

Desde Abajo y a la Izquierda: An Ethnography of Transnational Activism

Erica Lagalisse

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Abstract

Desde Abajo y a la Izquierda: An Ethnography of Transnational Activism

Erica Lagalisie

Autonomist movements are unified across context through shared discourses of autonomy, direct action and radical democracy. Decentralized networks of autonomist collectives are responsible for the transnational activism often referred to as “grassroots globalization”. This has largely fallen outside academic purview, however, as both marxist and liberal theoretical perspectives on social movements honour state-centric politics.

Mobilizing the concepts of “autonomy” and “counterpower”, this experimental, multisited ethnography (Marcus 1999; 2006) introduces autonomist politics and investigates how commonality is built upon asymmetry (Moore 2006: 447) and conversation across difference (Tsing 2005: 2) in transnational activism by concentrating on collaboration among autonomist collectives, anarchist movements, and indigenous movements at four “moments of conjuncture” (Tsing 2005: 272): 1) cooperation among anarchists and indigenous ecologists in Venezuela; 2) the transnational solidarity movement surrounding the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca*; 3) solidarity activism with the Six Nations land reclamation in Canada; 4) the solidarity network of transnational Zapatismo.

By tracing the practices of collaboration and listening to the *palabra* of participants for overlapping discourse and practices, the research exposes and analyses congruency and disjuncture among movements as well as among principles and practice therein. Findings highlight the intersection of race, class and gender in participation dynamics as well as emergent discourses. The conclusion argues that anarchoindigenism and related solidarity projects constitute an important “conversation” in the global anticapitalist movement; however, the secular and “public” nature of politics as constructed within political economy (i.e. anarchism) precludes radical solidarity with indigenous peoples and women most generally.

*Para Magdalena,
una alma bien fuerte y conciente
que pidió a su hija la blusa bella
porque sintió que iba a salir,
que alguien esperaba,
y cuando estaba lista,
se desmayó por un dolor fuerte de repente.*

*No sabemos si era posible de curarla
porque los del hospital del seguro social
la detieron horas, los hicieron firmar
papeles que nadie pudo leer,
y entonces dijeron que como no tenía seguro,
tenía que ir a otro lado.
Pero ya fue demasiado tarde.*

*Para Magdalena,
una mujer bien fuerte y conciente
quien se murió el 3 de abril 2007,
cuyo espíritu bello nos ha tocado a muchos
y nos inspira todavía.*

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Introduction

Ethnography: Research from Below

There is a global anticapitalist movement. It consists of autonomist movements, each emergent from particular context but coordinated and unified through shared discourses of autonomy, direct action, practices of direct democracy and an uncompromising position against capitalism. These movements organize autonomously as well as seek ultimate autonomy from the structures of domination that correspond with capitalism, including state governments. Autonomists understand how borders serve capitalism in their separation of humanity, both tangible and psychic, and reject them in principle as well as practice; this is why radical activism has come to be coordinated transnationally, through conscious strategy. Decentralized networks of autonomous collectives are responsible for much of the transnational activism often referred to as grassroots globalization. This phenomenon has largely fallen outside academic purview, however, as both marxist and liberal theoretical perspectives on social movements honour a state-centric politics.

I decided to research dynamics of participation in autonomist activism as I have been alternately inspired and disappointed by this activist milieu which has been the context of my life for a decade; also, having read the academic literature on social movements, it was clearly lacking for those who sought to understand the contemporary terrain of popular politics. The frameworks of political action, axes of solidarity and dynamics of coalition in today's transnational activism involve solidarity beyond homogeneity, conversation across difference, and awkward yet creative qualities of interconnection. As Tsing writes: "There is no reason to assume that collaborators share common goals. In transnational collaborations, overlapping but discrepant forms of cosmopolitanism may inform contributors, allowing

them to converse, but across difference.” (2005: 13). It is inspiring to see people collaborating across borders, communicating across gulfs of experience, cooperating against capitalism and for humanity – even though that’s all they share in common, and prevailing against incredible odds: Armies, paramilitaries and constant police surveillance; racism, sexism, and the other physical, mental and ontological violences consecrated in capitalism; the consequent identity politics which threatens to splinter us forever. If I am disappointed it is only because we have yet to transcend all of these, that there is much work to be done, as much within the activist scene as without.

This ethnography introduces autonomist social movements and concentrates on collaborative projects among anarchist collectives and indigenous movements for autonomy in multiple sites, always with a view from my position as an activist within anarchist collectives: My inquiry concerned implicit logic informing anarchist solidarity activism and dynamics of participation therein; my fieldwork unfolded to involve many solidarity projects with indigenous peoples’ movements and suggested the importance of an emergent discourse/practice which I introduce here as anarchoindigenism. I therefore decided to concentrate on this specific thread to illustrate the existence of anarchoindigenism as well as the strengths, failings and subtleties of such a conversation. To this effort, I discuss cooperation among urban anarchists of Caracas, Venezuela with indigenous ecologists of Zulia, Venezuela; the transnational solidarity movement surrounding the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* (APPO) in Mexico; dynamics among anarchist activists of Mexico City, those from abroad and activists from Oaxaca while collaborating with the APPO in Mexico City; the solidarity activism based out of Montreal regarding the Six Nations land reclamation in Ontario, Canada; and, finally, the phenomenon of transnational Zapatismo,

including dynamics of *La Otra Campaña*, *La Zetza Internacional*, Zapatista solidarity networks and one transnational *Encuentro Zapatista*.

While each of these encounters may be analysed separately and in particular depth, my object concerns the patterned affinities and disjunctures that characterize them, what common discourses and practices precede as well as emerge from these transnational exchanges: “empirically following the thread of cultural process itself impels the move toward multi-sited ethnography.” (Marcus 1995: 97). Identities and practices can no longer be understood with attention to one confined locale (Moore 2006: 449); ethnography of transnational cooperation, most especially, must transcend “the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time-space.” (Marcus 1995: 96). Rather than assuming in advance the location and boundaries of cultures, I have traced practices, allegory, metaphor and the lives of particular people and their collaborative projects: “Grounding one’s analysis of global connection not in abstract principles of power and knowledge but rather in concrete engagements” allows the “possibility of an *ethnographic* account of global interconnection.” (Tsing 2005: 267, 6). For a discipline whose colonial methodology valued immersion in everyday life to create knowledge about “local” populations, a shift towards ethnography in/of the world system raises challenges but marks a necessary transcendence (Marcus 1995: 105). Such a methodologism entails the exposure of “global” and “local” as heuristic devices rather than empirical realities (Moore 2006: 444). Multisited ethnography itself has the particular potential of exploding the global/local dichotomy that functions as an implicit metanarrative in both postmodern capitalism and academia (see Moore 2006; Marcus 2006).

I could argue that I am studying the “culture” of activists but this would be rather forced, just as cultural boundaries have always been. The activists in this ethnography do not share an identity *per se*; the only thing they share are autonomist and anticapitalist principles, and even those are spoken in different vocabularies. Precisely due to the disjunctures that do exist, the fact that there is such resonance and cooperation is significant in and of itself. Perhaps respecting “identity” and “culture” must involve transcending their boundaries to organize against capitalism, which is what is destroying diversity and inspiring identity politics in the first place. So I privilege practice over culture: a pseudo-speciation of humans into discrete types, which has been grounds for domination, racism and a lack of effort to communicate on equal ground with others, as culture is often considered “impenetrable” and “opaque” (Scheper Hughes 1995: 417). Postcolonial feminism has exploded the primacy that social anthropology has always afforded cultural difference (Moore 1988: 196). By the same token, there exists no dualism of “native” and “non-native” anthropologist; there are only “shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations.” (Narayan 1997: 23). Race, class and gender, along with infinite other positionalities, determine commensurability between subjectivities as much as culture (Moore 2006; Gupta 2000; Narayan 1997). This is further illustrated in this text; the structure of the research and methodology to consider “particular individuals and their changing relationships” has illustrated that mutual understanding, imaginative identification and solidarity occur along diverse axes, thus further subverting “the most problematic connotations of culture: homogeneity, coherence and timelessness” (Abu-Lughod 1991: 154).

Ethnography as methodology is particularly useful in illustrating the “makeshift links across distance and difference that shape global futures” (Tsing 2005: 2); while no longer

preoccupied with representing the “local”, the disciplinary methodological focus on practice and everyday life allows perception of implicit logic in the context of its continual creation in concrete exchanges and collaborations: The universals that are mobilized and order transnational collaborations are borne of, and reflect, the interests and power dynamics among the actors involved (see Tsing 2005). As such, ethnography - or research from below - is uniquely situated to illustrate the actual dynamics of transnational social movements as well as those of globalizing processes most generally: Local/global dichotomies are not categories of analysis exterior to the cultural production of globalizing processes themselves; rather, the existence of such an academic framework suggests the degree to which “theoretical analysis and cultural production blur in new and challenging ways” (Cunningham 1999: 585). Due to an empirical focus on practice and concrete engagements:

It follows that perhaps anthropologists are uniquely positioned to document the ways in which globalization itself is shifting the traditional barriers between the researcher and the researched to produce not only a fluidity of symbolic fields, but also new complications to the practice of ethnography. (Cunningham 585)

Cunningham notes that “anthropologists (particularly those who study contemporary social movements) are apt to experience a kind of representational conundrum itself fostered by globalizing processes” due to slippage of analytical terms among activists and academics (1999: 585). Her description of her fieldwork in the Sanctuary movement “as an indoctrination into my own categories of analysis” (585) resonates with my experience; in many ways this text illustrates the ways in which academic concepts of identity, “epistemic authority” and other tenets of postcolonial theory have been interpreted, popularized and manifested in activist practice. She notes that:

...one significant factor contributing to this overlap might be how information technologies (specifically their mandate to connect groups via information) have a secondary imbricating effect in that they throw together (or engender areas of overlap between) different social groups, and they force the adoption of common vocabularies. (Cunningham 1999: 599)

My research supports her observation; as transnational activism increases and is largely reliant on internet communication, it is clear that the Internet must be seen as a site of cultural production itself; beyond merely connecting disparate contexts and engendering common vocabularies, its media also engender certain dynamics of communication and favor certain forms of expression (in terms of both form and content), effectively privileging certain voices. The Internet is not a virtual replica of speech or text but is an entirely new social space with specific parameters that are crucial in defining transnational activism (Olesen 2005: 182-187).

By methodologically focusing on practice, I am necessarily privileging praxis over structure theoretically; “society is a system, the system is powerfully constraining, and yet the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction” (Ortner 1984: 159). Therefore we “need to watch these systems in action, to study tactics and strategy, not merely the rules of the game.” (145). Conceiving organization-as-process is an underdeveloped area in anthropological thinking (Wolf 2002: 228). Particularly in this context, whereby the diverse activists in question define their politics in terms of process, it only makes sense to consider Eric Wolf’s suggestions: We should look at the flow of action, ask what is going on, why, who engages with it, with whom, when and how often, and also ask for what, and for whom, is all this going on (228; see also Burdick 1992).

So I have lived in the flow of action myself and have conversed with many others involved also. I have chosen conversation as methodology consciously: it emerged as a form congruent to the logistical dynamics of the field, prerogatives of participants and object of research –“conversation” among diverse activists (see Tsing 2005). In multisited ethnography, the argument is embedded in the structure of ethnography itself (Marcus 2006: 620): During fieldwork, listening and conversation presented themselves as common themes

among the diverse participants; for this reason they function as allegorical archetypes, ordering the text both as principle and device.

I agree with Farmer (2003) and Scheper-Hughes (1995) when they say that the academy must be responsible to history and humanity. Appadurai writes that a leveling of intellectual authority of public intellectuals, academics, activists and laypeople is the only way one can speak of democratization of knowledge (2002: 283); he also suggests that collaborative research on “globalization from below” could contribute to new forms of pedagogy (2002: 280-1), forms which serve to correct academic disciplinarity, conventions about world knowledge and protocols of inquiry that are taken for granted (283-4). He is correct; allowing conversations in the field to direct the research process has meant rejecting disciplinary boundaries, methodological and epistemological protocols that are conventional to academia but alien to living, breathing people. Collapsing the boundaries of researcher and researched is the ultimate challenge for an academy that wishes to democratize rather than reform its authority. Let this modest attempt be a microcosm; in this text, anarchist activists are alternately subjects and objects of analysis, as are indigenous activists, as are scholars, as am I. Informants have been scholars and scholars have been informants. As such, fieldwork is betrayed as a fetishization of learning; the best fieldwork is no different than a sincere and expansive process of learning which is necessarily open-ended as well as reciprocal.

This text is not directed to an audience of experts or policymakers who will “apply” this knowledge in their projects of social engineering: Collaborative research on “globalization from below” could never do that because those “globalizing from below” explicitly reject such social engineering from above: This is why such a project inevitably entails new forms of pedagogy and writing. So, here you will find a text written by an

anarchist for academics, a text written by an academic for anarchists, a text written by a feminist for anarchists and academics both, and a few more. If I have succeeded at all, then it will be useful to living, breathing people who are concerned with improving anticapitalist practice and entirely useless to all those people and institutions that wish to hamper it, especially governments.

In terms of the latter, I have had to conduct fieldwork in particular ways in order to avoid legal trouble for others and myself. Governments don't like anticapitalists. Even in Montreal, Canada, some of our homes were raided and ransacked by government intelligence agents during the course of fieldwork, requiring me to record and store information in particular ways. Hardly anyone in the three countries I worked in was willing to formally go on record. They know how little their "rights" actually mean; many of them have had their homes ransacked too at some point, others have lived through much worse. There exists no "confidential" in matters of "national security" and of course everyone knows that anticapitalists are "terrorists" these days. So the activists are largely nameless; the names that do appear are merely pseudonyms of those who have told me I can repeat their words.

So I write from a position within the movement. I make no pretensions of neutrality; there is no such thing as responsibility to science, only to humanity. By the same token, however, there exists no such responsibility to "the movement" inasmuch as the movement is not responsible to humanity. Within this text critiques are made in a constructive spirit. If anticapitalist activists are truly fighting to win then we must question and improve our practice, not just focus on popular education of others alone.

Chapter 1

El Foro Social Alternativo: Caracas, January 23 – 29 2006

“And if they build those coal mines higher up the watershed, the whole Amazon basin will suffer. The Guasare river is already contaminated and Maracaibo only has drinking water 3 days of the week. We *indígenas*¹ of the region are protesting the mines, organizing and refusing to leave the land that is ours, but the army comes to harass, threaten and displace us. The new *Constitución Bolivariana*² says the *pueblos indígenas*³ have the right to self-determination and provides for the demarcation of indigenous lands, but the mining law gives the state priority to resources underground anyway. The Venezuelan Revolution is being financed with the blood of our peoples and the blood of the Earth.”



¹ Indigenous persons

² The Bolivarian Constitution is the 6th and most recent Venezuelan constitution, amended by Chavez.

³ Indigenous peoples

Lusbi wiped his forehead again and waved his other hand at the microphones. The crew of Indymedia⁴ reporters armed with mp3 recorders, mini-disk players and one video camera held together with elastic bands shifted to focus on Lusbi's companion Angela. The rest of us in the classroom shifted also, shuffling our chairs, flipping pages in notebooks. Carlos had volunteered from the audience earlier on to do English translation because many were lost in Spanish, now someone was asking if he was doing ok or if he'd like to switch off. Four French speakers took a moment to reposition themselves in a corner, where someone had announced they could do whisper translation from the English. Angela stood up and the room hushed.

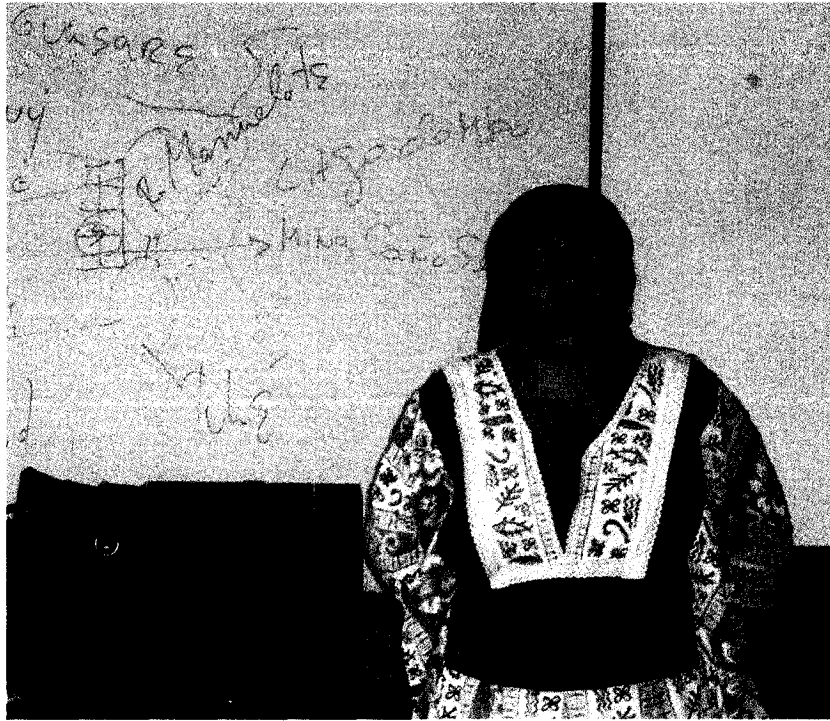
“*Compañeros y compañeras* of the world, first I bring you greetings in *Wayuu*, my *lengua indígena*.” And everyone listened, transfixed, to the greeting they didn't understand. Then in Spanish, “Brothers and sisters of the world, *la Tierra es la Vida*⁵. The Earth is the first thing, it comes before any other, she is our Mother. *La Madretierra*⁶ gives us Life, *la Madretierra* gives us water, she gives us soil, beans corn and yucca. We must respect and love the Earth as we respect and love our mother. We are her children, we must take care of her, never abuse her. We must be grateful for life and tread lightly. We *Wayuu* and the other *pueblos* of Zulia and Maracaibo are fighting against the devastation of our *Tierra*, fighting to keep our *tierra*⁷ from the coal companies, because they are our ancestral lands, but also for humanity, for the children of the world. And the government calls us terrorists. These are accusations which

⁴ Indymedia is an transnational independent media network based out of the Internet. It is decentralized and anti-copyright: anyone may post text, audio or video files and download others from anywhere in the world for free; there is no invitation, membership, or password required.

⁵ the Earth is Life

⁶ Mother Earth

⁷ The Spanish word *tierra* has the compounded meaning of the planet Earth, soil, and “land” in the political, territorial sense. These concepts are often integrated in its usage, especially in contexts such as these.



offend us deeply. So many people, the people of the corporations, have turned their backs on their mother earth, they treat her like something you can take and use, and never give back anything! They treat her like something you buy and sell to make a profit, their own mother! And she becomes poisoned, and her milk becomes poisoned. Like the milk of the women in Zulia, so toxic they cannot feed their own children, she is poisoned. And like the women she is sad, sad because she wants to care for her children, wants to feed them and flow in fresh waters but she cannot, because she has been ruined. You do not sell off your mother, your life, for profit, because you will die too, with her. It is a culture of death; capitalism is a culture of death and it falls to us, the *indígenas* to fight for the culture of Life. We are few now; the governments have been killing us for hundreds of years and so we are few, but we are not gone. We resist and we will continue to resist as we always have, with our other indigenous brothers and sisters around the world, to fight for *la tierra, agua y*

*dignidad*⁸, to continue our culture of Life, in harmony with *la tierra*. The government says that the mines are “development”, that they are good for Life, but they are only good for the rich who do not live here, who do not live on this land: They do not help us, we do not eat coal.”⁹

The room was full now. Angela’s voice booming down the hallways had drawn a crowd. The old school building was being used as a venue for the World Social Forum so there were little groups of internationals continuously shuffling up and down the hallways. Some wandered in, just as the organizers figured they would: If the World Social Forum will not give voice to the struggles of these people, we’ll go and speak anyway, and at least some will hear, they figured. So, while most of the events of the *Foro Social Alternativo*¹⁰ (FSA) took place in the *Organizacion Nelson Garrido*¹¹ (ONG), an autonomous, self-managed community space, some were specifically planned to overlap with the concurrent World Social Forum (WSF).

The Alternative Social Forum was planned to coincide with the WSF as an act of protest to the large, bureaucratic, State-managed affair as well as to provide an autonomous space for planning and sharing among radical social movements. As the WSF had been planned and managed by the Venezuelan state, certain voices were not welcome, such as those of Lusbi and Angela. Anarchist activists in Caracas and elsewhere in Venezuela felt strongly that the WSF had been co-opted by the state for its own ends, that the rhetoric about it being a free space for sharing and building grassroots globalization was no more than a show, a huge advertisement attesting to the progressiveness of the Venezuelan

⁸ Land, water and dignity

⁹ Rewritten from fieldnotes. All dialogue from the FSA is rewritten from notes unless otherwise specified.

¹⁰ Alternative Social Forum

¹¹ Nelson Garrido Organization

government. Meanwhile, those disenfranchised by the very same government were prevented a platform, even called terrorists; their social movements are “counterrevolutionary”. During an Indymedia interview at the ONG one of the organizers explained:

“The participatory democracy that supposedly exists now in Venezuela is a farce. The state revolution in Venezuela has not addressed the needs of the most impoverished; rather, what it has done is co-opted existing social movements into the state bureaucracy, undermining civil society. Before there were all sorts of social movements working together in this country, the miners, the *indígenas*, the unions, the anarchists, the *campesinos*, sex-workers... We were all on the same side! Now we’re divided. What happened was that the government created all these grants and reformist programs, attracting activists to work within the bureaucracy for the sake of funding. This promise of support, however, has only meant activists spending their time on government ritual proceedings rather than organizing around the issue at hand, whatever it may be. They spend all their time preparing for these state run assemblies and then don’t get heard anyways.”

