

# Anarchism! What Geography Still Ought To Be

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**Abstract:** This article is a manifesto for 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. In its rejection of such multivariate apparatuses of domination, this article is a proverbial call to non-violent arms for those geographers and non-geographers alike who seek to put an end to the seemingly endless series of tragedies, misfortunes, and catastrophes that characterize the miasma and malevolence of the current neoliberal moment. But this is not simply a demand for the end of neoliberalism and its replacement with a more moderate and humane version of capitalism, nor does it merely insist upon a more egalitarian version of the state. It is instead the resurrection of a prosecution within geography that dates back to the discipline's earliest days: anarchism!

**Keywords:** anarchism, colonialism, Marxism, neoliberalism, postanarchism, radical geography

## Introduction

We, “frightful Anarchists” as we are, know only one way of establishing peace and goodwill among women and men—the suppression of privilege and the recognition of right . . . It pleases us not to live if the enjoyments of life are to be for us alone; we protest against our good fortune if we may not share it with others; it is sweeter for us to wander with the wretched and the outcasts than to sit, crowned with roses, at the banquets of the rich. We are weary of these inequalities which make us the enemies of each other; we would put an end to the furies which are ever bringing people into hostile collision, and all of which arise from the bondage of the weak to the strong under the form of slavery, serfage and service. After so much hatred we long to love each other, and for this reason are we enemies of private property and despisers of the law (Elisée Reclus 1884:641).

If you wish, like us, that the entire liberty of the individual and, consequently, his [or her] life be respected, you are necessarily brought to repudiate the government of man by man [sic], whatever shape it assumes; you are forced to accept the principles of Anarchy that you have spurned so long. You must then search with us the forms of society that can best realize that ideal and put an end to all the violence that rouses your indignation (Peter Kropotkin 2005 [1898]:144).

Anarchism is a maligned political philosophy; of this there can be no doubt. Typically anarchism is portrayed as a chaotic expression of violence perpetrated against the

supposedly peaceable “order” of the state. Yet such depictions misrepresent the core of anarchist thought, which is properly understood as the rejection of all forms of domination, exploitation, and “archy” (systems of rule), hence the word “an-archy” (against systems of rule). Anarchism is a theory and practice that seeks to produce a society wherein individuals may freely co-operate together as equals in every respect, not before a law or sovereign guarantee—which enter new forms of authority, imposed criteria of belonging, and rigid territorial bindings—but before themselves in solidarity and mutual respect. Consequently, anarchism opposes all systems of rule or forms of archy (ie hierarchy, patriarchy, monarchy, oligarchy, anthroparchy etc) and is instead premised upon co-operative and egalitarian forms of social, political, and economic organization, where ever-evolving and autonomous spatialities may flourish. Although it has often been said that there are as many anarchisms as there are anarchists, my contention is that anarchism should embrace an ethic of non-violence precisely because violence is recognized as both an act and process of domination.

Violence has formed the basis of many historical anarchist movements and it would be disingenuous to simply wish away this constituent as somehow “non-anarchist”. Yet before anarchists like Paul Brousse, Johann Most, Errico Malatesta, and Alexander Berkman popularized revolutionary violence and propaganda of the deed, earlier anarchists (or “proto-anarchists”) like William Godwin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Henry David Thoreau, and Leo Tolstoy rejected violence as a justifiable means to overthrow the tyranny of the state. From its outset, anarchism accordingly sympathized with non-violence, which was reflected in *The Peaceful Revolutionist*, a weekly paper edited by Josiah Warren in 1833, and the first anarchist periodical ever produced (Baillie 1906). That anarchism has since become derided as a *direct* synonym for violence—rather than acknowledged as an ideology that has at times engaged both violence *and* non-violence—speaks to the discursive buttressing of the status quo against alternative socio-spatial and political economic formations, and to the limited geopolitical imagination or ideological indoctrination of those who either cannot or simply refuse to conceive of a world without states. Yet the originary critique of anarchism is that the state is tantamount to violence, or as Godwin (1976 [1793]:380) put it, “Above all we should not forget, that government is an evil, an usurpation upon the private judgment and individual conscience of [hu]mankind.” Given the postcolonial purview that contemporary human geography now espouses, radical geographers would do well to think more critically about how acceptance of the state actually recapitulates the violence of colonial modes of thought and practice. In reinvigorating the potential of anarchist geographies and in realizing the critical praxis anarchism demands, my feeling is that non-violence should be understood as an ideal for anarchists to live into. This is the story of anarcho-feminist Emma Goldman (1996 [1923]:253), who in her younger years flirted with violence, but eventually came to reject it:

The one thing I am convinced of as I have never been in my life is that the gun decides nothing at all. Even if it accomplishes what it sets out to do—which it rarely does—it brings so many evils in its wake as to defeat its original aim.

Thus if anarchism is positioned against the state, and in particular the monopolization, institutionalization, and codification of violence that such a spatial organization represents, then it should follow that anarchism offers an alternative geographical imagination that refuses violent means.

