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community self-help**

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Chapter Twelve

Crisis, capitalism, and the anarcho-geographies of community self-help

By Richard White and Colin Williams

Introduction

"(T)hree decades of neoliberalism have failed to produce an economy that is not bubble-prone and that is capable of improving the living standards of most people in the world. Articulating an alternative to neoliberalism is therefore an urgent task.

Posey (2011: 299)

"(I)f we are to accept anarchism as the dismantling of unequal power relations and the pursuit of re-organizing the way we live in the world along more egalitarian, voluntary, altruistic, and cooperative lines, then it becomes necessary to appreciate anarchism as a geographical endeavor." Springer (2013: 46)

One hundred years ago the anarchist geographer Peter Kropotkin (1998 [1912], 197) wrote:

"Such is the future - already possible, already realisable; such is the present - already condemned and about to disappear." These words act as both consolation and inspiration when held against our own epoch: a time of intersectional crisis (economic, political, social and environmental) which, as Shannon (2014) argues, may well result in the end of the world as we know it. We contend here that despite capitalism's uneven and variegated

nature (Bruff and Hown, 2012), crises do not exist beyond or outside it: they are - fundamentally - creatures of capitalism. In rejecting the oxymoronic notion of 'sustainable' capitalism the chapter picks up the gauntlet laid down by Springer (2012: 136) when arguing that:

The point of our critiques should not be to temper neoliberalism with concessions and niceties, as capitalism of any sort is doomed to fail. The logics of creative destruction, uneven development and unlimited expansion – which stoke the fires of conflict and contradict the finite limitations of the earth – are capitalism's undoing regardless of the form it takes.

Certainly, there is no possibility of social, economic or environmental justice to be found in the toxic (economic) remedies administered by a neoliberal State. Indeed the violent imposition of austerity, that "policy of cutting the state's budget to promote growth" (Blyth, 2013: 2), as a response to the economic crisis will succeed only in entrenching and exacerbating inequality further. In such austere times, as Stephen Duncombe (1997: 6) observed,

The powers¹ that be do not sustain their legitimacy by convincing people that the current system is The Answer. That fiction would be too difficult to sustain in the face of so much evidence to the contrary. What they must do, and what they have done very effectively, is convince the mass of people that *there is no alternative*.

¹ In this context it is important to ask: who are the powers in question here? For the economic crisis in the western world has also brought into focus the power relationships between state and private capital. As Mason (2015: xi) ruefully notes: "As the Greek experience demonstrates, any government that defies austerity will instantly clash with the global institutions that protect the 1%".

But are we really to believe that there is no alternative to capitalism? Such is the success of the propaganda of capitalism realism that it seems a pointless exercise. Even if we could entertain thoughts about a "post-capitalist" or "post-state" world, so the metanarrative goes, we would be unable to envisage what this world would look like *in practice*. Indeed the crisis therefore affects as much our political and economic *imaginary* as much as it affects the material world 'out there'. Thus, any critique of capitalism - to stand the greatest chance of success - has to operate in these real and imagined spaces. We look to achieve this by provoking a collective re-thinking of "the economic", one that embraces an ontology of difference by recognising the centrality of other "non-capitalist" practices in our own lives.

The central aim of the chapter therefore is to draw critical attention toward the everyday material coping strategies employed at the household and community level. Focusing on the UK in particular through Household Work Practice Survey findings we deeply problematise the rhetoric that we live in an increasingly commodified world: an atomised sea of naked self-interest, where exchange with others is always calculated, mechanistic, abstract, self-interested, profiteering and quantifiable. Recognising the shallow penetration of capitalism in a deeper reading of economic exchange consequently, opens up the future in new and important ways. This is particularly so for those who seek to move purposefully toward a truly "post-capitalist" society. To this end (rooted in the contemporary nature of community self-help) the chapters draw inspiration from anarchism - and anarcho geography - praxis in particular. In doing so we encourage greater spatial emancipation by calling for more

prefigurative and direct forms of self-organisation, expressions of solidarity, mutual aid, and acts of reciprocity to be brought into being.

