



# Toward Anarchist and Autonomist Marxist Geographies

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## Introduction

In recent months, the Occupy movement has reinvigorated the imagination of the Left in the United States and elsewhere, by moving radical politics in new directions and creating spaces based upon participatory and non-hierarchical modes of organizing. Anarchist, autonomist Marxist and libertarian socialist ideas have played critical roles in imagining and enacting Occupy spaces, achieving renewed influence in the process. Writing about this turning point in politics for *The Nation*, Nathan Schneider states: “The anarchists’ way of operating was changing our very idea of what politics could be in the first place. This was exhilarating” (2011 unpaginated online source).

This volume brings together geographic scholarship on anarchism and autonomist Marxism for the first time. Even before Occupy Wall Street, anarchism and autonomist Marxism as political ideologies and radical methodologies have been on the rise in the West at least since the 1999 World Trade Organization



protests in Seattle, when anarchistic protesters exploded onto the international media landscape due to their successful application of direct action tactics to stop the trade ministerial meeting (De Armond, 2001; Sheppard, 2002; Graeber, 2004; Levi, 2006). That anarchism and autonomist Marxism have been deeply implicated in the alter-globalization movement of the past decade cannot be denied. For example, radical movements such as Ya Basta!, the edu-factory movement, European movements of students and precarious workers, and the contemporary Industrial Workers of the World union in the United States have integrated autonomist Marxist theory into their broadly anti-authoritarian and anarcho-syndicalist perspectives. Indeed, although anarchism and autonomist Marxism have different histories and geographies, activist spaces such as the Occupy movement, increasingly feature encounters and engagements between the two diverse trajectories of thought, leading to new configurations. Anarchism and autonomist activism have attained a prominent position within Western oppositional politics and we seek to examine these trajectories together because they confront us together in activist spaces, despite their sometimes-divergent histories and conceptualizations.

Drawing on, but also going beyond, a daylong series of sessions at the 2008 AAG in Las Vegas, this special issue has several ambitions. First, to more broadly publicize anarchist and autonomist Marxist work in geography, and thereby expose the mainstream of critical geography to these strands of radical scholarship. Second, by bringing these two distinct trajectories of radical theory together we hope to foster an examination of the affinities these trajectories have with one another and to explore how both are apropos for thinking about the current conjuncture of neoliberal crisis. Third, we hope that this issue will help to foster a research community in radical geography such that anarchist and autonomist Marxist approaches may find more opportunities for resonance, cooperative theorizing, and the rigorous development that occurs when geographers (or anyone for that matter) enter into debate and conversation with the intention to improve understanding. We think this project is timely and important because, while anarchism and geography have had some contact in the past (both Peter Kropotkin and Élisée Reclus were famed 19<sup>th</sup> century geographers and anarchists) a specifically anarchist geography has never really taken root, despite calls for greater scholarly engagement articulated at various times (Breitbart 1978, Dunbar, 1978, Peet, 1978, Bauder and Engel-Di Mauro, 2008). Similarly, besides engagements with a few limited texts (primarily those of Hardt and Negri), autonomist Marxism has received little systematic attention within radical geography, though the impact of this trajectory of thought is felt increasingly in other areas of the critical social sciences and humanities through the establishment of the autonomist journal *The Commoner* and the work of individual scholars such as Cesare Casarino, Nik Dyer-Witheford, Nicolas Thoburn, Tiziana Terranova, and Massimo De Angelis, for example. Finally, the articles in this issue demonstrate

not only the relevance of anarchist and autonomist thought and politics for radical geography, but they also provide examples of how geographical analyses can push the theorizing and practice of anarchism and autonomist Marxism in new directions.

