistance against traditional social, political and economic forms of oppression.

Social anarchism

Resisting power

For the purposes of this chapter, social anarchism is defined essentially in line with the writings and practices associated with nineteenth-century figures such as Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. One thing that the recent anti-capitalist groups and social anarchism often have in common is a shared alignment along an axis of negative unity. By that I mean that social anarchists and the temporary alliances that have been characteristic of recent anti-capitalist demonstrations are united by virtue of what they stand against. For the anti-capitalists, capitalism, globalisation and trans-national corporations are the adversaries most regularly cited. Social anarchists target similar enemies. More importantly, both social anarchists and anti-capitalists stress that a cartography of power relations does not yield a map in which there is one dominant epicentre of power.

Anarchists, old and new alike, insist that power relations saturate multiple networks and must be resisted accordingly.

Arguments against hierarchy, inequality and against capitalism itself are abundant in anarchist literature. It is here that we find evidence both of social anarchism's indebtedness to and its repudiation of Marxist theory. Bakunin is a splendid example of the way in which social anarchism on the one hand embraces Marx's moral critique of capitalism and on the other rejects its preferred revolutionary strategy. Although there are serious differences between the anarchist and Marxist conceptions of human nature, Bakunin readily draws on Marx's account of alienation in his attack on the dehumanising consequences of capitalist production. The importance here (in terms of the differences between social and poststructuralist anarchism) is that the adoption of this Marxist concept reflects social anarchism's foundationalist perspective. Here social anarchism and Marxism converge in assuming that the scale of the dehumanising effects of capitalism can be measured against some notion of human nature. Even though the conception of human nature differs between social anarchism and Marxism, the critical common reference point is the centrality of human nature to both ideologies. Human nature is the foundation upon which Marx builds his moral critique of the alienating and exploitative features of capitalism, which is a foundationalist perspective that social anarchists like Bakunin share.

However, the commonality is soon displaced by contestation when it comes to identifying an appropriate revolutionary strategy. The core of the debate between Marx and Bakunin in the First International and the subsequent wider disagreement about means and ends in revolutionary methodology hinges on rival conceptions of human nature. Accordingly, Miller (1984: 93) judges that anarchists possess a more realistic perspective of human nature, precisely because of their fears that a Marxist 'dictatorship of the proletariat' would lead to the development of a new ruling élite. The corrupting effects of power on human nature are well documented in the anarchist writings of Bakunin and others and are integral to the split between Marxists and anarchists after the First International.

In essence, what social anarchism is arguing against here is Marxism's mode of representational politics. Establishing themselves as the representatives and voice of the oppressed masses, Marxist revolutionary leaders assume a vanguard role in securing the victory of the proletariat. The creation of a centralised, hierarchical political party to lead the workers to victory is anathema to most anarchists for three principal reasons. The first of these is the issue of representation. As writers such as Bakunin (1990: 135–6) and Malatesta (1974: 44–7) stress, anarchists are not in the business of drawing up blueprints or establishing themselves as prophetic revolutionary leaders. This would be tantamount to anarchists becoming a priestly class governing the rest of humanity.² Malatesta writes: 'we would be declaring ourselves the government and would be prescribing, as do religious legislators, a universal code for present and future generations' (1974: 44).

Revolutionary agencies

The second reason why anarchists eschew Marxist visions of revolution is that anarchists have been somewhat reluctant to ascribe the role of revolutionary saviour to the proletariat. Anarchists were much more inclined to look beyond the industrialised working class as the embodiment of revolutionary destiny. Rather, figures such as Bakunin identified with what contemporary sociologists would now term the socially excluded as the source of revolutionary potential, much in the way that Marcuse (1968) did in the following century.

Locating power

The third reason follows naturally from the second for social anarchists. In visualising a potential revolutionary role for classes other than the proletariat, social anarchists express their belief that resistance is not solely and perhaps not even primarily political in nature. Power, for instance, resonates within social institutions and economic and cultural relations as much as the political realm. With that in mind, social anarchists stress that all forms of power, hierarchy and oppression, whether they be political, social, cultural or economic, are to be resisted and subverted. Consequently, modes of resistance transcend the political. Nonetheless, social anarchists have invariably identified the State as the locus of power to be resisted.

