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Beyond electoralism: Reflections on anarchy, populism, and the crisis of electoral politics

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By A Collective of Anarchist Geographers

Abstract

This paper is comprised of a series of short, conversational or polemical interventions reflecting on the political 'moment' that has emerged in the wake of the rise of right-populist politics, particularly in the Global North. We position the UK's 'Brexit' vote and the election of Donald Trump as US President as emblematic of this shift, which has a longer genesis and a wider scale than these events alone. In particular, we draw on anarchist principles and approaches to consider opportunities for re-energising and re-orienting our academic and activist priorities in the wake of these turbulent times. Following a short introductory section, in which we collectively discuss key questions, challenges and tensions, each contributor individually draws from their own research or perspective to explore the possibilities of a politics beyond electoralism.

Key Words: anarchism, populism, social movements, voting

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We submit this paper under a collective name, which should be used for referencing.

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"Not fear but hope in the Apocalypse" (Mandarini, 2008)

Introduction

The recent rise of populist politics has capitalised on, and nurtured, growing uncertainties and anxieties across Europe and the USA. Following the result of the UK referendum to leave the European Union (Brexit) and the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA,

anarchists, like everyone else caught up in the aftermath of this electoral whirlwind, found themselves in a turbulent political moment. To recoil is unavoidable but to retreat from struggles in such challenging times only serves to embolden the kind of destructive politics that we must fight against. Herein, we are interested in what ways forward exist and how to actively generate a hopeful politics beyond electoralism as a form of resistance (Solnit, 2016) in our multiple academic and activist positionalities.

The recent populist reactions in western democracies against political-economic elites is neither a cause for optimism and celebration nor a time for lamentation and despair at the failure of 'good citizens' to adhere to liberal representative democracy's norms and expectations. In practice, the electoral alternatives offered were no real alternatives at all. To vote 'Remain' in the UK meant the continuation of David Cameron's austerity government and the aggressive implementation of EU neoliberal trade policies. To vote against Trump effectively meant voting for a right-wing liberal, Hillary Clinton, as US Commander-in-Chief; a foreign policy 'hawk' who backed coercive regime change in Iraq, Libya and Honduras.

The aim of this intervention is therefore to understand recent political crises and transformations through anarchists' critiques of power relations, intersectional injustices and narratives of revolt and freedom. Much of this paper is far from academic in tone, format, referencing, and style – and deliberately so – in order to clear pathways that might otherwise have been obscured. Specifically, pathways beyond electoralism – beyond a self-defeating cycle of reliance on the sovereign violence of coercive leadership – are urgently needed. Faced with a widely-felt crisis of liberal representative democracy in the Global North, and coupled with the ugly resurgence of authoritarian and far-right ideologies, what might collective responses of anarchists and other egalitarian anti-authoritarian perspectives look like, sound like, or feel like?

As geographers, social scientists and social movement activists, many of us have experienced frustration across the field of 'critical' scholarship. Experts in leftist critique and deconstruction now tend to occupy decidedly comfortable positions in the proverbial Ivory Tower of academia. Yet, efforts to propose concrete ideas, structures or approaches within the pages of critical academic publications can face considerable resistance. In the newly-emerging political landscape, especially in polities and political cultures of the Global North, it is beneficial to step back from the comfort of critique and think carefully about what knowledge our academic labour is producing, and its relevance to imagining and creating new forms, structures, and relations. These, we believe, must recognise the grounded realities of the present but boldly prefigure alternative futures nonetheless. As such, recognising, envisioning and enacting (anarchistic) spaces of hope and liberation in the present moment necessitates a keen focus on praxis – on putting ideas into action – learning from, collaborating with, and ensuring their applicability for social movements and other radical initiatives.

Europe and the USA are not the only regions in the world to experience a populist surge, nor are they the first. There is also a worrying global trend to the right – to populism and fascism – which suggests that the problems lie not just with our electoral systems but in how we organise as societies and understand that organisation politically. While others on the left propose the need for new progressive political parties or blocs, anarchist alternatives look beyond electoralism and explore the possibilities of direct democracy and new post-statist epistemologies (and ontologies). We also acknowledge the need for our alternatives to reach out beyond predictable and perhaps stale ideology, and beyond familiar platforms, to appeal to disaffected and self-disenfranchising citizens. How, in short, should anarchism engage with

populism? In what places and spaces can we meet to contest and construct the political in our diverse contexts (Mouffe, 1999)?

Anarchist perspectives

The infamous circled-A symbolises Proudhon's maxim "anarchy is order", yet the stereotype of anti-authoritarian politics is quite the opposite. Our individual contributions in this paper point to the recurring theme of how horizontal and anti-authoritarian forms of organisation are a central component of an effective response. Indeed as Schneider (2017) has argued:

'the bulk of anarchist tradition has sought for people to be better organised in their everyday lives—while they work, where they live, how they manage disagreements. This type of power emanates from below, and it is shared. Anarchists aspire to a kind of world in which the Donald Trumps among us can shout all they want but nobody has the need for flocking to them. *Real, daily democracy does not leave much room for quite so much greatness*.' (emphasis added)

Beyond the strict hierarchies of political parties - be they revolutionary or reformist in nature - anarchist organisational imaginaries and strategic analyses are diverse. Consider the highly-disciplined 'platformist' tradition that emerged from the *Makhnovshchina's* vast anarchist Black Armies in the Russian Revolution, or the mass anarchist-communist collectivisation of large parts of Spain in the mid-1930s. More recently, the Bookchin-inspired organisational structures that have developed in the absence of a functioning state in Rojava and the longevity of insurrectionary communities of the Zapatistas in Chiapas are clear examples of successful

horizontal organisation, but also examples of how anarchistic forms vary in relation to their diverse geographical and historical contexts. The origins of these forms are likewise diverse – springing from complex regional histories and movements that, rather than 'fizzling out' or becoming co-opted, actually flourished, became embedded, and developed complex organisational cultures and structures for moving beyond immediate moments of transformation, crisis, or collapse. These sources of inspiration - both in inspiration's emotive and its institutional/organisational senses - help us trace the genealogies and trajectories of new forms, and thereby identify potential leverage points and courses of action.

Nevertheless, there is an altogether more lived, everyday dimension of anarchistic approaches to form, structure and strategy, one that lives and breathes among us irrespective of political persuasion, and which, therefore, has enduring allure in anarchist imaginations. As several of our contributions outline, there is a wide range of anarchistic organisational forms that operate daily - within, against, and beyond capitalist-statist spaces and relations. As Schneider details above, anarchism generates great power through these often rather mundane acts at the grassroots. There is an important everyday quality to these ways of being which can create different relations in society. It is a belief in the power of horizontality, of individuals organising equally with each other, of grassroots self-determination, which binds together our approaches to anarchism. However, many such examples (e.g. trust and collaboration in organisations, sharing, hospitality, responsibility) are so ingrained in various modes of accumulation and coercion that they are often barely distinguishable from that against which we fight. This anarchy on which capitalism and state power are based raises important questions regarding how to expand such relations and disembed them from the machine that feeds off their vitality.