In the next section we examine some of the basic concepts of, first, anarchism, and then autonomist Marxism. These are not meant to be comprehensive, but are rather intended to contextualize the articles in this issue and identify some of the aspects of anarchist and autonomist Marxist thought that we think are of particular importance for the analyses contained herein. We also think it important to stress that we view this special issue as, hopefully, the beginning of some new discussions in geography and not as any kind of final word as to what an anarchist or autonomist Marxist geography ought to look like. We do, however, conclude this essay with some thoughts on what a particularly anarchist or autonomist Marxist geography might focus on, and how concepts from these trajectories of radical thought might find a home in geography.

### **Understanding Anarchisms**

Defining anarchism has always been a contentious process, with no clear consensus even among self-proclaimed anarchists (Berkman, 1929; Goldman, 1910; Rocker, 1949). Historically, anarchists have focused on opposing relations of dominance emanating from the state and the capitalist economy, but anarchist theory and practice has also developed to question and challenge all forms of domination. Unlike exploitation, which is an economic term referring to the sphere of work, domination is more diffuse and can manifest itself in any social relationship (May, 2009). As a result, anarchist-inspired struggles have not been and are not restricted to the workplace; instead they have challenged boundaries between the private and public, work and home, society, state, and economy. In comparison with Marxists, Breitbart notes that “anarchists go further however, in attacking centralization, hierarchy, privilege, and domination whether they arise in governing bodies, the workplace, the home, the school or social situations” (1978, 1).

In the process, anarchists have prioritized prefigurative politics by attempting to form “the structure of the new society within the shell of the old” (IWW, 2012) based on such principles as mutual aid, solidarity, self-determination and individual freedom that is socially supported. However, this broad definition conceals considerable disagreement between anarchism(s), and their diverging theoretical and methodological influences. In the following paragraphs, we discuss recent scholarly attempts to understand anarchism(s) in their diverse historical and contemporary manifestations. We then go on to situate and describe the contributions related to anarchism in this issue, which we suggest, help pave the way for a new formulation of anarchist geographies.

In her treatise on anarchism, the prominent anarchist thinker and activist Emma Goldman writes: “anarchism urges man to think, to investigate, to analyze every proposition” (Goldman, 1910, pp. 31). Provocatively, Goldman invites her readers to critically interrogate her own propositions, encouraging a certain kind of practice, which is motivated by critique, discussion and evaluation. Goldman’s encouragement of critical engagement reflects the consistent attention to revolutionary methodologies within the anarchist tradition. Rather than dwelling upon broader theoretical questions about revolutionary strategy, David Graeber argues that anarchism has “tended to be an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice” (2009, 106), asserting that revolutionary means must mirror desired ends. Consequently, core anarchist principles of “autonomy, voluntary association, self-organization, direct democracy and mutual aid” (Graeber, 2009, 105) largely deal with organizing practice. Specific anarchist schools of thought, from anarcho-communism to insurrectionism, are differentiated by their organizing principles (Graeber, 2009).

Focusing examination on organizing practices may provide a potentially fruitful opening to understand and differentiate between anarchism(s), but it is important to note that even anarchist organizing practices are rooted in certain theoretical perspectives, and that non-hierarchical organizing is not exclusive to anarchist spaces. For example, the practice of organizing around affinity groups, especially at large-scale protests, has become dominant within the contemporary alter-globalization movement for anarchist groups, as well as other groups with radically different political agendas. Historically originating in Spain in the decades preceding the Spanish Civil War, anarchist affinity groups brought together small numbers of people who worked autonomously in a decentralized manner, thereby enacting non-hierarchical and participatory principles (Ackelsberg, 1991). A contemporary mobilization of the politics of affinity in anarchist spaces provides a supportive common ground, based on mutual solidarity that “enables connections to be drawn that extend beyond the local and particular, by recognizing and respecting differences between people while at the same time recognizing similarities” (Routledge, 2009, 85). In stark contrast to a politics of identity, a politics of affinity acknowledges the “possibility of multiple, fluid egalitarian networks, alliances, and subjectivities” (Rouhani, this issue). Thus, a politics of affinity is based on a conceptual understanding of mutual solidarity, which can be deployed in establishing a common ground within and between groups who are coming together in free association.