I begin this paper by exploring how geographers have taken up anarchist thought. Specifically I argue that although anarchism factored heavily into the radicalization of human geography in the 1970s, this early promise was quickly eclipsed by Marxism, which has (along with feminism) since become a cornerstone of contemporary radical geography. The following section problematizes the utilitarianism of Marxian thought, which is argued to reiterate the colonial precepts Marxism ostensibly seeks to disrupt. Anarchism is presented as a preferable alternative insofar as it disavows nationalism and recognizes that there is no fundamental difference between colonization and state-making other than the scale upon which these parallel projects operate, meaning that any substantively “post-colonial” positionality must also be “post-statist” or anarchic. Next I seek to provide a partial answer to the question of alternatives to the state and how new forms of voluntary human organization might be enabled to blossom. Rather than advancing a revolutionary imperative, I encourage an embrace of the immediacy of the *here* and *now* as the most emancipatory spatio-temporal dimension, precisely because it is the location and moment in which we actually live our lives. I also take neoliberalism’s illusion of state dissolution head on at this stage, and remind readers that “small government” is still government, so while the rationalities, strategies, technologies, and techniques of neoliberal governance are new, the disciplinary logic of the state remains unchanged. In the conclusion I offer some thoughts on the future of radical geography and in particular where I think anarchist geographies can provoke a more liberationist framework that potentially breaks from both the discursive formations of neoliberalism and the limitations of Marxism vis-à-vis contemporary oppositional struggles.

This paper is accordingly to be read as a manifesto for 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. In its rejection of such multivariate apparatuses of domination, this article is a proverbial call to non-violent arms for those geographers and non-geographers alike who seek to put an end to the seemingly endless series of tragedies, misfortunes, and catastrophes that characterize the miasma and malevolence of the current neoliberal moment. But this is not simply a demand for the end of neoliberalism and its replacement with a more moderate and humane version of capitalism, nor does it merely insist upon a more egalitarian version of the state. It is instead a condemnation of capitalism and the state in whatever guise they might adopt; an indictment of all manner of exploitation, manipulation, and domination of humanity; a disavowal of the privations of the majority and the privileges of the minority that have hitherto and by common consent been called “order”; and the resurrection of a prosecution within geography that dates back to

the discipline's earliest days. This is nothing more and nothing less than a renewed call for anarchism.

## For Anarchist Geographies

Many critical scholars probably take some aspects of anarchist thought for granted, but there has been very little development of the tradition within geography in the last 100 years... Yet as many people have questioned the basis of so-called "grand theory" and any claims to universal explanatory ideas, we might expect anarchism to come into its own (Alison Blunt and Jane Wills 2000:38).

In light of Kropotkin's and Reclus's foundational contributions to the discipline of geography (Breitbart 1981; Dunbar 1978; Horner 1978), and anarchism's important role in the emergence of a more radical geographical praxis (Breitbart 1978; Peet 1978), it is surprising that this vibrant intellectual tradition has, until recently, been largely ignored by geographers since the late 1970s. Writing at the height of geography's infatuation with colonialism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and in stark contrast to contemporaries like David Livingstone, Halford Mackinder, and Friedrich Ratzel, who spent their days advancing an imperialist vision for the discipline (Godlewska and Smith 1994; Kearns 2009), Kropotkin and Reclus each possessed a resolute anti-authoritarian imagination. Kropotkin's theory of the voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources for common benefit, or "mutual aid", was a direct challenge to the social Darwinism found in the writings of Mackinder, Ratzel, and in particular, biologist Thomas Henry Huxley's (1888) essay "The struggle for existence" (Kinna 1992). "They came to conceive of the animal world as a world of perpetual struggle among half-starved individuals, thirsting for one another's blood", Kropotkin (2008 [1902]:10–11) writes in his magnum opus, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*:

They made modern literature resound with the war cry of woe to the vanquished, as if it were the last word of modern biology. They raised the "pitiless" struggle for personal advantages to the height of a biological principle which [hu]man[s] must submit to as well, under the menace of otherwise succumbing in a world based upon mutual extermination.

In arguing that the reality of mutual aid among non-human animals undermined the naturalistic arguments for capitalism, war, and imperialism that dominated geographical thought at the time, like the social Darwinists, but in precisely the opposite way, Kropotkin sought to find in nature the social form he wanted to legitimate in society (Kearns 2004). Geography was accordingly to be conceived not as a program for imperial hubris, but as a means of dissipating prejudice and realizing co-operation between communities (Kropotkin 1978 [1885]).

Like his friend and ally Kropotkin, the anarchist vision of Reclus was similarly rooted in geography. Reclus advanced an integral approach wherein every phenomenon, including humanity, was conceived as inseparable from other living beings and geographical features of the land itself (Clark 1997). Earth was accordingly interpreted as a unified whole, where any coherent account of the world required

a simultaneous recognition of all the multiple interconnecting factors. For Reclus (1905–1908:114–115), “it is only through an act of pure abstraction that one can contrive to present a particular aspect of the environment as if it had a distinct existence, and strive to isolate it from all the others, in order to study its essential influence” (quoted in Clark and Martin 2004:5). Although the focus here was the “natural” system, the holism of Reclus’s work actually demanded that social phenomena be considered as imbued within and co-constitutive of the natural “universal geography” he envisioned (see Reclus 1876–1894). For Reclus, the preceding quote had as much relevance to the prevailing ideas of human organization, whether Marxian or neoclassical, as it did to nature, which hints at the limitations of these two economic theories. Yet, while Reclus’s ideas of integrality inspired the social ecology of Bookchin (1990) and other strands of the radical environmentalist movement, the political implications of his work with respect to human organization have been essentially overlooked by geographers for over a century. His continuing political significance, Clark and Martin (2004) argue, comes in large part from his egalitarian vision of a “globalization from below” based on the integrality he revealed and promoted, which offers a theoretical alternative to the dominant corporate and statist versions of globalization. In contrast to our present moment of a world divided into “haves” and “have nots” where the geography of access to capital largely adheres to the peaks and valleys of the Westphalian system, Reclus (1876–1894, quoted in Clark and Martin 2004) envisioned a free and stateless world with “its center everywhere, its periphery nowhere”.