The collective autonomy on which anarchists base their thinking also unearths intersections between tactical decisions and ethical commitments. We may agree that in contrast to the coercive violence of the state, acts of physical confrontation with the far-right or police are critical ruptures from this monopoly of violence that acts upon us every day. Moreover, the intersecting oppressions of capitalist-statist society mean that the violence of that society is wielded many times more on certain groups than on others. Therefore violence against the representatives of oppressive structures could be legitimate - even liberating - in some circumstances. In the fallout from Trump's victory and the anonymous attack on 'alt-right' poster boy Richard Spencer, the question "is it ethical to punch a Nazi?" became a point of debate across the political spectrum. However, accepting the critique of statist violences does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that all violence committed against structures of domination is justified in and of itself. As Emmanuel Levinas would suggest, inadvertently following Kropotkin's and Tolstoy's anarchist ethics, our entwinement with the other (whoever they may be, and whatever they may represent) necessarily demands of us an ethical sensibility rooted in a radical co-responsibility for all others at all times. Politically, Hannah Arendt argues that while 'Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it' (1970, p.59). Acknowledging the contextuality of tactical violence, Uri Gordon suggest that anarchists must 'be responsible, experiment and keep their options open' (2008,p.108). How, then, can we forge practical solidarities between different tactics and approaches that appear to be at odds with one another? Learning from the 'messy' debates and discussions within movements themselves, again, may present answers that academics all too easily overlook in their search for 'neat', logical conclusions.

What those who seek to move beyond electoralism now face, therefore, is a complex matrix of challenges and opportunities in the present turbulence and uncertainty. This raises the question, addressed in many of our individual contributions that follow, of how realistic interventions can be made to carve spaces for participatory and grassroots forms of praxis that can not only prefigure the futures we seek but also make concrete impacts in present struggles. These interventions will necessarily differ according to the context in which organising and mobilisation takes place. The tactical diversity of anarchist approaches thus comes into its element; freed from the constraints of the Party and ballot box, there is a somewhat bewildering range of configurations through which we might act.

What next? Nurturing spaces for action

The post-electoral moment signalled by Brexit and the election of President Trump threatens to become an epoch defined by othering, jingoism, and attacks on the most vulnerable, particularly migrants. The academic and activist responses gathered here highlight the mobilisation of diverse geographies in response to populism to generate forms of hopeful and resistant politics. [Author C] recovers the insights of early anarchist geographers, stressing the need for anarchist academics to rediscover links with grassroots movements. [Author H] argues for an ethics of care in activism. [Author A] considers the generation of prefigurative politics in the present. In an exchange with his imaginary Socratic interlocuter, [Author D] considers local activist responses to populism (see also Finley, 2017). [Author C's] engagement with white supremacy considered as love calls into question how academics construct justice from positions of privilege. Decolonising electoral politics is [Author E's] focus, problematising a blanket anarchist rejection of engagement with electoral politics through the example of the CNI in

Mexico. A tactical anarchist focus on anti-fascism is considered by Author F. Finally, [Author G] argues that the shift to right-wing populism will have little impact on the catastrophic climate change already set in motion through neoliberal forms of government.

A number of themes emerge from these diverse individual responses:

1. Scale, and the continuing need for anarchists to engage with the local and grassroots while developing strategies to counter a global trend.
2. Praxis, whereby anarchist academics have an obligation to work constructing alternatives as much as formulating critique.
3. Communalism, co-constructing town, village, and neighbourhood assemblies and federations as alternatives to electoral state politics.
4. Inclusion, or how anarchists can reach 'disenfranchised' citizens who have turned to populism to co-construct alternative stories of collectively reclaiming the power.
5. 'Acting up', acknowledging the imperative to keep battling, stirring things up, making a noise and disrupting new regimes even if it may look as if we are losing.
6. An ethics care and mutual aid will be integral in anarchist responses, as well as engagement with right-wing populisms.

In the contributions that follow, we draw from our individual research interests and activisms to discuss analyses, critiques, and proposals for moving forward - boldly but mindfully - into the new political 'moment'. In many ways, we cannot see this new moment as a sudden rupture but as an intensification of dynamic conditions and relations that have existed for some

time. Nevertheless, in this intensification, we feel it is important that scholars take this as an opportunity for revisiting our priorities, understandings, and practices.

(In)visibly mobilising anarchist futures

Author A

In a world seemingly intent on supporting fascism, racism, misogyny, patriarchy, neoliberalism, environmental destruction and growing inequality it can be tempting to retreat. We can use this urge to think carefully about the power of being invisible, of using 'unseen' spaces to build alternative imaginaries, and practice prefigurative acts. We need to use invisibility strategically and with purpose as a way to rebuild while we live in an era of fear, anger and unpredictability.

Now is not the time to rely on the electoral system to counter such politics. White Americans and Europeans are being encouraged to articulate themselves as victims, as being treated unfairly, a move that eradicates any sense of history or complicity in structural inequalities. Such victimhood erases responsibility, solidarity and mutual obligation to tackle any structural inequalities. It decouples any links with others, with place, and with history. The system has already failed many in society and the history of representative democracies illustrates the tendency to repeatedly fail the marginalised, the environment, and the non-elite. While the state has had moments of protecting workers, responding to ecological crises, and providing welfare, it has only done so under pressure from social movements and even then, it has often been too slow and weak in taking any actions that might curtail the destructive effects

of capitalism. For example, while labour movements such as Trade Unions have fought for employment rights and in countries like England there is now a broad range of legislation that protect workers from unfair dismissal, leave entitlement and maternity and paternity leave, there has at the same time been an exponential growth in the use of zero-hour employment contracts. These contracts are legal and carefully sidestep employment legislation by enabling employers to avoid providing a stable living wage, holiday or sick pay. Even when state legislation has been able to change or modify capitalist practices for the benefit of workers or the environment, the British vote for Brexit and the US support for Trump now illustrate how unstable, temporary and fragile such protective acts are.

If we reject relying on electoral politics it becomes more obvious that we, as individuals, are the ones who need to, and can, act. Anarchism has always understood the value of people-power. Although it has been accused of failing to adequately confront power (Mueller, 2003) - by seeking to bypass the state and perhaps not always articulating how it would deal with the powerful – anarchism has repeatedly illustrated that that grassroots, collective activism can generate internationally progressive transformative politics (Springer, 2016). This rests on a belief that right-wing populism can be effectively challenged by a left politics of justice, equality and inclusivity.

This people-power can be mobilised visibly and invisibly. While confrontation and public resistance is necessary and timely, it is also vital that we attend to the less visible forms of activism that can be crucial to a successful transformative politics. This is not only that our everyday practices should not contradict our politics ('walking our talk') and that we cannot call for an end to sexism and racism, for example, if we are perpetuate them, but that anarchist prefigurative politics are in themselves a powerful form of change. Prefigurative politics require

living now as if we already inhabit the world we want. It is a way to embody political values and reflect these in daily practices and acts, leading to new social relations (Ince, 2012). Prefiguration is a process of creation, of optimism; of action in the now that is flexible, local and diverse.