Similarly, mutual aid is a commonly employed organizing practice with considerable theoretical development and practical deployment throughout the history of anarchist movements. In his most influential scholarly work, *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin (1902) argues that cooperation within and between species plays an important role. Although he did not deny competition, his argument about the evolutionary benefits of mutual aid was in part meant to combat the influence of

Huxley's Social Darwinism (and Malthusianism), which justified and naturalized inequality and oppression. By locating the ontological grounds of cooperation, Kropotkin demonstrates that mutual aid is an impulse that pre-exists political ideology. Although cooperation may precede formal politics in some ways, it is nevertheless a profoundly political project to foster that tendency, which anarchist activism has attempted in multiple ways, such as by rethinking and reorganizing housing, medical care, economic relationships, and political solidarity.

However, beyond broad agreement on the above concepts, some scholars have argued against embracing all self-proclaimed anarchisms as part of the anarchist tradition. In a recent volume, van der Walt and Schmidt (2009) point out that there are several disadvantages in positing a vague definition of anarchism and the anarchist tradition, which can then potentially include anyone who favors individual freedom and has a negative disposition towards authority and domination. They reject various approaches which locate anarchism as an innate force within human nature, or which tend to group together incoherent theorists such as Tolstoy, Stirner, and Godwin. They argue that "a sweeping and loose definition of anarchism tends to group quite different ideas together, and does not historicize anarchism; by presenting anarchism as vague and rather formless" (2009, 19). Although they acknowledge the existence of various libertarian currents throughout history, they claim that the anarchist tradition should be understood as originating out of the socialist and labor movements of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. As such, they assert that there is only one anarchism: "class struggle" anarchism originally stemming from the work and writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin, but also profoundly internationalist in its character from its origin. Class struggle anarchism foregrounds class-based unity, while not dismissing the importance of struggling against other forms of oppression. As Schmidt and van der Walt argue "race, gender, national, and imperial oppression can only be fundamentally ended by a social revolution that creates a society that emancipates the majority of people; at the same time, opposition to such oppressions in the present is a necessary component of the project of creating the revolutionary counterpower and counterculture" (2009, 335). Citing the failure and collapse of the Soviet Union and the lack of a movement with a systemic alternative to neoliberalism, they go on to posit anarchism and syndicalism as providing the theories and strategies to make libertarian socialism possible today.

Yet in seeking to be theoretically and historically consistent and narrow in their treatment of anarchism, Schmidt and Van der Walt provide no framework for understanding and analyzing the emergence of self-described anarchisms that do not fall into their categorization. In addition, the anarchist movement's present and past theoretical heterogeneity can be seen as a source of strength and creativity, a critique of theoretical dogmatism, as well as a demonstration of fluidity. Without implying "theoretical unity, ideological conformity or linear movement structures" (Gordon, 2007, 14), Gordon argues for an understanding of anarchism as a

‘political culture,’ characterized by particular “models of organization, repertoires of action, cultural expression, and political discourse” (Gordon, 2007, 14). For Gordon, the unifying political discourse features three central characteristics: targeting all forms of domination; emphasizing prefigurative politics that stress egalitarian social relations; and embracing open-endedness in politics (Gordon, 2007, 20-21). However, Gordon focuses exclusively on the ‘new school’ of anarchist activists, and admits that not every contemporary manifestation of anarchism (those more connected to the ‘old school’) shares the same political culture. Moreover, even among the ‘new school’ of anarchists, transnational as well as other differences may produce barriers, effectively dividing anarchist political cultures.