“But isn’t the whole purpose of the CLPPs¹² specifically to bring decision making power to the community level?”

“Voice, yeah sure, lots of people wasting a lotta breath though, because those decisions aren’t *binding*. It’s all just suggestions, legally the government doesn’t have to respect the decision of the assembly, just “take it into account”, which translates into... a total farce really, the whole thing is a terrific spectacle.”

¹² *Consejos Locales de Planificación Pública* or Local Councils of Public Planning, the system of participatory democracy enshrined in the Venezuelan Revolution.

“So social movements in Venezuela have been preempted by the growing socialist state...”

“And criminalized! Because now that the government is supposedly so revolutionary, there is no room for Leftist critique! If you are organizing independently of the state programs, you are automatically suspect as a counterrevolutionary, accused of being an imperialist, or worse... Like the case of Angela and them, they were accused of being terrorists, “green mafia”, supposedly hired by transnational corporations competing with one another! Or like with Lusbi, Chavez publicly denounced him as a CIA *provocateur*¹³ working against the revolution!” I mean no one actually believes it, except for Chavez and the army....”

“The ones with the guns.”

“Yeah, exactly.”

“So fear and funding have changed the face of Venezuelan social movements... Can you give me another example?”

“Just recently there was a sex-worker attacked, raped and beaten really badly, and beforehand you woulda had tons of women’s groups and popular organizations demonstrating in front of that courthouse when they set that guy free, but not now. Now they are all thoroughly distracted by their paperpushing and enthusiasm for the next “state initiative”. Meanwhile things are getting worse. That day in front of the courthouse there were only 35 people, and I was one of the 3 men.”

“So independent social movements are actually suffering.”

¹³ A *provocateur* is an infiltrator masquerading as an activist in order to sabotage social movements, an undercover police, military or government employee.

“Exactly, autonomous popular action, autonomous social movements are being co-opted or strangled one way or another. The idea is that if the state is taking care of you now, why would anyone need to work outside of government? But obviously social movements that are organized by the state are not actually people’s movements - they are born out of and respond to the needs of government! And government always looks out for itself, not for the people, certainly not the people of Zulia. Resource extraction and land appropriation from indigenous peoples has actually increased since the ‘revolution’.”

“Right.. And don’t the principles of the WSF include something about how it’s supposed to be a forum for grassroots social movements and not a platform for political parties?”

“Yes, even though the WSF has always been somewhat of a bureaucratic affair, being managed by the municipal government of Porto Alegre and all, in spirit it’s supposed to be a free meeting place for social movements to organize against neo-liberal globalization and promote values of autonomy, self-determination and *autogestión*. So having it sponsored by the Venezuelan state and managed by the military is majorly problematic. And it’s a little ironic, no? That the WSF is being held in a country with no social movements?”

Before arriving in Caracas I had emailed some of the organizers of the FSA, the *Comision de Relaciones Anarquistas*¹⁴ (CRA), to say I wanted to participate and needed a place to stay if possible. I said I was an activist and a grad student, that I was curious to investigate the WSF but as an autonomist was more drawn to the FSA. I got a reply inviting me to the final organizing meeting the day after my flight; we would arrange everything then.

¹⁴ Commission for Anarchist Relations

Saturday afternoon 14 of us gathered in the *Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios* (CESL)¹⁵, an infoshop¹⁶ that looked like any other back home; it was one room lined with exploding bookshelves and a rectangular table in the middle. Chaotic stacks of newspapers, propaganda, zines¹⁷ and posters were towering on every surface. The only amenities were a coffee machine, sugar and a couple of ashtrays. I was introduced to more names than I could remember, offered coffee and copies of *El Libertario*, a monthly free newspaper produced by a collective within the CRA. People explained to me that this is where *El Libertario* is produced and that just last year they opened it up as a small library and public resource center. This last is repeated often with pride: maintaining a space autonomously with collective fundraising is hard enough, consistently staffing it with volunteers on a regular schedule is another feat entirely, a success in self-management.

Everyone squeezed around the table; those who got up close unloaded notebooks, pens, flyers, and schedules onto it, the rest were fumbling in their laps. Somebody asked if we should start, make an agenda. People started calling out items, “Well, what about propaganda, is it printed yet?”

“We need to talk about the convergence center at the ONG”

“Money and expenses”

“Logistics”

“The independent media and craft fair”

“Maybe that goes in money and expenses?”

“Oh yeah, ok”

¹⁵ Center for Social Libertarian Studies

¹⁶ Self-managed shop and community space open to the public; often has small lending library, used as venue for events.

¹⁷ Zines are self-published book(lets), usually photocopied.

“Maybe a welcome for the people who are new today, our *compañeros*¹⁸ who are already here from Canada, Uruguay and the USA”

“Yes, a moment to hear their *palabra*”¹⁹

“Let’s start with logistics.”, and so on, until we had a big list written in big letters on a big piece of craft paper at the front of the room. There was no discussion as to who should facilitate the meeting; rather, Pedro started facilitating sort of automatically, the same guy that called out for an agenda. While there were 14 people in the room, 10 men and 4 women, a third of them seemed more involved and knowledgeable than the rest, he was one. Among these there was one woman, her name was Carmen and when she spoke everyone listened. She never took as much time talking as the men, she would just speak up to correct or qualify something, but she would always have the last word. It seemed to me that Carmen was quietly running the show. Meanwhile the guys talked, argued and interrupted one another as me and the other 2 women in the room watched them. Also listening quietly were two elder men, they caught my attention because they were supremely old. I found out later that they are veterans from the Spanish Civil War who live in Caracas and work with the CESL. Once the propaganda issue had been dealt with we started talking about lodging, space and protocol for the main venue, the ONG.

“Everyone’s gonna wanna stay there, we’re gonna have to have some sort of way of deciding who does and doesn’t. We want to do this consciously and fairly.”

“Yeah and we have to remember that the ONG... This is Nelson’s house we’re talking about, we have to make sure it stays in good shape.”

¹⁸ Companions, friends, “comrades”.

¹⁹ *Palabra* translates as “word” but also connotes input, contribution, position on something, act of speech; it is a fraction of conversation: i.e. “Anarchist values of egalitarianism mean taking everybody’s *palabra* into account.”

“Well, we said earlier that the people who write us ahead of time have priority and if we figure on those...then we’re almost full already so...”

“Well I think if we have to decide between some and others it should be based on accessibility, like who needs to stay there more. Obviously illegals from Colombia have less money for hotels than Americans and they shouldn’t be wandering around the city cause they could be picked up by the military...”

“Yeah, the space shouldn’t really be for rich North Americans.”

“How much space is there anyway?”

“If you include the floor space we could probably fit another 3 or 4...”

“Beyond who’s already on the list?”

“Well.. there’s Erica here who just wrote us a few days ago, I told her she could stay and I’ll add her to the list right now so that means 2.”, Carmen intervened. What a relief, I had been sitting through the conversation about North Americans sort of cringing.

“You... want to stay with us?”

“Yes” I said, “It’s not that I don’t have money for a hotel, I could pay for one, but I don’t know the city, like, what neighborhood is safe or not, I don’t know where to find one, and I would have a hard time getting back to it after the FSA events in the evening, cuz the Metro closes at 8 and everyone’s telling me to not go out after 9... I am a little blondie girl after all, and I came here totally on my own. It does make it sort of hard to move around, yknow. I came here specifically for this so I would like to be able to stay and participate. It would also give me a chance to help out too, I can translate and do whatever else.” I waited nervously; I had just monkeywrenched their accessibility argument about white privilege with gender issues and guys usually don’t like that very much. Lots of eyeballs darted around the room but no one challenged me. Phew. Carmen snuck me a smile.

The other agenda items involved report-backs from different working groups that had been working on specific tasks: fundraising, propaganda, events planning and finally logistics. This was the largest working group, responsible for everything from security to film equipment. I followed the meeting easily because the format was strikingly similar to back home. When autonomous collectives plan events in Montreal, it works the same way. First, especially if it's a big event or action, you call or email other groups around that would be in solidarity with such an action and might want to do it with you. After some initial flux in the first few organizing meetings, a more or less stable organizing committee emerges, usually with a majority from the initial collective but including other participants, liaisons to other collectives.

In the case of the FSA, the CRA had put out the initial call-out²⁰ and had the largest presence, but the organizing committee was a mix of people from various groups²¹. As a collective it was independent from the CRA and accountable only to itself. This FSA organizing committee had gone over the tasks at hand months ago and organized themselves into the working groups mentioned. Such groups work on their separate tasks, the layout and printing of flyers for example, and when they come across a decision to be made in the course of things ("Fuck! The image file we chose is corrupted."), they make note of it and bring it up at the next general assembly ("Ok guys, that file is messed, we need a new picture, what should we use instead?"), that way inviting the *palabra* of all involved. This is the crucial difference between anarchist/autonomist activists and the traditional Left: Their ethic of anti-authoritarianism translates into a rejection of leaders and representatives on

²⁰ Open invitation to participate in organizing something, usually over email.

²¹ The groups participating in the organization of the FSA were: *Organización Nelson Garrido* – ONG; *El Libertario*; *Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios*; *La Libertaria de Biscucuy*, an infoshop and social centre in Biscucuy; *AMIGRANSA* – *Sociedad de Amigos en Defensa de la Gran Sabana* (Society of Friends in Defense of the Gran Sabana), a largely indigenous ecologist organization; *Fundación de Arte Emergente*, a political cultural centre for social change in Caracas.

every scale. The working groups do not have “representatives” empowered to make decisions outside of the assembly; all decisions are brought back to the main assembly, that way everyone has a chance to share their *palabra*. That’s what the FSA report-backs were about.

The next day we all met at *Bellas Artes* Metro station to go poster²². We had decided at the meeting that we needed to do this in a big way, that it’s too much work for just the propaganda working group, so we set a meeting time and invited everyone to come. At least half showed up and there were some new faces too. Besides the CRA guys there was 2 other French women I hadn’t met before, a couple of teenage punks, an Argentinean woman and another older man who looked in his eighties. He intrigued me right away with his huge stature, enormous laugh and perfectly bilingual biting wit. His name was Frank and he had been an anarchist organizer previous to the Cuban revolution; when the socialist state betrayed the people’s revolution, co-opted it and took military control of the country, all anarchist organizers were murdered, purged. Frank has been writing in exile since the 1950s.

We divided up stacks of posters and rolls of tape and the crew began to canvas the boulevard. We wandered around as a crowd, chatting in groups of two or three, getting split up and finding each other again a dozen times. There were lots of people out in the streets, the regular traffic plus armies of red-clad WSF staff and security everywhere building stages and blocking roads; we passed through groups of international activists who were quickly filling up the city, and crossed at least two right-wing, anti-Chavez rallies. The reactions to

²² Sticking up posters in public places. In North America this is often done in pairs, stealthily, in the dark of night, but in Caracas it is not illegal so it can be a fun group activity.

us and our posters were highly varied. Jesús, one of the FSA guys, explained to me the subtleties of the situation.

“Why are those right-wingers wanting our flyers? I don’t understand..”

“Because we are critical of Chavez. They are against his government but they are conservative reactionaries, they want things to go back to the way things were before him and they like anything that’s critical of him. One of the biggest challenges for us is to not play into these people’s hands, that’s why we can’t give them the flyers – we can’t do anything that could end up looking like we are on their side or they are on ours... its really tricky.” Just then a woman came up to me from the conservative rally and grabbed my arm.

“You!” she screamed, “You are only here because our government would rather pay the plane fare of activists than take care of its citizens! We have to pay more taxes – why? So that you can all come to the WSF!”. Jesús rescued me and continued, “They think Chavez is buying your tickets, its screwed up. I mean they’re right that he’s buying popularity but still, those guys man, just try to not talk to them... Anyways, so as I was saying, these people are against Chavez and against the WSF, right? So you know what they did? They advertised the FSA in the right-wing newspaper! Just because it is an “alternative” forum and involves a critique of Chavez they grab it for their own ends and reprint it as if we actually had something in common. And then people see it and accuse us of being reactionaries, as if we were working with them. Its really hard these days in Venezuela to take a third position, like against US imperialism but also against the Chavez administration. Its fucked.” And so it went, the people that responded well to us were across the spectrum, rich and poor, radicals and right-wingers; it was certainly unique. We got into one more conflict, this time with Chavistas, university students.

“With the WSF going on right now, why would you want to organize something at the same time, not to mention *against* the WSF? Don’t we have the same enemy, shouldn’t we be working together instead of being divisive?”

“We thought it’s important to plan an alternative forum because the WSF is being run by the government. Our position is that revolutionary social change can only be brought about through people’s movements, from the bottom up. The WSF doesn’t actually reflect the position of social movements in this country, it reflects the power of the state.”

“And you don’t think Chavez has made improvements? What about all the reforms and what they are doing for the country right now?”

“Some people have benefited from this state socialism, certain sectors, sure, and yeah, lots of people support Chavez, but lots of people don’t too, and not just the conservatives. Like, take the oil workers for example, they are less exploited than before because they have a union now. Sure, that’s good, but what about the fact that under state socialism the drilling has accelerated to rates higher than ever before, and all the people that live in those rural areas are sick because of it! And if they protest they are met with military repression. So what’s the revolution doing for those people? Making things worse. And that’s the problem, y’see, you’re never gonna have equity with a centralized government, which always has vested interests, its own agenda! Not to mention a military and monopoly on violence! To stay in power and make money they will always sacrifice some citizens for others. Its inevitable, because the state in and of itself is founded on inequality.”

“Well those are some strong words there, I don’t see how you can argue against the Venezuelan state “in and of itself”, that’s not the issue! The issue is how to improve living conditions and human rights, all the stuff we’re talking about at the WSF...”

“Yeah, well...”

“Anyway talking about getting rid of the state is not really useful, its just not realistic!
It’s not constructive. All you’re doing is lending weight to the conservatives arguments”

“Well if you believe choosing the lesser of two evils is the way...fine, but we believe
that if a movement’s goal is truly revolutionary, like with the aim of bringing about an
egalitarian society, it’ll never happen by way of the state! It’ll happen by people organizing
autonomously, learning *autogestión*²³ in practice, cooperating, working together, creating
alternative support networks and ways of doing politics....”

“Are you saying that the WSF could be organized without the help of the state!?
Impossible! It’s too big!...”

“Yeah, well, that’s the point! No - it couldn’t happen without the state, and that’s the
problem! If the thing needs the Venezuelan military to protect it and a huge army of
bureaucrats to manage it, then its not useful to us!”

“So what’s your alternative then, just not have it at all?”

“The alternative is organizing among existing social movements events that actually
reflect the capacity of civil society and its interests, creating experiences that help civil society
get stronger in the process. And if its smaller, then fine. Our *Foro Social Alternativo* is
smaller, yes, but it’s a more useful experience for everyone involved because it’s not just
showing up at a lecture and being an observer, as usual! It’s about the process as well as the
content, learning to be a participant, how to cooperate on a basic level, without which we’ll
never get anywhere!”

“But something small like that is not really gonna challenge...like, imperialism!”

They both walked away exasperated, not understanding each other.

²³ Self-management

Afterwards we took the metro back to the ONG where we were all to spend the night. It took awhile to get oriented; the ONG is half Nelson's house, half community center; its a 3 story cement labyrinth with an open air kitchen on the roof. By the time I was installed, more people had started arriving. I went to go chat with the CRA people and others who were hanging around downstairs. Everyone agreed to someone's suggestion that it was time to have a big meeting downstairs for all those who would be staying all week. The hour hadn't been planned ahead of time so a group of us ran up and downstairs shouting "Meeting everybody!!" and managed to round up the 22 of us that were in the building:²⁴

- Evelia:** *Argentina.* delegate of the FLA (Federación Libertaria de Argentina) and the International Federation of Anarchists, founded in 1935.
- Julie:** *Quebec.* Had worked with the *Campement Jeunesse de Quebec*, a yearly camp based on principles of autonomy and self-management - came to Youth Camp of WSF and found out it was a bureaucratic organ not autonomous, and came to find us instead.
- Pedro:** *Venezuela.* Works with the CRA. In FSA committee
- Jean:** *France.* Anarchist activist who had landed a job as a French professor in town but was using his free time working with the CRA and translating. In FSA committee.
- Celine:** *France.* Friend of Jean who had come to visit and attend the FSA
- Caro:** *France.* Also a friend of Jean. Works with the *Cruz Negra Venezuela*²⁵.
- Steven:** *United States.* radical ecologist working with Earth First!²⁶
- Mateo:** *Venezuela.* Works at *La Libertaria de Biscucuy* infoshop in Biscucuy, a town in the interior. In FSA committee.
- Daniel:** *Uruguay.* Daniel Barret is a writer and sociologist, involved in libertarian²⁷ movement since 1967.
- Clara:** *United States.* Indymedia journalist and filmmaker - Pan Left Productions, Arizona Indymedia.
- David:** *Venezuela.* Works with the CRA. In FSA committee.
- Oscar:** *Venezuela.* European activist with experience in anti-fascist movements, now living in Venezuela.
- Carlos:** *Cuba, United States.* Cuban anarchist in exile, currently working with IWW²⁸ in Southern California. Also works with the *Movimiento Libertario Cubano*²⁹ or MLC
- Leo:** *Cuba, Mexico.* Cuban activist living in Mexico City. Works with MLC.
- Voice:** *United States.* Hip hop artist, writer from New York.
- Carmen:** *Venezuela.* Works with the CRA. In FSA committee.
- Jorge:** *Venezuela.* Works with the CRA. In FSA committee. Professor and writer for *El Libertario*.
- Jesus:** *Venezuela.* Works with the CRA, Jorge's teenage son.
- Elias:** *Mexico,* works with the *Colectivo Autonomo Magonista*³⁰
- Frank:** *Cuba, United States.* Writer and activist with the MLC.

²⁴ With the exception of Frank Hernandez and Daniel Barret, public personalities, all of these names have been changed and all biographical information has been shuffled. This list is taken from notes at the meeting, and includes all present except myself.

²⁵ The Anarchist Black Cross Federation fights for justice on behalf of political prisoners, does prison support work.

²⁶ Radical ecologist network, based on direct-action and a diversity of tactics.

²⁷ In Spanish, the phrases *anarquista* and *libertario* are interchangeable. *Libertario* is used often; it translates directly and properly as libertarian, but should not be confused with capitalist "libertarianism" of North America.

²⁸ Industrial Workers of the World. Radical union movement, strong in North America at the turn of the 20th C.

²⁹ Cuban Libertarian Movement

³⁰ Collective named after Francisco Magón, 20th C. indigenous libertarian from Oaxaca, Mexico. See chapter 2.

Many of us were meeting for the first time. We exchanged names, kissed, laughed and fumbled around with the plastic chairs, automatically arranging our seating by language: the French that didn't speak Spanish went and sat near the French that could translate, and so on. This time it was Carmen who said "Ok so should we make an agenda?" and like the day before, we brainstormed agenda items until we had covered all aspects of the *autogestión* of the space for the upcoming week: Food, cooking, cleaning, workshop support, tech, media and more.

To make the forum accessible, 3 meals – with a vegetarian option - would be provided each day so people would not be preoccupied with having to pay for food. The food had already been scavenged, bought and donated; it remained to make a cooking schedule with teams for each meal each day. Evelia from Argentina grabbed cardboard and a marker and started drawing up a calendar. We did the same thing for cleaning. One of the French women suggested dividing the space into 7 sections (downstairs bathroom, kitchen, main hall, patio, etc), and then drew up a calendar with spaces to sign up for each of the 7 chores on each of the 7 days. Both of these calendars were put on the wall in the main space so everyone would know who was responsible at what time for each task. Above the calendar one of the Americans wrote "Washing your dishes is revolutionary too!" and we ended the conversation saying that no one here is going to supervise, nag or boss anyone around because the idea is that we are learning to cooperate and do things in an egalitarian way, but it means we all have to unlearn the 'culture of coercion' and be pro-active. A guy from the CRA repeated: "Remember everybody, there's no use talking about grandiose revolutions and autonomy unless we start learning how to be autonomous and cooperative in these basic ways. The revolution starts here!"

"Next item then? Here it says "translation", maybe whoever suggested this item could go ahead..."

"Sure, I was just wondering if we should organize translation at the events, like whisper translation or running translation depending."

"I think whisper translation would be the best approach, cause some people need English, some French, some German, who knows..."

"Rather than decide in advance, we should see how it goes, maybe in some cases there will be just a few people that need translation and then we can whisper, but if many people in the room could use an English translation we could do it out loud... I dunno."

"Well yeah exactly, we can ask the audience and see what's most appropriate..."

"I have a proposal. How about those of us who can do translation if necessary all write our names down with the languages we can translate and then we can see..."

"Or even better, lets just see a show of hands now for English..."

"Ok... that's lots."

"How about French?"

"Ok.... that's a few too."

"So now we know who we are and in a few days we'll all know each other even better, I say we just remember who's around and if we need translation we'll arrange it spontaneously."

"Does anyone mind being on call like that?"

"Fine with me."

"Yeah."

"I'll be at the ONG the whole time cuz I'm one of the key people so you can always find me."

"For me, I don't mind doing whisper translation on the spot but doing running translation on a moment's notice? It really depends on the crowd and the topic..."

"Right, of course. And of course no one's obligated, only if you feel comfortable.."

"Yeah totally."

"I think we'll be fine." People look around and nod at each other.

"Next item then? What about the computer room, is it just for the FSA volunteers working media or open to the public? What if the people staying here want to check their email?"