Direct action

A defining feature of social anarchism has been its commitment to spontaneous direct action. Driven by grassroots activists without bureaucratised revolutionary leadership, direct action has been cherished as an effective tool in the social anarchists' strategic armoury. Participatory by nature, direct action encourages anarchists' faith in the capacity of individuals to do things for themselves. As Ward (1988) has argued, even acts such as self-build housing projects or tenant co-operatives afford anarchists comfort simply because they provide convincing evidence of people's capacity to live without oppressive agencies such as the State. Self-organisation, then, has been fundamental both to social anarchism's promotion of direct action as an effective tool of resistance and subversion and to its assumptions about the feasibility of life without a State after the downfall of capitalism.

Poststructuralist anarchism

How then does poststructuralist anarchism differ from its predecessor in terms of its theory and praxis? Poststructuralist anarchism is equally committed to the elimination of power, inequality and capitalism as social anarchism is. To argue

the converse would be to imagine a rupture of seismic proportions within the movement and within its theoretical narratives. Such a rupture has not taken place. Social anarchism has shifted its ground as it has embraced some elements of poststructuralist philosophy.

Rejecting foundationalist discourses

This shift in territory from social to poststructuralist anarchism is most noticeable and particularly important at three levels of theory. The first, and the one that underscores the others, is the poststructuralist denunciation of foundationalist discourses or narratives. Poststructuralism, closely associated with the writings of Foucault and Derrida, is a rejection of explanations (such as those found in Marx's writings) that the human condition can be explained by reference to underlying structures, such as economics, that are subject to objective analysis outside the discourse that constructs these structures. In *The political philosophy of poststructuralist anarchism*, Todd May (1994) exemplifies how poststructuralism has jettisoned all forms of humanism. For poststructuralists, 'subjects and structures are sedimentations of practices whose source cannot be discovered in a privileged ontological domain but that must be sought, rather, among the specific practices in which they arise' (May, 1994: 78).

There are two ineluctable strategic (in May's terms) difficulties in social anarchist thought. The first is the subscription to a benign human essence or human nature, although, as I have argued elsewhere (Morland, 1997), to identify anarchism as the proprietor of a benign assumption concerning human nature is simplistic and erroneous. The second difficulty concerns social anarchism's ascription to a suppressive notion of power, which will be addressed below. The former inescapably associates social anarchism with foundationalist discourses, and it is the abandonment of such discourses that facilitates the separation of social anarchism from poststructuralist anarchism.

Locating power

The second shift in theoretical territory is less pronounced but nonetheless real. It flows out of the transition to a poststructuralist philosophy that defines power as operating at multiple levels and in multiple modes. To be sure, social anarchists have long conceived of power as a relation that permeates political, social and economic institutions. However, as May argues, social anarchism advocates the decentralisation of power precisely because it sees this as an alternative to the centralisation of power in the hands of the State. In this regard, social anarchism is what May terms a strategic political philosophy, whereas for a tactical philosophy, such as poststructuralist anarchism,

there is no centre within which power is to be located. Otherwise put, power, and consequently politics, are irreducible. There are many different sites from which it arises, and there is an interplay among these various sites in the creation of the

social world. This is not to deny that there are points of concentration of power or, to keep with the spatial image, points where various (and perhaps bolder) lines intersect. Power does not, however, originate at those points, rather, it conglomerates around them. (May, 1994: 11)

Within poststructuralist philosophy, power is conceptualised as existing in the rhizome of political, social, economic and cultural networks. Its distribution along the flows of these networks may result in occasional concentrations of power at interconnections between different networks. How different is this assessment from that of the social anarchists? Were the social anarchists too immersed in Marxian economics to perceive the power dynamics at play in social and cultural networks? Is it that poststructuralist philosophy identifies flows of power in the socio-cultural nexus because that nexus is more visibly central to our lives than it was in the nineteenth century? It is beyond the remit of this chapter to address such questions in detail, but it is imperative that consideration be given to the relationship between social and poststructuralist anarchism, if only to determine the degree to which poststructuralist anarchism is more than the arguments of social anarchism writ large.