Prefigurative acts build an alternative future. Sometimes being invisible is incredibly powerful and silences useful (Gatwiri and Karanja, 2016). This invisibility creates space and time to remake ideas, resource flows and infrastructures. As Tsing (2015) explores in her examination of invisible networks of trade of matsutake mushrooms, there is much in the world that exists and flourishes on the edges of capitalist encroachment. It is in these 'unseen' spaces that alternative imaginaries are built and experimental ideas tested, not just as radical spatial interventions but also in our everyday lives in our homes and workplaces. Creative new ways of being and acting are practiced. There are also, of course, many forms of direct action that appear from invisible sources, such as hacking by Anonymous.

There is a huge range of post/non/alter-capitalist spaces to be employed here, including eco-communities, squats, online spaces, pop-up shops, secular halls and social centres, but informal spaces can also be used, such as people's homes, or local community spaces such as village halls, allotments and meeting spaces above shops or in charity offices (Chatterton, 2016). It is about seeing what might not at first sight be visible and finding the cracks in places to be occupied. Prefiguration enables the struggle to be grounded in place, for acts to be local, relevant and culturally appropriate. It is about developing responses to local events regardless of the unpredictability and the fear, of using what space we must try out new ways of being. Small daily acts, be that calling out racism, making ethical consumption choices (like where you purchase food and what you eat), or countering gender stereotypes, can appear non-

confrontational and open up space for dialogue with differentiated others. These seemingly small daily acts open up a space of dialogue where difficult conversations about how privilege and oppression are structural and replicated can happen. These discussions can be the beginnings of creating the commons. Invisibility helps new necessary alliances (especially with the white working classes) be built. These less visible daily practices are just as important as filling the streets for a protest. While it is necessary that we signal our withdrawal of consent to state power (especially to Trump) and resist coercion, the state response is predictable – it will be swift, violent, and merciless.

As we enter a new political era it is tempting to retreat, but if we do it should be to ready ourselves for future political encounters. It is strategic to be as invisible as we are visible, but only if we are practicing anarchist prefigurative politics, if we are experimenting in 'unseen' spaces, and if we are slowly but surely building new alliances of solidarity.

Mainstream White Supremacy is Rooted in Love
Author B

> "Today I believe in the possibility of love; that is why I endeavour to trace its imperfections, its perversions." ― Frantz Fanon

Panic around the election of Donald Trump reflects a fear that white nationalism has gained electoral legitimacy and has emboldened white supremacists. Media, academics, and the public are reeling from what they allege to be an unprecedented infusion of malevolence into the political mainstream. This anxiety is the product of a prevalent caricature of white supremacy as

hateful ideology, a caricature which serves to obscure and perpetuate the more insidious existing forms of racist violence in the political mainstream. More specifically, there are at least three mistaken premises motivating the unease: that white supremacy is (a) an ideology centring on a hierarchy of skin colour and physiology in which peoples of European decent are privileged, (b) motivated by fear, anger and hate directed at people of colour, and (c) cultivated in conditions of misinformation and ignorance. While these features do describe the rather thin periphery of marginalized vulgar white supremacists, these definitions do not capture the vast majority of white supremacists who occupy the mainstream. There is a genuine danger in the reductive identification of white supremacy with its noxious fringe elements. If we wish to understand the robustness of white supremacist institutions over time in order to pursue the goal of abolition and decolonisation, we can no longer suffer under the delusion that white supremacy marches under the banners of racism, hate, and ignorance. Rather, we must confront head on the reality that the violence of white supremacy persists because it is rooted in love and convivial relations, however perverse.

The mainstream core of white supremacy is comprised of a set of beliefs, practices, and relationships that preserve and privilege European ideals. These ideals include but are not restricted to the privileging of mind over body, reason over emotion, civilisation over the primitive, and capitalist markets over mutual aid. Historically, then, white supremacy operates through the doctrinal veneration of European ideals of mind, reason, civilization, and markets over corresponding subordinates identified with the inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The ideological and material violence thrust on the globe by European empire, colonialism, and slavery has been rooted in the arbitrary authority granted to these ideals. In this context, the 'white man's burden' was conceived of as a relationship that involved the cultivation

of mind and reason through education of the primitive, the promotion of literacy and sophistication, the establishment of a civilised order predicated on universalised notions of citizenship rather than parochial kinship relations, and the generation of wealth through the imposition of private property and market economies.

An investment in the supremacy of European ideals does not necessarily require an investment in biological theories of race. Indeed, the robustness of structural and institutional racism cannot be explained with reference to seething anger or unremitting hate. White supremacist relationships function though the exclusion, coercion, and violent disciplining of those who challenge or fail to aspire to these ideals irrespective of colour or physiology. Indeed, the vast majority of white supremacists reject as abhorrent the ideas and propaganda espoused by their vulgar racists cousins. Mainstream white supremacists are motivated by confidence, compassion, and love for anyone who upholds their ideals. Whiteness is manifests in the identification of humanity with the reasoning mind, in the value associated with formal education, in the veneration of the intellect, civility, and citizen spirit. Whiteness is reproduced in the regret we feel for those who are uneducated, illiterate, poor, and stateless. Such groups represent a moral tragedy and their happiness is the lamentable pleasure of the fool or the infant whose condition calls for our "loving" discipline and tutelage.

Whiteness manifests in the love for God and country; in the way we naturalise parental authority, discipline, and even violence as necessary if people are to be civilized out of primitive childhood, a process associated with unconditional love; in the way parents and young children bond at bedtime over racist nursery rhymes; in the way laughter over racist jokes and stories brings us closer to our uncles and cousins; in the honour bestowed on our parents and grandparents who fought in wars predicated on the preservation of empire; in the way they

sympathize with the parent, sibling, or good friend whose job is exported to a developing country; in the way our membership in a particular nation-state is associated with esteem and even virtue while our national borders compel the most vulnerable to undertake 'criminal' acts of migration; in the way the memories that constitute us as individuals focus on a family home or home-land, an affirmative place and space made possible through the ongoing dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples; in the convivial distribution of wealth made possible by centuries of African and Indigenous enslavement; in the way we enact care and reciprocity through gifts manufactured by enslaved brown and black children; in the way the success of our business colleagues and ventures hinges on the ongoing global exploitation of labour and displacement of vulnerable communities. In these ways and many more, white supremacy and loving relations are co-constitutive.

The reductive identification of white supremacy with vulgar racism allows mainstream white supremacists to operate under pernicious illusions. We hold, for instance, that domestic incidents of racial antagonism are the appropriate indicator of white supremacist violence rather than the violence imposed globally in order to promote ideals of citizenship in a nation-state, education, and markets. We hold that a lull in domestic hate crimes signals the waning of white supremacist violence while ignoring the violent assimilation and disciplining of black and Indigenous peoples in our schools, prisons, and workplaces. We hold that electoral politics established and sustained by slavery and settler colonial genocide somehow provides a potential bulwark against white supremacy.