In summary, anarchist struggles are guided by different theoretical perspectives, which are not unified, rigid or unchanging, but do share commitments towards non-authoritarian organization based on mutual aid, affinity-based organizing and prefigurative politics. The growing importance of anarchist activism has been followed by increased academic interest in understanding and also furthering anarchist politics. We have highlighted three recent and contrasting scholarly attempts to analyze this movement, which provide a template based on methodology (Graeber, 2009), theoretical and historical coherence (van der Walt and Schmidt, 2009), or political culture (Gordon, 2007) to conceptually unify an otherwise diverse movement. The need for some sort of unifying framework is not an isolated academic concern, but one with significant political and strategic importance. The inability to unify diverse and autonomous anarchist groups in support of or against particular political positions has incited contentious debates historically, even creating more steadfast divisions between anarchists, as Mudu illustrates in the case of Italy (this issue). However, there is also a tension between positing a unifying ‘anarchism’ (by listing principles, philosophy, tactics or culture) and allowing for new ideas and practices challenging domination to emerge. Instead of positing yet another possible unifying template for understanding anarchism, we focus our analysis on how anarchist movements hold on to the tension between unity and diversity, both present and future. We suggest that this is a fundamentally spatial question, requiring attention to the sociospatial practices of anarchist movements. We contend that geography cannot be tangential in understanding the development of anarchist perspectives; it is precisely what shapes the place-based diversity of anarchist approaches.

### **Towards Anarchist Geographies**

In the following section, we situate the articles of this issue within broader research on anarchism that is currently taking place within and outside the academy. We utilize the articles from this issue to highlight how anarchist politics has grown through its sociospatial inclusiveness, but also how anarchist spaces have themselves been sites of exclusion. However, by adapting various theoretical

perspectives, anarchist politics have also developed to address different forms of exclusion or to generate more nuanced perspectives on politics.

Before the Bolshevik rise to power in Russia, it was anarchist, not Marxist, movements which “stole the hearts and headlines” of Europe (Anderson, 2010, xiv). Benedict Anderson notes that anarchism’s popularity was due in part to its inclusivity, its attraction to peasants as well as workers. In contrast to other revolutionary movements, “anarchists have tended to welcome as natural rebels the *déclassé* elements whom Marx despised most of all because they fitted nowhere into his neat pattern of social stratification” (Woodcock, 2004, 26). Making bridges across various axes of difference was recognized as important even in early anarchist organizing (Hirsch and van der Walt, 2010). More recently, the potential inclusivity of anarchist politics is something which features prominently in two of the articles in this issue (Heynen and Rhodes; Rouhani).

Anderson goes on to argue that another advantage that anarchist movements had over their Marxist competitors was their internationalism. Prominent anarchist activists, such as Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Errico Malatesta, were also migrants whose very movement helped forge the ideas they then circulated. Moreover, contemporary and historical transnational connectivities forged by anarchist movements worldwide, dispel simplistic assumptions that anarchism is and has been a movement centered in Europe and the United States (Hirsch and van der Walt, 2010).

In the process of crossing borders, anarchist ideas have been reshaped and challenged by local needs and struggles. In the United States, some civil rights activists, such as Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin (Heynen and Rhodes, this issue), have found fertile ground in anarchist politics to challenge the geographies of racism and exclusion as well as to put forth more radical alternatives. In this issue, Heynen and Rhodes analyze Ervin’s political trajectory, starting from his involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party (BPP) and leading to his formulation of a distinctly Black Anarchism. His introduction to anarchism as a prison inmate exposed him to a “systematically anti-authoritarian view of the world, which would provide him with both a nuanced critique of the BPP as well as an intellectual framework from which to evaluate the reasons for the effectiveness of SNCC’s decentralized approach to organizing” (Heynen and Rhodes, this issue). The anarchist critiques formulated by Kropotkin and Sostre caused Ervin to rethink the workings of power in maintaining specific racialized geographies of oppression, while also providing tools with liberatory potential when combined with the social knowledge created within the Civil Rights/Black Power struggles.