"Well media is the most important thing, we're gonna wanna upload photos and articles³¹ about the day's events as they happen... and hopefully people will be working on translation at the same time."

"Maybe we could have it like there's certain hours when the computers are free for email and stuff, like later at night or something."

"And in general... like I'm all for sharing the resources and, I mean, like the people who are staying here I think it would be cool if they could use the email, after all they are gonna wanna be in contact with their collectives and *compañeros* they work with and stuff... but it shouldn't be just a free-for-all..."

"Yeah we don't know how many people are gonna show up, it could be tons..."

"Yeah and all the equipment is in there."

"How about treating it as one of the off-limits spaces, like Nelson's bedroom and the back area, but those of us who are here at this meeting know that if we want to do email its ok, as long as its discreet and later on when there's not tons of people around?"

³¹ Referring to the Indymedia network.

“Sounds good.”

“At night then?”

“Yeah, say starting at 9?”

“Do we have a consensus on 9 o'clock?” Nods and thumbs up all around.

“But I think that if we say at night then we should also say that we don’t use the computer after 1 am.”

“Why?”

“Do we really need to make rules like that?”

“Well if we don’t put a limit on it then people will stay up late and they won’t be rested, they won’t participate in the morning’s activities....”

“Umm..... guy? don’t you think that’s a little paternalistic?”

“If people can’t get up that’s their problem, no? We’re not here to be Mommy and Daddy, the whole point is to...”

“Give ourselves a chance to...”

“Doing things this way means trying to have faith in people....”

“And they might let you down, sure....”

“But the point is to practice, like, being responsible for our own actions...”

“So that we don’t NEED rules like that.”

“It’s like expecting failure.”

“Anyways fuck rules.”

“Yeah, goin all authoritarian on us or what?”

“Watcha gonna do if we break curfew huh? Give us a spanking?!”

“Mamacita!”

“Anyways you think people will sleep in cuz of staying up late doing email? Wait til we whip out the *aguardiente*, that’ll really mess up their morning!”

And as if on cue, out came the guitars and the liquor. New faces from the Cuban Libertarian Movement showed up and we all moved into the next room, also an empty cement box but much larger. We arranged plastic chairs in a circle and sat down to drink and sing. The bottle of *aguardiente* and a small shot glass traveled around the circle til it was empty and replaced by a new one. The anarchists sang for hours, getting better with each bottle. The Venezuelans knew the Cuban revolutionary songs and the Cubans knew the Argentinean ones; the Americans knew a few Mexican ones and the Mexicans sang Woody Guthrie. The French sang the *Internationale* and the rest were drunk enough to fake it.

Most of us got up early in the morning. Clara from Indymedia Arizona in Tucson started the Videoactivism workshop at 10 am, a practical workshop on producing independent films or short documentaries. The first day was about how to organize, fund, plan and do the project itself, including footage. The second day was about editing with FinalcutPro, subtitles and other artistic and technical issues. The place was packed, there was over 40 people in the room and others arriving in droves. Many were local activists from Caracas, others had come from Colombia and other places in South America, a few were WSF internationals who had heard about it one way or another. The keyholders, cleaners and organizers were running around in panic, partly ecstatic about the turnout, partly terribly overwhelmed. There really was a lot going on. The FSA involved a workshop series that ran back-to-back all day at the ONG and film screenings every night in the same place. Beyond that, there was panel discussions, activities and more workshops

taking place off site. Many of the organizers took off in the mornings to accompany the events taking place elsewhere, leaving us internationals to keep house in the ONG. That night we watched a documentary called *Nuestro Petroleo y Otros Cuentos*³² that dealt with the experiences of indigenous villagers being displaced by drilling projects. Women interviewed gave testimony as to the still-births and birth defects caused by living close to the fumes. Dozens of women in the region had given birth to babies without any brain whatsoever, and most deaths in the area are cancerous. Chavez has buried the ecological and medical investigations because the state revolution is now funded with the nationalized oil industry. At the end of the film we were invited to a live panel and discussion with indigenous activists from the area, who were fighting oil drilling and coal mining on their ancestral lands. That was where we met Angela and Lusbi.

Coming back from the event on coal in Zulia, we saw that the *Alterforo* had finally been printed. It was 16 pages of newsprint, including a schedule of events, an introduction to the collectives and organizations that were participating, and various articles on Venezuelan social movements and politics. One discussed the free trade agreement called the IIRSA³³, which is basically the same thing as the FTAA³⁴ but just excluding the Yankees. The argument was that Chavez is still participating in neo-liberal policies and economics; he's still destroying the Amazon to build pipelines and selling off the country to transnational corporations, just not Yankee ones. At least 4 of the articles had to do with the oppression of indigenous peoples under Chavez and the ecological devastation wrought

³² Our Oil and Other Tales (2004)

³³ *Integración de la Infraestructura Regional Sur America* or Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America; trade agreement involving the building of highways, pipelines and mines to extract electricity, water, oil and other wealth.

³⁴ Free Trade Area of the Americas, stalled by activists and the refusal of Venezuela and Brazil to sign on. Other multi- and bi-lateral agreements are quickly circumventing resistance, i.e. IIRSA, PPP, TLC, CAFTA, AFTA (see glossary).

by accelerated resource extraction. One dealt with the increasing militarization that is being legitimized in these “revolutionary times”. A group of us discussed going together the next day to the WSF rallies to hand out copies. We figured it could be a good strategy for a bunch of us white English speakers to go do it because we could translate and communicate on the spot and also wouldn’t attract as much surveillance. Military police had been seen circling the ONG.

I sat overlooking the patio and doorway with the key in my lap. It was my turn to be gatekeeper. Franco and Zeta from Caracas were chatting next to me on the balcony along with Susie and Clara from the States, who also spoke Spanish.

"Hey, look at that guy parking over there, he's right up on the sidewalk, he's totally blocking...", said Clara. Zeta threw his hands up:

"That's what's great about Venezuela, law don't matter anyway!"

"Yeah, its like we are all anarchists in this country!"

"Nobody respects the government."

"There's more to being an anarchist than that though!" interjected Susie.

"Yeah anarchy isn't about a lack of order, its about doing things non-hierarchically. It's not rejecting *order* its rejecting *power*."

"Same thing."

"No, sometimes having rules - or order or whatever - is necessary to stop *informal* power that emerges in groups."

"What I'm saying is that anarchists are against the state because its a hierarchy, no?"

"Uh.. yeah, but that's not the *only* hierarchy that exists...". The ladies:

"Like, take in meetings for example, back home we have facilitators for meetings which I've noticed doesn't happen here, not this week anyway."

"Yeah I noticed that too, I mean theres sort of *de facto* facilitation but..."

"Well there was that meeting over breakfast the other day that this chick from Ecuador facilitated super formal..."

"Yeah, she was a good facilitator actually."

"We fuckin needed it for that meeting."

"Yeah tell me about it...". Clara turned to Zeta, "Like the meetings are basically the same, the way we make agendas and do go-arounds³⁵ to hear everyone's input, and the decision making is all similar, but the conversations themselves in the meeting are not facilitated."

"Yeah, except for the go-arounds its just a free-for-all."

"And the same people do all the talking."

"I mean, because we are all used to how this shit works, we are self-facilitating pretty well, I mean we all basically understand how to work and communicate in a way that's..."

"Non-authoritarian?"

"Well yeah, but you can still see power dynamics in those meetings, some people are taking up way to much space, whereas others haven't said a word all week."

"Yeah, that is certainly true.", said Franco, "It's interesting what you say. Here in Venezuela to be an anarchist means to be critical of state power, not necessarily these other kinds..."

³⁵ Everyone speaking in turn once around the circle; no direct responses; often done at the beginning of a meeting to give all a chance to introduce themselves, to propose agenda items, or as a technique during a meeting to ensure hearing everyone's *palabra* on a given issue.

"Well it depends," reflected Zeta, "There is the notion that anarchists are against oppression in general, "power" in general I guess you could say, that's the whole point I guess.". Franco continued, "And for example there's all those animal-rights vegan anarchists that say that humans don't have the right to oppress or control animals, the anarchopunks are often into that."

"Yeah we should think about that more."

"...Uh huh.". The ladies decide this subject is clearly a waste of time.

"I mean don't get me wrong," Clara said, "There's things I love about the way you do shit down here. There's certainly more humor involved, people don't take themselves so goddamn seriously. And people seem more sincere, is what I mean."

"People share differently too, more easily it seems."

"But still, people could always be more respectful.", we agreed. And changed the subject.

Early the next day some Argentineans woke me up, "Hey Erica, breakfast is ready, come eat quick and come with us, we are going to Frank's talk on Cuban Anarchism."

"Where is it?"

"It's in the WSF complex like yesterday and for sure there are gonna be Chavistas planted in there to give Frank a hard time. Critiquing Cuba is like sacrilegious to the Bolivarians, we gotta go back him up."

"Ok I'm coming". The talk was in another beige basement classroom. Frank was the teacher. Frank began to describe the popular revolution in Cuba and how it was usurped by the state. As expected, after about a half hour the talk degenerated when some people at the back called Frank a reactionary for questioning the "people's mandate" enshrined in the

Cuban state and revolution. The argument broke down along the same lines as the conflict in the street with the Chavistas, except this time it was about Cuba and painfully academic.

Next was the workshop on Conscientious Objection and Anti-Militarism given by the War Resisters International³⁶, which provides resources and legal support for conscientious objectors and organizes against the military-industrial complex in a variety of ways. Across borders and generations, anarchists generally agree that the state army is a mechanism whereby the poor are sacrificed as soldiers to protect the politico-economic interests of a state that thrives on their poverty. Albaro invited the 30 of us to break down the complex into its various sectors and come up with some examples³⁷:

Arms and war technology manufacturers: Locke and Martin, Boyd, Halliburton, Caterpillar, Sodexho

Post-war reconstruction contractors: Halliburton, Caterpillar, Beshtel

Banks and financial agencies: the Axa Group and the Banco de Catalan, among many others, offer loans and credit to build land mines and nuclear arms.

Arms fairs: such as those sponsored by the NAA (North American Arms)

Communications and media: Fox and other corporate networks maintain a state of war by breeding fear and legitimization for violence.

"These business promote war, in fact their profitability depends on it. Their interest is profit at the cost of human life. And government and business are indistinguishable in the highest ranks. This is clear when Caterpillar bids for reconstruction of Iraq before it has been attacked yet, or when arms manufacturers fund election campaigns or create weapons on contract by government, and when top officials in the United States government are executives in the Halliburton Corporation like the situation we see now. American oil companies and pipeline firms want contracts, the government wants control of the oil, thousands of regular Americans and Iraqis die to steal oil and funnel it on over to Empire so they can finance even more death and destruction. Right? Clearly the military-industrial

³⁶ The WRI was founded in 1925 and now includes 70 collectives in 33 countries.

³⁷ List directly from workshop notes.

complex will not be affected by petitioning the state. In any case, the military-industrial complex is a global phenomenon, involving transnationals, investors, governments and victims around the world; it is mobile and flexible enough to transcend any "national" campaign. The WRI has an internationalist and direct-action approach. For example, what are some ways we can directly intervene in the complex? Lets brainstorm."

"Well I'm from Belgium and there we did this campaign against this fascist bank by picketing and postering, "Buy a house, build a bomb" and it actually worked, they stopped investing in arms..."

"We could shut down job fairs in universities when they come to recruit more drones."

"What about boycotts in general?"

"Direct action against banks and businesses, like blockades or property destruction."

"Shareholder campaigns" Albaro was scribbling as we shouted out ideas.

"We made this soup kitchen at our university called "The People's Potato" and fed everybody for free everyday with donated and dumpstered food³⁸. Above all the idea was to feed people, but it was also a conscious action against Sodexho's exclusivity contract at Concordia. No one's allowed to *sell* food but since you can give it away for free..."

"Wow, that's wicked."

"Oh hey, we forgot one earlier, all the chemical companies, like Monsanto and those guys who make all the pesticides for Plan Colombia³⁹ and stuff like that."

"Totally."

³⁸ When you go "dumpster-diving" and eat what you find, that's dumpstered food.

³⁹ The name of the American chemical warfare campaign in Colombia, sometimes advertised as "the War on Drugs".

"One strategy in general could be to pick 1 or 2 corporations that are supremely evil, like Monsanto and Halliburton for example⁴⁰, and organize a concerted international mobilization and denunciation of their activities. Lots of people are against genetically modified food and terminator seed technology as well as... well... war of course, but who links it with those corporations? Not enough people. That needs to be politicized."

And so on.

The ONG was full now, with way more people crashing there than had been planned. This was the inevitable outcome everyone had been fearing. But despite the initial appearance of chaos, things were actually running well; the bathrooms were clean, the meals were ready on time, and so far nothing had been stolen.

After dinner every night the open air kitchen turned into a jumping roof party. It always started with salsa and ended in ska. Some danced while other shared stories. Groups of foreigners in their 20s gathered around those of their parents generation to hear about Cuba in the 50s, Argentina in the 60s and Chile in the 70s. Marina from Argentina impressed us all with her stories of the wombstrike they organized in the 60s, against conscription, and her friend told us stories about the *piqueteros*⁴¹. A guy from Chile announced that Salsa came from Puerto Rico and the Cubans devoured him. People jumped around, danced and flirted, made out on the dance floor and videotaped each other being silly with their Indymedia equipment. Men cheated on their wives saying, "We're anarchists after all, she agrees with me, its totally fine!", when it totally wasn't⁴². One of them was

⁴⁰ Monsanto is the chemical agrobusiness giant that manufactures genetically modified seeds whose plants cannot reproduce. This is so farmers have to buy seeds every year, but could kill the planet. Halliburton is the American oil company (owned largely by Dick Cheney) which is currently operating in Iraq.

⁴¹ The recent mass movement of unemployed workers in Argentina.

⁴² This is actually confirmed: I spoke with two such wives in the months following.

hovering over me, drunk, blathering on about polyamory at the precise moment someone came up the stairs and handed me the key, "Can you take this for awhile, I need to switch off its driving me crazy.", so I took it. Perfect escape. But now I had the stupid key again, damn. I walked over. Hopefully there would be some people hanging around in the dorms, where there is a balcony overlooking the door, so I could enjoy myself while keeping an eye out.

I walked up the stairs and heard voices and laughing inside the dorm; I walked into a cloud of pot smoke. "Hey, this thing is hotboxed! Who found rolling papers?"

"No where man, you can't get 'em *anywhere*." A Rasta kid from Montana had rescued everyone with the brilliant idea of carving a pipe out of an apple. The room was packed and all were talking and laughing at once, this time in English.

"Hey Erica have you gone to the World Social Forum at all since you been here?"

"Yeah a little bit. Hey could I come over by the window there, I have the key and need to look...."

"Oh yeah sure, how'd you get stuck with the key?"

"Oh whatever, bullshit. It's fine though."

"I'll take it after you for awhile if you want, I'm over here anyways."

"Cool, thanks Lisa."

"So how was the Social Forum?"

"I went to see this panel on women in Colombia but I couldn't find it. I ended up going to this one on gene modification, nanotechnology and patenting of life though, it was CRAZY, absolutely terrifying..."

"Yeah there's some really crazy stuff being shared over there, its true."

"It's also true that it's hard to find shit, I had the same experience.". People joined in.

"It's like they changed all the venues last minute and now the catalogue is useless!"

"Well what do you expect from bureaucracy?"

"The way I see it, like, I think it's easier for the people that came in groups. Big NGOs that have whole delegations and tour buses to get around, and guides, and translators, they are doing OK I'd say... It's if you are alone that it's impossible to orient yourself, participate and stuff."

"Hey... yeah that's interesting, sorta ironic huh?"

"Yeah, like, if you are located somehow in a bureaucracy structure yourself then it's easier to integrate into the... like... system."

"Meanwhile the idea is it's supposed to be a grassroots thing!"

"Yeah ironic."

"Hey pass that apple over here..."

"Thanks."

"Like... some of the people here are really against the WSF it seems, I can't say I'm actually 'against' it but it they do have a point in the sense that... It is more of a 'show' than anything truly revolutionary."

"Like I'm sure that despite the bad organization and ... whatever, there's all kinds of people learning but you can't say the structure itself actually lends itself to participation, interaction, solidarity building or planning actions or anything. It's just a series of lectures and there's not even time to ask questions at the end."

"There's all these people around all the time but it's just this... nebulous mass."

"Everyone's lost!"

"People are wandering around lost in corridors and spending a lot of time waiting and doing nothing... You can't actually say they're, like, organized."

"Where's this apple going?"

"This way man, over here"

"Here, you're gonna need to pack it again."

"Yeah, there IS some amazing stuff to learn over there, I certainly came away overloaded every time I went, but only once did I get to see what I was looking for, and I wandered around a whole hour before finding it and then only saw the last bit."

"Same here."

"It's like... I mean the WSF is cool in terms of a... I dunno ...kind of radical university or something but its not a place for actual organizing."

"No, and that's what's messed up about it, because that's how they are playing it up."

"People play it up like the "globalization movement" or whatever is depending on it, like its gonna help us all organize together but I mean..."

"Yeah, *as if!* More like distract energy and people away from the *actual* organizing they were doing before, like what made up the globalization movement in the first place!"

"They are co-opting our shit man."

"The thing I like about *this* place is that it's not just a show, its not just like switching the TV channel to 'The Revolutionary Network', like you're still this passive drone but now you're absorbing information on environmental collapse..."

"And when the show's over you feel depressed..."

"Helpless."

"And wander away feeling like 'How could I possibly do anything to change this?'"

"Some lonely spectator, a consumer of information, with no venue for action..."

"As isolated as you were before."

The next day we dragged ourselves up to breakfast and discussed the upcoming dilemma. John Holloway's⁴³ presentation was at the same time as the plenary on the ecological movement in Venezuela and the Andes. Despite the draw of Holloway's talk, about 25 of us went over to the plenary. We had all become concerned about the situation since we had arrived and, also, rumor had it that there would be English translation, attracting the Americans.

"The rain is black, the river is full of heavy metals, 96% of our people in the region have skin diseases and 37% of our deaths are from cancer." A slide show behind the Bolivian *indígena* woman showed pictures of birds born without eyes and children with stunted limbs.

"The *Pachamama*⁴⁴ movement started 16 years ago in my country. It is an ecological movement but it is more than that, it is a movement for autonomy, for Life and for humanity. In our cosmology there is no private property. Our *Madre tierra* is not meant to be divided and sold for wealth, for private greed, like what the corporations are doing in this capitalist system. We are organizing against the oil and the mines and at the same time we are protecting our community, our way of life, our rights as people of this Earth, our rights as *indígenas*, and also our rights as women." A Venezuelan *Warao* woman from the Orinoco took over:

"Yes, like here in Venezuela, they say there are new constitutional rights now but these only exist for its citizens, they don't include us women or the *indígenas*. The state has

⁴³ John Holloway is a libertarian academic that lives in Mexico; author of Changing the World without Taking Power (2005)

⁴⁴ Andean term for Mother Earth

never represented our interests or listened to us. That's why we need social movements in Venezuela and can't rely on the government. The powerful movements are demobilized, there is no pressure to see that the government actually does what it says it will do, and resist when it doesn't. For hundreds of years the state has dispossessed us of our lands, enslaved us, poisoned us and our families. Never has this colonial government respected us as people, as *indígenas*, as women and mothers, as protectors of the Earth. The only way for us is to organize, keep our communities strong, fight the mines, the drilling, and refuse to leave the land. They will have to kill us to make us leave the land! We are not leaving alive! For us there is no Life without our land, and we will die to protect it. We must be strong and show an example to the rest of the world, show that another way is possible. That is the burden that has fallen to us, this is the path of the *indígenas* of the world: To preserve the culture of Life against the Empire of greed, to remember when everyone else has forgotten, to remember the way of harmony with the Earth and to teach those who will listen." She paused for the English translator to catch up, who apologized for not capturing the poetry of her words. People in the audience shook their heads and said she was doing a great job and to keep it up.

"We invite all of you to come and see first hand the oil spills and erosion, to see for yourself the devastation, but more than that we invite you to come visit us, eat with us, work with us and live in our communities and see how we live. We will show you how the earth provides food for the hungry, how we have everything we need already, and are in no need of any 'development' program." Her *compañera* continued, "This summer we will be occupying the area planned for mining; Chavez has already sold this land of ours to the Brazilian company Vale de Rio Dulce to excavate but we will not let them. And we invite all

of you to be there with us! *Gracias compañeros y compañeros.*” The crowd roared in applause. Someone whispered something to the translator who then repeated in English and Spanish:

“Everyone is invited to a march tomorrow, Friday, at 9 am, against the coal mines in Zulia. A whole delegation of *Wayuu* are coming in from the interior to participate and if we could get some internationals there that would be really great.” One of the CRA people stood up and added, “Those of you that are staying at the ONG, a bunch of us will be leaving together tomorrow morning and we can all go together.” We looked around the room and nodded at each other.

We gathered at the monument early in the morning. The plaza was full of banners laid out on the ground and people milling about. Some had come for the Zulia march but others were WSF people who were hanging around. We took the opportunity to distribute the last few stacks of *Alterforos*. The *Wayuu* delegation showed up and everyone fussed over them. They were in full ceremonial dress and looked entirely serious. Pedro from the CRA came out of the crowd looking frazzled. “They brought them all ham sandwiches, they don’t eat *ham sandwiches*! I can’t *believe* this, we go through all this and then we can’t even... anyways, fuck, I need to go get...” And wandered off muttering to himself, presumably looking for something more like *Wayuu* food. The guy was at the end of his rope, he’d been running in circles all week.