Neither the ideals nor the delusions are exclusive to Trump supporters. We find the same virtues and relationships extolled by Clinton, Sanders, Stein, and virtually every other political candidate in recent memory. The rise of Donald Trump and any corresponding rise in overt racist

violence can only occur because they exist in the more general context of white supremacist violence that goes unnamed. Our anxieties over conditions of misinformation and ignorance giving rise to violence are therefore misplaced. Whiteness is not a hypothesis awaiting contradictory evidence, nor is it a philosophical premise that is open to superior argument, nor is it an ideology or myth that can be undone by a powerful counter-narrative.

The vast majority of white supremacists, then, are not cartoonish red-necks or skin-heads who subscribe to the ideologies of social Darwinism and scientific racism. Rather, they are the masses of moderates, centrists, liberal egalitarians, progressives, and socialists who proudly reject the explicit racialisation of bodies while tacitly upholding the supremacy of European ideals. We may even fashion ourselves as activists, as staunch advocates of affirmative action, as allies of Black Lives Matter, as dedicated students of postcolonial scholarship. We can be the most vocal detractors of racial hierarchy. Yet our commitment to principles of justice and progress that hinge on education, enfranchisement, and employment belie our investment in white supremacy.

What now? First, let's stop "being dupes"!
Author C

The anarchist tradition contains a rich set of ideas on the inadequacy of electoral politics for a program of social transformation: nevertheless, this "classical" corpus is generally overlooked, or even discarded with some sense of superiority, by most of contemporary scholarship. As the early anarchist tradition and the geographical one intersect significantly, it is

worth considering what insights early anarchist geographers can furnish to present day non-electoral politics and their spatialities.

Anarchist critiques of parliamentary politics started from Pierre Joseph Proudhon's deception after his experience at the 1848 *Assemblée nationale constituante*, the assembly which followed the insurrections of February 1848 and ruled the French Second Republic from 4 May 1848 to 26 May 1849. The first political thinker who labelled himself explicitly as "an anarchist", Proudhon hoped to represent there the revolutionary aspirations of the working classes; the failure of the Second Republic to perform a social revolution and the repression and reaction which followed are considered by anarchist thinkers like Kropotkin (1896) as a milestone in the definitive rift between anarchism and parliamentarianism, and inspired Proudhon's famous statement that being governed means to be

> noted, registered, enrolled, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished …. repressed, fined, despised, harassed, tracked, abused, clubbed, disarmed, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed … mocked, ridiculed, outraged, dishonoured (Proudhon 1851, 341).

These words, which are considered to anticipate the contemporary concept of biopolitics (Springer, 2013: 117), were echoed by anarchist geographers Reclus and Kropotkin in their respective claims against French elections in the 1880s. Reclus (quoted from the version published by the journal Freedom in 1910) argued that "to vote is to be dupes" because "to vote is to abdicate, to nominate one or more masters for a period short or long to renounce one's own

sovereignty" (Freedom 249, January 1910: 4). The same concept was expressed by Kropotkin, who added that political corruption leads to a loss of interest for political participation:

> What a shame that there are no special trains to allow the electors to see their 'Chamber' at work! They would soon be disgusted. …. To this rabble of nonentities the people abandons all its rights, except that of dismissing them from time to time and naming others in their places [so that] the great mass of the people ends up losing interest in the comedy (Kropotkin, 1885: 197).

Reclus and Kropotkin focused then on organisation and competences, drawing on geographical matters such as the critique of centralist state in favour of decentralisation. According to Reclus, people should stop believing "that men like yourselves acquire suddenly at the tinkling of a bell the power of knowing and understanding everything. Your mandatories having to legislate on everything, from lucifer matches to ships of war, from clearing off caterpillars from trees to the extermination of peoples, red or black, it must seem to you that their intelligence will enlarge the virtue of the immensity of the task" (Freedom 249, January 1910: 4). Kropotkin, who experienced the inefficiency of central administration during his explorations in Siberia, was equally sarcastic:

> Your representative is expected to express an opinion … on the whole infinitely various series of questions that surge up in that formidable machine – the centralised State. He must vote the dog tax and the reform of university instruction, without ever having set foot in a university or known a country dog. ... He will vote on phylloxera, on tobacco, on

guano, on elementary education and on the sanitation of the cities …. He will kill the vine, imagining he is protecting it; he will vote for reforestation against pasture, and protect the pastures against the forests. He will know all about railways.… An omniscient and omnipotent Proteus, today soldier, tomorrow pig breeder, in turn banker, academician, sewer-cleaner, doctor, astronomer, drug manufacturer, currier and merchant, …. in the Chamber his opinion becomes law" (Kropotkin, 1885: 197-198).

A critique of the different dimensions of power is apparent in Reclus's idea that "power has always made its possessors foolish … if you send your mediocrities into a place of corruption, be not astonished if they come out corrupted" (Freedom 249, January 1910: 5). These statements also show that early anarchists did not cultivate much illusions on the "good nature" of human beings, because they considered that gaining political power is likely to corrupt well-intentioned people. This concept was also developed by Errico Malatesta, who argued that parliamentary mandates had a bad pedagogical impact for both elected and electors, as the former might be corrupted by the mechanism they entered and the latter might lose the habit of direct struggle once accustomed to delegating to others. The famous Italian anarchist also clarified that an anarchist refuse of vote is not an absolute one, because a vote can be considered when it has a direct value, e.g. the vote at a free assembly. There, an anarchist criterion is not necessarily seeking unanimous consensus, but ensuring that a majority should not be able to impose its decisions to a minority, and that every individual is entitled to keep only the engagements she/he freely accepted. According to Malatesta, "it is not true that it is impossible to act together if there is not the agreement of everybody … what is true is that, if a minority cedes to a majority, it must be by its free will" (L'Agitazione, 14 March 1897). A prefigurative

example of non-statist decisional scales came with the 1936-39 Spanish collectivisation (Breitbart, 1978), following the 1936 definition of Libertarian Communism by the CNT, based on the three levels of "the individual, the commune, the federation" (Puente, 2013).

Why should one now consider these authors, writings and concepts? Because experiences of direct democracy and bottom-up organisation, from Chiapas to Rojava, are helping people rediscover this set of ideas while, on the other side, the political left remains unable to provide alternatives to the existing order all over the world. Thus, the emergence of figures like Trump and the advance of the far right in Europe are a result of this failure. The anarchist tradition provides a number of experiences of spatial and social prefiguration and a related corpus of critical thinking with which critical scholarship (and not only the anarchist one) should engage more in order to enhance the transformation of society, starting by the spaces and scales at which decisions are made. Geographers and other scholars can contribute to this by rediscovering links with grassroots movements and by reviving this critical tradition beyond disciplinary barriers and beyond the walls of academic institutions. In this the example, early anarchist geographers such as Reclus and Kropotkin refused political power but did not neglect any way to reach wider publics. This included collaboration with both popular and specialised publishers; contribution to both mainstream and militant journals; conferences in academic contexts and learned societies as well as in public meetings and protest mobilisations; and interdisciplinary, multilingual and transnational approaches as a challenge to nationalist and institutional (academic and non-academic) ways of producing knowledge (Ferretti, 2014).