Anarchism and Anarcho-Geographies of Community Self Help

Anarchist thought and practice is as rich as it is diverse, and its essence escapes convenient definition. Perhaps, as Jun (2012: 116) argues:

Anarchism is better understood as (a) universal condemnation of an opposition to all forms of closed, coercive authority (political, economical, social, etc.) coupled with (b) universal affirmation and promotion of freedom and equality in all spheres of human existence. Slight variations on and close approximations of these general themes abound in the anarchist literature.

In this way, perhaps the on-going, open-ended *nature(s)* of anarchism is, as Dana Williams (2010b: 249) argues, "about changing the unequal power relationships that exist in society." By seeking to solicit a closer understanding of anarchism by denoting its broad ambition, rather than unpacking it literally, has many advantages. Such a reading avoids the problem that Shukaitis, (2009: 170) draws attention to:

There is also a tendency in this dynamic to reduce anarchism to its linguistic instantiation that then further reduces it to only a specific kind of politics. In other words, we cannot reduce anarchism to the mere use of the word "anarchism," but

rather might *highlight and propose social relations based on cooperation, self-determination, and negating hierarchical roles.* (italic added)

In the context of this chapter there are many advantages to think more explicitly of community self-help through an anarcho-geographic lens, particularly given the understanding that anarchist praxis is concerned with "the ways in which people organise themselves in any kind of human society" (Ward, 1982: 4). In this way Ward's reading of anarchism as being potentially rooted within everyday, local, and informal modes of organisation is consistent with the writings of Kropotkin, and the attention he paid toward mutual aid. For Kropotkin, mutual aid was means to greater ends: social justice, and freedom (see Brietbart, 1981). As a social anarchist Kropotkin maintained, "a firm belief in the capacity of people to organise their lives without structures of domination and subordination - to coordinate everything from a family to an economy on a cooperative participatory basis" (Brietbart, 1981: 136). In this context anarchism, rooted in day to day life, has an inescapably *spatial* dimension: a key intersection that has been given greater recognition and visibility in response to the unfolding crises and acts of *archy* (see Ince 2012, 2014; White and Williams 2012; Springer, 2014a,b). In this respect the chapter reinforces Springer's (2013: 1607) reading of *anarchist geographies*:

Which are understood as kaleidoscopic spatialities that allow for multiple, non-hierarchical, and protean connections between autonomous entities, wherein solidarities, bonds, and affinities are voluntarily assembled in opposition to and free from the presence of sovereign violence, predetermined norms, and assigned categories of belonging.

It is to use anarchism both as a means to inspire social (and spatial) transformation and as an end: a free, just and compassionate world. In this respect the chapter also draws on the essence of Élisée Reclus, a man whose reputation as "the anarchist geography par excellence" (Clark and Martin, 2013, 52) was based on a life spent "writing (*graphein*) the history of the struggle to free the earth (*Gaia*) from domination (*archein*)" (ibid).

Rethinking capitalo-centric economy and economic representation

The sociology of everyday communism is a potentially enormous field, but one which, owing to our peculiar ideological blinkers, we have been unable to write because we have been largely unable to see the object. (Graeber, 2011: 208)

Asimakopoulous's (2014: 85) important observation that "Economics is not the exclusive purview of any particular ideology nor synonymous with capitalism" is far removed from how "the economic" is typically approached, defined, governed, narrated, framed and represented. Mainstream readings of "the economic" are, in the words of Gibson-Graham (2006: 41) haunted by a "*capitalocentric*" imaginary; an imaginary which "involves situating capitalism at the centre of development narratives, thus tending to devalue or marginalise possibilities of noncapitalist development." In other words it is a perspective that represents all economic activities in terms of their (subordinate) relationship to capitalism. This effectively promotes a particularly narrow, atomised, competitive, selfish, individualistic reading of exchange, one which views monetary transactions as always market-like and motivated by personal financial gain. This capitalist "realism", perpetuated and promoted

effectively by the insidious argument - that there is no alternative to capitalism (TINA) - serves to reify "the market". This ensures that:

The market has become the model of social relations, exchange value the only value. Western governments have shown themselves weak and indecisive in responding to the environmental crisis, climate change and the threat to sustainable life on the planet, and have refused to address the issues in other than their own - market - terms. (Hall et al. 2013: 9)

Interpreted from a critical economic perspective, the mythologizing of a market economy needs urgently unpacking because it "excludes participation from so much of human existence" (Buck 2010: 68). Happily, this anaemic reading of economic exchange has been convincingly contested by an increasingly diverse array of critical thinkers and disciplines in the last twenty years: and continues to gain further momentum in response to the on-going financial and economic crisis. This has certainly been the case in anarchist readings of the crisis, and responses to it (e.g. Askimakopolous, 2014; Buck, 2009; Ward, 1982; Shannon et al, 2012, Shannon, 2014, White and Williams, 2012, 2014).

A widely accepted reading of the dominant economic trajectory of the western world is that a great transformation has taken place in European society, one that has seen society fundamentally shift toward a formal (capitalist) market economy (see Polanyi 1944 [2001]). Yet, when interpreted from an empirical perspective, it becomes clear such a transformation is not embedded in reality. For example, Time Use Surveys (see ONS, 2006), undertaken over the last forty years, emphasises the significant limits of capitalism within

so-called "advanced capitalist" societies. Focusing on the quantitative findings emerging from the UK, France and the USA for example, Burns et al (2004: 53) observed that: "well over half of people's total work time is spent engaging in unpaid work, and in some advanced economies, there appears to be shift in the balance of work toward the non-market sphere." Appealing to more qualitative and subjective evidence base, we would argue that the very *idea* of living in a commodified society is also highly counter-intuitive.

To appreciate this, think carefully about the different forms of work and organisation that *you* undertake individually or with the help and support of others (for common examples, reflect on those tasks identified in Table 2). Then think critically about the different spaces in which these encounters occur: in particular those embedded within the household and the local community. In the household work practice surveys, detailed below, discussion around communities of self-help was typically focused on two typologies, namely *self-provisioning*: "unpaid household work undertaken by household members for themselves or for other members of the household" (Williams and Windebank, 2002: 232) and *mutual aid* defined as "unpaid work done by household members for members of households other than their own" (ibid). What motivated you to engage in these practices (is it paid, or unpaid work). Could your participation be construed as being consistent with an anarchist reading of organisation: i.e. not coerced, undertaken for non-economic rationales, altruism, reciprocity, and ethics of care and so on. Such an exercise, hopefully if nothing else, draws attention to the multiple ways in which you (co)-organise with others to get work done, and the various rationales for doing so. The complexity and richness of economic life, removed from a capital-centric haunting will be aptly reinforced by the findings drawn from the household work practice surveys shortly.

Recognising the diversity of work practices has necessitated ever more complex typologies being constructed to better capture and represent this. One of the most nuanced examples of has been developed by Williams (2009: 405) through advancing “a total social organisation of labour” approach (see Figure 1).