That power inhabits the flows of networks is indicative of poststructuralist philosophy's perspective on totalities. Here there is a subtle shift of emphasis in how social and poststructuralist anarchism visualise the nature of systems oppression. For some social anarchists, such as Bakunin, the principal enemy is capital. Despite his difference with Marx over revolutionary strategy, Bakunin is indebted to Marx for his appraisal of where power lies and how to overturn the oppression that it brings. In nineteenth-century social anarchism, capitalism and the bourgeoisie are clearly identified as the source of the economic, social and moral wrongdoings that are committed against humanity. Whilst capital is not absolved of its responsibility in poststructuralist anarchism, there is a shift of emphasis that renders the narrow focus on capitalism and its governing classes as obsolete. Goaman (1999: 73), for example, has argued that we 'are oppressed and alienated by the totality of existing conditions . . . [and for that reason we] . . . need to examine the socio-economic-cultural framework underpinning the contemporary system of power relations and late capitalism'.

Passages such as this reveal how anarchists now look beyond capitalism to a broader and perhaps more insidious system that perpetuates oppression. Here metaphors of interconnectivity abound as anarchists uncover oppression and power across a wider totality. Thus Moore (1997a: 159) suggests that 'the focus of anarchism is not the abolition of the State, but the abolition of the totality, of life structured by governance and coercion, of power itself in all its multiple forms'.³

At times Moore's 'totality' is explained by reference to an underlying scientific-technological rationale that provides a framework within which capitalism thrives. However, the crucial point here is that anarchists are now persuaded that capital shares this totality with others. Indeed, it is often the logic and the myth that drives the system forward that must be resisted. It is for this reason that resis-

tance should occur at multiple levels and at multiple points across these totalities.

Redefining the State

Poststructuralist arguments on power are integral to its consideration of the State and the practices within which power and the State are situated. It is at this juncture that the shift in territory on the State and hierarchies becomes evident in poststructuralist anarchism. Thus, May contends that thinkers like Lyotard, Deleuze and Foucault have developed:

a new type of anarchism. This new anarchism retains the ideas of intersecting and irreducible local struggles, of a wariness about representation, of the political as investing the entire field of social relationships, and of the social as a network rather than a closed holism, a concentric field, or a hierarchy. (1994: 85)

Certainly, the work of Deleuze and Guattari injects ‘a radical notion of multiplicity into phenomena which we traditionally approach as being discretely bounded, structured and stable’ (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000: 608). One phenomenon that Deleuze and Guattari approach in this manner is the State. Their distinctive approach to the State emerges in their philosophical distinction between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. In *What is philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 67–8) argue that we ‘need to see how everyone, at every age, in the smallest things as in the greatest challenges, seeks a territory, tolerates or carries out deterritorialisations, and is reterritorialised on almost anything – memory, fetish or dream’. This process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation permeates the State and the city.

State and City, on the contrary, carry out a deterritorialisation because the former juxtaposes and compares agricultural territories by relating them to a higher arithmetical Unity, and the latter adapts the territory to a geometrical extensiveness that can be continued in commercial circuits. The *imperial spatium* of the State and the *political extensio* of the city are not so much forms of a territorial principle as a deterritorialisation that takes place on the spot when the State appropriates the territory of local groups or when the city turns its back on its hinterland. In one case, there is reterritorialisation on the palace and its supplies, and in the other, on the agora and commercial networks. (1984: 86)

States are not uniform or identical in terms of appearance or organisation. States ‘are made up not only of people but also of wood, fields, gardens, animals and commodities’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 385). But ‘every State carries within itself the essential moments of its existence’ (p. 385). The reason for that is that the State, for Deleuze and Guattari, did not evolve over the course of some defined historical period but ‘appears fully armed, a master stroke executed all at once’ (1984: 217). The primordial despotic State that accompanies Marx’s Asiatic mode of production is the original abstraction that is realised in concrete existence in different settings. Now, the State is ‘subordinated to a field of forces whose flows it co-ordinates and