While contemporary human geography has appropriately moved on from appeals to science as the *sine qua non* of “truth”, retaining Reclus’s and Kropotkin’s skepticism for and challenges to the dominant ideologies of the day has much to offer contemporary geographical scholarship and its largely unreflexive acceptance of the civilizational, legal, and capitalist discourses that converge around the state. The perpetuation of the idea that human spatiality necessitates the formation of states is writ large in a discipline that has derided the “territorial trap” on the one hand (see Agnew 1994; Brenner 1999), yet on the other hand, has confoundingly refused to take the state-centricity critique in the direction of state dissolution. Contemporary geographers have accordingly failed to engage the emancipatory potential of anarchist praxis, largely overlooking contributions from Bey (2003), Bookchin (1990), and Clastres (2007 [1989]) on the importance of alternative configurations *to* the state, favoring instead discussions surrounding alternative configurations *of* the state, particularly by way of Marxian theory. In its present form, such concern focuses on explaining how neoliberalizing processes facilitate state transformation and endurance (see Agnew 2009; Harvey 2005; Peck 2001), offering a counterpoint to popular commentaries that globalization is eroding the state and producing a borderless world that signifies the end of both history and geography (see Fukuyama 1992; O’Brien 1992). In other words, while neoclassical-cum-neoliberal ideas have been vigorously debated and discredited by geographers working from broadly Marxian perspectives, contemporary geography has not seen anarchist critiques of Marxism develop with the same theoretical and empirical force of its radical rival, an endeavor long overdue.

Although still very much underrepresented in the geographical literature, recent contributions from Chatterton (2006), Halfacree (1999), Heynen (2010), Ince (2010), and Springer (2011) offer welcome interventions that point towards the continuing promise of anarchist ideas in both theory and practice. As welcome as these engagements are, there is still a great deal of theoretical terrain yet to be explored by geographers. In particular, I am thinking of the profound contributions being made by scholars working outside of geography, such as Call (2003), May (1994), Newman (2010), and Rousselle and Evren (2011) on the possibilities and potential of postanarchism. While poststructuralist ideas are now commonplace in the discipline, human geographers have—with few exceptions (see Brown 2007; Springer forthcoming)—failed to explore the potential of postanarchist thought.<sup>1</sup> Postanarchism is not a movement beyond anarchism, but a renewal of anarchist ideas through the infusion of poststructuralist theory, thus allowing us to retain an emancipatory spirit, while abandoning appeals to science and the essentializing epistemologies and ontologies that characterize “classical” anarchist thought. It is incumbent upon radical geographers to begin examining the contemporary importance of anarchist action and postanarchist theories in resisting capitalism, rather than simply recapitulating those state-centric, road to nowhere arguments that call for more equitable distributions of power *within* the state. The state after all, in the classic anarchist critique, is a hierarchical institution premised on deference to authority. As ostensibly “non-anarchist” thinkers like Agamben (1998) and Benjamin (1986 [1921]) have recognized, it is precisely because of the state’s juridico-sovereign character that it can never actually be egalitarian. And so geographers should be keen to ask: where do supposedly liberationist arguments that continue to embrace the state leave us except with the structures of hierarchy and domination firmly in place?

While not the sole concern of anarchists, the state nonetheless forms the primary locus of anarchist thought. Although Marxists have increasingly questioned the logic of state power, it is beyond the scope of this paper to develop a taxonomy that situates precisely where the multiple variants of Marxian thought sit with respect to the state. At the risk of oversimplifying the complexity of the intersections between the two principle alternatives of socialist thought, it is nonetheless fair to say that the question of the state is the originary differentiation between Marxism and anarchism. Indeed, the main division between anarchism and Marxism emerged from differences in opinion over the degree of autonomy afforded to the workers in the post-revolutionary conjuncture and the closely related question of the monopoly of violence. Anarchists rejected any such monopoly on the premise that violence is first and foremost the primary dimension of state power and accordingly any state, whether controlled by the bourgeoisie or captured by the workers, will inevitably come to function as an instrument of class domination. In contrast, Marxists believed that because a minority class rules most societies prior to socialism, the achievement of a classless society requires the previously disadvantaged class to seize the state and acquire a monopoly over violence. Yet the desire to overturn the state and create a liberated socialist system via despotic power is a contradiction that anarchists disavowed. The related Marxian notion of withering away the state was similarly seen as a contradiction. As Bakunin (1953 [1873]:288) observed:

If their State is going to be a genuine people's State, why should it then dissolve itself? . . . [Marxists] say that this State yoke—the dictatorship—is a necessary transitional means in order to attain the emancipation of the people: Anarchism or freedom, is the goal, the State or dictatorship is the means. Thus, to free the working masses, it is first necessary to enslave them.