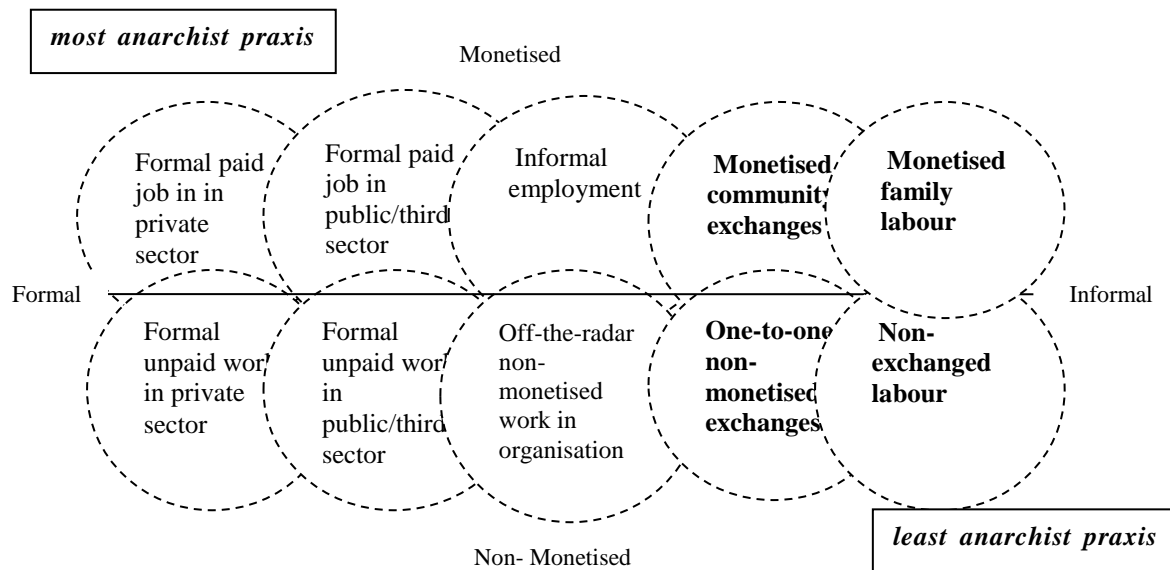


Figure 12.1: Beyond capitalo-centrism: reading anarchism praxis into a Total Social Organisation of Labour framework

This representation is particularly important insofar as it emphasises the blurring of lines between types of economic practices, and encourages recognition of the *spectrum* of differences according to the degree of formalisation (x-axis) and monetisation (y-axis) between these key forms of labour. For Williams (2009, 412) "this conceptual lens therefore allows the limited reach of the market to be identified as well as a fresh perspective on the nature of work cultures and how they vary spatially."

Concerning the words 'most/ least anarchist praxis' in Figure 1, one of the stated ambitions of this chapter is to read anarchism as "a description of human organisation rooted in the experience of everyday life" (Marshall, 2011: 17) and ask *where* is this present, and (conversely) where it is absent across our economic work practices? Importantly, here, we must avoid the temptation to essentialise. We may expect, for example, the household, to be embedded within an anarchist sensibility - respect, mutuality, reciprocity, co-operation etc. However, regrettably this is far from inevitable. Indeed the household has often been a space of coercion, repression, domination (most significantly perhaps through patriarchy, expressed in a highly gendered division of labour). Similarly, it is important to continually interrogate, and not romanticise, what 'the community' represents. As Ince (2011, 23) argues:

We cannot assume a fixed understanding of what community or authenticity 'is' - either spatially or temporally - since they are both defined by those who constitute it every day. Authenticity thus becomes a locus for struggle rather than an a priori quality to be objectively imposed on a certain space, concept of phenomenon.

It is with this understanding in mind that a similar spectrum of difference (more/ less) is applied vis a vis anarchist praxis.

Anarchy in Action: evidencing community self-help in a "capitalist" society.

The Household Work Practice Studies have been particularly influential in revealing key geographies of community self-help practices (in particular the extent, the social

embeddedness, the rationales to participation and the barriers to participation) and how these vary between lower- and higher- income localities. An early version of household work practice survey was developed by Ray Pahl (1984) when investigating the divisions of labour within a local population on the Isle of Sheppey. Similar surveys were conducted during the late 1990s and 2000s to explore the geographies of household work practices, not least an English Localities Survey composed of 611 face-to-face interviews across both higher-and lower income neighbourhoods in rural and urban areas (see Williams and Windebank, 2002; White, 2009; Williams, 2010a).