We started moving slowly down the boulevard, the ecologists, the anarchists and a whole bunch of WSF people who were always ready for another march, any march. The FSA organizers signaled wildly to each other and helped accompany the *Wayuu* to the front of the march with their banner, otherwise the whole message would be lost in the cacophony of pickets and banners: “Stop Bush!”, “Free Tibet!”, “Close Guantanamo!”, “Long live

Fidel!", "Legalize abortion!", "Free Mumia!" and just about every other injustice you could possibly think of.

It worked, we got our sound truck to the front along with the *Wayuu* and sang out against coal in the Sierra de Perija all the way downtown until suddenly chaos erupted. We had been intersected by a mob of red-shirted Chavistas and network reporters. The red-shirts arranged themselves at the front of the march and started yelling "*¡Viva la revolución Bolivariana!*"⁴⁵ and the reporters descended on the white people, sticking microphones in our faces, "*¿Un saludo para el Presidente?*"⁴⁶. At first I wrote it off to WSF pandemonium; I figured they were part of another march that was happening at the same time that we just ran into, but it soon became clear it was no accident. There was no other march, just the red shirts. They zoned in on the anarchists who were obviously accompanying the *Wayuu* and harassed them as *imperialistas*. Gustavo ran up to me saying that some guy had accused him of working for the CIA, "Isn't that just fucking ridiculous?!", Gustavo was a punk kid that didn't speak English. "Anyways the guy wanted to fight me man! Some others started surrounding me and I had to run up here." He paused to catch his breath. As the march organizers fielded the Chavistas, things began to fall apart. We were all surrounded by red-shirts and losing ground. Dozens of Venezuelan flags appeared. The WSF people with their mixed bag of causes were overtaking us, oblivious to the whole charade, and now the banner in front said "Stop Terrorism" with a big picture of Bush next to it. The old Cubans sighed and shook their heads, "Oldest trick in the book...".

Even after hearing all the testimony and seeing all the unmarked cars circling the ONG all week, I had been silently skeptical about the amount of 'conspiracy' against the

⁴⁵ Long live the Bolivarian Revolution!

⁴⁶ A greeting/ salute for the President?

anarchists. When I was told there would be Chavistas 'planted' at Frank's talk, it sounded exaggerated. Looking around at the scene unfolding at the march, however, it no longer seemed unlikely.

Saturday we had a big group meeting. It was the only thing planned, otherwise it was a free day to share and learn from one another before the *Espacio Libertario* the next, and last, day. There was some tension as we gathered in the room, everyone was aware that some liquor had been stolen from Nelson's personal space the night before and we all sort of felt responsible for failing to prevent it. Almost all of us that had been at the first big ONG meeting were at this one too, plus a dozen more who had shown up during the week. There were just a few people staying at the house who didn't come to the meeting, mostly Americans who couldn't speak Spanish. When we had settled into a circle and arranged ourselves, one of the CRA guys said, "So, this meeting was planned for today to be a kind of *encuentro libre* to talk and to evaluate the event as a whole, to have a chance to share feedback about the event, personal experiences, the *autogestión*, whatever comes up. There's no planned agenda or anything."

"Maybe we should start with a go-around?"

"Yeah I don't know everyone here, maybe we should introduce ourselves again."

"And then... can we maybe divide this into some really practical shit we need to deal with right now, and then open it up?"

"Uh.. yeah ok let's get that out of the way and then we'll have a go-around and stuff."

"Everybody cool with that?" Nods. The guy tore in right away:

"Ok so somebody stole Nelson's *aguardiente* last night and it's really not cool, there's people here who are disrespecting the space, treating it like a hotel...". Someone cut him

off. This was the same guy who had tried to institute a curfew at the beginning of the week and by now people had little patience for him.

"Obviously its not cool that it happened, but we don't know who did it and we can't start making assumptions because that's not cool either."

"Well there's people here that aren't even at this meeting, what does that tell you? Obviously they have no idea what *autogestión* is about."

"But that's not the point though." This was a conversation about the Americans although no one was saying it.

"If the problem here is the liquor, then we can replace it. It's not cool that it happened, but anyway I think we are all willing to replace it..." Nods all around.

"But if we are talking about who's here and how they are using the space that's a different issue." Nods again. Someone takes off their hat and sends it around the circle for the *aguardiente* fund.

"All I'm saying is that there are some people here who are taking this seriously and others who are, like, anarchotourists, and taking advantage. People that aren't even involved in political work."

"Like all those people who showed up from the WSF and just started staying here cause they thought it was cool, and they don't really have any idea what we're trying to do."

"Well, wasn't it the point to divert attention from the WSF?"

"Yeah, well, no..."

"The point was to make a space for the ecologists."

"Anyway, I think we should open up the go-around and see what comes out of it."

"Yeah let's do that.", we said, relieved to end the argument.

"Well I'll go first. My name is Evelia, I'm from Argentina. Above all I would like to thank our hosts here, and also say that I thought the whole thing has been a truly impressive act of coordination, the *autogestionamiento* of an event like this isn't easy. I am just so delighted to see so many young people involving themselves, I really feel that we've entered a new period of organizing in recent years. The events and workshops were very successful... What I have also seen that is of tremendous importance, is the sharing and learning going on between everybody in all in between. In this sense I think it is a positive thing that there has been so many people at the ONG. If people want to be here its because we are doing something right! And building a movement means inviting people to join and making it possible to participate and share. If this is a new experience for some then that's good, hopefully it has been inspiring!"

"My turn, ok, well my name's Paulo and I too am just *so* happy that the turnout has been so good and that all the events - well all except one - happened, and mostly on time. Some workshops were so successful that people spontaneously held them again the next day, that was impressive! The direct-action⁴⁷ workshop was also a great success, we actually formed an affinity group⁴⁸ and pulled off an action the next day, some invisible theatre⁴⁹. I would say the ONG worked out pretty well. The key thing got a little crazy and there were some problems - we know what they are - but considering the amount of people that have come in and out of here... Fuckin-A!"

"Me too I think that overall it went well, but some things could have been better. Since this is a space for self-critique, I... well, first of all the vending fell on my shoulders the

⁴⁷ Direct action differs from civil disobedience in that it is not symbolic, but direct; the aim is to succeed in some sort of intervention, not get caught on purpose for show. Such an action could be anything from an illegal occupation, property destruction or sabotage, to guerilla theatre or an unauthorized public art installation.

⁴⁸ A group of people that comes together to organize a direct-action or series of them.

⁴⁹ Theatre you carry out in public without people realizing you are acting; often, as in this case, with subversive intentions, to subtly illustrate a point or expose certain truths.

whole time, that was bad. We could have sold more of the silk-screening and CDs if only we had tried... I mean nobody really likes it, who wants to deal with money? But if we *are* self-financing this event then we have to... well, do what it takes. That's all. But in general I'd say that it was an awesome success and I have met so many cool people here this week, I'm inspired for months to come! That's the other thing that's important about things like this, the human element. Like Evelia was saying. Oh yeah, and about people not being involved, I wanted to say that sometimes I think its not so obvious *how* to get involved, especially if you don't know everybody. That's all."

"Well", said Antonio, one of the Spanish Civil War vets. "My heart is truly touched by the young people taking up the struggle and by everything I have seen here this week. I could go on but I won't speak much here today, just offer one idea I had. I think the most wonderful outcome would be to examine all the critiques that we make here today, and others, and consider them a learning experience. And, then, we should have a meeting with the entire community, including *all* the people that were involved in *all* the different ways, have a self-organized public session of self-critique. This would be an act of real strength. That's all."

"Well I agree with you Antonio", said Frank. "And neither will I speak for very long today. I just want to caution everyone here about insularism in the movement. In order to build a movement you *can't have insularism*. The only other thing I want to say is a huge Bravo! to the organizers for keeping it together all week, everything was smooth, with no serious problems at all to speak of, and I think everyone here has had a wonderful time." And he started clapping so we all joined in. Carmen was smiling through tears, she was so relieved and touched at the sentiment. The go around continued until we had all spoken.

As it continued everyone became more comfortable and opened up a lot more, we decided to go-around again. We left a few hours later, uplifted.

If Saturday was all about the microcosm of anarchy, then Sunday was about the macrocosm. The *Espacio Libertario* was a place to discuss the wider struggles out there in the world, for each of us to share a *palabra* on the political work of our collectives and propose ways of organizing together on into the future. This was a meeting of over 50 people; the first formal go-around took 2 hours. Later there was a discussion to draft a declaration, which lent itself to much polemic; the guys argued about whether to include Castro's name in it for what seemed a disproportionate amount of time. On the fringes of this show, however, there was tons of activity. Dozens of people exchanged emails and schemed about how to integrate their different projects across the world.

Libertarian Declaration of Caracas⁵⁰

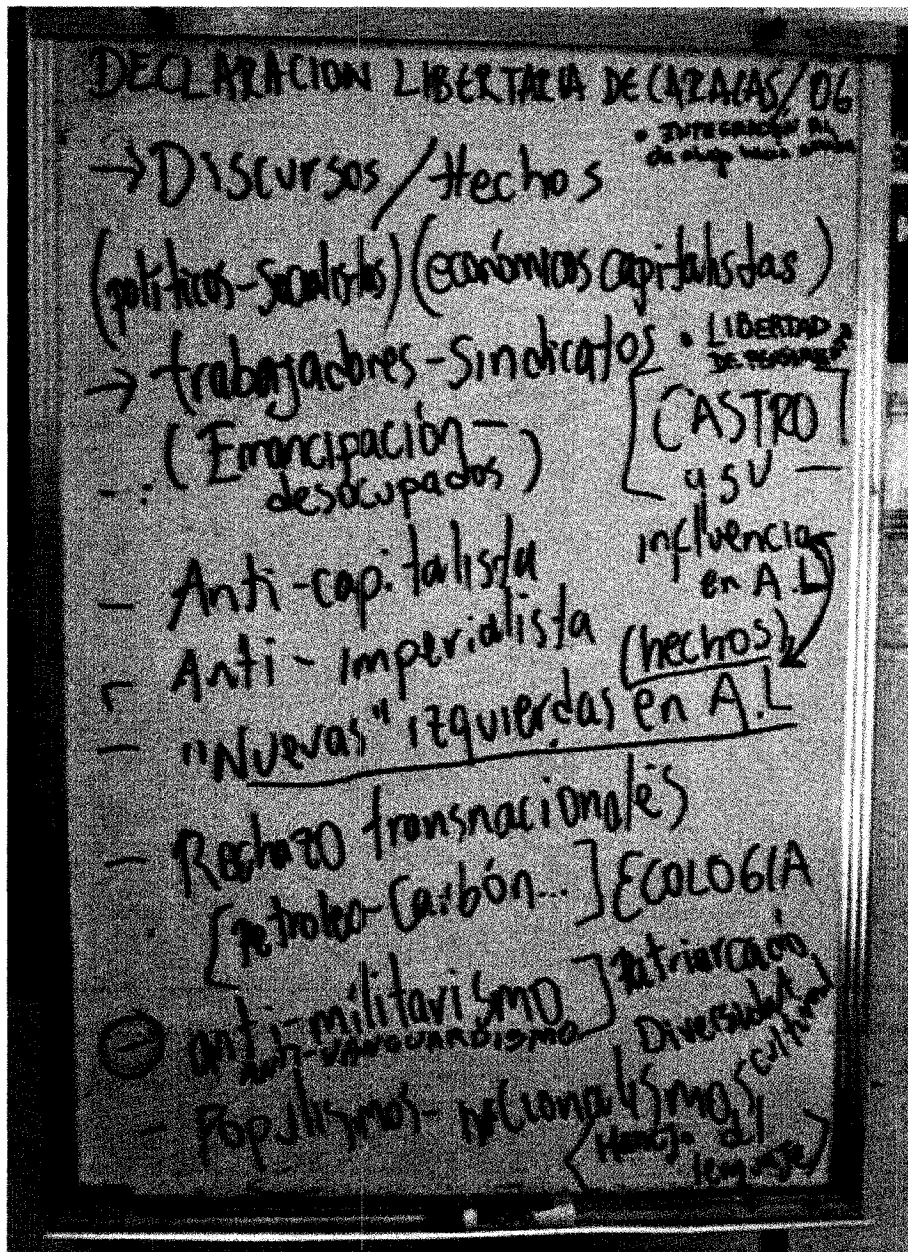
Between January 23 – 29, 2006, anarchist activists gathered in Caracas for the Alternative Social Forum, coming from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Spain, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela. We consider it important to establish a specifically anarchist position that speaks to our experiences and exchanges. In such a spirit we declare the following:

- 1- In accord with our ideological foundations, we can do no less than confirm our deepest rejection of any and all conceivable form of domination and oppression. Therefore, in order to dispel any doubt, distortion or media manipulation we once again condemn the capitalist regime and the state organization of society, as well as militarism, imperialism, patriarchy, racism, the different forms of captivity, the destruction of the environment, the imposition of a supposedly superior culture and any discourse that implies domination.
- 2- On the contrary, we are passionate lovers of freedom; we point out and confirm our inspiration in anarchist egalitarianism and the values of solidarity that inform the construction of a genuinely socialist society here and now, a society defined by direct democracy, federalism and self-management that will surpass artificial state boundaries.
- 3- Likewise, above and beyond the habitual string of good intentions and socialist declarations, we think it appropriate to once again pinpoint that a truly libertarian society can only be the result of conscientious decisions founded in the grassroots and that there is not a single historical example that encourages hope in obscure legalism, engineering from above or strong man messiahs. All of that is nothing more than an anti-emancipatory illusion that must be exposed and discredited.
- 4- This affirmation is particularly timely and necessary as it seems that a new historical cycle is opening up in Latin America in which the people deposit their anguish and hopes in social-democratic and populist governments, invented to manage the crisis of the dominating system, to perpetuate a cosmeticized and sweetened manifestation of the same. Consequently we reaffirm, with the backing of rich historical experience, that there are no statist or vanguard paths towards a socialist libertarian society. To be credible, such a society must be based on the direct participation of grassroots social movements and their non-negotiable self-managed ascent.

⁵⁰ Official translation of the Declaration, my translation.

5- We believe that freedom is not merely a destination but also a road and praxis. Therefore, we defend freedoms already won, as well as those yet to be won, during our long journey, resolutely condemning all governments, including those who call themselves revolutionary. Let's be clear, we oppose all of those who, in Latin America or elsewhere, find their basic inspiration by cutting back on and delaying freedom. We condemn them with absolutely no regards to their "higher" justifications brewed in their delirious imaginations.

6- Lastly, as people belonging to different currents and modalities of anarchist thought and practice, and having shown in real life that it is possible to establish a climate of solidarity and respect among ourselves despite our differences, we wish to emphatically proclaim the possibility and need for our movement to take advantage of the many opportunities to build our network of organization in all ways imaginable. This is and will be our immediate commitment.



Chapter 2

An Autonomist History of Social Movements

The academic scholarship that exists around social movements has focused on specific organizational constellations dating from certain workers' movements of the 19th century; these are the Old Social Movements as found in the literature and involve both communist and nationalist bids for state power as a function of "class war". In the latter half of the 20th century scholars named a different phenomenon New Social Movements, referring to identity-based groups seeking rights and redress from government; these include feminist and civil rights movements of the 1960s among others. Faced with transnational movements that seek neither to replace government nor divested rights, who reject rights to "identity" and "tradition" under sovereign states in preference for "humanity" and a global dissolution of centralized power, scholars acknowledge a lack of disciplinary vocabulary to discuss the phenomenon, often chalking it up to another bizarre affect of postmodernity. The vocabularies that are lacking are of counterpower and autonomy, both non-existent in the OSM-NSM dichotomy but existent in popular thought and practice since long before modern times.

Social Movements Scholarship and the State

Academic conceptualization of social movements stems from Marxist theory and observation of actual mobilizations that seemed to correspond to Marxism. In the latter half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, diverse patterns of resistance existed in

Europe and elsewhere, including the emergence of organized Western anarchism. Marxist theory, however, secured hegemony in the academic imaginary while Marxist movements began to dominate the Western political landscape, each reinforcing the other. Old Social Movements are thus designated as “class-based”, corresponding to the birth of the “social movement” in academia, or organized along ethno-“national” lines, corresponding to the emergence of the “national movement” as an academic concept. (Arrighi 1989: 30).

Movements of this period were oriented toward the state, it being the “key political structure of the modern world” (31) and effects were “to be felt across an entire social space, usually a nation-state, and expected to occur across a wide spectrum” (Day 2005: 65).

While authoritarian models of change existed in this time, they need not be definitive; in fact, many “class-based” and “national” movements are designated as such retroactively; in fact, many of the modern revolutions, such as the Russian, British, French and American, were chaotic constellations of grassroots resistance to capitalist labour and government regulation; most of the revolutionary movement was entirely uninterested in gaining control of the state or replacing it with a better one, and most were indifferent to Marxist illustrations of history. In each case, liberal or Marxist elites usurped revolutionary cooperation in the interests of wealth to protect either mercantilist or state capitalism. Before the late 19th century, “class” was seldom the self-applied label or basis of workers’ mobilization; early workers’ movements sought more free time and less work, even more so than higher wages; workers wanted to spend time with families and friends, they were not concerned with the formation of some Marxist state (see Calhoun 1982; Mathieu 1991). It has often been family dynamics, men’s changing gender identities that have presupposed their collective mobilization as workers (Byrne 2002).

New Social Movements refer to social movements in the West in the post WWII period; these are said to revolve around identities and rights rather than class as the main social cleavage (Edelman 2002: 417). NSMs are also contrasted with the Old in terms of their various orientations to state power; whereas Old movements are oriented to nationalist party politics, New ones reject party politics and the verticality of the traditional Left (Edelman 2002: 417). Rather than seeking social transformation via control of state governments, NSMs seek to effect change along a certain number of axes rather than all at once (Day 2005: 70). This paradigm was introduced by Alain Touraine (1974) and developed by others such as Laclau and Mouffe (1994) who suggested that “Western societies are moving towards an increasing degree of democracy via expanding notions of who should have access to liberty, equality and community.” (in Day 2005: 72). This is characterized as “in line with history” as NSMs emerge out of the “crisis of modernity” (Edelman 2002: 417). The NSMs are still preoccupied with social change occurring in the space of the nation-state, however, and have largely directed energies to modifying juridical structures of state governments (Day 2005: 70). The NSMs analysed in much academic literature, as well as the academics that analyse them, seem to take it for granted that the purpose of social movements generally speaking is to ‘impact’ government policy (Whittier 2002), bridge the gap between ‘micro’ interactions and ‘macro’ structures (Staggenborg 2002), ‘steer’ government in the desired direction (Kolb 2005; Della Porta 2005) and gain power through ‘recognition’ (Escobar 1992). Some suggest they are generally concerned with a “politics of everyday life and individual transformation” (Melucci 1989: 5), resulting in a blurring of “public” and “private” spheres (Laclau and Mouffe as quoted in Edelman 2002: 417), although this more accurately refers to women’s movements than NSMs in any general sense. Many theorists have characterized NSMs as preoccupied with “cultural struggles over

meanings, symbols, collective identities and rights to specificity and difference” (Escobar 1992; Melucci 1989) and suggest that these are accorded more weight than socio-economic concerns. Such a statement, however, obscures the fundamental socio-economic dimension of struggles to improve the situation of women, queers and people of colour (Day 2005: 72). Those that cast NSMs as “single-issue” movements ignore long-standing analyses of relations between various struggles, such as the relationship of feminism to capitalist patriarchy and the relationship of civil rights struggles to imperialist slavery. To suggest that displacement of “class” as fundamental antagonism necessarily renders social movements merely symbolic is to fail to acknowledge the intersections between class and identity that correspond to lived experiences of those living in poverty (Edelman 2002: 419).

Post/modern mobilizations around identity specifically emerge from shared exploitations within capitalism rather than any essential commonality; they are a function of discursive cooperation among those who have recognized they are being slighted along the same axes. But, some will say, not all identity-based movements are anti-capitalist in their goals; indeed, many identity-based movements, although perhaps rooted in capitalist oppression, seek to secure rights and privileges within the system of power rather than seek to dissolve it. This is the danger of reifying identity rather than moving “against-and-beyond” it as a function of capitalist alienation (Holloway 2005); we must beware the coagulation of identity as a process of fetishization. While the post-materialist character of NSMs has been exaggerated, it is true that the “identity-politics” that have emerged within and by way of NSMs have served to divide struggles within popular classes. Some suggest that the NSMs have “helped reproduce the fragmentation of the popular classes sought by state and market” (Vilas as quoted in Edelman 2002: 417); what matters to the “stability of capitalism is not the particular composition of identities (...) but identity as such. A struggle

that does not move against identification as such blends easily with the shifting patterns of capitalist domination.” (Holloway 2005: 103). Reformist identity-politics within NSMs, and the scholarship consecrating them, both resonate with dehumanizing aspects of neoliberal postmodernity: The accentuation of difference and otherness that both their theory and practice imply is a reaction to rising inequality, insecurity and adaptation to the flexible accumulation of capitalism (Vilas in Edelman 2002: 417).