Such noticeable inconsistency appalled anarchists, and during the First International, this discrepancy became the fundamental divide between socialists. Whereas Marxism traditionally represented the statist edge of the socialist political spectrum, or at the very least accepted the state in utilitarian terms as a means to an end through a provisional dictatorship of the proletariat, anarchism has always been the domain of libertarian socialism, rejecting the idea that a realigned state will ever wither and lead to an emancipated condition.

## **Colonialism is Dead, Long Live Colonialism?**

There is no greater fallacy than the belief that aims and purposes are one thing, while methods and tactics are another. . . . The means employed become, through individual habit and social practice, part and parcel of the final purpose; they influence it, modify it, and presently the aims and means become identical (Emma Goldman 2003 [1923]: 260–261).

I am not enthusiastic about Marx's own enthusiasm for capitalism. Marx and the classical political economists saw capitalism through a similar celebratory lens; only Marx tempered his view by suggesting that it was a necessary phase to pass through on the way to communism, and not a glorious end-state as with the liberal project of Adam Smith. Writing a century later, Bill Warren—arguably one of the most controversial writers within the Marxist tradition—picked up on this tenor of Marx's work. Warren (1980:136) argued that "Imperialism was the means through which the techniques, culture and institutions that had evolved in Western Europe over several centuries—the culture of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution—sowed their revolutionary seeds in the rest of the world." He correctly interpreted the integral relationship between capitalism and imperialism, but painted imperialism as a "necessary evil" on the path towards some greater good. The banality of Warren's depiction of imperialism ensured that his detractors were many, but he was really revisiting the Marxism expressed in "*The Communist Manifesto*" (Marx and Engels 2002 [1848]), where although Marx condemned the violence of primitive accumulation, he nonetheless retained a "view of this violent expropriation as necessary for the furthering of human possibilities" (Glassman 2006:610). In spite of finding capitalism morally repugnant, when compared with the feudal mode of production that preceded it, Marx (1976 [1867]) recognized capitalism as having a number of virtues, acknowledging it as amazingly productive, sparking human creativity, igniting awesome technological change, and ushering in potentially democratic forms of government. It is this optimistic side of Marx that Warren (1980) followed in arguing that, at an early stage, capitalism's exploration and inhabitation of new territories was carried out through the guise of colonialism and imperialism, and that while

this form of capitalism had drawbacks for those territories that were occupied, it had important benefits as well. Education levels were said to have improved, life expectancy was thought to have increased, and the form of political control was considered more democratic than that which existed before colonialism.

If all of this sounds familiar, it is essentially the same set of discursive principles that presently guide neoliberalization, which Harvey (2003) has appropriately recognized as a “new imperialism”. The refrain is that people have been made better off, and although imperfect in its execution—which is largely blamed on the continuing “interference” of the state in markets—eventually the “trickle down effect” will bear fruit and the promised utopia will materialize. Rather than wait for the market to sort things out on its own schedule, the difference with Marx is that he wanted to quicken the pace at which an egalitarian social contract is arrived upon through revolution. To be clear, I am not suggesting ideological consonance between Marxism and neoliberalism here, but instead seek to illuminate how both rest upon the notion that the state can be used as a means to achieve a “liberated” end. In contrast, an anarchist position rejects the interlocking violence of the state, imperialism, and capitalism outright, and is unimpressed with the utilitarian strain of Marxian thought. The means of capitalism and its violences do not justify the eventual end-state of communism, nor does this end justify such means. This particular resonance of Marxist thought resembles neoliberalism, where although the utopian end-state is conceptualized differently, the penultimate means to achieving the “final product” is virtually the same. While postMarxists appropriately foreground gender, sex, ethnicity, race, and other ostensibly “non-capitalist” categories as equally important lines of differentiation that mark the hierarchies, inequalities, and violences of our world under neoliberalism (Wright 2006), anarchism goes further by rejecting the substantive violence that is imbricated within and implicitly accepted by Marx’s linear approach to history based on “stages of development”. Unease with the utilitarianism and essentialism of Marxian thought can similarly be regarded as the genesis of poststructuralism (Peters 2001), which instead focuses on the complexity and heterogeneity of our present condition, and refuses totalizing theories through a rejection of absolute “truths”.

Although poststructuralist critique has quickly become one of the most vibrant philosophical variants within the discipline, and Foucault, Deleuze, and Lacan have all cultivated critiques within the fertile ground of anti-state thinking (May 1994; Newman 2001), contemporary human geography has been slow to engage ideas that call for Leviathan’s end. I can only speculate on the reasons for this lacuna, but it seems that the predominance of Marxist ideas have some role to play. Traditional Marxism, and its espousal of statist ideology, is well traversed in the geographical literature, where the influence of Harvey (1973, 1982, 2005, 2009) looms large. Although occasionally lamented by political geographers critical of the limited geopolitical vision state-centricity affords (see Johnston 2001; Taylor 1996), statist forms of organization have nonetheless taken on a certain platitude within the discipline. The state is typically either implicitly accepted or not subjected to the type of examination that penetrates its fundamental precepts, even if feminist geographers have helped to redefine the parameters upon which the state is actually conceived (see England 2003; Gibson-Graham 1996; Sharp 2007). Nonetheless, a

significant swath of contemporary human geography has raised the question of the state only insofar as to determine how neoliberalism has reconfigured its orientation, with Marxist geographers calling for renewed and re-imagined versions of social welfare (Harvey 2005; Peck 2001), and poststructuralist geographers arguing that governmentality renders the state nearly invisible through self-regulating, auto-correcting subjects (Barry, Osborne and Rose 1996; Larner 2000). The potentiality of the latter to reveal the ongoing force of statist logics and the violence this engenders through altered disciplinary rationalities and mutated techniques of biopolitical control is scarcely realized, to say nothing of poststructuralism's coincidence with anarchist thought (see Newman 2010).