whose autonomous relations of domination and subordination it expresses' (1984: 221). Today, then, the State is formed out of the decoded flows it invents for money and property; it is formed out of the dominating classes; it cowers behind the things it signifies, and 'is itself produced inside the field of decoded flows' (p. 221). Accordingly, the State is now determined by the system within which it becomes concrete in the exercise of its functions, but in which it also remains subordinate to those very forces it decodes. Essentially, there are 'two aspects of becoming of the State: its internalisation in a field of increasingly decoded social forces forming a physical system; its spiritualisation in a supraterritorial field that increasingly over-codes, forming a metaphysical system' (p. 222). Herein lies the totality that social anarchists must now address. Resistance against the State alone in a crude political stratagem makes little sense in face of new understanding of the State.

Poststructuralist resistance

Within poststructuralist anarchism, then, resistance is designed to reflect the nature of power and to confront it wherever it materialises. In this respect, post-structuralist resistance draws on the situationist heritage which confronted and simultaneously subverted the spectacle of capitalism, and in so doing signalled a shift away from economic attacks on capital as the structural epicentre of power. Consequently, alternative modes of opposition are utilised to subvert the dynamics of the totalities. Resistance no longer confines itself to the political, to expressing itself against the bourgeoisie as the representatives of capital. Resistance now assumes social and cultural forms. These modes of resistance and subversion are central to the new social movements that constitute recent radical opposition, expressed through, among other things, the anti-capitalist movement.

Recent media coverage of anti-capitalist protests would have us believe that anarchists linger on the fringes of such movements as throwbacks to some nineteenth-century clandestine terrorist organisation, much as they have been painted in early twentieth-century literature such as Joseph Conrad's *The secret agent* (1978 [1907]). Indeed, as Apter has noted, anarchism 'is associated with unreason and bombs, violence and irresponsibility' (Apter and Joll, 1971: 1). It is futile to deny that violence often accompanies direct action as a mode of protest, but whether violence is any more acceptable remains a moot point. Here social anarchism appears as a broad church, with some proponents counselling against the use of violence, such as Kropotkin, and others ready to engage in a physical battle with the police and other opponents (see, for example, Miller, 1984, chapter 8).

New social movements

Formations and rationales

Although undoubtedly a construct of academics' analyses of popular protest, new social movements are real and tangible. Defining precisely the ontology of

new social movements is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it seems fairly evident that the recent wave of anti-capitalist protests across the globe has illustrated the vitality of such movements, even if they are more complex than the label or construct suggests. As Whittier (2002: 289) comments, social movements 'are made up of shifting clusters of organizations, networks, communities, and activist individuals, connected by participation in challenges and collective identities through which participants define the boundaries and significance of their group'. Social movements are neither static nor monolithic. Rather, they are dynamic entities that frequently possess an organic and acephalous organisation. Moreover, movements of various and often quite radically different political hues have come together in recent protests against capitalism and globalisation. The anti-capitalist movement would be more accurately described as a movement of movements. Nonetheless, it is plain to anyone who has participated in recent anti-capitalist protests that anarchism is pivotal to the movement. As Graeber (2002: 62) opines, 'anarchism is the heart of the movement, its soul; the source of most of what's new and hopeful about it'. The mapping of social anarchism across social movements is not new. Murray Bookchin, for example, identified a number of anarchist principles and practices that may be located within the new social movements of the 1980s. For Bookchin, these are principally:

- (a) that the literature of these groups resonates with Kropotkin's recommendations of decentralised society and the rejection of capitalism;
- (b) that municipalist movements in particular adopt Bakunin's principle that anarchists can participate in local politics;
- (c) that they are anti-hierarchical; and
- (d) that the 'principle that unites these seemingly independent movements is the notion of participation and mutual aid'. (Bookchin, 1989: 271)

To be sure, Bookchin's analysis remains valid even when examining those movements associated with the recent anti-capitalist protests. Bookchin's analysis does, however, begin to lose significance with the recognition that the anti-capitalist movement is more poststructuralist in nature. As Ruggiero (2000) has noted, increasingly two schools of thought are emerging on social movements. The first suggests that social movements are concerned with resource mobilisation or distribution. This argument is advanced by writers such as McCarthy and Zald (1977) and Bluechler (1993). The second is led principally by Melucci (1996), who contends that new social movements are occupied less by political actions than by symbolic and cultural challenges.⁴ A preferred categorisation depends much on the definition of 'new' in new social movements. According to Melucci (1996: 5), the 'new' is meant to signify multiple 'comparative differences between the historical forms of class conflict and today's emergent forms of collective action'.