Whereas anarchist politics have been adapted to serve multiple liberatory agendas, anarchist spaces are not and have not been isolated refuges from broader societal relations of domination. Indeed, the US-based network of Anarchist

People of Color was formed precisely because of the domination of white anarchists, who universalized their perspectives on anarchism, re-inscribing patterns of racism and exclusion (Aguilar, 2004). Similarly, the anarchist movement in 1930s Spain spawned successful but short-lived economic and political experiments, but it also created a vibrant organizing space for women who felt that their issues weren't being addressed by the broader movement (Ackelsberg, 1991). In other cases, women's voices and activities within the anarchist movement, as well as their critical stances on anarchism, have not received considerable attention. Noting recurrent patterns of gender-based exclusion and silencing in the anarchist movement throughout history as well as the failure of standard anarchist historiographies to take gender relations seriously, feminist historians have begun to make space for women by rethinking the accepted practices of anarchist historiography, questioning who and what counts as history and political work (Greenway, 2010). Feminist historiography is one of many ways that feminist theory is influencing and transforming anarchist theory and practice. The merging of feminist and anarchist politics has helped foster new ways to understand and challenge domination, while paving the way for creative articulations of anarchy-feminisms (Shannon, 2009), as well as queer anarchisms (Heckert and Cleminson, 2011). In the process, new forms of collaboration have emerged, crossing academic/activist boundaries. In this issue, Rouhani analyzes his involvement in queer anarchist space making in a small-city context, pointing out how geographical perspectives can help elucidate the problems and prospects inherent in efforts to create spaces which are both liberating and pleasurable. Queer theory attempts to understand how subjects become social beings through the performance of identities, while also addressing how sociality is proscribed "through the discursive construction of identities that often function more as cages than descriptors" (Shannon and Willis, 2010, 434). According to Rouhani, "queer theoretical perspectives coalesce with anarchism around an affinity politics that critiques categorization into separate, unchangeable identities and a prefigurative politics that destabilizes and reimagines how we can live our sexual lives" (this issue). As he demonstrates in his analysis of the demise of an activist group forming the Richmond Queer Space Project, the coalescing of anarchist and queer politics in a process of space-making was complex, in part "because participants enacted conflicting understandings of queer space that at sometimes sought to destabilize identity boundaries and at other times solidified a fragmenting identity in space". A spatial lens allows Rouhani to discern these conflicting understandings, bringing to light how space-making should not be seen as a bounded process, internal to the activist group, but situated within the social and spatial politics of a small city, and influenced by the identity politics of other LGBT advocacy organizations. In other words, he adds: "queer space can never be entirely queer, but it is never entirely not queer either". This does not mean the queer anarchist space-making should be abandoned; instead attention needs to be focused on how space-making is an open, active and on-going process,



engendering liberating experiences, and possibly experiences of closure and domination.

The uptake of queer theory by anarchist scholars and activists mirrors the general influence of poststructuralist theories on anarchism, which has recently led to the contentious articulation of a ‘post-anarchism’ (Newman, 2010). By gleanig insights from poststructuralist theories, post-anarchist approaches interpret power as multivalent and relational, instead of concentrated in a single entity and characterized by repressiveness. As such, post-anarchist critiques do not discard older anarchist approaches, but seek to reveal their limitations, especially for anarchist praxis.

In this issue, Crane’s contribution illustrates a post-structuralist approach to anarchism through his analysis of the power relations immanent to the practice of dumpster diving. While often situated as an escape from domination, creating a space outside of and resistant to the power emanating from dominant groups, Crane’s attention to the complexities of power allows an understanding of anarchist practices of “dumpster diving as an expression of associative power”, in which “dumpster divers are entangled in power relations, and their practices of freedom are immanent to practices of governance” (Crane this issue). This leads Crane to conclude that dumpster divers “may come to effect change, not simply evade or oppose domination”, a conclusion that troubles both traditional anarchist concepts of resistance and post-structural critiques of contestation (Crane, this issue).