That radical geography retains a decidedly statist focus perhaps also betrays the colonial origins of the discipline itself and a hesitation in breaking from old disciplining habits. Yet the contemporary nation-state, following Anderson (1991) and Billig (1995), must be understood as a smaller-scale replica of the colonial state. Although differing in their diffusion and distribution across space, both national and colonial state power express the same violent principles of a privileged few wielding influence over others, and imposing a singular identity upon antecedent ways of imagining belonging. Marx was not oblivious to this critique, yet here again he advanced a utilitarian ideal. As capitalism spread around the globe, it gave rise to powerful resistance movements by oppressed workers and peasants—led by vanguards—which Marx believed would eventually engender the transcendence of capitalism. In particular instances Marx supported nationalist struggles, viewing nationalism as another “stage in development” towards a future workers’ internationalism (Lewis 2000). Yet from an anarchist perspective it is hard to see the emancipatory end when the means are shot through with violence. What “national liberation” actually represents is the trading of one set of elites for another, and thus one form of colonialism for another. While the territorial expression has been scaled down, the underlying logic remains unchanged. Just as the colonial state sought and was frequently able to impose a monopoly on violence, the struggle to create the nation-state is likewise a struggle for the monopoly of violence (Harris 2004). What is created in both instances—a colonial or national state—is itself a means of violence. In recognizing this congruency—notwithstanding Hart’s (2008:680) so-called “properly post-colonial frame of understanding” that continues to privilege the state—to be “post-colonial” in any meaningful sense is to also be “post-statist” or anarchic, wherein the hierarchies, order, authority, and violence upon which these parallel state projects have been built are rejected outright. Moreover, internationalism by definition can never actually transcend the state; instead it continues to presuppose and assume nations. By calling for trans-geographical co-operation between nations, Marx’s internationalism fails to move beyond the notion of the nation-state as the foundational unit of belonging.

Why then has contemporary radical geography not developed an “anti-colonial imagination” that rises to the post-statist challenge that Anderson (2005) argues such a vision actually demands? Reclus and Kropotkin demonstrated long ago that geography lends itself well to emancipatory ideas, and “it was no accident that two of the major anarchists of the late Nineteenth Century were also geographers” (Ward 2010:209). There exists an extraordinary latent potential within

contemporary radical geography to become even more radical in its critiques, and thus more liberationist in its focus by embracing an anarchist ethos. Anarchism is able to recognize capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, neoliberalism, militarism, nationalism, classism, racism, ethnocentrism, Orientalism, sexism, genderism, ageism, ableism, speciesism, carnism, homophobia, transphobia, sovereignty *and* the state as interlocking systems of domination. The mutually reinforcing composition of these various dimensions of “archy” consequently means that to uncritically exempt one from interrogation, is to perpetuate this omniscidal conglomeration as a whole. Unlike the circumscriptions of Marxian geography, the promise of anarchist geographies rests precisely in their ability to think integrally and therein refuse to assign priority to any one of the multiple dominating apparatuses, as all are irreducible to one another (Brown 1996). This means that no one struggle can wait on any other. It’s all or nothing, and the a priori privilege of the workers, the vanguards, or any other class over others is to be rejected on the basis of its incipient hierarchy.

## Imagining Alternatives

There are, in truth, no worse counter-revolutionaries than revolutionaries; because there are no worse citizens than the envious (Anselme Bellegarrigue 1848:np).

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These are not dreams for a distant future, nor a stage to be reached when other stages are gone through, but processes of life about us everywhere which we may either advance or hold back (Roger Baldwin 2005:114).

The question of alternatives to the state is foremost in the minds of those skeptical of anarchism. In this vein Harvey (2009:200) asks, “How will the reifications of this anarchist ideal actually work on the ground in absolute space and time?” Although anarchists have theorized multiple possibilities ranging from collectivist to individualist, syndicalist to mutualist, and voluntaryist to communist, I advocate a non-doctrinaire, postanarchist approach and accordingly my response is to begin by refusing to offer a prescriptive overview of what forms of social organization I think should be developed. The answer to this question is not to be determined by a single individual, but rather collectively through continuous dialogue and ongoing adaptive innovation. In this sense, Harvey’s (2009) critique of anarchism is problematic on two counts. First, when have space and time ever been “absolute”, other than in the reductionist lens of positivism? This assessment belies Harvey’s own recognition for the dialectical influence of space and time, expressed as “space–time”. Second, he attempts to apply the tenets of Marxian thought and its “stage-based” thinking to a philosophical position that eschews such predetermined linearity. Harvey (2009) conceptualizes place-making as an end-state politics, which incorrectly positions anarchism as an ostensibly completable *project*—the shared ideal of both Marxism and neoliberalism—rather than appreciating it as a living, breathing, and forever protean *process* (Springer 2011). Some may view my restrained position as a copout, but I want to remind readers that any attempt to prescribe a fixed model in isolation from the larger social body recapitulates both the neoliberal project and an authoritarian disposition, as each argues in favor of