The household work practice survey examined organisation of labour used to undertake the everyday household tasks listed in Table 1. For each task, the respondent was asked whether the task had been undertaken. If it had been conducted, they were then asked to consider the last time that it had been conducted, who had conducted the work, why that particular individual had been chosen, whether they had been paid in anyway or given a gift in lieu of payment (and why). If formal labour had not been used, again the householder was questioned as to why this was the case. The participant was also asked about the extent to which they (or members of the household) engaged in community self-help with other households, again by asking whether they had conducted these tasks for other households, for whom they had conducted the work, whether they had received any form of payment or not, and why they had conducted this task.

Nature of the task	Individual tasks
Property maintenance	Outdoor painting; indoor decorating (i.e. wallpapering; plastering) replacing a broken window; maintenance of appliances; plumbing; electrical work.

Property improvement	Putting in double glazing; house insulation; building an extension/ renovating; putting in central heating; DIY activities (carpentry/ putting up shelves etc.)
Routine housework	Routine housework (washing dishes/ clothes/ cooking meals) cleaning the windows; doing the shopping, moving heavy furniture.
Gardening activities	Sweeping paths, planting seeds/ mowing lawn
Caring activities:	Childminding; pet/animal care; educational activities (tutoring); giving car lifts; looking after property.
Vehicle maintenance	Repairing and maintenance
Miscellaneous	Borrow tools or equipment; any other jobs

Focusing on the results of the Household Work Practice Survey (see Table 2), noncapitalist forms of work practices and organisation to undertake the tasks investigated were central in coping strategies across both across deprived and affluent urban communities. Contrary to the widely held view that the market was permeating every nook and cranny of everyday life, few of these households outsourced these tasks to the formal market economy indeed the overwhelming majority of these tasks were conducted on a self-provisioning basis. Similarly, nearly three times the number of tasks was carried out on an unpaid basis as mutual aid than by people working in the formal economy. The permeation of the formal market economy, in consequence, is shallow so far as everyday household life is concerned. The overwhelming source of work is self-provisioning and then mutual aid. In terms of the dominant rationales that underpin this form of work, the emphasis is very much on choice (including ease, enjoyment, pleasure) rather than an economic rationale (i.e., to save money). People prefer to use these non-market sources of labour (Burns et al, 2004; Williams and Windebank, 2001). This reality poses a direct challenge to a capitalocentric imagination. Far from penetrating every nook and cranny of our lives, the spectre of capitalism would appear to cast an altogether smaller and less impressive shadow.

% tasks last conducted using:	Deprived urban	Affluent urban	Deprived rural	Affluent rural	All areas
<i>Non-monetised labour</i>					
Non-exchanged labour	76	72	67	63	70
One-to-one non monetised exchanges	4	2	8	7	6
<i>Monetised labour</i>					
Monetised family labour	1	<1	1	1	1
Monetised community exchange	3	1	4	1	3
Informal employment	2	8	<1	4	2
Formal paid job in private sector	12	15	18	22	16
Formal paid job in public and third sector	2	2	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100
χ^2	102.89	29.87	89.76	28.88	-

Table 12.2: Results from the Household Work Practices Survey: labour practices used to undertake 44 domestic tasks across 11 UK localities.

Source: adapted from White and Williams (2012, 1635)ⁱ

Addressing these findings, our argument is that this understanding how work is performed in contemporary 'capitalist' societies offers not only a refutation of the TINA perspective that capitalism is hegemonic, inevitable and immutable, but also contains an important framework of possibilities concerning the future world of work and organisation. It displays that there are many non-capitalist spaces that provide the seeds (or perhaps more accurately given their size they should be termed 'forests') of a "post-capitalist" world. More importantly for the purposes of this chapter, they represent examples of anarchy in action.