On anarchist responses to electoral populism: a dialogue from the edge

Author D

'You look troubled,' the Gadfly said, landing on my laptop.

'Well, Brexit then Trump… Most of my political community is despondent, terrified even. Where do we go from here?' What am I to write? How am I to write?'

'Your local political community is unusual, isn't it?'

'Living on the west Wales coast, we're not only on a geographic edge but a political one too. Our representative democracy at both the Wales and UK government scales is contested between peripheral parties, Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats, both pro-Remain. We're the most europhile area in Britain (YouGov, 2016).'

'But your personal activism is with social movements outside electoral politics?'

'Outside but not beyond. In a small town, in a rural area, such activism must involve alliances with groups from the more progressive political parties. And, though we campaign against the political establishment, in the immediate reality we are most often seeking to change it through its institutions rather than overthrow it. The local authority, itself oppressed by central government policies, can be an ally.'

'And why are people terrified? What's changed? Surely your struggles were largely defined by the European Union and establishment politics in the US, neoliberal economic policies and global military aggression as ready examples?'

'The electoral choices in both the UK and US was between two wrongs, either of which would result in a shade of right – politically, not morally (e.g. Mason, 2016a, Van Reybrouck, 2016; Mounk 2017). Regarding Brexit, my local community has already mobilised against an increasing incidence of hate crime and the imminent prospect of diluting environmental regulation. With Trump as President-elect, people's fears for themselves, never mind for

women's and minority rights within the US, are even more existential: climate change, even nuclear war (e.g. Mehta, 2016).'

'I repeat, though,' the Gadfly said, rolling his compound eyes, 'what's changed?'

'Populism. Explicitly, right-wing populism. Judis proposes that left-wing populism champions 'the people' against an elite and/or an establishment (Judis, 2016). Right wing populism does the same, but in addition scapegoats others – 'out' groups, typically immigrants – whom it claims the elite/establishment favours over the people.'

'And the definition of 'the people' is a moveable feast?'

'As suits the populist rhetoric of the moment. But in the case of Brexit, the people are mainly defined as white and British, especially English.'

'And for Trump, white and American, whatever American signifies?' The Gadfly checked, pacing the keyboard, 'So, 'the people' are working class, particularly unemployed, under-employed and lowly-paid workers whose misfortunes populist rhetoric attributes to immigrants, outsiders prepared to work for lower wages under inferior conditions?'

'While the same or perhaps another 'out group' is blamed for crime, terrorism and other social problems - the strain on health services, for instance.'

'Trump is still part of a very establishment political party, however?'

'And the populist discourse that helped swing the Brexit vote emanated mainly from UKIP which, although an anti-establishment party, did not gain any direct political power from the Leave decision.'

'Not straight-forward right-wing populist party political coups, then? Given that right-wing, establishment political parties will continue to exercise power in the UK and US through

the institutions of the state and in favour of corporate capitalism, I ask again: what's changed for anarchist struggles?'

'Right-wing populism is even more morally reprehensible than right-wing elitism. It conjures skewed visions of social justice based on notions of nation and identity, home, belonging and territory. But such visions clearly appeal to a lot of people in the UK and US.'

'Not to mention in other western nations currently - France, Austria, Italy, Hungary and the Netherlands.'

'Owen Jones wrote that the left needs a 'new populism' (Jones, 2016). Among some comrades in social movements, his proposal received a hostile response. Associating populism with an appeal to self-interest, othering, charismatic and fickle leaders (e.g. Crick, 2002), one social media response ran: 'We need to fight for what is right without compromising any of our values. Only by repeating our truths time and time again will we achieve a just society.''

'Except that repeating our 'truths' isn't working?'

'Repetition is but one aspect of communication. And aren't the left going to make space for new truths - new knowledges? It's a pity that Owen Jones used the term populism in his title, because what he was actually asking for was not any compromise of values 'in the fight against racism, misogyny and homophobia but it (the left) must work out how to do that in a way that connects with the unreached… We need an emotionally compelling vision. Because we know that stating the facts and hoping for the best will not blunt the Right or build a progressive alliance (Jones, 2016).''

'Despondency doesn't suit you,' the Gadfly decided, rubbing his forelegs together, 'and it won't help your local community. You need to get on with building that defiant hope you talk about, from the ashes (Solnit, 2005, 2009). Some have presented the rise of right-wing populism

as an opportunity, tuning into to its anti-establishment strand, calling for progressive international alliances (e.g. Mason, 2016b, Varoufakis, 2016ab, Žižek, 2016).'

'If it is an opportunity, we need to develop our emotionally compelling vision differently from past efforts, and present it very differently – much more creatively and poetically via different media and forms. (e.g. Brown, 2015; Mason, 2017; Sartre, 2001; Springer, 2017; Thompson, 2012). To compliment the hard-graft of traditional grassroots politics, we need a politics of art.'

'From what you've said, progressive alliances are already in formation locally?'

'As a primary instance, we have a People's Assembly that involves members of the more progressive parties as well as people who might self-identify as anarchists: such alliances can reach the unreached.'

'Bookchin wrote,' the Gadfly said, taking off and landing on a book, 'that 'to get from a centralised statist 'here' to a civically decentralised and confederal 'there'', we need conscious movements 'to seek out counter-institutions that stand in opposition to the power of the nation state (Bookchin, 1989).''

'And he's clear that he doesn't mean marginalised communes or co-ops, but a libertarian municipal movement that 'establishes a system of confederal relationships between municipalities; one that will form a regional power in its own right.'''

'Bookchin would favour making space for new knowledges. He would surely also back new ways of communicating such knowledges. What he highlights is that ideas such as a 'Progressive International' or 'all-European Left' can perhaps – and should perhaps - begin with progressive local alliances.'

'For me, the challenge is to develop emotionally compelling visions – plural, rooted in the local, which eschew populist irrationalities - othering or exclusionary localism (Mason & Whitehead, 2012).'

'Judging by your comrade's reaction to Owen Jones' proposal, I anticipate that creatively, poetically and dramatically developing such visions might meet with more opposition from within progressive alliances than from the Right?!'

'There's a lot of work to do; we need to communicate.'

'Get typing, then' the Gadfly said, and flew away.

Decolonising Electoral Politics

Author E

The struggle for the right to vote has cost the lives of many women and men, and the desire to participate in the decision-making process of the nation-state and other governing bodies runs deep for many people. Electoral politics are presented to its publics as democracy, duty, voice, choice, membership in a nation, gender and racial power, enfranchisement, and even condoning a subjectivity of "being of worth". In my view, however, electoral politics as majority vote and/or electoral college is an assembled actor and tool in a system of explicit hierarchies used to maintain an untouchable, un-malleable epistemic praxis of socio-political-economic networked power relationships.

It is my understanding that people want to have a voice about how they live and participate in their communities. However, living within the territory of a nation-state we are given seemingly few choices about how to participate in local, regional-state and national

politics. Rather, participation in politics is often limited to interactions between the individual and the government. Be it through education or violence, entertainment or oppression, one is constantly aware that they are directed and controlled through a series of steps, agreements, bureaucracies and laws (Graeber, 2016).