one way of doing things. It also reinforces the arrogance/ignorance of the so-called "expert", by presuming to know what is best, without appreciating one's limitations (Mitchell 2002). Even Haraway, as brilliant a thinker as she is, once exposed her own limitations in revealing, "I have almost lost the imagination of what a world that isn't capitalist could look like. And that scares me" (Harvey and Haraway 1995:519). The same nascent fear should be similarly evoked when one critically reflects upon the state and its seemingly all-consuming pervasiveness. We treat this particular form of hierarchical organization and territorialized dominance as though it is unavoidable, and in doing so we actively forget that the bulk of the time that humans have existed on planet Earth has been characterized by non-statist organization. The state is thus no more inevitable than it is needed.

Neoliberalism is particularly virulent inasmuch as it contributes to a new element of our collective forgetting by reconfiguring the state in such a way that facilitates a failure to notice its ongoing deleterious effects (Springer 2010a). The discourse behind this illusion of dissolution attempts to convince us that neoliberalism represents our liberation as individuals, emancipating us from the chains of what it calls "big government". Yet the literature has amply demonstrated that the state continues to matter to neoliberal modalities (see England and Ward 2007; Peck 2001). Likewise, the monopoly of violence the state claims for itself remains just as forceful and oppressive under the disciplinary logic of a neoliberal state as it does under any other state configuration—"feel good" moments of ostensible democracy (read "electoral authoritarianism") notwithstanding (Springer 2011). What is actually lost through neoliberalism's supposed "streamlining" of the state is most obviously the shared social provisions previously afforded to citizens. This "roll-back" results in the collapse of social trust, actively anticipating the Hobbesian-cum-Darwinian myth of all against all where only the strong survive. People are encouraged not to look to each other for support in their everyday transactions or even when the going gets tough, but to simply stop being "lazy" and get to work. Neoliberal discourse positions the system itself as being beyond reproach, so any existent "anomalies", such as impoverishment or unemployment, are dismissed as distinctive personal failures. Those who do not "succeed" at this perverse game are easily resolved by the punitive neoliberal state through their criminalization. Incarceration is seen as a more viable solution than addressing the mounting inequalities and ongoing poverty of the majority (Peck 2003). This disciplinary stratagem is particularly debilitating because for popular power to be realized, the conditions for social co-operation must be present, meaning quite simply that people have to trust each other.

Neoliberalism, in particular, and capitalism more generally, work to destroy trust by making us compete with one another and profit from each other's vulnerability. Similarly, the state destroys trust by warning us that *homo homini lupus* will become the rule in the absence of sovereign power (Cohn 2010). To re-establish trust, it would seem that smashing capitalism alone is not enough. In convening a post-neoliberal reality—that is, the realization of a context that completely breaks from the current zeitgeist—sovereignty and the state itself must also be dismantled. Doing so, at first glance, appears to raise the problematic of getting from *here* to *there* and from *now* to *then*. Although positioning the idea of revolution as

having fallen from view, Smith (2010) instead exemplifies the ongoing infatuation on the Left by suggesting that the recent financial crisis should be the basis upon which “the revolutionary imperative” is renewed. But wanting a global revolution to emerge from the recent economic crisis affords an instrumental role to a single global economic system, which oddly resurrects the neoliberalism-as-monolithism argument (see Springer 2010b for a critique). This criticism hints at Smith’s implicit embrace of the utilitarian role Marx afforded capitalism/colonialism, a position that anarchists find objectionable. While pitying the victims of colonialism, Marx consoled himself with the thought that its far-reaching abuses would only hasten the day when the entire world would be consumed by a single crisis, thus inaugurating the revolutionary swell he so desired. This is an overly passive approach, because if revolution is to result from a capitalist crisis, then this implies a politics of waiting for the day when “all that is solid melts into air” (Marx and Engels 2002 [1848]:223).

The question of lost trust becomes particularly acute at the moment of “melting”, because as Proudhon (2005 [1864]:108) warned, there is “danger in waiting until moments of crisis, when passions become unduly inflamed by widespread distress”. In the time that has passed since the crisis first hit in late 2008, sadly it has become increasingly obvious just how possible it is—in the absence of trust—for people to accept racist, nationalist, and fundamentalist alternatives. Rather than biding our time in waiting for the levee to break, geographers could instead anarchically embrace the *here* and *now* as the space–time within which our lives are actually lived (see Vaneigem 2001 [1983]). Acknowledging the enabling power of this immediacy is emancipatory in itself as it awakens us to the possibility that we can instantaneously refuse participating in the consumerist patterns, nationalist practices, and hierarchical positionings that confer legitimacy on the existing order and instead engage a “do it yourself” culture centered on direct action, non-commodification, and mutual aid (Graeber 2009; Halfacree 2004; Trapeze Collective 2007). In aligning to Gibson-Graham’s (2008) contention that “other worlds” are possible, and to Koopman’s (2011) concern for the non-violent counter-hegemonic struggle of what she calls “alter-geopolitics”, the power of *here* and *now* further allows us the freedom to imagine and begin establishing the alternative free institutions and voluntary associations that will smooth the transition towards a truly post-colonial/post-neoliberal future. Yet the significance of imagining alternatives to the current order is not to establish a fixed program for all time, but is instead to provide a point of alterity or exteriority as a way of questioning the limits of this order (Newman 2010). It is only in the precise space and moment of refusal, which is the *here* and *now*, that individuals are self-empowered to chart their own paths, free from the coercive guidance of a sovereign authority or the cajoling influence of a patronizing academic. Where geographers are actually well positioned to contribute, as feminists thinkers have demonstrated (see Lawson 2009; Nolin 2010), is towards the issue of building trust, by shattering prejudices and intervening with creative new energies rooted in the nurturing capacity of emotion and everyday life as the actual terrains of human interaction. By engaging the “affective turn” (Thien 2005) in understanding emotional connectivity and the politics of affinity as the fundamental basis upon which any lasting transformation might take place, it is to such intimacy and immediacy that the possibilities of anarchist geographies could be productively