Cautious of investing in these movements a unitary objectivity where none exists, Melucci observes that new social movements are:

systems of action, complex networks among the different levels and meanings of social action. Collective identity allowing them to become actors is not a datum or an essence; it is the outcome of exchanges, negotiations, decisions, and conflicts among actors. (1996: 4)

Melucci is right to emphasise the absence of political actions here, if only because new social movements, and especially the anti-capitalist movement, are explicitly anti-political. As Ruggiero (2000: 181) discovered in his study of the 'centri sociali' in Milan, the newness of these movements is encapsulated 'in their refusal to engage in building up a superior representative entity, such as a party or an all-embracing organization'. Establishing an organisational structure akin to groups like Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace, for example, is not the objective of new social movements (although this is probably less true of some of the Trotskyist organisations involved with the anti-capitalist movement, such as Globalize Resistance). Rather, their organisational modes are 'multifarious, fragile, transient and inconsistent' (Ruggiero, 2000: 181). They do not aspire to represent a majority; moreover, they have thrown off the shackles of representational politics completely.

Recognition of what constitutes the 'new', however, is occasionally lost, even among sympathetic commentators. Brady (2002: 58), for instance, applauds the anti-capitalist movement for engaging 'in refreshing forms of creative, extemporaneous protest' that encourages participatory politics whilst circumnavigating political spin. Appreciation of new modes of protest needs to be accompanied by a similar awareness of a sense of new purpose. In countenancing a move into the democratic arena to extend the democratic appeal of the movement, it is clear that Brady (2002: 65) has fundamentally misunderstood the nature and purpose of the anti-capitalist movement. Brady either has misjudged the centrality of anarchism within this movement or has misconceptualised the nature of anarchism as a political entity. Insofar as the anti-capitalist movement is anarchist, it has no intention of entering the democratic arena of electoral politics, or of aspiring to a broader cosmopolitanism grounded in democratic politics. Additionally, the movement does not pretend to speak for or represent anyone, never mind the world's people. The whole idea of representational politics is anathema to anarchist movements.

Certainly, the anti-capitalist movement in Britain has very visible origins. It has

emerged from a convergence between radical environmentalists and anarchists, aided by a growing sense of unease amongst some liberal organizations and commentators. It has been joined by left groups, some earlier (Workers Power) than others (the SWP⁵). (Jazz, 2001: 96)

Tactics, praxis and 'Black Block'

That the movement comprises groups of varying political standpoints is without question. This results, of course, in diverging tactics and praxis when confronting capitalism. There has been much discussion concerning the role of 'Black Block' in

Genoa and other anti-capitalist protests. Marked by a commitment to confront the police with violence if necessary, 'Black Block' were not welcomed by all quarters of the movement. Although not uniquely anarchist, 'Black Block' exemplifies the recrudescence of a social anarchist strategy that is at the heart of the anti-capitalist movement. Spontaneity, autonomy and direct action are the attributes of 'Black Block' and others in the movement. Indeed for some, 'Black Block' is no more than a tactic (K, 2001). For others (Porter, 2001), 'Black Block' has too readily adopted the stereotype identity of anarchists as instigators of chaos and destruction. To be sure, there is disagreement over tactics and targets in the anti-capitalist movement. Less contentious by far, however, is the recognition that 'Black Block':

is no sort of organization, no sort of group. It does not exist outside the demonstration and is united only on that demonstration by some minimal unity of tactics – people who are up for property destruction and for fighting the police. (Anonymous, 2001: 45)

Such characterisations engender disquiet within the movement, but this unease is reflective of social anarchism's heritage that underscores anti-capitalist protest. As Kamura has noted, the consistence of means and ends within the movement is important. The prospect of violence becoming the defining statement of anti-capitalist protest threatens to jeopardise the whole direction of the movement: 'We want a fair world so we don't play dirty' (Kamura, 2001: 60). Violence has a long and ambiguous history within social anarchism, and it will undoubtedly continue to play an integral role in anarchist protest.