Writing from the perspectives of decoloniality and anarchism, I argue that national elections and referendums are mechanisms that reify a continuance of coloniality/modernism. I then contrast the recent proposal of the National Indigenous Congress [Congreso Nacional Indigena, (CNI) in Spanish] in Mexico to place an indigenous woman candidate in the 2017 presidential elections with the western concept of electoral democracy.

The fall 2016 presidential elections and public referendums in the Americas have driven many people to reflect on electoral politics. Donald Trump in the United States of America was elected with 46.3% of the voting-age population not voting (United States Electoral project, 2016), Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua was elected with 37.75% of the vote (where abstentions range from 40%-80%) (La Prensa, 2016), and the referendum on the peace accords between the FARC and the government of Colombia were rejected with more than 60% of the population not voting and a 0.5% margin on the results (Lafuente, 2016). While each of these decisions was made in the name of democracy and democratic process, it is difficult to find the demos in these events. Rather, limited percentages of each population participated, favouring right-wing politics of racism, sexism, xenophobia and neoliberal projects of big business that further the United Nations 2030 Development Goals. It is important to situate the United States of America in the same discursive space as Nicaragua and Colombia, for within a discourse of decoloniality the developed and developing worlds are parts of the same construction. Decoloniality suggests a de-

westernisation in both theory and practice by prising apart history through a lens that privileges an equality of epistemes and ontos[1] across geographies and histories.

Walter Mignolo (2009) writes that the concept of democracy, in a genealogy of Western thought arising from the Greco-Roman empire, became foundational during the European Renaissance, the same time that the conquest of the Americas began. While democracy as a practice applicable to the governance of a nation-state – or even the existence of nation-states in general – began centuries later, other imperialist practices within that genealogy, including territorial expansion, cultural destruction and homogenisation, epistemicide, and enslavement, were used excessively. Democracy in the Americas has always been a project of coloniality.

When Europeans arrived in the Americas there was already an immense diversity of decision-making practices around territory, governance and cultural practices in general. Authors such as Lenkersdorf (2002), Quintero Weir (2013), Mignolo (2009) and Zibechi (2010) have examined how communal thinking in various parts of the indigenous Americas continues in use around local politics, economics and other necessary decision-making spaces. The communal here refers not to socialist communes but rather to an episteme of an ecology of knowledges where well-being within a community of people, the land and ecosystems come together. While democratic decision-making constructs individuals that decide for themselves who will lead (with few options to choose from) and then compiles votes to create a majority, a communal politics refers to a process of many (both human and non-human actors) deciding how the well-being of all will continue. In an anarchist decolonial communality this process would establish all participants as equals.

It is in this sense of communal well-being that the CNI in Mexico presented a proposal for an indigenous woman candidate to run in the 2017 presidential elections. While the proposal

is (as of December, 2016) under consultation in over fifty indigenous regions of Mexico, it has sparked debate not only in the regions of the consultation but among those living and working in solidarity with the Zapatistas in Chiapas and the larger movement of communities associated with the CNI. It is currently unknown how the candidacy will manifest if it is approved. The Zapatistas have expressed that it will have a non-capitalist form, driven with the goal of privileging the experience of indigenous communities and their struggles nationally. This process reinforces the need to return to local decision-making practices, increased engagement in one's community and furthering the belief that each person has a right to participate in the governance process. By way of conclusion I offer a comment by Walter Mignolo (2009): "The left, with its European genealogy of thought, cannot have the monopoly over the right to imagine what a non-capitalist future shall be. There are many non-capitalist pasts that can be drawn from, many experiences and memories that perhaps do not wish to be civilised – neither by the right nor by the left."

Anti-fascism: attack as defence / defence as attack

Author F

In the present moment, we find ourselves amidst debates across the Global North about the nature and extent of fascism in our states, parliaments, and streets. The emotive label, "fascist", can risk becoming a 'scatter-gun' effort to discredit or confront a range of regressive or reactionary policies of the right, and if over-used can lose its power as a tool of critique or confrontation. The trouble is that defining fascism can be tricky, which may partly explain why so many across the social sciences prefer to study the theoretically less ambiguous notion of

racism. Despite these caveats, I will suggest that a renewed, nuanced, and explicitly anti-authoritarian notion of anti-fascism is an important dimension in confronting the uncertain future we now face. I will also argue that anti-fascism offers much more than simply opposing fascism.

Setting aside the wide diversity of terms – fascism, neo-fascism, far-right, alt-right, neo-Nazi, radical right, etc. – fascism (as a broad family of far-right ideologies) is usually composed of four common characteristics: 1) a fanatical affiliation to protecting and promoting national and/or ethnic identity and 'interests', 2) unwavering militarism, 3) deference to (particular forms and symbols of) authority, and 4) anti-liberalism and anti-libertarianism. They may also have roots in modernist discourses of order and progress (Gentile 2004), or draw from anti-modern sentiments of blood, land and heritage (Feldman and Pollard 2016) – often both. Growing pan-European far-right movements and parties have also generated a distinct ideological shift – from biologically-driven ethno-nationalism towards a "Europe of the peoples" (Spektorowski 2015) in which a specific, exclusionary, Eurocentric form of diversity is embraced. Yet, despite this shift, the core underpinnings of far-right ideology remain.

In the UK, where I live, the far-right threat has been growing over a number of years, but two moments of rupture in the Anglophone world have rendered this gradual re-emergence newly visible. While the vast majority of Donald Trump's supporters or 'Brexiteers' cannot be defined as bona fide fascists, their electoral successes are certainly 'fascist-enabling', legitimising attitudes, discourses and agendas that contribute to the mainstreaming of far-right politics. In the aftermath of the Brexit vote, for example, it is no coincidence that there was a substantial spike in reports of racist incidents (Institute for Race Relations 2016a; 2016b).

In the present turbulence, electoral campaigning has proven woefully insufficient in confronting these new dynamics, which stretch far beyond party politics and into the everyday

lives of communities and individuals. This is something that anti-racist geographers have discussed, at least implicitly, for some time. Literatures on encounter and living with diversity foreground not periodic electoral participation as an antidote to the complexities of living in a diverse, mobile society but understanding and negotiating the lived experiences of difference in place more effectively (e.g. Wilson 2016). However, these fields arguably do not do enough to integrate their analyses with more political-economic questions of inequalities in work and housing[2], and can overlook problems of hierarchical mediation or coercion (Ince 2015).

While anti-racism continues to be fundamental to critical and radical geographies (e.g. Nayak 2010; Pulido 2015), anti-fascism offers something quite distinct. Anti-fascism intervenes at the intersection of racism and authoritarianism, confronting the ways in which the two play off one another and are manifested in tandem. The authoritarian dimensions of fascism – such as suppression of independent democratic institutions, restrictions to the press, and hyper-militarism – sometimes enter into anti-racist geographies but are fundamental to anti-fascist analysis and action. As a result, there is a renewed necessity for research on, and participation in, anti-fascism, which operates largely beyond the electoral realm and is woefully underexplored in geography.