The desire to evade domination is not a novel phenomenon. This impulse motivated early experiments to create anarchist colonies, experiments that often met with failure. However, critiques of this tendency were also voiced: writing in 1893 in an open letter, Peter Kropotkin (1893) urged more careful consideration of ventures to create anarchist communal colonies in remote areas by seeking to expose their limitations. In a similar vein, Crane critiques the motivations of dumpster divers to escape domination by showing that dumpster diving reconstitute spaces, and thereby play an active role “precisely because they are entangled in power relations” (Crane, this issue). Rouhani’s contribution further explores how a spatial understanding of anarchist spaces can reveal their liberatory possibilities, but also their constraints, when these spaces are viewed as in process and situated relationally with respect to other spaces. Finally, Heynen and Rhodes’ demonstrate that radical geographies of survival must consider the social knowledge accumulated through past struggles in marginalized spaces. Anarchist politics are uniquely situated here to incorporate this knowledge, while seeking radical social transformations. In return, geography can offer the place sensitive analyses necessary to make connections between struggles thereby “building more effective anti-capitalist political strategies across places and, eventually, egalitarian social orders” (Engel-Di Mauro, 2008, 3).

## Autonomist Marxism

Most visible today in Anglophone academia through the work of Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, autonomist<sup>2</sup> Marxism is a trajectory of thought that emerged from the milieu of radical struggles in Italy during the 1960's and 1970's. The publication of *Empire* (Hardt and Negri, 2000), *Multitude* (Hardt and Negri, 2004), and *Commonwealth* (Hardt and Negri, 2009), helped to bring this line of theorization to the attention of geographers (see for example the special section of *ACME* on geographies of the Multitude in Vol. 8, Issue 2, 2009). However, few geographers have delved deeper into autonomist Marxist thought and gone beyond the contemporary usages of Hardt, Negri and associated figures. Although this special issue does not presume to be a comprehensive encounter between autonomist Marxist thought and geography, we do hope that it might provide an opening for deepening engagements and to encourage an encounter between geography and autonomist Marxist concepts and approaches.

We call autonomist Marxist thought a 'trajectory' here because it is not so much a school of theory as it is a current of theorizing that draws on a series of shared concepts such as the autonomy of the working class from capital and official labor institutions, class composition, the primacy of resistance, the social factory, immaterial labor, and an insistence on the relevance of the real spaces of resistance that are created through the expansion of capital; concepts that are explored and mobilized in some of the articles that follow. Much of this trajectory traces a common origin back to a re-examination of Marxism in the 1960's, which was an attempt to understand Italian workers' struggles in places like the factories of Turin, where workers increasingly viewed the Italian Communist Party and the official labor unions as part and parcel of the problem of exploitation<sup>3</sup> (Hardt, 1996; Wright, 2002).

Drawing on a reinterpretation of Marx's *Grundrisse*, autonomist Marxists stressed a bottom up view of capitalism that understood working class struggle as the foundational motor of capitalist society, and the fissure through which its contradictions continually boiled up (Tronti, 1966). This is the view that has come to be known as the autonomist Marxist hypothesis, that resistance is primary and that capitalism operates largely as an apparatus of capture that directs the energy of living labor into the production and reproduction of capitalist forms (Tronti, 1966; Deleuze and Guattari, 1983; Shukaitis et al., 2007).

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<sup>2</sup> We think it important to note that the term 'autonomous' seems to have gained currency in radical circles of late, but that not all usages of the term in radical politics today are particularly related to autonomist Marxism. Rather, such usages often reflect the anti-state perspectives of anarchists, left-libertarians and others who may not technically be Marxists at all.

<sup>3</sup> This history of post-Gramscian Italian labor radicalism is not well known in the Anglophone world. However, interested readers should consult Steve Wright (2002) for an excellent historical and theoretical introduction.