'Black Block' is also representative of another feature of the anti-capitalist movement: the absence of an obvious or hierarchical structure. Fleeting and temporary unity signifies the coming together of this movement of movements, both at the level of the broader movement itself during protests, and frequently within the individual groups or movements themselves. As Ian Welsh has illustrated, we are beginning to witness

the arrival of the self-organising movement which exists without anything which can be identified as a traditional organisational structure. The existence of movements as networks capable of producing fleeting mobilisations to perform quite specific direct actions at short notice represents a very different model of cultural contestation compared to the essentially 1970s models which have shaped much social movement research. (Welsh, 1999: 79)

Moreover, today's activists are seemingly less likely to compromise their own commitment by ushering the movement into forms of engagement delimited by traditional structures and practices. As Welsh (1999: 79) observes, contemporary protests 'are increasingly staged on movements' own terms.' To date, groups such as Reclaim the Streets, Earth First! and the Anarchist Travelling Circus do not appear to be following in the footsteps of organisations like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, in either establishing dominant bureaucratic governing structures or by transferring to insider status and negotiating directly with government and its agencies.

This is not to say that all the groups or movements that have participated in recent anti-capitalist protests conform to this model. Frequently, and perhaps significantly at a local level, movements with fundamentally different outlooks combine forces during these protests. As research by Plows and Wall (2001: 4) illustrates, one of the distinctive features ‘of protests against neo-liberalism is the hybrid character of the networks involved. Over 700 groups from many countries were co-ordinated by the Genoa Social Forum.’ Nonetheless, a new dynamic is emerging within the protest movement. This is the drive to map out the interrelated mechanisms and practices of globalisation. Consequently, articulating the bigger picture is an integral element of the campaigns mounted by protest groups from the late 1990s (Plows and Wall, 2001: 8).

As these latter writers suggest, we are not witnessing the emergence here of entirely new groups who share nothing in common with their predecessors. The tactics and strategies they employ have often cascaded down from previous movements and groups active in the 1990s and 1980s, if not before. Insofar as those strategies invoke an engagement in political protest, it is possible to suggest, as Goaman and Dodson (1997) have done, that these new social movements are practising a tried and tested mode of orthodox socialist politics. However, the degree to which they eschew such traditional modes of action and reject the representation and vanguardism at the heart of Marxist politics, and conversely embrace new modes of socio-cultural contestation, the more sensible it becomes to regard such movements as exhibiting new poststructuralist modes of anarchism.

New social movements and poststructuralist anarchism

It is not just the fluidity and ephemerality of these alliances that makes them different; rather, it is in their strategies of resistance that they become visibly post-structuralist. At the heart of these strategies is what Welsh (1999: 80) refers to as the ‘long-term process of autonomous capacity building’. The principle of acting for yourself has long been treasured by social anarchists and was the message enunciated by Kropotkin in his article ‘Act for yourselves’ in *Freedom* in 1887 (Kropotkin, 1988). To the extent that local communities and movements mobilise against capital and globalisation, for instance, such actions are a clear reinforcement of this anarchist principle. In this form, resistance resides at the core of new social movements’ strategies. It occurs at multiple levels, assumes many different guises, and ‘represents a point of convergence between anarchist and postmodern thought’ (Amster, 1998: 109).

Building anarchist capacity

In essence, then, there are two features of new social movements that may be classified as anarchist in nature. The first, what Welsh refers to as ‘autonomous capacity building’, is that which links the old with the new: the rejection of rep-

resentation. Anarchists have always been suspicious of vanguardism. Whether it appears in the form of a revolutionary élite or the veiled vampirism of an organisation that thinks it knows better, representation has been and remains an unwelcome reference in the anarchist lexicon of resistance. The reluctance of new social movements to be drawn into hackneyed strategies of political protest signals an invigorating commitment towards anarchism in action. It is precisely this ethos that underlines what Graeber (2002: 66) refers to as the movement's quest 'to map out a completely new territory'. Groups like the Direct Action Network and Tute Bianche are striving to construct 'a 'new language' of civil disobedience, combining elements of street theatre, festival and what can only be called non-violent warfare' (Graeber, 2002: 66). Such activities contrast sharply with traditional forms of protest associated with the social democratic Left and trades union politics over the last forty years. If nothing else, these protests have a very different feel about them. When compared to the prearranged march and rally, more recent protests certainly induce a sense of organic autonomy within their participants. Nonetheless, these tactics converge with the anarchist culture of 'delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from' the State (Graeber, 2002: 68).