dedicated. Rather than prioritizing the particularisms of class as is the Marxian imperative, or surrendering to the politics of racism as neoliberalism would have us do (Goldberg 2009), anarchism demands that any process of emancipation must be infused with non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, and non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments (Day 2005).

Ultimately, what anarchism has to offer is precisely the opposite of neoliberalism. While rescinding the inherent elitism and authoritarianism of the state, anarchism wants to align the collective goods produced through human co-operation according to need, a process that does not require an administrative framework, but instead pivots around an ethics of reciprocity. An anarchist perspective further recognizes that the latent new forms of organization that might evolve beyond the territorial logic of the state must exist in a continual process of reflexivity and revision by those practicing them so as to quell any and all potential hierarchies before they can be allowed to germinate. Anarchist geographies of co-operation are to be born from outside the existing *order*, from sites that the state has failed to enclose, and from the infinite possibilities that statist logics ignore, repel, plunder, and deny. As Kropotkin (1887:153) eloquently explained:

While all agree that harmony is always desirable, there is no such unanimity about order, and still less about the "order" which is supposed to reign on our modern societies; so that we have no objection whatever to the use of the word "anarchy" as a negation of what has been often described as order.

Anarchist geographies are those potential forces that perpetually haunt the state with the fact that it is merely one socio-spatial possibility among an unlimited number of others. Yet alternatives to the state do not arise from the order that they refuse, even if this order is contradictory and oppressive, but from the anarchic profusion of forces that are alien to this order and from those very possibilities that this order seeks to dominate and distort (Colson 2001). Radical geographers accordingly have much to learn from developing deeper connections with those peoples—like the indigenous tribes of Zomia—who have continually outwitted the state and mastered what Scott (2009) calls "the art of not being governed". What is at stake here is neither the end of the state, nor the realization of an end-state politics, but an "infinitely demanding" struggle of perpetual evasion, contestation, and solidarity (Critchley 2007). We are not required to view the state as the exclusive site of socio-political change or as the lone focus of a revolutionary paradigm, as have all too often been the historical precedents (Holloway 2002). In the spirit of the quotes that open this paper, we can instead focus our anger and sadness inwards, where sustained indignation for our own good fortune can lead to a realignment of our ethical compass, compelling us to stand and refuse alongside others less fortunate. Empathy is the death of apathy, and it begins not when the state is streamlined, withered away, or dismembered, but *here and now*.

## Conclusion

[F]reedom as a means breeds more freedom... To those who say this condemns one to political sterility and the Ivory Tower our reply is that "realism" and their

“circumstantialism” invariably lead to disaster. We believe...that it is more realistic to...influence minds by discussion than to mould them by coercion (Vernon Richards 1995:214).

The etymology of “radical” is from the Latin *radix*, meaning “root”. Contemporary radical geographers would do well to explore this originary dimension by (re)engaging with the contributions of Kropotkin and Reclus, who fearlessly critiqued colonial domination at a time when mainstream geography marched hand in hand with the imperialist project. But radical geography today needs more than the insights of the past, it also requires a future, an injection of new ideas that encompass the intellectual strides made by poststructuralist and feminist thought to move beyond what is already “known”. Within anarchist studies, the critical edge of this philosophical endeavor is postanarchism, which does not seek to move “past” anarchism, but instead rejects the epistemological foundations of “classical” anarchist theories and their adherence to the essentialisms of the scientific method. Postanarchist thought accordingly seeks to reinvigorate anarchist critique by expanding its conception of domination from the state and capitalism to encompass the circuitous, overdetermined, and multivariate networks that characterize contemporary power, and by removing its normative and “naturalist” frames in embracing situated and empathetic knowledges. Applying this philosophical critique to radical geography today requires one to make a conscious ethical and emotional choice, “whether to be allied with the stability of the victors and rulers, or—the more difficult path—to consider that stability as a state of emergency threatening the less fortunate with the danger of complete extinction” (Said 1993:26). To choose the latter requires a sustained effort to shatter the “commonsense” spell of neoliberal governmentality, as government is not merely the political structures or management protocols of the state, but the government of the conduct of individuals and groups, it is “to structure the possible field of action of others”, their *direction*, and their *location* (Foucault 1982:790).