Promoting anarcho-geographies of community self-help at a time of austerity

Uncoupled from hegemonic representations of capitalism as the dominant form of work and organisation in society, and recognising the inherent crisis of capitalism, the need to harness anarcho-geographies of community self-help is an urgent one. At the time of writing, the winds of austerity are biting hard and disproportionality across in the UK, with the poorest people and most vulnerable communities bearing the brunt of the cuts to local government services (Hastings, et. al , 2015). Homelessness is rising, poverty is increasing. Given the overlapping and inter-locking nature of the economic, of course this has direct consequences for community self-help strategies: the rolling back of the State and the Market places additional pressures communities to cope; in the home the cuts in services, reduction in employment opportunities and social welfare protection places more emphasis on unpaid domestic labour to fill the gaps. Given the gender division evidence here, this ultimately increases more pressure on women to cope (Karamessini and Rubery, 2013). Exploring the ways in which the geographies of community self-help have changed in response to the rolling back of the State and the Market, would be wonderful, particularly if some 'good practice' (of resistance/ resilience) could be identified, to encourage other communities to adopt similar practices.

Unfortunately, there is a real dearth of evidence, and the household work practice surveys identified here were undertaken prior to the imposition of austerity measures. That said, there is still much to be gained by drawing on the existing evidence base, and repeating the question asked by Ward (1982:13): "What, in a phrase, will it be like to live in a world dominated more and more by household and hidden economies and less by the formal

economy?!" A response to this question demonstrates how a radical re-appraisal of the importance of the 'spaces' focused on here (the local, the household), and a critical gaze over "alternative" ways to promote community self helps are necessary.

Valuing "Noncapitalist" Spaces

Resisting a myopic privileging of capitalist work spaces, and recognising the importance of the work that takes place in the household and the community, is to radically departure from liberal representations of the economic, which marginalise and trivialise the work that is undertaken in these spaces. One only has to think about how the work that takes place through the labour of households is stripped of value and meaning through the oxymoronic use of the term the "unemployed" to describe the individual(s) who undertake work in this space (Leonard, 2001). From a gendered reading of the division of labour, there is also disproportionately more work undertaken by women, than men, which also raises important questions, not least in terms of equity and reciprocity.

Recognising the power and important of these spaces, uncovers an emancipatory and liberatory intent, particularly when placed in the context of post-capitalist visions of work and organisation. As Byrne et al (2001: 16) argue:

Understanding the household as a site of economic activity, one in which people negotiate and change their relations of exploitation and distribution in response to a wide variety of influences, may help to free us from the gloom that descends when a

vision of socialist innovation is consigned to the wholesale transformation of the 'capitalist' totality.

Focusing on the way in which work is undertaken in the household and community also encourages individuals to challenge and resist the propaganda that their lives and identities are defined in relation to a singular capitalist identity. The greater truth is that the "alternative" worlds of post capitalism is found in the ordinary and everyday: be this in a rural or urban communities, in higher or lower income households. This is an important step to inspire individuals to think differently, more creatively, and reject neoliberal assertions about the contemporary nature of "the economic" and its (inevitable) capitalist trajectory. As Ward (1982: 5) observed:

Many years of attempting to be an anarchist propagandist have convinced me that we win over our fellow citizen to anarchist ideas, precisely through drawing upon the common experience of the informal, transients, self-organising networks of relationships that in fact make human community possible, rather than through the rejection of existing society as a whole in favour of some future society where some different kind of humanity will live in perfect harmony.

Embracing an anarchist perspective is therefore *not* tantamount to taking a leap of faith into some 'new' unknown utopian future. Rather it necessitates recognising, celebrating, re-valuing and harnessing a web of existing economic practices – embedded in mutuality, reciprocity, co-operation, self-organisation and non-violence - that are already known and familiar to us. The reality is that there already exists a tremendous range of empowering

economic and political forms of organisation in western society; forms of organisation that in significant ways act as lived alternatives *beyond* the market and state. Indeed the significant limits of the purchase of capitalism enables appreciation that we should acknowledge the continued, ongoing and resilience of an anarcho-libertarian² or anarcho-communist spirit that still burns brightly at the heart of society. As Graeber (2011: 199-200) argues,

Everyday communism... can only be understood [by] examining everyday practice at every level of human life to see where the classic communistic principle of 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs' is actually applied. As an expectation of mutual aid, communism in this sense can be seen as the foundation of all human sociality anywhere; as a principle of co-operation, it emerges spontaneously in times of crisis; as solidarity, it underlines almost all relations of social trust.