New forms of protest

The second feature is that which delineates contemporary social movements as converging with poststructuralist anarchism. As Goaman and Dodson (1997) rightly point out, if new social movements remain locked into tired modes of political protest, they will fail to transcend the parameters of orthodox socialist politics. By its very nature, anarchism has sought out alternative modes of opposition. Establishing communes, building free schools, publishing radical tracts, writing anti-hierarchical lyrics, planting flowers, living in trees, growing organic food, squatting in unused properties, and recycling cooking oil into green diesel are evidence of how resistance within anarchist circles assumes symbolic and cultural forms. It is also demonstrative of how both social anarchism and poststructuralism converge and are mediated by resistance. As May (1994) has argued, it is precisely through the promotion and cherishing of alternative practices that poststructuralism and social anarchism come together. In doing so they form a backdrop in front of which the new social movements surrounding the anti-capitalist debate play out modes of socio-cultural resistance.⁶

This socio-cultural movement amounts to more than a just penchant for carnival-style resistance. In the wake of communism's downfall across the former Soviet bloc and the general retreat of the Left when faced with a virulent neoliberalism, opposition to capitalism has transformed itself from endeavours to construct a brave new world (for much of the time premised on a centrally planned economy) to local and internal resistance. As Sader (2002: 97) comments, resistance in this changed environment has become separated from historical metanarratives and crude economism and has transformed itself into the

'local and sectoral'. Even if we cannot agree a name for it, society is certainly in transition and social movements reflect this change. This is not to say that traditional social movements have suddenly vanished. To be sure there is overlap between the old and the new in contemporary anti-capitalist protest, but there is also a real sense in which new social movements are distinct from their predecessors. As Melucci has observed, there are a number of common factors one may identify here:

the diversity and low negotiability of the movement's goals; eschewing political power; questioning the partition between public and private; the convergence of protest and deviance; reaching for solidarity through action; and the repudiation of representation in favour of direct action. (Melucci, 1996: 102–3)

Echoing social anarchist sentiments through their own contemporary praxis, new social movements are also deeply reflective of new modes of anarchism. In targeting nodes of power across social, cultural and political networks, by way of organising into non-hierarchical and decentralised networks themselves, the anti-capitalist movement not only reinforces the customary anarchist approach to resistance but also confirms 'what is to be resisted' (May, 1994: 52). Here, we witness the emergence of poststructuralist anarchism. Subjects and structures obtain meaning through the specific practices from which they arise. In spurning representation, in shunning the quest for political power, and in focusing on the present and the specific (Melucci, 1996: 116), the anti-capitalist movement encompasses a series of attempts to carve out social spaces of autonomy that, by their very nature, oppose the dominant paradigm of neoliberal economic and social commodification. This search for autonomous zones unfolds itself at the level of the local and the specific intersections of social, cultural, economic and political networks. Essentially, the anti-capitalist movement has embarked on a poststructuralist voyage to 'construct power relationships that can be lived with' (May, 1994: 114). Recognition that power pervades multiple networks is recognition that power can never be eliminated. Social anarchists have long realised that. In building alternative practices, poststructuralist anarchists are engaged in what Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 291) term 'becoming minoritarian'. By developing alternative practices through social forums and other networks and organisations, contemporary anarchists are challenging dominant practices and simultaneously escaping oppression. As Deleuze and Guattari contend in *A thousand plateaux*, the concept of majority 'assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. It assumes the standard means, not the other way around.' With that in mind, it is important to distinguish between 'the majoritarian as a constant and homogenous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming' (1988: 105–6). In becoming minor, 'a nondenumerable and proliferating minority . . . threatens to destroy the very concept of majority' (1988: 469).