A False Dichotomy

The differences between OSMs and NSMs cannot be construed as a class/identity dichotomy; class mobilization is spurred by common identification and identity mobilization is inspired by a shared class of oppression. Indeed this dichotomy rests on a rather tenuous distinction between “class” and “identity” in language itself; much of this distinction is socially constructed in the context of Marxist reconstructions of history and the emergent alienation of capitalism, arbitrary *ipso facto*. The only persuasive difference between OSMs and NSMs is the tendency of movements in the 19th and early 20th century to seek to replace government, versus the tendency of movements post-WWII to persuade government to be nice to them. This is meaningful in various ways but cannot be construed as a dichotomy nor as a universal historic trend. What of the movements of Latin America in recent decades, which have been an eclectic mix of insurrectionary marxist guerilla movements, indigenous autonomy movements, land occupations and rights-based activism? What of social movements that existed before Marxism? What of women’s movements against land enclosure at the dawn of capitalism? What of all the religious and spiritually-

based mobilizations against state/capitalism that have occurred both in Europe and wherever colonialism ventures? These have always been bracketed precisely because they do not seek to engage or replicate state power. This reflects the tautology of modern political science, whereby politics is co-defined with the state while the state decides what is political; projects of social engineering within state politics are designated as “progress” whereas projects outside state parameters are seen as backward, regressive, detrimental or, at the very least, irrelevant for social transformation. These modernist definitions of politics reflect the “great typological division between Savage and Civilized man, (the) unbridgeable gulf whereby everything was changed, for, on the other side, Time became History.” (Clastres 1987: 200). This passage is constructed of course, “Not only do we, in industrial societies, still have kinship (and cosmologies); other societies have social movements and revolutions.” (Graeber 2004: 54). Precisely because kinship and cosmology are bracketed as culture by the politics of modernity, we should examine the political function of this very displacement, investigate who and what it serves. Also, we should recognize social movements outside the time/space of modernity with the effect of broadening horizons of revolutionary possibility.

*Against-and-Beyond Identity and the Politics of Demand*⁵¹

Modern political movements are “driven by a fantasy of emancipation within existing structures of domination” (Day 2005: 84); they “rely on similar logic, a logic of representation of interests within a state-regulated system of hegemonic struggles.” (76).

⁵¹ See Holloway (2005) for his discussion of “moving against-and-beyond identity”; see Day (2005) for analysis of the “politics of demand”

They are concerned with changing the *content* of systems of domination but not domination itself nor its form. The system of domination is left unchallenged while the state is cast as “neutral arbiter, a monological consciousness that, upon request, dispenses rights and privileges in the form of a gift.” (80). Old Social Movements involved:

state encapsulation of the projected development of the proletariat (that) contradicted the uniting of the workers of the world. It deflected the formative revolutionary tendencies into national and international organs... that work through, and so reinforce and depend upon, one of the fundamental structures and planes of operation of the capitalist economy, namely, the relational network we call its interstate system... following the accessions to power of social and/or national antisystemic movements, a marked increase in the structural ‘centralization’ of the state has occurred, that is, a marked increase in what we’re calling here the deepening of stateness. (Arrighi 1989: 68; 43)

Deepening of stateness refers to the expansion of laws, agencies to enforce them, surveillance and the proportion of the labour force engaged in formal state activity (see also Scott 1985: 29). The state is also entrenched by rights-based activism, which seeks recognition of an oppressed identity by the state apparatus and its inclusion in the list of “those who are to be granted equal rights” (Day 2005: 76). Limited gains may be made this way but ultimately the state mechanisms of domination are reinforced; the state bureaucracy entrenches itself by way of a politics of demand:

Every demand, in anticipating a response, *perpetuates* these structures, which exist precisely in anticipation of demands. This leads to a positive feedback loop, in which the ever-increasing depth and breadth of apparatuses of discipline and control create ever-new sites of antagonism, which produce new demands, thereby increasing the quantity and intensity of discipline and control. (Day 2005: 89)

Nicole Laurin-Frenette has explored this phenomenon in relations to women’s movements; when oriented to the state they constitute a particularly ironic politics of demand, considering the state is founded in patriarchal family as well as the negation and denial of the politically-constructed “nature” of this family. She notes that, “By addressing itself to the State, the women’s movement formulated its principal demands in the language

of the State. Thus, women claimed rights the State can accord, reforms the State can accomplish, resources the State can distribute.” (Laurin-Frenette 1981: 183) ; these women’s victories are also victories of the State ; contestation directed towards the State is absorbed while the State disposes minimum resources necessary to quell unrest, its principal function (184).

Not only do such politics of demand reinforce systems of domination but they engender new ones. The state is not a neutral arbiter but rather mediates the complex hierarchies upon which it depends; for this reason, gains made for some translate into losses for others (Day 2005: 80). For example, the capitalist state system fundamentally relies on unpaid work of the “household”; one particular demographic gaining new “rights” will not preempt this situation; i.e. Western women’s trend away from work in the household involves the creation of new classes of migrant and immigrant women of colour domestics (Mohanty 2003: 246). To challenge capitalism, its compounded and divisive oppressions, we must avoid the trap of starting with the multiplicity; instead, “we need to start with the prior multiplication that gives rise to this multiplicity. Rather than starting with the multiple identities, we need to start from the process of identification that gives rise to those identities.” (Holloway 2005: 42).

There is a world of difference between a struggle that simply identifies (that says ‘we are black’, ‘we are Irish’, ‘we are Basque’, as though these were fixed identities rather than moments of struggle) and a struggle that identifies and, in the very moment of identification, negates that identification: we are indigenous-but-more-than-that, we are women-but-more-than-that. Whereas the latter moves against identification in the very process of asserting identity, the former is easily absorbed into a fragmented world of identities. (Holloway 2005: 103)

All conceptualization involves some process of identification; if we cannot identify, we cannot think, “The difference is between an identification that stops there and an identification that negates itself in the process of identifying (...), between conceptualising on

the basis of being and conceptualising on the basis of doing.” (Holloway 2005: 102). The process of identification is revolutionary but identity-politics are a fetishization, a function of capitalism.

Autonomous Resistance in Imperial Europe

Before identity-politics, nationalist movements and Marxism, there were movements against nations. Anti-colonial movements of the mercantilist period as well as movements against private property in Europe both recognized State and colonial governments as the harbingers of capitalist labour and slavery. These autonomous movements aimed to retain land, dignity and personhood in the face of encroaching capitalism. They were articulated in diverse ways concomitant with local religious, spiritual and political paradigms, none of which were based on the *a priori* assumptions of modern political science. Resistance to capitalism was thus not divorced from everyday life, the “private” sphere. This is the first alienation of capitalism, whereby the product (of the public sphere) is conceptually divorced from its process of formation (in the private sphere). The assumption of spheres had not yet become normalized. Instead of perceiving the political as delimited by the spectacle of modern public politics, oppression and resistance was located in real life. Transcending the Western dichotomy that contrasts politics with kinship, cosmology and by extension most non-Western social movements, involves first thinking our way out of the trap whereby political activity is “public”, formal and secular. The history of resistance has largely been “private”, informal and religious; the most effective resistance is of cosmological proportions and takes place, must take place, in everyday life.

In 16th and 17th century England, movements of commoners – those who lived and worked the land in common – mobilized against the enclosures of private property being dug and erected by nascent States and their militias (Brockway 1980). They recognized land enclosure as a strategy to turn them into resourceless labourers and slaves. Not only did they lose their subsistence base with the loss of the commons, but new State laws redefined the landless as vagabonds, beggars, idle persons, criminals and thieves, thereby justifying their torture and incarceration in work camps and “correction-houses for masterless men and women” (Linebaugh 2000: 50, 56). They were likewise impressed into the imperialist navy or banished to the “New World” where they would serve as indentured labourers in the plantation economy. The Virginia Company proudly declared its goal to make the whole country of the New World into an enormous Bridewell, one of the most infamous prisons of England (58). English and other European commoners denounced capitalism as slavery; they fought against private property in practice as well as principle. While the “tragedy of the commons”⁵² is invoked by Liberals to rationalize the emergence of private property as a function of population saturation, in fact the commoners did not turn on each another; the tragedy is in the hands of government, who tortured, branded, dismembered and hanged the commoners that did not comply with capitalist prerogatives. Private property does not emerge naturally or practically in any utilitarian sense; it does not emerge out of European “culture” but rather its kingdoms. Neither does it necessarily emerge from Christianity. The social movements against enclosure and slavery in Europe were often articulated in Christian principle, whereby people were to live by way of grace not works, i.e. by faith not riches, by moral merit not inheritance. These Antinomians – meaning “against or opposed

⁵² While these arguments may be dated back further, the specific phrase “tragedy of the commons” and its application in this historical context is first found in William Forster Lloyd’s Two Lectures on the Checks to Population. Oxford University Press (1833).

to the law” (Hall 1990: 3) - insisted it was “unlawful for a Christian to be a magistrate” and profit from power or the labour of others (Linebaugh 2000: 85). The notion of free grace encouraged “self-declared, often poor saints to take the law into their own hands.” (192). The radical congregational church movements were opposed to social and political privilege, stating “God is no respecter of persons” (85; see also Brockway 1980: 131) and churches were “governed from below, by mutual consent, rather than from above, by elder, king or nation, and organized on principles of lawful debate, dispute, protest and questioning.” (Linebaugh 2000: 65). These social movements were direct action movements; the millenarian movement of the Diggers was named for digging up fences and enclosures; their movement to repossess the land at one point totaled 12 communes, freeing thousands from slavery (Brockway 1980: 124-131). There were many movements led by women, who were particularly slighted by new capitalist relations; they resisted the stealing of children and burning of women parallel with new measures of population control; they led movements of sabotage, attacking ditches, dykes and tools (Linebaugh 2000: 45). The witch hunt emerged in response to such autonomous women’s resistance and was most ferocious between 1550 and 1650, “simultaneously with the enclosures, the beginning of the slave trade and the enactment of laws against the vagabonds, in countries where a reorganization of work along capitalist lines was underway.” (Federici 1988: 37).

Meanwhile, over in the “New World”, deported labourers, inmates and slaves were defecting as much and as quickly as they possibly could to live in indigenous communities. They escaped shipwrecks and plantations to the woods to live in classless, stateless, egalitarian societies, whose powerful example of alternative ways of life was brought in tales back to Europe (Sioui 1992: 28; Linebaugh 2000: 23). The indigenous peoples of North America, as in many other places, had no private property, did not work, were idle and

healthy, and in many cases, both men and women had sexual freedom outside of marriage (Leacock 1978; Etienne & Leacock 1981; see also Draper 1975; Lee 2003: 89-90); Europeans made certain connections between the communalism of America and that of their ancestors in Europe (Linebaugh 2000: 26). The threat of these associations was so powerful, all found defectors were tortured and killed; others lived free and intermarried or were adopted into native communities such as the Tuscarora and Cayuga. They did not have a politics of identity as we are accustomed to; these converts were not conceived as “White Indians or Red Englishmen” but, if anything, as Anglo-Powhatans, with reference to the language barrier (34). Race was not yet a salient political category.

During these times justice was not conceived as a national project; rather, it was declared that the commons could not exist in one country only (Linebaugh 2000: 141). The commoners preceded Marx in understanding that capitalist social relations have never been limited by state frontiers. African, American and European escapees spoke pidgin tongues and mixed with indigenous communities in the pirate strongholds of Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Bermuda, North Carolina, Bay of Campeche and Honduras (168; see also Rediker 2004). As for the pirates, they explicitly rejected nationality, declared they had “no country” but rather “come from the seas” (Linebaugh 2000: 165). George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, was inspired by indigenous practices of counterpower (leveling schemes) and subsequently imprisoned for inspiring revolutionary consciousness among commoners while living with pirates (94-5).

The alliance between Irish, African and native slaves constituted a larger threat as multiethnic and maroon communities proliferated. In the 17th century, capitalist powers began to more formally differentiate servants and slaves in attempts to preempt their cooperation and normalize slavery (Linebaugh 2000: 126). Servants were made legally

accountable and punishable for slaves' insubordination to specifically create conflicts of interest (136). The discourse of the "Freeborn Englishman" was born; "the development of the English doctrine of white supremacy thus occurred in the context of counterrevolution, the restoration of the monarchy, and the advance of the slave trade." (134). The defeat of slave/servant rebellions and the "recomposition of the plantation proletariat coincided with the origins of scientific racism (139). Language was instrumentalized as well; ships purposely loaded slaves and labourers from different continents and regions to preempt collaboration; pidgin English developed in this context of rebellion.

The initial resistance to capitalism was internationalist and the subsequent divisions among workers and slaves, citizens and immigrants, can be seen as a result of the specific maneuverings of capitalism, rather than any sort of "natural" xenophobia. While there has been territorial conflict along many lines in human history, conflict specifically along lines of nation and race is a function of imperialism and the specific conflicts of interest it creates with its structures of privilege. This is comparable to the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism; while gender relations have been diversely arranged outside of imperialism, capitalist patriarchy consolidates an unprecedented global structure of male dominance inherent in the alienation of spheres. Neither imperialist racism nor capitalist patriarchy may be retroactively characterized as latent in human nature or a function of essential forms and tensions. There is nothing natural about Eurocentric racism, nor the constructed cleavages between citizens and non-status peoples; there is nothing natural about state-institutionalized rape and control of women's bodies, nor their fetishization as commodities, i.e. their specific *objectification*, within capitalism (see Stoler 2000).

The rebellious cooperation and collective actions I have just been describing are not normally considered social movements or even political in any way. This is because they exist and function outside the realm of “civil society” or the State and, furthermore, specifically work against it; they are more often characterized as crime. In terms of anticolonial resistance, creative strategies of evasion are dismissed as ritual performance, based in myth not politics, mere coping mechanisms that are considered “functionally valuable insofar as they ‘empower the weak’, but only because the universal principles of the Enlightenment project have not yet been fully realized.” (Asad 2002: 135). In his discussion of “weapons of the weak”, Scott reminds us that “indigenous and peasant resistance will often make use of implicit understandings and ‘informal’ networks” (Scott 1985: xvi, xvii). For those most vulnerable within the system, direct or overt confrontation can be suicidal; instead, patient, silent struggles are waged. These are not accorded significance because they are not the ‘mass’ movements of Marxism and do not evoke notions of national wars of liberation. But we must admit that a squatting movement is as much a social movement as a formal land invasion:

Formal, organized political activity, even if clandestine and revolutionary, is typically the preserve of the middle class and the intelligentsia; to look for peasant politics in this realm is to look largely in vain. It is also – not incidentally – the first step toward concluding that the peasantry is a political nullity unless organized and led by outsiders. (Scott 1985: xv)

June Nash suggests that:

indigenous social movements are difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend in the Aristotelian and Cartesian traditions that dominate Western perspectives. In this framework, hierarchy and opposition are the framework for thinking about social mobilization. Continuity and persistence of the same organizations are applauded, and the shifting processual “coming into being only to become something else” is often considered a sign of failure. The closest we come to appraising the subtle maneuvers of oppressed people who are trying to make a bid for change is through the Marxist

dialectical approach that sees contradictions within a structure to be the emergent framework of opposition. Even within that framework, it is almost impossible to conceptualize the fluid and often acephalous organization of *campesino* mobilizations. (Nash 2001: 173)

Indigenous peoples' resistance to the encroachment of State/capitalism has taken many forms; when collective thought, word and action of communities in resistance is complicit, cooperative and purposeful, we may call it a social movement. This is true of the strategies of the Tsimihety of Madagascar, who maintain an egalitarian social organization, not by way of any direct confrontation with the state for "independence" but precisely through the art of evasion, a relatively unique but meaningful example. They used the same techniques against the French that they had used to evade the Sakalava monarchy; administrators would visit to plan building roads and other development projects with apparently cooperative village elders, and would return a week later with materials only to find the entire village abandoned. Every single inhabitant had moved in with relatives in another part of the country (Graeber 2004: 55). Other Malagasy peoples developed discourse and practice of counterpower parallel with colonial conquest; all relations of command came to be regarded as variations of slavery; hierarchy began to constitute the very definition of illegitimacy (32). The passive resistance that has gradually deprived the state of its substance, combined with the elaboration of autonomous forms of self-government, can be read as a revolution (33, 63).

There has been much evasive resistance in Europe too; the examples continue with the centuries. In year VII of postrevolutionary France, thousands of people mysteriously lost fingers on their right hands, more than could be attributed to normal injury, soon becoming the most common excuse to evade conscription into the state wars of expansion. These early war-resisters were an organized people's movement, involving the complicity and cooperation of family, parish, local authorities, entire cantons (Scott 1985: 30). While

these people, now known as the French, were not as successful as the Malagasy in their efforts, they may be understood along the same continuum. Defection and evasion, conscious and unconscious, individual and collective, are political acts and should be considered within the realm of political and social struggle. The American Civil War was won as much by the Southerners who defected as by the Northerners that fought; the Southern poor deserted the confederate army in droves leading to its collapse. Some left for material reasons, some for political ones; whether you consider it a “social avalanche of petty acts of insubordination” or a “vast movement of collective complicity” is truly a matter of choice (Scott 1985: 31). In Hobsbawm’s writing on bandits – avengers who rob the rich - he correlates them to a transitional stage between tribal and industrial society, relegates them to proto-politics as they are “incapable” of conceiving land-reform policy (1969: 15, 22); was Sandino not a revolutionary simply because he did not have a national programme? (see Palmer 1988). Has no one considered that a preference for autonomous land occupations and other leveling schemes may reflect conscious rebel rejection of centralized government? While characterized as stubbornly “backward” and “traditionalist”, perhaps these criminals are concerned for the future rather than affected by nostalgia; a bandit persecuting the Jacobins is quoted as saying: “You’re an educated man and a lawyer: do you really believe we’re breaking our bones for Francis II?” (Hobsbawm 1969: 22). These are not traditionalists, they are autonomists.

One cannot speak of modern “anarchism” and apply it to these contexts; this formalized discourse is historically situated; anarchism arises in 19th century Europe and adopts the framework of political economy. This discourse resonates with struggles and articulations of much popular anticapitalist resistance, however; anarchist cooperative and syndicalist movements proliferated in Europe in the 19th and early 20th century. Perhaps

notably, it was in Andalusia, a famous stronghold where bandits reigned, where Spanish rural anarchism emerged with force just a few decades later (Hobsbawn 1969: 23).

Anarchism and Magonismo: Indigenous Articulations Against Capitalism

At the turn of the 20th century, anarchism spread with immigration to North America where an internationalist movement of landed and immigrant poor organized against capitalism and wage slavery. Workers, beggars and the unemployed engaged in a grassroots politics that involved communal kitchens, hobo colleges and “free schools” as well as direct action protest and wildcat strikes⁵³. Much organizing centered around the Industrial Workers of the World, or the Wobblies movement, which was a radical union movement that sought the abolition of wage work rather than recognition and privileges in the system according to trade; for this reason, unlike trade unions, the IWW often worked in solidarity with immigrant workers rather than against their interests.

South of the border, *mestizos* and *indígenas* were organizing against the Porfiriato⁵⁴. Of the many currents within the Mexican Revolution, Magonismo represented one of the most powerful and libertarian. Ricardo Flores Magón (1874 –1922) was a Oaxacan *indígena* who left the region to work in the interests of revolution and in 1900 started the publication *Regeneración* that diffused radical indigenist revolutionary propaganda. Much colonial incursion into the province of Oaxaca had provoked organization against colonial government and inspired a politics of indigeneity (Nash 2001: 172). After being imprisoned

⁵³ Wildcat strikes are worker-organized initiatives and not formally sanctioned by any institutionalized labour union.

⁵⁴ The Porfiriato refers to the reign of Porfirio Díaz, dictator of Mexico (1876 – 1911).

various times he self-exiled to the United States where he established a network of relations with *gringo* radicals and immigrant socialists, unionists and anarchists from Russia, Germany and Italy, including Emma Goldman⁵⁵ (Trejo 2005: 116). In 1905, the year of the first IWW convention, Russian and German immigrants were the first to align themselves with the Mexican revolution. The Wobblies sent supplies, funds and people over to the Mexican guerrilla while American anarchists wrote against counterrevolutionary repression and formed the Anti-interventionist League, appealing to the United States government and military to not participate in the counterinsurgency (126, 128). Meanwhile, Magón worked to mobilize migrant Mexican and *chicano*⁵⁶ labourers in the United States and helped radicalize the American Federation of Labour to respond to the growing immigrant labour force (125). These revolutionaries developed a bi-national organizing structure against capitalism and had an explicit critique of borders as such (119); it was clear to all involved that *gringo* business interest was everyone's enemy and borders served to protect it (117). Magonistas in Mexico shared Kropotkin's "The Conquest of Bread"⁵⁷, built communes in Baja California and in 1910 the PLM⁵⁸ declared that it was not fighting to elevate anyone to the presidency, but rather to dissolve it entirely as part of the repressive apparatus of capitalism (61). In Trejo's words, "the PLM and the Wobblies had similar enemies, shared similar political thinking, were victims of the same repressive apparatus, and shared the dream of a universal struggle against capitalism" (117, my translation).

Mexico is just one of many places where there has been an encounter between indigenous counterpower with modern anarchist ideology. Aspects of anarchism that

⁵⁵ Russian-born Emma Goldman (1869–1940) is the (only) famous anarchofeminist of this historic period; she qualified anarchism with a feminist analysis and wrote against the state, patriarchy and marriage.

⁵⁶ American-born Mexicans

⁵⁷ Piotr Kropotkin (1842–1921) was a Russian anarchist who wrote about revolution, cooperation and mutual aid; his works have become signature to Western anarchism; they were spread in Mexico in part due to Magon who revered him.