This is a process many geographers are already engaging through attention to the entanglements of power (Crampton and Elden 2007; Sharp et al 2000), to participatory action research (Kinson, Pain and Kesby 2007), and through non-representational theory (Thrift 2007), but without explicitly connecting them back to the anarchist critique. Yet if the mercurial horizons of space–time ensure that our lived experiences are continual performances that defy the theoretical divisions of predetermined identities and codified subjectivities, then what is more “realistic” than acknowledging the perpetually unfolding means of anarchism? Anarchist geographies would thus ideally seek to question the spatiality upon which governance is premised, and argue for an unstructured “field of action”, where individuals may voluntarily and/or collectively decide their own *direction*, free from the presence and pressures of any higher or ultimate authority. The *location* of such liberation from all variants of sovereign power is not rooted in ideas of fixity, as in the “territorial trap” of the state, but in the inexorable assertion of freedom through processual associations of affinity that may be entirely transient or slightly more permanent (Day 2005). The key potentiality though is that any affiliation is free to coagulate or dissolve under conditions of free will and individual choice, where no

presence—such as the monopoly of force or independent control of the means of production—enforces either subjugation or communal continuity.

The political geographies of boundaries and borders would become infinitely messier, overlapping, and variable, to the point where attempting to map them into a rigid ordering or grid, as is the epistemological notion behind modern cartography, would be an exercise in futility. Such mapping, either literally as in an actual map, or through techniques such as the census and the museum, are constitutive of state logic to begin with (Anderson 1991), and the purpose of anarchist geographies should be to dissolve any such categorization and classification schemas that promote spatio-temporal permanence. This is not to suggest anarchism is reduced to chaos, but any geographical organization would proceed as an ethics of empathy as opposed to a politics of difference, as the latter is always carved out through oppression. Anarchism, spatiality arranged in these terms would allow us to recognize whole people, rather than attempting to make them as subjects or citizens that conform to particularized spaces and segmented political goals. Kropotkin (1979 [1885]) articulated a similar vision when he wrote:

In our time of wars, of national self-conceit, of national jealousies and hatreds ably nourished by people who pursue their own egotistic, personal or class interests, geography must be... a means of dissipating these prejudices and of creating other feelings more worthy of humanity.

Anarchist geographies might accordingly be productively characterized by their integrality, where all attempts to construct false dichotomies of separation are rejected, and instead humanity is recognized as intimately intertwined within all the processes and flows of the entire planet (Massey 2005). Such a radical reconceptualization of the discipline would, in realizing Reclus's (1876–1894) vision, render it conceptually akin to both the Jewel Net of Indra from Buddhist philosophy and the Gaia Hypothesis, inasmuch as attempts at separating between political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and any other “sub-disciplinary” variant would be viewed as fabrications that attempt to tame, order, restrain, partition, and contain the irreducible whole.

New forms of affinity are already emerging as a “relational ethics of struggle” (Routledge 2009), where it is no longer the worker who is conceived as the agent of historical change, but anti-capitalist protesters who comprise a heterogeneous group that defies universal subjectivation to the proletariat identity (Notes From Nowhere 2003). Such recognition could form a point of departure in unsettling the orthodox position Marxism holds within radical geography today. This emergent form of struggle is clearly not interested in formulating strategies that replicate traditional representative structures, signifying a paradigm shift away from effecting change from within the state by realigning its character, and towards autonomous movements positioned in opposition to the state (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006). In this context, Newman (2010:182) identifies a series of new political questions and challenges: “freedom beyond securities, democracy beyond the state, politics beyond the party, economic organization beyond capitalism, globalization beyond borders, [and] life beyond biopolitics”. Yet these are not just political questions, each is also profoundly geographical. While geographers are already examining

these very issues, there has been little attention to the ways in which anarchism might foster a more rigorous investigation of these emergent geographies. Consequently, conceptualizing a “way forward”—beyond the dominating strictures of neoliberalism and the enduring animosities of colonialism—requires a deeper engagement with anarchist philosophies. Committing radical geography to an anarchist agenda would necessitate a negation of the false dichotomy the discipline maintains between the academy as a space of knowledge production on the one hand, and wider society as the domain of social struggle on the other (The Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010). Accordingly, intensified networks of solidarity with those involved in direct action on the streets may well be the future of radical geography. From here, ideas that allow for new geographical imaginations and materializations that transcend state-based politics may blossom, more “glocalized”, ephemeral, and voluntary forms of non-institutional organization may bloom, and Kropotkin’s (2008 [1902]) theory of mutual aid along with Reclus’s (187–1894; Fleming 1988) contributions to the ideals of human freedom may be treated to the same contemplation that Marx has hitherto received from radical geographers. Anarchism, as Kropotkin (1978 [1885]) recognized more than a century ago, is “what geography ought to be”.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the following individuals for their critical feedback and encouragement on various parts of this argument and/or earlier drafts: Jeff Ferrell, Anthony Ince, Gavin Brown, Jenny Pickerill, Adam Barker, Nik Heynen, James Sidaway, Nathan Clough, Renata Blumberg, Salvatore Engel-DiMauro, Peter Holland, Wendy Larner, and the anonymous referees. Any mistakes, errors, and omissions are my own.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Others have explored broadly “anarchistic” spatialities through a poststructuralist lens (see Koopman 2011; Routledge 2003), but without plugging such concerns into the emergent literature that explicitly develops a theory of postanarchism.

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