Firstly, anti-fascism may offer opportunities to integrate the political-economic and the everyday, affective dimensions of life in divided times. These dimensions mesh through anarchism as an analytical approach and mode of praxis that fundamentally seeks to develop a politics of everyday life rooted in both material, collective questions of equity and wider imaginaries of liberation. When we imagine anti-fascism, it is easy to think of a reactive phenomenon manifested in the spectacle of public confrontation, but it can be undertaken equally in many spheres – work, communities, pubs, homes, etc. Anarchists have long been at the

forefront of anti-fascism, not only on the streets but also in these other spheres, such as incorporating anti-fascist approaches into the labour movement (e.g. through the inter-war anarcho-syndicalism of Germany's Freie ArbeiterInnen Union[3] or the Spanish Confederación Nacional del Trabajo). An anti-fascist geography driven by anarchist sensibilities is something that radical scholars could do well to explore.

Anti-fascism does not solely focus on self-defence, or defence of others, even though these are central elements; anti-fascist imaginaries tend also to promote visions for society. At a very basic level, solidarity across ethnic, gender and other differences often provides a framework for such visions. This unsettles the reactive-sounding 'anti-' prefix of anti-fascism, since anti-fascist action is ultimately prefigurative action for something, as well as defensive action against something. As such, anti-fascism tends to articulate defence and attack as one, creating a heterodox politics that cuts across different modes and visions of attack and defence. For liberal anti-fascists, this may be to preserve the liberal-democratic state, individual freedoms and the free-market economy, whereas anti-fascism for orthodox Marxists would propose class solidarity in the face of fascism's 'unholy alliance' of capital and labour.

Anarchist anti-fascism links with Marxist class analysis but crucially offers something different again, since anarchism is underpinned by an anti-authoritarianism that extends to the logics of statism and hierarchy altogether. Whereas liberals or Marxists critique certain forms of authority (e.g. fascism), anarchists promote modes of action in which authority as an organising principle should play no role in governing societies. For anarchists, then, the anti-fascist imagination includes rejecting (or only instrumentally using) electoral methods; instead focusing on grassroots, extra-parliamentary activisms and participative forms of democracy. Electoralism may offer a straightforward way of 'beating' the far-right, since keeping certain parties out of

political office is a specific, measurable goal, but this maintains the same power relations, discourses and agendas that produced the conditions for the far right to emerge in the first place. We must therefore think on a more systemic level, considering how fascism has multiple lines of flight that extend far beyond the ballot box. An analysis driven principally by anarchism can help us do this.

A first step in developing what we might term 'anti-fascist geographies' is to consider what this could entail. What might anti-fascist praxis look like in an everyday academic context? To what extent can academics continue collaboration with a state that is increasingly authoritarian, coercive, and racist by design? What role is our academic labour playing in the production and reproduction of these agendas? And how can we ensure our thinking and research strengthens or informs praxis beyond the academy? It is also necessary to distinguish between geographies of anti-fascism (an empirical topic) and anti-fascist geographies (an approach to scholarship). These have crossovers, especially in the sense that geographers can use analysis to support more effective anti-fascist strategies. A finer-grained analysis of the far right itself is also necessary for both of these approaches, since the relational interplay of anti-fascists with their political opponents is a fundamental dynamic. However, incorporating an anti-fascist ethic into other empirical topics or academic activities (e.g. pedagogy) is a different task that requires further debate to generate approaches that cut across multiple fields.

Geography has long prided itself on its critical ethos and grounded relevance to pressing social issues. Yet, critique alone no longer feels sufficient. Our task, then, is to adapt swiftly but with nuance to this new world that is emerging around us. It will not provide all the answers, but re-energising anti-fascism beyond the ballot box as a fusion of defence and attack – a deliberate affront to passive victimhood – is one way we as geographers might begin to do this.

Paris Can't Save Us

Author G

       With the election of Donald Trump to the Office of the President and the results of the United Kingdom's "Brexit" referendum signalling the beginning of the end for the country's membership in the European Union, there has been a growing concern among scientists, policymakers, and environmentalists over the future of the Paris Climate Agreement, a global regulatory measure designed to reduce the impacts of climate change by limiting global warming to 2ºC (Schiermeier, 2016; Scott, 2016; UNFCCC, 2015; Wernick, 2016). Though the agreement lacks a mechanism for legally binding member countries to meeting this goal (Dimitrov, 2016), in the world of liberal democratic politics this concern is justified. If two of the most powerful industrial states change their relationship to the agreement it could prove a fatal blow to the stated goals of the Paris Agreement, increasing our collective perpetual vulnerability by removing one of the regulatory measures meant to mitigate against it. However, a focus limited to the ways in which electoral results impact the implementation of global climate agreements ignores a bigger and broader issue: global agreements, like a focus on building resilience, are concerned primarily with the potential future impacts of climate change, ignoring the environmental violence being experienced in marginalised communities today. A focus on the status and future of global environmental policy ignores the general impotency of this policy to enact meaningful change in the environment, ignores the specific role of capitalist enterprises in producing violent environmental conditions, and places continued faith in electoral politics in solving problems that it cannot solve.

By focusing on electoralism and placing hope in an ever-changing cadre of politicians rather than looking at the everyday experiences of environmental violence within marginalised and targeted communities, the solutions to collective vulnerabilities are being continuously placed in the future, setting the stage for global catastrophe. Climate change is not simply a problem for the future; it is a problem in the present. Direct, causal relationships have been identified between climate change and the rise of wildfires, changes in water runoff and riverine flooding patterns, and agricultural productivity, among other factors (Abatzoglou and Williams, 2016; Arnell et al., 2016). While it is true that experiences with these climate change impacts will only intensify if dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions do not occur, a focus on the role and impact of international climate treaties obscures not only the reality that people are suffering today but that climate change is not just a cause of this suffering but also an effect of a deeper seeded, much longer history of environmental harm in the name of capitalist gain (see Parr, 2013; Vinthagen, 2013). A more liberal candidate or referendum result would not have changed this.

While there is no hope to be found in the Paris agreement, there might be in resilience. In the days and weeks following a disaster the concept of resilience emerges both in praise of the actions of individuals impacted by the disaster and as something that needs to be built to protect others from future disasters. Through decades of policy formulation and scientific development, resilience has moved from a term used to describe socioecological, psychological, and engineered states to a disciplinary tactic employed by in neoliberal forms of governance (see Chandler 2014; Chandler and Reid 2016). In the process, vulnerability to traumatic shocks such as the myriad disasters brought on by climate change has become naturalized. Divorced from their political and economic origins, disasters become unwieldy, contained only by regulatory

environmental policy meant to minimise their inevitable effects and through the resilience of individuals and institutions to survive these effects. We are now and forever vulnerable (cf. Evans and Reid 2014).