⁵⁸ The *Partido Liberal Mexicano* was an organization of the radical current in the Mexican Revolution.

resonated with indigenous movements in Mexico included radical notions of land-reform and the approach of “socio-economic organization based on voluntary association of village communities, labor unions and other small groups.” (Friedrich in Wolf 1969: 25). The benefit of the conversation among anarchists and Magonistas is mutual, however; Magonismo catalysed the diffusion of “local, indigenous understandings of ownership, power and fairness” (Wolf 1969: 25). As Trejo writes:

Magonismo was not the mere repetition of anarchist doctrine (that of Bakunin and Kropotkin among others), but rather the development of an original discourse” which formulated “clear historic alternatives, coherent and distinct from the bourgeois-democratic current represented by Maderismo.”⁵⁹ (Trejo 15; my translation)

On Cooperation

While modern liberal theory would have us believe that the State pre-empts otherwise brutish relations among people, rationalized as the innately competitive nature of individuals in conflict, others point out the role of the State in pre-empting cooperation among these same people. They would suggest that humans are by no means naturally “individual” but are always embedded in collectivities, cooperation within and among which are fundamental to humanity. I suggest that this broadly define “social movements”, that this cooperation or lack thereof is the fundamental substance of politics. This would provide a framework outside modernist parameters and also has the import of recasting politics in terms of everyday life. Furthermore, this definition offers a true common denominator to the eclectic movements of resistance introduced above, participants in these

⁵⁹ Francisco Madero (1873-1913) was of the business elite and studied at Berkeley; he was the main candidate in opposition to Porfirio Díaz and replaced him as president during the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

organized regardless of nation, colour, creed or religion; “identity” did not underpin these movements so much as cooperation across identity, with the common goal being against slavery and alienation.

During the 19th century, anarchist thinker Piotr Kropotkin presented compelling arguments against the logic of the Leviathan by demonstrating that humans have always survived and thrived through co-operation and various forms of mutual aid (1955; see also 1943; Harrison 1983; Taylor 1976). Kropotkin challenges Darwin (and later Malthus) by suggesting that not only humanity, but the entire animal kingdom, evolves through cooperation, not competition (1955). James Scott (1998) has elaborated on the various ways states thrive on dissolving solidarity and horizontal cooperation to replace such social networks with vertical allegiances and orientations toward centralized government. His investigation into authoritarian high modernism reveals the utopian state project as the brainchild of elites who benefit from centralized power controlling an increasingly regulated, controlled and legible population. Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein elaborate a similar argument as they maintain the interstate system appropriates:

all manner of direct and circuitous relations among people of different countries (state jurisdictions) – whether religious, scientific, commercial, artistic, financial, linguistic, civilizational, educational, literary, productive, problem-focused, historical, philosophical ad infinitum – such that they all become, at the very least, mediated, more often actually organized, by the counterpart agencies of different states through their established or newly formed relations with one another. (1989: 45)

Cooperation among people will always be more efficient to the task than any protocol ordered from above; this is why work-to-rule strikes exist and are effective; if workers work according to the rules, production grinds to a stop. Scientific agriculture and industry, Taylorism in its every manifestation, is thus not a strategy of efficiency (Scott 1998: 310) but rather to control and appropriate labour at its expense, for the sake of profit (311). The

experience and innovation of ordinary people, *metis*, to use Scott's term, is coopted in the interests of power. As relations among people are increasingly mediated by central agencies, this practical knowledge is lost as people become deracinated and divorced from diverse knowledge and practice. Not to their benefit, as the state becomes entrenched and legitimized, central planning continues to re-order relations among subjects to further extract labour and profit. The more profit capitalist powers accumulate, whether governments or corporations, the more is invested in the apparatus of violence and control that ensure compliance with capitalism: police, military and mercenary force. Since the state is "predicated upon the assumption that some should be bosses giving orders while others should be subordinates - a situation which can only irk the subordinates and frustrate them" (Barclay 33), organized violence is necessary to pre-empt and quell the cooperation that emerges naturally against the system, this being the main function of police. While this is rationalized as "keeping the peace", actually the "paramount and ultimate end of all law enforcement is to benefit the ruling interests" (ibid). The imperative of the state "by design is homogenization and singular control by the monopoly of force and legitimacy" (Alfred 2005; 136). History illustrates that democratic systems may ameliorate this situation but never cure it: "The world today is full of national armies that have never fought an external enemy, but continue to torment their own fellow-citizens... When imperial powers began creating local militaries in the colonies, they trained them for purposes of domestic control." (Anderson 2002: 268). The state specifically attempts to pre-empt resistance to capitalism by incorporation of dissident and autonomous movements into its apparatus of control; the farmer-populist movement in the United States "originated with various apolitical voluntary mutual aid associations" and cooperatives to exchange farm products but "turned increasingly to electoral politics" due to organized sabotage of cooperatives and transport,

due to systematic repression of autonomous economy (Barclay 1982: 147). The *ejido*⁶⁰ lands in Mexico were designed to contain and control indigenous campesinos to the effect of pre-empting more revolutionary redistribution (Nash 2001: 22). The examples are as diverse and widespread as the expansion of capitalism.

The Leviathan and the Housewife

The State compels women, both legally and by way of constructed and autonomous conscience, to informally cooperate among themselves to ensure survival of their communities. The “welfare” programs of States are no more than spectacular illusions of care; in fact they extort labour and funds for projects that, if they were followed to code, would fail miserably, mirroring the phenomenon of the work-to-rule strike. The top-down ordering of factories is an illusion and in fact credit for production must go to workers; the top-down ordering of “welfare states” is an illusion and in fact credit for the welfare of populations of nation-states must go to the unpaid work of women (see James 1997; Folbre 1994; 2001). Not only that, but capitalism takes such a toll on the physical, emotional and holistic well-being of persons that there is an exponentially increasing amount of “welfare work” to be done in order to sufficiently nurse students and workers such that they may continue “being productive”; the Leviathan makes a mess and women clean it up. When theorists define the family as “the domain of disinterested love and solidarity” (Anderson 2006: 144), they obscure women’s labour as they struggle to compensate for inadequate, misguided or consciously misogynist programs of development and welfare devised by male

⁶⁰ Reserves; local term referring to land reform program carried out under Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution.

governments (see Lind 2005: 13, 15). An understanding of women's cooperation as women in the face of such structural violence is crucial for any discussion of what anarchists call "mutual aid"; cooperation among women provides the most diverse, successful and emphatic examples for anyone looking for proof that the tendency of "mutual aid" indeed exists (see di Leonardo 1984; March & Taquu 1986; Stall & Stoecker 1998; Marchand 2000). Women's location in the informal, or "private", sphere of life as constructed by the State/capitalist system has engendered a higher degree of socialization of cooperative behaviour; women may not fall back on protection of State power and so must engage in personal and community relationships with more vested interest. As such, the conflation of the "private" domestic sphere as defined by the patriarchal state with the "private" self-interest of the individual consumer or capitalist entrepreneur is a fundamental inaccuracy in political economy.

The situation of women in State/capitalism also provides some of the best examples of how the State pre-empts and discourages cooperation. With its system of privileges, "the state converts women's interests to its own ends in part by institutionalizing differences between women along lines of race and class" (Moore 1988: 184). State power does not protect women but coerces and manipulates them into obedience to capitalist patriarchy. While liberal theorists characterize the state as a benefactor to women, bringing them "equality" as if it has regulated or tamed natural inequality between the sexes, in fact gender inequality is exacerbated or even principally created by the proliferation of states across the globe (Day 2005: 87; see also Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974). Women's conditions changed from that of relative equality in pre-state societies to one of relative subordination under emerging state structures; pre-state kinship structures are transformed by the state with the effect of bringing women more under the control of men (Moore 1988: 132, 183; see also

Etienne & Leacock 1981; di Leonardo 1999; Reiter 1975). State policies regulate sexuality, fertility, marriage, rape and abortion and as such have a profound impact on women's power over their own lives yet women's interests do not impact the state as men's do. Men and women constitute different political subjects within the state; the state is not neutral, its structures and institutions are male-dominated and thus serve to institutionalize male privilege (Moore 1988: 150). The state maintains "family" as a "private" domain in which the state hesitates to intervene; as such, any "protection" offered women by the state is contradictory and/or hypothetical as women are structurally prevented from accessing juridical structures and impacting policies. This is the case regardless of variation in state forms, "none of the known forms of the state, whether ancient, pristine or modern, politicizes women's roles in such a way so as to give them *de facto* rather than *de jure* equality with men." (ibid).

Because of the structural violence women experience within States, feminist perspectives provide rich critiques of the State's relationship to capitalism and its mere guise as a consensual contract (see Mathieu 1991). Since the time of Kropotkin, it has mainly been feminists who have elaborated arguments against the State as an institution of domination, and both feminist intellectuals and activists have historically been the most adamant about the necessity for autonomy of social movements, due to their particular knowledge of the State's cooptive function.

Of all the peoples' mobilizations against "development" initiatives, women have formed the frontline and majority of dissenting voices. Development detrimentally affects them more so than their male counterparts, serving to consolidate women's subordination to men; development policies have institutionalized men's access to the state while marginalizing women's (Elson 1991; Beneria & Sen 1997; Mohanty 1997). Cooperation

among women in the neocolonial south constitutes the main initiatives in movements against neoliberalism (Mohanty 2003: 249). Urban poor, peasant and indigenous women have been among the first to make connections between global change and daily life and to politicize their “roles in development” (Lind 2005: 9).

Women workers of particular caste/class, race, and economic status are necessary to the operation of the capitalist global economy. Women are not only the preferred candidates for jobs, but particular kinds of women – poor, Third and Two-Thirds World, working-class, and immigrant/migrant women – are the preferred workers in these global, “flexible” temporary job markets... In fundamental ways, it is girls and women around the world, especially in the Third World/South, that bear the brunt of globalization. Poor women and girls are the hardest hit by the degradation of environmental conditions, wars, famines, privatization of services, and deregulation of governments, the dismantling of welfare states, the restructuring of paid and unpaid work, increasing surveillance and incarceration in prisons, and so on. (Mohanty 2003: 246, 234)

In this era of structural adjustment and unprecedented privatization, mothers are positioned as absorbers of welfare crises (Lind 2005: 93). Social services designated as “feminine”, i.e. health care and welfare distribution, are specifically those structurally-adjusted-out-of-existence and women “are assumed to fit into the new institutional arrangements by nature of their maternal responsibilities and their perceived (voluntary) roles in communal life.” (5). The “disinterested love and solidarity” of the “family” (i.e. women) is taxed to magnanimous proportions and is only voluntary if starving and letting one’s children starve can be posited as a viable alternative to doing the work of “love and solidarity”; “A social policy that assumes women will volunteer to distribute food or manage a day-care center, for example, posits poor women as absorbers of the crisis and transfers, in invisible and visible ways, a heavy responsibility to them to manage welfare in their communities.” (17).

This has led collectivities of women in diverse contexts of the capitalist world system to unify in movements against “development” and neoliberalism, the ideology that normalizes capitalist development. They take specific issue with patriarchal restructuring

inherent in institutions of capitalism, up to and including the United Nations; as such, these movements question the role of States and institutions of world government *per se* and advance a critique of centralized power and the State grounded in experience and empirical knowledge. Whereas anarchist theory is largely rhetoric written by those least affected, the combination of experience, analysis and testimony on the part of pluralities of women under state rule and in “development” provides more forceful arguments than anarchist theory while at the same time supporting some of its tenets.

In their mobilizations against neoliberalism, women organize within and among informal networks of biological and fictive kin which they maintain regardless, as it is such informal networks maintained by women that sustain families and, by extension, the formal economy in general (see March & Taqqu 1986). It is specifically in their roles as “family members, neighbors, caretakers, and mothers, that women have secured much of the socially and culturally defined necessities for their families and loved ones at the household and community levels.” (Lind 1988: 98). It is precisely the quality of personal bonds that give these networks strength; this is why social movements borne of them are so powerful. It is precisely oppression correlated to the “private sphere” that motivates women into action; it is their mobilization within the “private sphere” that presupposes success of their resistance movements.

While not all of women’s movements have been autonomist, it has been autonomous women’s movements that have denounced development most forcefully and consistently. Autonomous feminists take issue not only with “development” but with “gender technocracy”, centralized power and male-based formal politics *per se*. Much of the “anthropology of development” literature can be read as a critique of state power in colonial contexts (see Escobar 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005; Gronemeyer 1993; Little & Painter 1995;

Sylvester 1999; Ferguson 1994); this literature may also be read as largely responding to the sustained outcry of poor and indigenous women in autonomous movements whether or not the genealogy is acknowledged. The burgeoning consensus that “grassroots”, “local” and “community development” programs are in order suggests that 1) decentralization of power is a defining theme in postmodernity and that 2) this is rooted in feminist critiques. This becomes all the more clear when we look to women’s movements in diverse contexts and find that, despite so many differences, women’s movements have articulated similar discourses of autonomy and decentralization. This is not due to any essential characteristic of women, of course, but rather due to their comparable oppression in capitalist patriarchal state structures, their relegation to a supposedly apolitical, “private” sphere of life.

Feminism and Autonomy

In Latin America, notorious in the 70s and 80s for militaristic Marxist movements, women’s movements identified the hierarchical, militaristic political culture of the Left as masculinist and “therefore as part of the problem; early feminists further declared the need to invent ‘new ways of doing politics.’ Feminist struggle, they asserted, must also be pursued at the level of daily life, of interpersonal and social relations, of ‘consciousness’ – and not just at the level of structures and institutions of (class) domination.” (Alvarez 1998: 296).

The culture of these feminist movements was:

imbued by such values, manifest, for example, in the decentralization of the movement and its autonomy vis-à-vis other actors. Such decentralization expressed itself in the debates about representation, direct and equitable participation, non-monopoly of the spoken word or of information, in the rotation of occasional tasks and responsibilities, the non-specialization of functions, the non-delegation of power. In sum, organizational horizontalism was extolled as the

perfect incarnation of the organizational principles of radical democracy.” (Heilborn and Arruda in Alvarez 1998: 297)

Latin American feminists elaborated a sophisticated critique of the gendered nature of the State itself, not simply advocating women’s “right” to control their own bodies, but also outlining sexual rights and the decriminalization of abortion as themes related to the construction of citizenship and the State itself (Alvarez 1998: 300). They advanced a discourse of individual autonomy that was then radical to the mainstream Left; they emphasized the importance of “speaking for oneself” and not in the name of any party; they replaced the authoritarian congresses of the Left, where the rank and file “voted” on “the” movement’s “strategic principles” with *encuentros* created for feminists to express ideas, thoughts and emotions that functioned by consensus, formal or informal, as opposed to majority rule (297). During the same decades in Europe, Italian and German feminists were similarly compelled to assert their autonomy from the Left; autonomy subsequently became a concept informing all political action in the movement (Katsiaficas 2001: 548). Note the similarities with feminist stances taken in Latin America:

The significance of feminism to the subsequent workers and youth movements in Italy and Germany is noteworthy. Feminists spoke in the “I” mode, not on behalf of others (the “workers” or the “people”), and their ability to return continually to the reality of their own needs became an essential feature of autonomous movements... Within the movement, local groups used the term in yet another sense: to refer to their independence within a nonhierarchical framework that did not create a division between leaders and followers. Finally, and most importantly, the meaning of the term autonomy was political and referred to the feminist movement’s independence from established political parties... It refers to the relationship of the movement to the government and its institutions, which because they are recognized as patriarchal and system stabilizing, are rejected, resulting in a complete detachment from state and institutional connections. Within the movement, autonomy means primarily decentralization, autonomy of every single group. (Katsiaficas 2001: 548-9)

Women’s movements in Europe have been more autonomist than those of the United States, which finally emphasized “equality” over “autonomy”. In their incipience, however, feminist movements in the U.S. were likewise rooted in women activists’ critique

of the hierarchical and male-dominated Left which dismissed the concerns of women as apolitical. Women proceeded to build decentralized networks of consciousness-raising groups and working groups around various projects, much like the *encuentros* and projects of Latin American and European feminists in terms of structure, decision-making and guiding principles. The relative structurelessness of these groups had its own fallbacks in terms of organizing collective action, and self-critique within the feminist movement along these lines has informed political organizing ever since. Much of what is taken for granted as best practice for decentralized and autonomous activism in North America comes from the still much-circulated “Tyranny of Structurelessness” which contained the following suggestions for effective working groups:

- 1) It is task oriented. Its function is very narrow and very specific, like putting on a conference or putting out a newspaper. It is the task that basically structures the group. The task determines what needs to be done and when it needs to be done. It provides a guide by which people can judge their actions and make plans for future activity.
- 2) It is relatively small and homogeneous. Homogeneity is necessary to insure that participants have a “common language” or interaction. People from widely different backgrounds may provide richness to a consciousness raising group where each can learn from each others’ experience, but too great a diversity among members of a task-oriented group means only that they continually misunderstand each other...
- 3) There is a high degree of communication. Information must be passed on to everyone, opinions checked, work divided up, and participation assured in the relevant decisions. This is only possible if the group is small and people practically live together for the most crucial phases of the task. Needless to say, the number of interactions necessary to involve everybody increases geometrically with the number of participants...
- 4) There is a low-degree of skill specialization. Not everyone has to be able to do everything, but everything must be able to be done by more than one person. Thus no one is indispensable. To a certain extent, people become interchangeable parts. (Freeman 2002: 58-9)

So, while both theorists and activists have dubbed women’s movements as “single-issue” grouping and denigrating them together with any and all rights-based identity-politics, in fact feminism has had singular import in radicalizing the texture of political activism in diverse contexts: “It is evident that the women’s liberation movement has left its mark by way of transforming the political imaginary and forms of resistance, but this is not made visible.” (Masson 2003: 110; my translation). Laurin-Frenette has shown how feminism completes

the fragmentary critiques of anarchism⁶¹ by calling “power into question in terms of its most elementary and fundamental form: interpersonal control, the game of force and consent.” (Lamoureux 2004: 173; my translation). Women organizing *as* women have challenged the abstract way men have thought about power; feminists put forth the challenge that “politics has no integrity until it is founded in everyday life” (Phillips as quoted in Lamoureux 2004: 111); finally, “the slogan ‘the end justifies the means’ could no longer function because that ‘end’ no longer existed as such” (Aubenas & Benasayag as quoted in Lamoureux 2004: 175; my translation); any politics that differentiates between its means and ends, yet pretends to know the steps to achieving those ends, will only reestablish existing domination and authoritarian characteristics (Lamoureux 2004: 175). These principles had become widespread among autonomist social movements in diverse contexts by the 80s and 90s, and still are today.

Contemporary Autonomist Movements of the North

In the 80s and 90s, autonomist movements in France, Britain, Germany and Italy, among other places in Europe, emerged to contest capitalism, racism and the nuclear arms race of the Cold War. Unlike many of the NSMs of North America in this period, they did not practice a politics-of-demand; they engaged in direct action. The history of fascism in Europe as well as the foothold that anarchism enjoyed on the continent earlier in the century

⁶¹ The manifestation of anarchism in actual social movements has mirrored Marxist mobilization inasmuch as exploitation of male wage-workers and syndicalism have been its focus. While anarchism claims to be thoroughly antiauthoritarian, it was not until the emergence of feminist movements that anarchists engaged in prefigurative politics beyond this specific area of interest. Historically, anarchists have often been either syndicalists or bomb-throwing protagonists.

are partially responsible for this emergence that is unparalleled in North America. In France, movements of old-tradition anarchists, anarchopunks and anti-fascist/Nazi movements all cross-sected and diverged, forming movements of contestation that are largely unappreciated and unacknowledged by historians (see Dupuis–Déri 2005a). In Italy, squats and “social centres” proliferated along with numerous autonomous women’s centres and infoshops. The politics were one of “engaged withdrawal” (Virno as quoted in Graeber 2004; see also Katsiaficas 1997); autonomists refused to engage in formal politics, students joined with workers in wildcat strikes and the term “revolutionary exodus” was coined. In Britain, Reclaim the Streets (RTS) did not seek to confront the state directly, but threw huge street parties, reclaiming public space with music and dance to expose certain truths of capitalist alienation (Yuen 2001: 11); such movements take inspiration from Situationism (i.e. Vaneigem 2001; Debord 1983).⁶² In Berlin, Germany, autonomists slowly but surely squatted the entire strip of wasteland along the Wall and this community became the organizing base for autonomist movements for a period of years (Katsiaficas 1997). These *autonomen* believed in radical democracy and prefigurative politics due to the influence of both anarchist and feminist critiques of power. They sought to prefigure alternative ways of relating and cooperating as well as planned specific direct actions against summits of capitalist leaders and the building of arms factories. To contest the erection of reactors and silos, they would move in and camp on the sites, creating autonomous villages for weeks or months on end, meanwhile using the time to play and learn from each other in self-managed free-schools. Such “Temporary Autonomous Zones” have become signature to autonomist

⁶² Contemporary anarchist activists continue to refer to Situationism, which suggests that it is possible to subvert capitalism; this is in contrast to academia, which concentrates on poststructural theory. Anarchists’ attention to Situationism is widespread; i.e. a translated version of Guy Debord’s “Society of the Spectacle” screened twice at the Alternative Social Forum in Venezuela. For analysis of the interrelationship of Situationism and contemporary anarchism see Graeber (2007).

activism (see Dupuis-Déri 2003). Inasmuch as these spaces are conceived as “a laboratory of ideas” or “an autonomous space for action and reflection” where activists “put forth collective practices founded on self-management and direct democracy” (132; my translation), we can see the import of radical feminist movements. Inasmuch as activists reject formal politics and put forth that “the State is a condition, a certain relation among human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by building alternate relations, by behaving differently” (Landauer in Dupuis-Déri 2003; 128 my translation), we can see the import of anarchist critiques.