Everyday communism then is not a larger regulatory body that co-ordinates all economic activity within a single 'society', but a principle that exists in and to some extent forms the necessary foundation of any society or human relations of any kind.

The resilience and pervasive nature of these spaces that lie beyond the private and public sector is striking, albeit not unexpected. As Scott (2012: xxi) argues,

Forms of informal cooperation, coordination, and action that embody mutuality without hierarchy are the quotidian experiences of most people... Most villages and

² Anarchist communism "is a form of anarchism that advocates the abolition of the State and capitalism in favour of a horizontal network of voluntary associations through which everyone will be free to satisfy his or her needs." (Roux, 2006, np)

neighbourhoods function precisely because of the informal, transient networks of coordination that do not require formal organisation, let alone hierarchy. In other words, the experiences of anarchistic mutuality are ubiquitous.

It is these everyday forms of anarchy in action - particularly those which we are embedded in - that we need to value, recognise and harness to increase resilience in the face of a capitalist imaginary and rampant destruction of "the social".

Critically Interrogating Alterity: alternatives as a means to anarchist, or neoliberal ends?

Any "alternative" strategies that promote anarcho-geographies of community self-help need to be aware of the danger of capitalist appropriation and recuperation. For example, Local Exchange and Trading Schemes and Time Banks have been enthusiastically promoted as a way of encouraging greater levels of community cohesion and informal support (see Seyfang, 2003, 2004; Williams, 2003). Yet in the present age of austerity and food banks, it is these same self-help strategies that are being promoted by the government and other elites (e.g. through 'Big Society' and resilience discourses and policy agendas) for neoliberal ends (see Gregory, 2015). In the early noughties for example, Time Banks were framed as a "radical manifesto for the UK" (Boyle, 2001), yet these have been strongly promoted by the State as a means of complementing/ reinforcing, rather than to challenge neoliberal policies. Thus, for Gregory (2015, 144),

There is a need to realign time bank theory and practice to promote resistance to neoliberalism. This should be pursued not in order to impose an alternative social order, but, rather, to create the social structure and definition of citizenship that allow

people to engage the local community in action and debates about the lives they wish to lead.

Thus, here and elsewhere, there is an ongoing challenge to ensure that these alternatives maintain (or are re-directed) toward their liberatory - and in the spirit of this chapter *anarchist* - potential. The idea of freedom to decide how to engage emphasised by Gregory is certainly consistent with anarcho-geographies of community self-help. Promoting freedom and diversity across space in important strength: recognising the different challenges, and unique opportunities offered by social and spatial configuration in the everyday - rather than anticipating some predetermined revolution to happen - is vital here.

Paul Goodman (2011, 34) argued that: "A free society cannot be the substitution of a "new order" for the old order; it is the extension of spheres of free action until they make up most of the social life." The hope is that there these emancipatory anarchic spheres of free action can transgress all socio-spatial geographies: in the home, the community, the city... and eventually the planet (see deSouza, 2015). In many ways, much depends on embracing open and experimental discussion around what types of organisation are desirable and enactable. As Parker et al (2007, x) note:

Defining organisation as a verb rather than a noun brings to the fore the many decision and choices that have to be made in structuring and ordering human activities. Organisation is contingent upon choices relating to questions of means and ends. What is organisation for? What should its size be? How should activities be

coordinated and controlled, and by whom? How should ownership be distributed?

How should work be divided, regarded? and so on.

Resisting authoritative top-down solutions, or conservative appeals to the known and familiar, is fundamental. Indeed, as a general rule of thumb, and especially so at a time of austerity, the "more original voices that can be heard the better" (Kinna 2012, 9). In this way prefigurative praxis, which encourages individual and local people to recognise and experiment collectively with the power they have in making a difference in their everyday, local interactions (with people, with place) must be supported wherever possible.