Rather than understanding capitalism itself as a dynamic force, autonomist Marxism reimagines contestation and resistance as a force that pre-exists the forms of its recuperation as labor (Shukaitis et al., 2007). Mario Tronti was one of the first theorists to make this claim in his 1964 article "Lenin in England," which appeared in the radical journal *Classe Operaia* (Tronti, 1964). It was there that Tronti proposed the primacy of resistance as a working hypothesis directed at liberating Marxian theory from the orthodoxies of the Party. He wrote, "it is the specific, present, political situation of the working class that both necessitates and directs the given forms of capital's development". In other words, it is the actual resistance of workers that forces capital to be dynamic and changing, a proposition that is opposed to the orthodox understanding of capital as a creative force in itself, driven by internal contradictions. This shift of perspective, which is perhaps best thought of as a strategic gamble, requires concomitant shifts in the practice of radical research. Rather than charting out the shifting strategies and forms of capital, which is the focus of much Marxist research including a great deal of radical geography, researchers should instead focus their attention on shifts in workers' struggles.

### **Toward Autonomist Marxist Geographies**

This focus on the autonomous rebellions of workers is typified through class composition analysis, which breaks the structure of class struggle in particular places and times into two main factors, technical composition (which essentially refers to the organic composition of capital) and political composition (which refers to the state of organization and forms of struggle engaged in by working class). These two forms of composition are interlinked, but the political composition of class struggle is primarily driven by the autonomous action of the working class in its efforts to free itself from exploitation (Wright, 2002).

This concept is the theoretical touchstone for Brian Marks' "Autonomist Theory and Practice in the Current Crisis" which appears in the present issue. Here Marks demonstrates how American and Chinese workers' resistance to exploitation co-produces contemporary globalizing strategies of capitalist accumulation, and contributes to the current crisis (Marks, this issue). He ties the immigrant rights marches of 2006, to Chinese rural-urban solidarity, to the American Tea Party movement to demonstrate how autonomous working class movements operate independently from capital, from official workers' institutions, and from each other, forcing capital to retool its strategies and devise new tactics to permit continued accumulation. Importantly, he notes that these autonomous struggles are not just isolated militant particularisms, and they do not need to be globally organized around a single issue to effectively challenge capital. The success of working class struggle is not dependent upon organization into a political apparatus, rather, it is determined by the extent to which effective struggles are circulated within the working class and how the class is able to recompose itself in

a manner that reinforces and accelerates class struggle. That is to say, the success of working class struggle depends on the extent of class composition as opposed to class decomposition (Marks, this issue).

Militant research praxis, the methodological corollary to class composition, is at the heart of Craig Dalton and Liz Mason-Deese's contribution to this issue, "Counter (Mapping) Actions: Mapping as Militant Research". Building on the work of UNC Chapel Hill's Counter Cartographies Collective (known as 3C's) (Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias, 2007), Dalton and Mason-Deese "define autonomous cartography as a form of mapping that recognizes and works from its own situation with no pretenses of being the only objective or singular truth, and that helps yield multiple useful ways of understanding and inhabiting that situation differently" (Dalton and Mason-Deese, this issue). Through their mapping of the composition of struggles at the University of North Carolina the Counter Cartographies Collective attempts to use mapping as a technology for the acceleration of working class struggle. The process of mapping struggle at a local scale serves several purposes. First, an autonomist perspective insists that analysis center on actually existing forms of struggle, and to analyze such struggles they must be identified and located. Second, locating struggles and circulating their whereabouts, claims, structures, and grievances among others also engaged in struggle may play a central role in political recomposition. Third, as is the case with Brian Marks' work we discussed above, an insistence on the geographies of class composition, whether international or local, is central to understanding the operation of capital and its institutions.

While the two contributions to this volume explored above import autonomist Marxist concepts and forms of critique into geography, the third article Cathryn Merla-Watson's "Bridging Common Grounds: Metaphor, Multitude, and Chicana Third Space Feminism" utilizes Gloria Anzaldúa's sophisticated identity-theory, along with autonomist Marxist feminism, to critique the homogenizing conceptions produced by Hardt and Negri's formulations of Empire and Multitude. Importantly, Merla-Watson's sympathetic critique of Hardt and Negri provides political and theoretical openings for a productive engagement between contemporary autonomist Marxist thought, third space Chicana feminism, and mainstream radical geography through her insistence that, despite the potential politics posed by Empire, different bodies are differentially posed in their imbrication with systems of domination, including capitalism, racism, sexism, heteronormativity etc. In her own words, Merla-Watson's critique "fleshes out the multitude, articulates its modes of differentiation, and gives us insight into the material dynamics of social organization and organizing," providing new avenues for radical theorizations that pull together diverse trajectories of thought to produce more complex and appropriate approaches to contemporary politics.