As the autonomist movements of Europe grew in prevalence, size and force, police in these countries began to seek out and persecute activists in the squatlands with pictures taken at demonstrations; this is how the Black Bloc was born, which is the technique of an affinity group going to a direct action wearing identical black outfits and masks such that no one person would be identifiable by police (Yuen 2001: 11; see also Dupuis-Déri 2005b). The lack of formal leaders in these movements and the inability to recognize militants confounded the authorities; the resistance to centralized leadership within autonomist movements was therefore pragmatic in manifold ways: practices of counterpower provided concrete protection from the police and constituted a learning ground for alternative ways of relating (Katsiaficas 1997; 2001a). These “new ways of doing politics” thus emerged from a mixture of anarchist analysis, a Situationist approach and feminist forms of counterpower, as well as the influence of popular religious traditions such as the Quakers: It is they who are largely responsible for the spread of consensus decision-making methods practiced in many autonomist movements on both sides of the Atlantic (Polletta 2002: 195; see also Graeber 2007). Perhaps notably, it is suggested by many that Quaker consensus and counterpower

stem from histories of cooperative resistance and experience of indigenous democracy back in the time of the pirates.

Particular counterpower methods that are borrowed from Quaker practice include the role of a facilitator that mediates discussions and/or a speakers' list in meetings and gatherings (see Graeber 2007). This is supposed to ensure equal participation in discussions and decisions, facilitate consensus generally speaking. Some groups also organize speaking parity in gatherings along gender or other lines, consciously alternating among men and women's voices to pre-empt informal domination by men who speak too often and for too long. Consensus procedures differ depending on the purpose of the meeting, the size of the assembly, and so on; some are more formal and include elaborate systems of feedback in the form of hand signals or other codes and structures, some are quite informal; while there is great diversity among them, the importance of consensus as a concept and method is generally shared as best practice even if usually imperfect. Contemporary autonomist movements take for granted the necessity for counterpower or leveling schemes in their organization. Much of what is now formalized as the organizational structure of the global autonomist movement was suggested in "The Tyranny of Structurelessness": Most autonomist collectives form around specific tasks and actions rather than stated principles or "party lines". There is the notion that "process" is fundamental, not abstract ideological convictions, i.e. as long as one respects (what is now called) "anarchist process", no one cares what you do or how you identify outside of the collective (see Polletta 2002; Graeber 2007). Within autonomist movements there is no notion of membership as the notion of individual autonomy is paramount; participation in one collective or project never precludes participation in other quite different ones.

Methods of participatory democracy subsequently characterize the “globalization movement”⁶³ along with widespread anarchist critiques of the State. If there is anything about these movements that allow them to be characterized as anarchist, it is precisely this. Autonomist movements of the 90s and today, whether self-declared as anarchist or not, take for granted the need to work outside State institutions and dismantle the State apparatuses of capitalism. Oriented to both present and future, autonomous spaces and networks emerge around health care, resource and skill-sharing, for example, to serve an immediate function for those involved while also constituting concrete practice in organizing projects in non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian ways. Self-management is seen to be worthwhile in and of itself, specifically revolutionary; the goal of an “anarchist revolution”, albeit diffuse, is a stateless, egalitarian, self-managed society, not ordered from above but from below. Autonomist movements echo feminists in highlighting that this may never be achieved by authoritarian action; their signature characteristic is the confluence of direct action politics and prefigurative forms of counterpower in their organization. All of this is galvanized during the 90s into a more coherent global movement due to the transnational organizing and influence of the Zapatistas.

Zapatismo and Autonomous Movements of the South

The Zapatistas have had a unique influence on the globalization, or rather coalescence, of autonomist social movements. The Zapatistas themselves constitute one of

⁶³ Dubbed the “antiglobalization movement” by corporate press, alternately called the “alternative globalization movement” or simply the “globalization movement”, I have chosen the latter.

the most compelling examples of an autonomist movement that does not seek to take power but rather dismantle it; they do not seek to take over the Mexican state but rather govern their communities autonomously within it. The State still exists, but counterpower exists within in the form of autonomous communities virtually independent from the State. The teachings of the Zapatistas suggest that the combination of contestation along with the building of autonomous networks, spaces, medias and economies from within the overarching power structures of neoliberalism is a viable path of resistance. The autonomist ideal of social change without taking State power is “formulated most clearly by the Zapatista uprising... The Zapatistas have said that they want to make the world anew, to create a world of dignity, a world of humanity, but without taking power.” (Holloway 2001: 20). The Zapatistas became famous quickly after their uprising on January 1st 1994, marking the inception of NAFTA; their strategy of media and internet activism distinguishes them as the first indigenous guerilla movement to make their voices heard directly in virtual space (Perlstein 2001: 336; see also Cleaver 1998). They are also distinguished in their explicit pronouncement that as indigenous poor they speak for humanity when they speak against neoliberalism. The Zapatistas do not speak of rights or privileges of indigenous peoples so much as the right of all peoples, including those indigenous, to have dignity and autonomy; they suggest that autonomous community governments such as theirs would be preferable for all communities. In other words, rather than demanding entitlement to such a “privilege” on the basis of particular identity, they suggest that all people should be entitled to live in radically democratic autonomous communities; they invite peoples of disparate “traditions” to follow their example. They call on all to create autonomous spaces within neoliberalism while at the same time actively confronting it in its various loci.

Not only do the Zapatistas inspire activists by way of web pages and Indymedia reports, but they have actively engaged in building transnational infrastructures for the global movement against neoliberalism. In 1997 they hosted a transnational gathering (*encuentro intergalactico*) in Chiapas for all those in solidarity with their struggle, the global struggle against neoliberalism and for humanity. The Zapatistas and their European solidarity network organized another gathering in Barcelona in 1998 from which the People's Global Action⁶⁴ network was born (Day 2005: 191). The PGA coordinated and synchronized actions among autonomous movements against neoliberalism in the early years of the globalization movement; its communication hub was the Canadian Postal Workers Union until it was replaced by the internet at the end of the 90s. Beyond the Zapatistas, the founding members of the PGA include: various anarchist and autonomous collectives from Spain, Britain and Germany, the Ghandian Socialist Peasant's League and the Karnataka State Farmers Union (KKRS) from India, the Argentinean Teachers Union, a delegation of Maori from New Zealand, the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) – the landless workers movement of Brazil and, finally, the Canadian Postal Worker's Union (Graeber 2005: 169; see also Day 2005).

While the globalization movement is commonly understood to refer to the string of large-scale demonstrations and direct actions against capitalist summits that has taken place in North America and Europe in recent years, it is important to recognize that it did not start in Seattle in 1999: This was merely the first time such a demonstration had occurred in

⁶⁴ hallmark principles of the PGA: 1) A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalization. 2) We reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings. 3) A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker. 4) A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements' struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximize respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism. 5. An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy. Taken from: <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/pga/hallm.htm> (June 18, 2007)

North America. What is commonly referred to as the “globalization movement” in the West follows on the heels of these and other concerted gatherings of autonomist activists (see Katsiaficas 2001b). Moreover, the globalization movement forms part of a continuity of resistance techniques that largely emerge from the global South, including but not limited to the Zapatista rebellion. Mohanty reminds us that roots of many of these movements, in terms of both form and content, may be traced also to anticorporate ecology movements such as the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* in central India, movements against environmental racism in the U.S. Southwest, and mobilizations against debt cancellation in the global South, much of this being organized and frontlined by indigenous and poor women (2003: 248). Demonstrations and riots against the IMF in Venezuela and elsewhere in the South were well underway in the 80s and 90s; these global mobilizations around debt relief and structural adjustment were a precursor and inspiration to anti-neoliberal protest that followed in the North (Katsiaficas 2001b: 30-31).

The Globalization Movement

By the end of the 90s, a new global infrastructure of resistance was emerging in the North based on networks such as the PGA and the internet generally speaking. In North America, a continental Direct Action Network (DAN) emerged related to the PGA at the end of the 90s to coordinate organization among regional and citywide groups and networks. The DAN networks built upon existing autonomist networks and projects such as the Anarchist Black Cross Federation, the Anti-Racist Action network, the radical/ deep ecology

direct action movements⁶⁵, as well as pirate radio collectives, anarchist infoshops and cooperatives that had been proliferating in North America for a decade. All of this developed under the radar of both academia and the mainstream Left; when huge numbers of disparate groups coalesced to demonstrate in Seattle in 1999, it seemed to most people that a movement had appeared suddenly and out of nowhere. While dubbed by the media as the chaotic “antiglobalization” movement, this apparently new phenomenon was, “from the beginning, a self-consciously global movement” (Graeber 2007: 37); it emerged from transnational gatherings and its concerns were explicitly global. The autonomist activists involved were, and continue to be, explicitly against borders, nationalism, imperialism and capitalism, specifically to an anarchist orientation to State/capitalism. Their position may be partially summarized as follows: Neoliberalism is a global phenomenon; nation-states are superficial communities constructed to support capitalist systems of privilege which divide popular classes and the oppressed; any resistance to neoliberalism must work consciously to transcend these divisions and not in any way give power to, or help consolidate power of, national governments. Thus, resistance must be autonomous, based on direct action, and serve to undermine both capitalism and the power structure of States, as well as international government bodies such as the WTO, IMF, and the World Bank.

These activists are not merely pragmatic, they work across borders to work against them; they think borders should not exist. Dismantling them, in both mentality and reality, is seen as a fundamental part of the struggle. The wave of demonstrations and direct actions against neoliberalism during the past decade are not “local” or “national” movements that emerged independently and “found” each other on the internet; these actions emerge from

⁶⁵ Deep ecology posits that humans should not be privileged over other living beings; direct action includes “tree sits”, forest occupations and other illegal strategies for preventing the killing of plants and animals. Earth First! is an example of a deep ecologist direct action network.

an internationalist and transnational network of relationships that are self-consciously global for practical reasons and also those of principle. Theorists who chalk up “grassroots globalization” to some invisible hand of history, a function of postmodernity in some general sense, are misguided; these movements did not emerge by themselves and their techniques and strategies are not new or spontaneously created. The transnational networks that have coordinated global activism have specific genealogies in autonomist movements across history and borders. The main reason that these stories are unknown and unwritten is precisely because they emerge from below and their characters do not seek to climb the ladder of power; as Holloway put it, “Power and social theory exist in such symbiosis that power is the lens through which theory sees the world, the headphone through which it hears the world...” (Holloway 2005: 22). This insight applies to those who retroactively explain the coordination of the globalization movement and its direct-actions by reference to formal organizations and networks such as ATTAC⁶⁶ and the World Social Forum; many have written about how these have galvanized the global movement. Autonomist activists laugh at this: The first World Social Forum happened in late 2001, years after global coordination of demonstrations, marches and campaigns already existed by way of networks previously mentioned. If anything, the WSF emerged due to these rather than vice versa. Autonomists - such as those in Caracas - point out how the formal relationships between the WSF and governments pre-empt revolutionary militancy and have undermined the WSF stated agenda of “decentralization” and “autonomy”; they point out the hypocrisy of their maneuver to centralize and subsume autonomous movements that were already decentralized and previously autonomous - not to mention coordinated reasonably well. While the World Social Forum states that “another world is possible” and that we may

⁶⁶ *Association pour la taxation des transactions pour l'aide aux citoyens*

discover and create it by way of meeting and exchanging at the WSF, autonomists prefigure and create it in the present by way of radically democratic practices and autonomous action.

As for ATTAC, it was formed posterior to much of the autonomist coordination in Europe and most autonomists saw it as merely another bureaucracy attempting to centralize and co-opt radical organization that already existed. Anarchists, squatters and striking workers in France were already organizing among themselves and with others in Europe in 1995-6; they themselves organized the demonstrations and actions against the G7 in 1996 (Dupuis-Déri 2005a: 205). When ATTAC was formed in 1998, autonomists denounced its co-optive and reformist agenda which was vaguely against “globalization” but refused to take a stance on capitalism. Autonomists organized their own movements and actions independently of ATTAC and were more successful in making local and international links and relationships: While ATTAC was busy “making a name for itself” in legitimate politics (see Kolb 2005), nameless anarchist collectives proliferated; by the year 2000, anarchist mobilizations dominated the political landscape of the “antiglobalization” movement in France and elsewhere (Dupuis-Déri 2005a).

The large-scale demonstrations that occurred in North America and Europe during the past 10 years have only been the most outward and sensational face of a much broader phenomenon which is still emergent; due to these demonstrations, the movement subsequently grew in size as many moderate activists were drawn to participate in the actions, were inspired, and included themselves in autonomist organization thereafter. The fact that people are drawn to these sorts of collective action and events is significant of the fact that the experience of self-management and autonomous organization is rewarding in and of itself. Little formal “recruitment” is done within this movement as is normally done among the authoritarian Left; many of the people that have gravitated towards the

movement did so autonomously. Many were perplexed and intrigued by the radically democratic structure of spokescouncils and affinity groups that characterize its events, as well as intrigued by the Temporary Autonomous Zones that always form part.

The Indymedia network and other alternative media networks grew in this period. These have had an incredible impact on the coordination and style of activism. Now, when actions are planned, activists find out how and where to participate more easily. They also know that others in the world will find out about their action once it happens even if corporate networks censor all information on the subject; when activists are repressed in one part of the world, others find out on the other side of the globe within 24 hours and plan solidarity actions in a way that was impossible before. As Holloway notes, “Social relations have never coincided with national frontiers. The current discussions of ‘globalization’ merely highlight what has always been true: capitalist social relations, by their nature, have always gone beyond territorial limitations.” (2005: 14); likewise, autonomist movements have never respected borders. If anything is “new”, it is precisely the Internet which allows instant and horizontal global communication among them.

Confronting Racism: “No Borders” and Indigenist Solidarity Movements

The global autonomist movement is not equally responsive, inclusive and in equal solidarity to all movements, causes, peoples and participants, however; there have been many complaints about gaps, deficiencies and blindspots of the movement in its goals and processes, in terms of its microcosmic interactions as well as global shape. Some of these have concerned gender, some class, but most critique has concerned racism inherent in the

form and content of the movement, particularly regarding the autonomist and anarchist movements of North America.

Insomuch as one can pinpoint an era of the globalization movement in North America, one could say this period of militant demonstration and direct action began in Seattle in 1999 and ended on September 11 2001. This was the beginning of the end, as it quickly became sanctioned to violently repress and arrest globalization activists with newly drafted terrorist legislation in both Canada and the United States. The transnational capitalist elites also began to have most of their meetings in remote areas and within borders of states that harshly punish activists; they began to meet on Austrian mountaintops and in the Arab Emirate States. The direct action movement could not attend. Police forces started firing on activists, involving serious injury and death in Prague and Miami in 2003. The climate of fear and legal proceedings that embroiled many activists had a paralysing effect. Also, it seemed there was a new priority: war hysteria, racism, increased border security and detention of (im)migrants was accelerating.

The globalization movement had been leveled with challenges of racism and politics of white privilege since its beginning. Long-time anarchist activists and newly politicized college students, all overwhelmingly white, were brimming with enthusiasm in their new, playful, confrontational social movement and did not understand why communities of colour were so “apathetic” in their lack of participation. In fact, communities of colour were organizing as militantly as they always had, but were focused on other (not unrelated) struggles such as those of immigrant and prisoner rights. These axes of resistance and their relationship to neoliberal globalization did not occur to many globalization activists. By failing to engage with communities of colour on their terms, the movement lacked an “experiential link with the raw (racist) violence of capitalist globalization” as well as the

knowledge and experience of immigrants from militant labour traditions and other struggles. (Yuen 2001: 14-6; Rajah 2001: 237). White activists of the movement seem to prefer to “outreach” to people of colour to have them join “the” (*their*) movement instead of positioning themselves in solidarity with the struggles indigenous to other communities. This is one of the dynamics of white “anti-racism”, whereby white activists enact but a superficial critique of racist imperialism: The imperative becomes one of “inclusion” of marginal communities in the white vanguard; white people conceive of the problem as one of “acceptance” of people of colour into their movement; they still suffer from the affectation that white people have the best ideas, best political analysis and most radical movements for change, things that they offer to benevolently share with less fortunate and backward others (not unlike so many well-intentioned “development” projects). They often struggle to fathom renouncing their bourgeois white agendas for the sake of working on projects and initiatives of immigrant and poor communities, which are dismissed as “not radical” enough. For example, many anarchist autonomists consider religion to be a function of false consciousness, disdain the notion of working in association with churches and spiritually based community centres, even though these spaces are some of the most dynamic and politically-engaged spaces among popular working class and immigrant communities⁶⁷.

Not only does the politics of representation in white movements not engage the politics of racist imperialism at root, but often the white activists who push for inclusion of people of colour in projects are more concerned with creating a good anti-racist image of the collective in the eyes of other radical activists than with truly engaging with issues of racism

⁶⁷ For example, the Montreal Street Medic Collective organizing for the FTAA Summit of the Americas (2001) rejected an offer of space for a clinic – the biggest, most amenable, closest to the demonstration – because it was in a church basement. Activists did not want to seem as if they were condoning the Church (I was part of the deliberations).

within the collective and in the world at large. Needless to say, there are many reasons why this sort of "outreach" doesn't work, and didn't work during the globalization movement. Beyond various obvious reasons, one particular issue had to do with the form of protest. Being constant targets of state violence and criminalization, activists of colour are less disposed to prostrating themselves before the imminent police attacks characterizing demonstrations. Indeed, the "ethic" of willingness-to-get-arrested for the cause was touted as so much revolutionary dedication by so many young, white middle-class activists, who thus alienated those who could not "afford" to get arrested. Clashes have also occurred over the issue of "process", interestingly enough, whereby young white autonomists' obsession with lengthy forms of consensus process becomes an obstacle: When people from diverse backgrounds and working-class communities cannot, or will not, attend 7 hour long meetings, activists often write it off to bad faith, lack of consciousness or "authoritarian attitudes" that they seem to think characterize immigrant and working class communities. In fact, people in these communities oftentimes have much more experience working cooperatively and consensually in diverse ways, ways that do not involve such formalized and lengthy procedures. A common critique includes the observation that the reason these wealthy white kids need to follow rulebooks of consensus process so stringently, and insist on them and others so doing, is because these experiences constitute the first times in their lives that they have really needed and consciously wanted, or felt the need, to cooperate with others. Personal wealth and privilege, of course, makes horizontal cooperation less necessary. In this sense, working class people and communities of colour are again treated like they need to learn something from consciousness-raising wealthy white activists, when in fact the opposite may be true.

Between 1999 and 2001, activists of colour became increasingly vocal in articulating the white privilege blinding globalization activists in the North. They outlined in better detail the arguments above and also charged the movement with a conspicuous lack of analysis regarding border and immigration control inherent in neoliberal globalization. Neoliberal globalization is not merely about the free-flowing of capital, but functions due to increased constraints on the movement of *people*. The only reason corporations continue to extract money out of impoverished states is because borders won't let workers and citizens exploited by neoliberal reforms physically leave the situation. As long as the globalization movement does not have a radical analysis of immigration, so the argument goes, the movement is a bourgeois, elite, racist one.

Many activists failed to get the point, reacted defensively but others started to understand, thanks to persistent education by people of colour who surely would have preferred people learning it on their own. As the political climate in the USA post 9-11 worsened in terms of racist hate-mongering, hate crimes and increased immigration control, racism emerged even more clearly as a new priority for organizing. Meanwhile, the possibility of protest against capitalist summits was drastically narrowed and a good segment of the globalization activists, having been drawn into social movements in the years recently preceding, were left with reduced avenues for action and a hanging challenge to improve their race politics. Mobilizing around the rights of immigrants and against the racist backlashes in American society seemed appropriate. If they could no longer protest the free-flowing of capital, they would protest the restricted movement of people. It all fit together.

Bringing this back to Montreal, the site of much of my research, it is important to note that all of this applies to the Canadian context also. Canadians seem to like to think that Canada is a much more "tolerant" society than that of the USA but in fact this is largely

a convenient displacement - the difference is a mere gradient; while the repression and racist backlash in Canada was not as pronounced as south of the border, the same story unfolds in Canada post 9-11, with increased criminalization of activists, terrorist legislation limiting civil liberties and widespread racist war hysteria. Shortly after September 11th 2001, a public assembly was called in Montreal for those wanting to organize around recent events and the emerging issues; during this assembly the group named itself the Coalition Against Racism and War Hysteria, set a weekly schedule of assemblies and also subdivided into working groups who met more frequently. They organized media, propaganda and poster projects to counteract racist dogma, mobilized demonstrations, and organized solidarity brigades to accompany shop-owners and people attending Mosques, among other projects. I participated in this coalition at the time and therefore know first-hand that the majority of the activists who participated in the assemblies were the same people who had been involved in the globalization movement the years recently preceding. Many of these had been working in the CLAC⁶⁸, our citywide network related to the PGA. Significantly, the only notable difference in this crowd was that there were more people of colour present among the new and returning militants. It was between this period and the moment I started my fieldwork in 2005 that collectives such as No One Is Illegal and Solidarity Across Borders formed, grew and strengthened.