Despite this threat of perpetual vulnerability, examples from New Orleans' Common Ground Collective and Occupy Sandy show how ideas of community resilience can be redefined along lines that resist the social and environmental alienation of capitalism and the neoliberal biopolitics normally associated with resilience (see Crow 2011; Solnit 2010; cf. Mullenite 2016). In the process of building this new sort of resilience – one not based on the ability of the community to bounce back to a previous, potentially violent state but instead on mutual aid and solidarity – the ability to reconfigure the politics of everyday life along the same lines begins to emerge. Catastrophic changes are coming with or without the Paris Agreement. Catastrophes represent a complete upending of the dominant social ordering of society and, in the process, open new ways of being (Aradau and van Munster 2011; Solnit 2010).

Community-based Activism: for ethics of care, expressions of solidarity and a spirit of revolt
Author H

> Whatever differences exist between individuals, we do not exist in some splendid isolation.... Rather, our lives are intimately and intrinsically connected with the lives — and freedoms — of others, a claim that bears out through a geographical understanding of relationality and solidarity. (White et al, 2016: 7)

In June 2016, following the waging of a particularly ugly and divisive campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, some 17,410,742 UK voters voted for Brexit, winning with 51.9% of the votes cast (BBC, 2016). Many communities – particularly those already existing precariously on fragmented and deep-rooted fault lines of nationalism, class, race, gender, ethnicity, religion – both before and after the Referendum were exposed to particularly caustic, bitter, poisonous and toxic resurgences of hate-related crime (O'Shea, 2016; Weaver, 2016). Just a few months later, many communities across North American were faced with a dystopic scenario: the Presidential election of Donald Trump. Trump, who many saw as leading and embodying an "Alt-Right" (i.e. fascist) hostile, divisive, and bitter campaign that, just as Brexit stirred the hornets' nest of American patriotism, misogyny, and racism (Rushton, 2016). The explosion of violence across North America was as shocking as it was predictable. Reporting on the harassment and intimidation in the ten days that followed the Presidential Election, the SPCL (2012) drew attention to 867 hate incidents across public spaces, private spaces, workplaces, university campuses. As widely documented, most of these hate crimes were fuelled by anti-immigrant, anti-black, anti-Muslim, anti-LGBT, anti-woman, anti-Semitism, and white nationalist sentiments.

Without desiring in any way to diminish the specific configurations of malevolent forces of anger and hatred that certain communities experienced/ are experiencing – which are inextricably and directly connected to the 'post-truth' machinations underpinning both the Brexit campaign in the UK and the pro-Trump campaign in the USA – it is important that we don't take a simplistic myopic view of these events. We must see them as part of a broader and deeper struggle for social justice: and these events, and their representatives are properly interpreted as figures in a wider dystopic play. Think, for example of what the alternatives presented.

Supporting Remain in the EU campaign, or voting for Clinton, would also have perpetuated

neoliberal, un/anti-democratic, and post-political futures (see Asher, 2016), and led to further

suffering and fragmentation of the most precarious and vulnerable communities and individuals

in society (WSM in Ireland, 2016).

Ethics of Care, Solidarity and Revolt

Therefore, when aiming to meaningfully and effectively challenge and confront these

specific intersectional violent geographies that continue to play out, and feed off, post-Trump

and post-Brexit, we must also devise tactics and strategies that are as applicable to the powerful

forces that bring them into being, underpin and sustain them. However, before acting and

engaging intentionally we must honestly appraise our own relative skills, abilities, strengths and

limitations. A fundamental part of this is the need to recognise our own situated knowledges,

partial perspectives and (white, male, etc.) privilege (Haraway, 1988). Beyond this, there is a

compelling argument that direct action for communities is rooted in an ethics of care, solidarity

and revolt. Indeed, here, much can be learned and applied from the approach and principles that

underpin some of the most prominent and effective anti-fascist campaigns. For example,

consider how the basic principles captured by Anti Raids (2016, n.p.) embody the values of

solidarity that have historically characterised many left-libertarian and syndicalist social

movements:

- It should be decentralised and grassroots
- It should target all forms of nationalism and xenophobia - from the streets to the state.

- It should be braver: When the time comes to hold the line, we need to be there for each other.

- It should be creative

- It should be multiform.

Indeed, it might be we might also add that a further bullet point: if the current dystopic climate has taught us anything, it is that (anarchist) geography/ies matters. As Springer (2016: 4) notes, "Our greatest resource comes from out bonds to one another though the relationship spaces of a universal geography and via the common interest of mutual aid." While on-line expressions of support and solidarity with people and communities are welcome, and necessary, far greater is the need for tangible, human-scale and geographically embedded actions, initiatives and campaigns where it is most needed. Of course, we should also not overly reinforce the artificial dualism of 'on-line' or 'on the ground' public activism, and there are excellent examples, born out of the Brexit campaign and adopted in the US. One of the most popular, yet simple, acts of solidarity was/ is the wearing of safety pins. However, the act of wearing of the pin was never intended to be an end in itself – a mere token gesture of solidity – but a real commitment to combat racism where encountered. As Alison, the woman who initiated the safety pin campaign argued:

> To me the pin is simply meant to be, one, a gesture of silent reassurance – that if something were to kick off, the victim of the attack would know he or she wouldn't have to face it alone. And, two, for those wearing it, it would be a constant reminder of the promise they've made not to stand idly by while racism happens to someone else. (Nagesh, 2016)

Elsewhere, there are some excellent examples of care, solidarity and revolt that bring hope and resolution to those communities who most need it. This may be through identifying with particular groups, for example the Bristol branch of the revolutionary labour union, the IWW, in recognition of the increased vulnerability of migrants post Brexit stated explicit support for people from migrant communities (Bristol IWW, 2016). In the short term, it may also – must also – be seen through co-creating space and empowering communities to come up with their strategies, and community-led activism. Longer term, the question of how to create meaningful dialogue across fragmented communities to heal and repair becomes central.

Conclusion

There is much to be done to eradicate the fires of violence and bigotry that have been fuelled by Brexit and the success of Trump in America. For many Anglo-Americans, who have previously retained a blind faith in (their) mainstream versions of 'democracy' dominated by political and economic elites, its hollow and shallow nature has been decisively exposed. In this way, this unprecedented set of events should be a source of hope: crisis as an opportunity for more people to think, and act, differently. For them: "The need for a new life…becomes apparent" (Kropotkin, 2002). For the heightened levels of fear, despair, grief indeed terror felt by many, has also been emboldened and fashioned new or more purposeful, strident waves of community-orientated activism, steeped in an ethics of care, intersectional solidarity and spirit of revolt. There is no blueprint for how to "best" engage and participate, or how to "heal" communities, nor should such pre-determination be desired. But to engage now by speaking out

against bigotry and hatred in all its forms, all the while working out how best to work to help empower vulnerable communities is the first step; and a vitally important one at that.

Recommended Reading

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http://christopherkeelty.com/easily-white-ally-marginalized-communities/

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[1] Where ontos is the noun of ontology, if ontology is the study of ways of being then ontos is subject of that study. Ontos are the foundations of ways of being and the discourse that evolves therein.
[2] Many thanks to Richard Gale for recent discussions on this.
[3] The name during this period was *Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands* but here I use the more gender-inclusive contemporary name.