Referring to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of nomadology, Paul Virilio has recently commented on the relevance of an understanding of the world as in flux.

‘Today’s world no longer has any kind of stability; it is shifting, straddling, gliding away all the time’ (Armitage, 1999: 48). Poststructuralist analyses premised on concepts such as networks, rhizomes, cross-currents and deterritorialisation overlap significantly with social anarchism. Tracing its strategic origins to its reluctance to solely support the industrialised proletariat (precisely because power permeates other arenas in life), social anarchism has long been conscious of the need to assemble resistance across networks. As Ward (1988: 22) observes, anarchists ‘have to build networks instead of pyramids . . . Anarchism does not demand the changing of the labels on the layers, it doesn’t want different people on top, it wants us to clamber out from underneath.’ This intellectual heritage is deeply rooted within social anarchism and pushes it away from strategic thinking towards what May terms a ‘tactical political philosophy’. Strategic political philosophy, such as Marxism, situates various oppressions and inequalities in one basic problematic; by contrast, tactical thinking ‘pictures the social and political world not as a circle but instead as an intersecting network of lines’ (May, 1994: 10–11). Rather than focusing resistance on one apparent nucleus of power, tactical thinking opposes emancipation led by a vanguard élite. Observing that power inhabits networks instead of originating from one centre or source, ‘the poststructuralist critique of representation’ is plainly anarchist in nature (May, 1994: 12). Both social anarchists and poststructuralists envisage social spaces as comprised of ‘intersections of power rather than emanations from a source’ (p. 52).

Conclusion

In engaging in multiple modes of resistance to confront the numerous accumulations of power at different nodes that intersect across social, cultural, political and economic networks, social anarchism and poststructuralism share a common outlook and a common assessment of how to construct spaces of autonomy. In establishing sites of resistance, activists, including those allied to the anti-capitalist movement, are simultaneously undermining dominant or major discourses of power. In attacking lines of police officers with pink feather dusters, for example, anti-capitalist protesters are not only creating social spaces marked by theatre and autonomy, they are also delegitimising violent forms of State oppression. To be sure, not all anarchists engage in such practices, but increasingly they are adopting carnival-style protest and resistance. Equally, not all anarchists would agree with the assessment that social anarchism is converging with poststructuralism in the twenty-first century. This chapter does not pretend to proffer a narrative that applies to all branches of anarchist practice and theory. It is, however (if I can borrow a phrase from one scholar who would have certainly disagreed with this piece), testimony to the fact that anarchism should be regarded as a ‘living, thriving project’ (Moore, 1997a: 159). Unquestionably, anarchist praxis is evidenced through recent anti-capitalist

protests. Consequently, as social anarchism adapts to life in a new century, it is a project that now possesses a distinctively poststructuralist dynamic.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank John Armitage and John Carter for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
- 2 The irony of Bakunin's occasional recommendation of Secret Brotherhoods (see for example Dolgoff, 1973: 148–55) that assume an essentially Leninist leadership role will not be lost on readers and signals one of the ambiguities in his writings. Another uncertainty surfaces in relation to the role of violence and propaganda by the deed, which does not always sit comfortably with anarchism's insistence on the commensurability of means and ends in revolutionary methodology.
- 3 It should be noted that Moore was not a subscriber to poststructuralist anarchism. Rather, he identified himself with what he termed 'the second wave of anarchism' incorporating figures like Guy Debord, Raoul Vaneigem, John Zerzan and Fredy Perlman. This is not a consistent grouping and ranges from situationists to primitivists.
- 4 *Editorial note.* The death of Alberto Melucci in October 2001 to cancer has deprived social movement theory of one of its most versatile and imaginative figures. Another assessment of the importance of his work for understanding contemporary anarchism is Atton (1999).
- 5 The Socialist Workers' Party, probably the largest and most highly organised of the far Left groups in Britain today.
- 6 It is also worth noting that Laclau's (1988) and Mouffe's (1988) writings on radical democracy emphasise the importance of multiple sites of resistance and struggle from a poststructuralist perspective.