In short, geographical articulations with autonomist Marxist thought allow deeper understandings of the processes of workers' rebellions across space – such as how class struggles operate between countries, and in place – through mapping class composition processes. Additionally, as Pierpaolo Mudu points out (this issue) the spaces, histories, and ideologies of anarchism and autonomist Marxism are distinct, though they also have come into frequent contact in real spaces of radical praxis. This attention to the actual geographies of these movements is necessary both for radical scholarship and for radical theory and practice because real movements and real politics can only be built on actually existing foundations. Further, geographically sensitive interventions into autonomist Marxist thought correct the historic blind spot of that trajectory, namely its universalizing bent that risks obscuring the situated natures of real subjects. We think that both geography and autonomist Marxism are improved through this encounter.

## **Conclusion**

The geographies of these radical trajectories are also important for considering the convergences and divergences between anarchism and autonomist Marxism. Although anarchism and autonomist Marxism are similar in their broadly anti-authoritarian politics, the geographies of these movements present important divergences, and more recently, novel convergences. Whereas anarchism has been historically influential in many places at various times, from the early labor movement in the US, to the Spanish syndicalism of the 1930's, the geographies of autonomist Marxism have been somewhat more restricted to Italy as a social movement, though with some manifestations across Europe and connections to some radical parts of the American labor movement (see Brian Marks' contribution in this issue for some details). Autonomist Marxist theory has also played an underappreciated role in wider currents of academic thought, particularly through the work of Deleuze and Guattari (see Thoburn, 2003) and has, perhaps, circulated more widely than is commonly acknowledged.

Both trajectories, however, converge in present day struggles, largely due to their critical or even antagonistic conceptualizations of the state and other official societal institutions, which offer radical critique a point of contact with popular politics. Neoliberalism's assault on the concept of the public and on public institutions, organized labor, and the other central institutions of the Welfare State has created an opening for Left politics that go beyond a project of rebuilding the compromises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, much radical geographic work on the present has been a critique of neoliberalism framed against its key concepts of privatization, market discipline, and entrepreneurialism, and as a defense of the categories central to the Keynesian accord such as the public interest, and cooperation between labor and capital. We think that the geographic imaginary has become mired in a romanticization of the twentieth century, which was anyways always a poor compromise between institutional left and right. Further, this

nostalgia disguises the ways that the working class in the core countries is and was actively implicated in the immiseration of the third world poor and working classes (Lenin, 2009). Autonomist Marxist and anarchist thought critique the welfare state just as mercilessly as the neoliberal present, and offer fresh understandings of the play of power and oppression within, between, and among movements.

Such critiques resonate with the sources of popular struggle today, in the United States and across the world, such as in the Occupy Movement, which has adopted many anarchist procedures and cultivated significant autonomy from the official institutions of the Left. The cultivation of “autonomous geographies” (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006), such as in the Occupy Movement’s assertion of ‘no demands’, involves active and critical theoretical engagement with anarchism and autonomist Marxism (Deseriis and Dean, 2012; Graeber, 2011). The theories and politics of anarchism and autonomist Marxism provide timely tools to lean on the lines of flight present in the current crisis, and might allow a chance for escape from the continuous rehashing of twentieth century politics. Perhaps it is time to consider a Left politics that embraces liberty, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and the common over the old shibboleths of the state, the public, and Left vanguardism. We hope that the articles contained herein might contribute, in however small a fashion, to new directions for radical geography that are more able to turn the present crisis in emancipatory directions.

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