Furthermore, what must also be recognised is that accumulating freedom is never just about "the economic". A just and compassionate world, far removed from the forms of exploitation and abuse associated with a capitalism must seek to challenge *all* forms of domination and hierarchy in our everyday societal relations, many of which are not reducible to "the economy" baseline. Certainly greater awareness of the intersectional natures of domination such as patriarchy, racism, heteronormativity, and speciesism, and how these overlap with capitalism, for example, across time and space is needed (see Shannon et al. 2012).

Aiming to de-centre capitalist representation of the economic, by constructing representations of "the economic" from below, which explore the pervasive nature of community self-help and its associated mutual organisation of individual and social ties, is itself congruent with an anarchist sensibility. DeLeon and Love (2010: 160) for example illustrate this well, arguing that "anarchist theory is informed by the autonomy of the individual, the importance of small and localised communities, the move toward more

organic and organisational structures, social justice and the freeing of our desires.” Here, particularly when talking about anarchism in relation to mutual aid and self-help economies, we believe that the autonomy of the individual is actually augmented, rather than constrained, by association with others. As Bakunin, argued: that “[the] liberty of each man [sic.]... does not find another man’s freedom a boundary but a confirmation and vast extension of his own”

Conclusions

Anarchist geographical praxis embodies and underpins many of the instinctive, natural, rational and *spatial* forms of economic, political and social organisation that symbolises everything that can be seen as good and positive in society. As this chapter has evidenced here, we continue to hold close and reconstitute such institutions in our communities. Mutual aid and self-help within our households and communities still runs strong in our contemporary socio-spatial urban fabric, promising a valuable - and valued - means of support and solidarity at a time of a severe crisis of capitalism within the first world. Yet, interpreting these practices merely as means of support and solidarity woefully underplays their revolutionary potential as viable, enactable and desirable alternatives to the twin crisis of the State and Capitalism. It is toward these potential *anarchistic* lines of organisation in which we need to invest serious time and energy in developing further. This is a difficult task:

It's one thing to say that we want a world where people manage our own lives, the environment isn't destroyed, and life (isn't) desolate and alienating - but it's another

to start talking about what such (life) might actually look like. And starting to actually create forms of cooperative practice, to re-envision utopian thinking as lived reality, is another. (Shukaitis, 2010: 303)

For those critical scholars and activists who reject the capitalo-centric representations of the economic, and narrations of “economic crisis”, the pressing question turns to one of how can these alternative spaces of mutuality and support be encouraged and harnessed, and new ones created? Here, as always, the contemporary specificities of people and place should be recognised and valued, in order to empower people and communities to take decisions and action that will make all the difference. If such a commitment could be coupled with embracing a prefigurative politics, and all the spontaneity, difference, diversity, experimentation, that comes with it that would a wonderful vision moving forward.

At every opportunity, taking back the locus of power and responsibility (in imaginary and in practice) from the state and the market, and re-affirming the power of the individual is an absolutely critical step moving forward. That said, it is also necessary and important to engage inclusively and constructive with those who contest such 'anarchist' readings. For example, the question of the role of the State is one which is keenly contested, particularly among other radical (Marxist) traditions, with some of the more robust challenges being found in the work of Cumbers (2012, 2015) in particular. Ultimately, if this chapter has encouraged greater critical reflection on the anarchist geographies that animate "the economic", and has stimulated deeper thought and consideration about how to begin to understand the exciting possibilities that exist in the here and now as a means of both

narrating, and confronting, our crisis and the limits of capitalism, then it will have served an important and timely purpose.

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ⁱ Note: $\chi^2 > 12.838$ in all cases, leading to a rejection of the H_0 within a 99.5 % confidence interval that there are no spatial variations in the sources of labour used to complete the 44 household services.