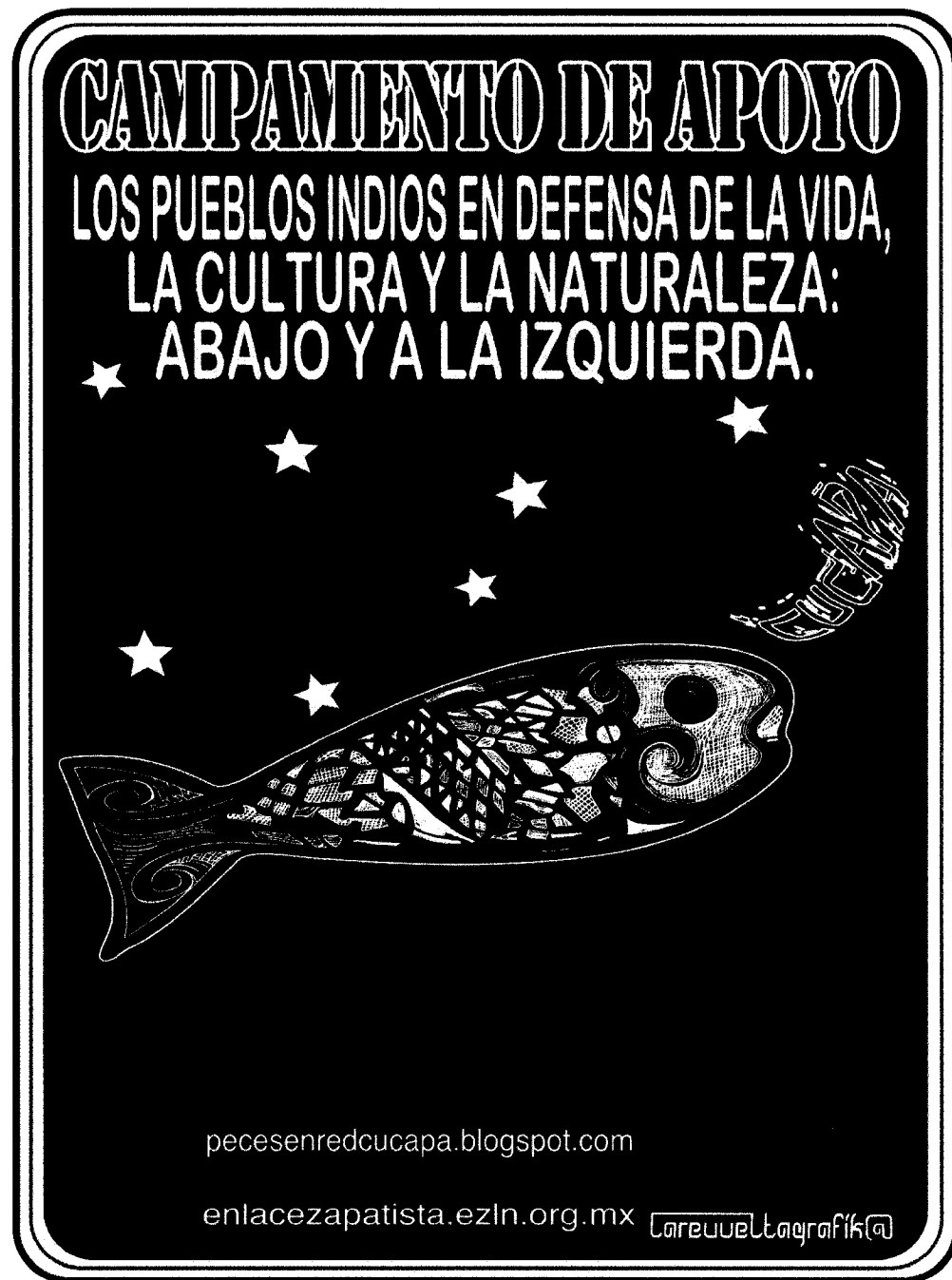
Activists' attention to indigenous struggles is somewhat related to this shift in focus; a consideration of imperialism "in our own backyard" is highlighted by a general awareness of repression and exploitation of immigrants. Once imperialist exploitation is no longer conceived of as something far-away and exotic but rather perceived in its holistic dimension as existing equally at "home" and in our everyday life, sanctified in citizenship rights, the

⁶⁸ *Convergence des Luttes Anti-Capitalistes*

plight of immigrants and natives is reframed more clearly for white/citizen activists. The framework is thrust open; to focus on non-status peoples and ignore native struggles becomes disingenuous. Notice here the expansion of focus from anti-capitalism to anti-state/capitalism that a focus on immigrant struggles engenders. Anarchist and autonomist activists, already having a critique of the State function, are more receptive to such a reformulation than some others who came to participate in the globalization movement; many liberal progressives, socialists and white environmentalists⁶⁹ participated in demonstrations in a different capacity; they believe in reform measures and the welfare state, and, therefore, in borders and states generally speaking. It is fair to say that it has been the more anarchist-minded activists that have maintained or joined these continuing threads of the globalization movement, whereas a diverse multitude of more moderate demonstrators has moved on to other things. Other reasons for autonomists growing attention to native movements must be credited to diverse native movements themselves: In the past decade there has been a shift in discourse, militancy and visibility of much native resistance due to successful organization on the part of native communities themselves, whether in South America, North America, or elsewhere. In Montreal, the increasingly militant actions of Mohawk activists in their struggle for land are inspiring examples of autonomist resistance that are close to home. Some white activists are starting to reflect on the history of indigenous resistance in Canada, including what's known in the white world as "the Oka crisis", and therein noticing that some of the best examples of autonomist resistance may be

⁶⁹ Beyond referring to environmentalists-that-are-white, this refers to "white environmentalism": The idea that the environment may be saved simply by Northern consumers reforming their purchases to be more "sustainable" (not eating meat, recycling etc.); the idea that global ecology may be saved without working cooperatively with indigenous and rural communities that live in areas of resource extraction and other sites of ecological devastation (communities that actually know what is going on and how it works).

found in continuing indigenous resistance to colonial civilization. And then of course there are the Zapatistas.



Chapter 3

Conversaciones desde abajo y a la izquierda

Ésta es nuestra palabra que declaramos: En el mundo vamos a hermanarnos más con las luchas de resistencia contra el neoliberalismo y por la humanidad. Y vamos a apoyar, aunque sea un poco, a esas luchas. Y vamos, con respeto mutuo, a intercambiar experiencias, historias, ideas, sueños.

- Sexta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona

La Otra Campaña – La Zetza Internacional

We have discussed the Zapatista uprising somewhat, as well as their role in the PGA and globalization movement more generally. But what have the Zapatistas been doing in the past 5 years? Having secured autonomous zones within the Mexican state by way of armed uprising and an international solidarity movement, they began consolidating autonomous systems of health care, education, municipal government and a solidarity economy among communities based on cooperative work projects and equitable redistribution of wealth. During this time, the Zapatistas reflected on the movements successes and failures, as well as critiques that had been leveled against them. Some of this critique surrounded the disproportionate attention they were receiving due to the nature of the international Zapatista media campaigns. While Zapatistas became a pop culture phenomenon and Chiapas the new activist Mecca, repression of other indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Mexico worsened and was ignored. Certain resentment grew towards these spectacular guerrillas, who spoke much of solidarity yet were not themselves in solidarity with their *compañeras* and *compañeros* right next door.

At this point they had put down arms and had entered into a long, arduous negotiation process with the Mexican state culminating in the San Andres accords (1996), from which the government had reneged almost immediately. This corroborated what many knew already, that the state government, inextricably embroiled in the neo-liberal world order, was fundamentally dependent on the ongoing subjugation of the indigenous poor and thus would never, could never, support their interests. This system of politics from above, *desde arriba*⁷⁰, is founded on their exploitation. The Zapatistas began to articulate the need for a new way of doing politics, *desde abajo y a la izquierda*, or “from below and to the left”, whereby the oppressed of the world would take turns speaking and listening to each other, organize themselves in solidarity, and build a variety of anti-capitalist, autonomist projects and movements founded on participatory democracy and the principle of *mandar obedeciendo*, or leading by obeying.

And so emerged *La Otra Campaña*, The Other Campaign, a conscious turn of phrase mocking the election campaigns of Mexico. Zapatista delegations would leave Chiapas and slowly canvas the country, visiting any community that invited them, for the purpose of listening to their stories with the aim of weaving a wider struggle. In the 6th Declaration from the Lacondon Rainforest they proposed that the struggle be non-violent and based on principles of autonomy and solidarity among *los de abajo*, and they proposed both national and transnational coordination. The original Declaration is over 20 pages; here is an abridgement:⁷¹

⁷⁰ from above

⁷¹ Full original Spanish version as well as complete translations (variable quality) in French, English and Italian can be found at: <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2005/> (as of April 12, 2007). I translated and abridged from the original Spanish.

EJÉRCITO ZAPATISTA DE LIBERACIÓN NACIONAL. SEXTA DECLARACIÓN DE LA SELVA LACANDONA

I - What We Are

We are the Zapatistas of the EZLN, sometimes also called "neo-Zapatistas." We the Zapatistas of the EZLN rose up in arms in January of 1994 because we saw how widespread the evil wrought by the powerful had become, who only humiliate us, rob us, imprison us and kill us... But we did not want to struggle just for own good, or just for the good of the *indígenas* of Chiapas, or just for the *pueblos indios* of Mexico. Rather, we want to fight together with everyone who is humble and simple like ourselves, and who have great need, and who suffer exploitation and thievery by the rich and their *mal gobiernos*⁷² here in our Mexico and in other countries of the world...

II. - Where We Are Now

...But we saw that the autonomous municipalities were not equal. Rather, some were more advanced and had more support from civil society whereas others were more neglected... And we also saw that the EZLN, in its political-military aspect, was involving itself in decisions which should belong to democratic authorities, "civil" authorities as they say. The problem is that the political-military component of the EZLN is not democratic, because it is an army, and we saw that it is no good this situation... Democratic politics should be leading and the military should be below obeying. Or maybe it would be better with nothing below but rather everything on the same plane, level, without a military, and that's why the Zapatistas are soldiers, such that one day there shall be no soldiers. Good, well then, what we did about this problem was we started to separate that which is political-military from the autonomous and democratic organizational forms and ways of Zapatista communities... Sure, its easy to say, of course, but in practice it was difficult because its been many years, first in preparation for war, then in the war itself, that political-military way has become customary. But in any case we did it, because it is our way to do what we say, because if we didn't, well, what would be the point of going around saying something if later we don't do it? That was how the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*⁷³ were born, in August of 2003, and through them we have continued our self-teaching and the practice of *mandar obedeciendo*...

III - How We See the World

Now we are going to explain to you how we, the Zapatistas, see what is going on in the world. We see that capitalism is what's strongest right now. Capitalism is a social system, a way in which a society goes about organizing things and people, and who has and who has not, and who gives orders and who obeys... Capitalism is most interested in merchandise, because when it is bought or sold, profits are made. So capitalism turns everything into merchandise, it makes merchandise out of people, of nature, of culture, of history, of conscience... And neoliberalism is the idea that capitalism is free to dominate the entire world no matter what, so you have to resign yourself and conform and not make a fuss. Not rebel, let's say. So neoliberalism is like the theory, the plan, of capitalist globalization. And neoliberalism has its economic, political, military and cultural plans. All of those plans have to do with dominating everyone, and they repress or separate anyone who doesn't obey so that their ideas of rebellion aren't passed on to others...

V - What We Want To Do

Good, well, now we are going to tell you what we want to do in the world and in Mexico, because we cannot see everything that is happening on our planet and just remain quiet, as if it were only us, as if we are only here where we are... In Mexico what we want to do is make an agreement among persons and organizations of the left, because we think its in the political left that the idea of resisting neoliberal globalization is found... And so, what we were thinking is, we make a plan to go all around Mexico where there are humble and simple people like us. And we are not going to tell them what they should do or give them orders. Neither are we going to ask for them to vote for a candidate because we all know that they're all neoliberals. Neither are we going to tell them to do the same as us, nor to rise up in arms. What we are going to do is ask them how their lives are, their struggle, their thoughts on our country, and what we are going to do so that they don't defeat us. And maybe we will find an agreement between all of us that are simple and humble and, together, we will organize all over the country and coordinate our struggles that are alone now, separated one from the other...

In the World...

- 1- We will create more relations of respect and mutual aid with persons and organizations that resist and fight against neoliberalism and for humanity.
- 2- Within measure of our capability we will send you material support like food and crafts for the brothers and sisters that struggle all over the world... And we are also going to make an agreement with the women's craft cooperatives to send a good amount of embroidery pieces to Europe that maybe aren't yet Union, and we'll also maybe send organic coffee from the Zapatista cooperatives so they can sell it and make a bit money for their struggle. And if it doesn't sell well then you can always make yourselves a pot of coffee and chat about the antineoliberal struggle, and if it gets cold, well then cover yourselves with the Zapatista embroidery that

⁷² Bad governments; *mal gobierno* is the phrase used by Zapatistas to refer to all politics *desde arriba*.

⁷³ Councils of Good Government; the name of the Zapatista municipal authorities.

does resist well, even being laundered by hand on the rocks and, even better, they don't run. And to the indigenous brothers and sisters of Bolivia and Ecuador we're also going to send some non-transgenic maize, its just that we don't know where to send it so it arrives intact, but yes we are willing to give this bit of help.

- 3- And to all who are resisting in all of the world we say to you that we must have other intercontinental *encuentros*, even if its just one. Maybe December of this year or next January, we'll have to think about it. We don't want to say just when, because this is about us deciding together on everything: where, when, how, with who. But not with a stage where a few talk and all the rest listen, rather without a stage, with everything flat and everyone speaking, but orderly otherwise it will just be a hubbub where we can't hear *la palabra*, with good organization so that everyone listens, and writes in their notebooks the *palabras de resistencia* of others so that later each can go talk about it with their *compañeros y compañeras* in their worlds... Later on we'll tell you what we are doing to start agreeing on how we are going to start agreeing on this. That's how we think about doing what it is we want to do in the world. Moving on...

In Mexico...

...A Zapatista delegation, together with those organizations and persons of the left who gather around this Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona, will go to such places where we are expressly invited. The EZLN will establish a politic of alliances with non-electoral organizations and movements that define themselves, in theory and in practice, as leftist and according to the following conditions: Not to make agreements above to be imposed below, rather making agreements to go together to listen and organize the indignation and outrage; not to raise movements to later negotiate behind the backs of those who made them, rather to always take into account the opinion of those who participate; not to look for rewards, positions, advantages, public office, from Power or those who aspire to have It, rather look beyond the electoral calendars; not look to resolve from above the problems of our Nation, rather build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, a leftist alternative for Mexico...

And this was our simple *palabra*, sent out to the noble hearts of all those simple and humble people who resist and rebel against injustice all over the world. Democracy! Liberty! Justice!

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast: *Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena – Comandancia General del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*
Mexico, in the sixth month, or June, of the year 2005.

La Sexta Internacional refers to the international network related to *La Otra Campaña*.

The EZLN had invited anyone in the world to become adherents to the 6th declaration, "*la Sexta*", if they were in agreement with it and during 2005/2006 many collectives based on *La Sexta* appeared across the world⁷⁴. Some have concentrated on local projects that challenge neoliberalism one way or another, others have concentrated on direct solidarity with movements in Mexico, others have been a mix; indeed there have been many creative manifestations of *La Sexta*. There are always certain points in common, however: a commitment to anticapitalism, a commitment to grassroots and horizontal politics in

⁷⁴ Some of the countries that have collectives working around the Sexta Declaración are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Catalunya, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Norway, Pais Vasco, Poland, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Kurdistan, Ukraine, Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

principle as well as practice, a commitment to respect the cultural autonomy and self-determination of the Zapatistas as well as the diversity of other peoples of the world.

Solidarity Activism in Montreal

Around this time I was part of the Anarchist Reading Circle at Concordia University. About a dozen of us were reading Katsiaficas, Crimethinc. and some Situationist stuff. Then there was the anticivilizationalists and the nihilists. That's right about when all the ladies left the group including myself. But the listserve always lives on. We all forward it random call-outs and info we think people would be interested in:

>**Subject: [listserve] summer...HA! what?!? okayohKayOK...**
>**Date: Tue, 18 Apr 2006 09:17:27 -0400 (EDT)**
>
>Yeah,
>Summer,
>Shorts, sneakers, sunburns,
>
>I dig the anarchist reading circle,
>I'm down for meeting whoever wants to keep meeting over the summer,
>I think a change of format/metting time/place might be in order,
>We live in a big freakin' city,
>
>Can't decide on Gramsci today,
>(I'm broke, by the way)
>Heard there's some recipes for disaster kickin' around,
>Could be cool to hear what works in different geographies,
>I know it's after many people leave, but the book fair on May 20th might
>be a good way to get some books directly from publishers, especially if we
>know what we're looking for, we could ask people to bring 'em for us...AK
>for example is going to be there, methinks,
>

>Oh yeah!
>I'll paste on this big-ass invitation to the Other Campaign assembly
>tomorrow night; if you're jones'n for reading, get into the Sixth
>Declaration from the Lacondan Jungle, good preparation for tomorrow
>night...
>I'll go check that out if anyone else is interested...
>
><http://www.narconews.com/Issue38/article1371.html>

>

>ENGLISH:⁷⁵
>First Assembly of the Other Campaign
>April 19th 2006
>6.30 pm
>UQAM, pavillon Hubert-Aquin
>A-2405
>400 Ste Catherine Est
>We invite all groups and individual that accept the principles of the Sixth
>Declaration of the Lacandona Forest of the EZLN
>
>Orders of the day:
>1. Presentation
>- Who are we, what we want and how do we want it
>- Information on what is the Sixth and the Other Campaign
>2. Participants round
>3. The Other Campaign here
>3.1 Direct international solidarity Montreal-Mexico
>3.2 The application here and now in our reality
>4. Action plan
>5. Intergalactic meeting
>
>*** Principles for participation:
>
>To be:
>Anticapitalist
>Working from the bottom and at the left
>NOT to seek to take power
>NOT to be hegemonic
>We do not seek to enter political parties.
>We seek an other way to do politics without reproducing the exclusive and
>repressive
>system.
>*****

As yet unaware of *la Sexta* and what it said, I quickly skimmed the version linked to the email to get a general idea and went to the assembly. I had spent some time in Mexico in the past and wanted to put my Spanish and knowledge of history to use. I was also intrigued by transnational Zapatismo, which was relevant to my project on transnational autonomism, so I figured I could do two things at once.

The assembly was attended by about 25 people, half men, half women. More than half seemed to be Mexican or Latin American and the majority of the meeting was carried out in Spanish with whisper translation in the corners to French and English. It was co-facilitated by a man and woman, both bilingual. They managed a speakers list and mediated

⁷⁵ The original email contained the invitation in Spanish, French and English in that order; here I have only included the English as it was presented, clearly translated from Spanish.

discussion among the participants as we went through the agenda, intervening only to reiterate summaries, make clarifications or put forth proposals based on the discussion, which we then consensed upon or not. Some ideas that emerged and were agreed upon as priorities for a *La Otra Campaña* movement in Montreal were as follows; I wrote this list at the meeting:

- Links with immigrant struggles
- Participate in May Day⁷⁶ march with other immigrant groups, as *internacionalistas*
- Focus on *pres@s politic@s*⁷⁷ in Mexico
- Focus on unemployment here
- Denuncias*⁷⁸ of repression and abuses in Mexico, here, anywhere
- Accompaniment work - direct solidarity with Mexican social movement/*La Otra*
- Collaboration/ project with indigenous orgs. in Oaxaca
- Red Alert system to respond to repression - system for internet and letter campaigns
- Solidarity/cooperation with the *Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie*
- Solidarity work with Six Nations land reclamation
- Garden project in Kanehsatake⁷⁹ to occupy disputed land, solidarity with Kanehsatake
- Network for urgent action
- Web page
- Translation work
- Creation of propaganda and literature about *La Otra Campaña*
- Workshops and popular education about *La Otra*

Over the summer the collective worked on projects by breaking into working groups around specific tasks and reporting-back in meetings, like in Venezuela. People in this collective were also part of other projects, some mentioned above. Collectives always overlap, sharing people and working groups. For example, at the assembly above, many sign-up sheets were passed around the circle; I signed my name on all the petitions and wrote my email address on all the contact lists. By the next day my inbox was flooded with information. Much of it had to do with the solidarity campaign with Six Nations, which was then in full swing: Earlier that year, the provincial government of Ontario had passed the “Places to Grow” act in order to sell off unceded native land to developers. Henco

⁷⁶ Mayday is international workers' day, originally commemorating the Haymarket massacre of anarchists in Chicago (1886).

⁷⁷ political prisoners. In Spanish, activists use the @ sign to replace suffixes "a" or "o" that designate gender.

⁷⁸ denunciations

⁷⁹ Kanehsatake is a Mohawk land reserve north of Montreal

Industries had bought a contract for a huge swath of the Six Nations land near Caledonia, and Mohawk activists were occupying the site in protest. After a tense two-month standoff, the police attacked.

>Subject: [listserve]⁸⁰ Today! 6pm SIX NATIONS EMERGENCY DEMO @ CABOT SQUARE
>Date: Thu, 20 Apr 2006 16:37:56 -0400
>EMERGENCY DEMONSTRATION AGAINST TODAY'S INVASION OF SIX NATIONS!!
>This morning 150 OPP invaded unarmed and sleeping people at Six Nations at
>the Haldimand Tract development site, with M16s, tasers, pepper spray in tow.
>Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement (IPSM) is calling a surprise action at 6PM!
>Meet at Cabot square by Atwater Metro.

>Subject: [listserve] Six Nations Solidarity Meeting this Friday @ 6pm
>Date: Mon, 24 Apr 2006 15:30:27 -0700 (PDT)
> > Come One, Come All!
> > Montreal Public Assembly to Organize Solidarity with
> > Six Nations
> > *****
> > When? Friday April 28th @ 6pm
> > Where? UQAM, Hubert Aquin Building, 3rd Floor
> > Cafeteria
> > Address? 400, rue Sainte-Catherine Est
> > Metro? Berri-Uqam
> > *****
> > This is a call-out for all groups and individuals
> > interested in joining forces to organize support for
> > the ongoing Six Nations Land Reclamation. The
> > Assembly will focus on the formation of committees,
> > and strategizing for each area of work.
> >
> > Groups who've expressed interest include: IPSM,
> > PASC, SAB, PPL, CLAC Latin America, NOII, CAPMA and
> > ISM. So please, if you receive this email, pass it
> > on to your members.
> >
> > The proposed committees, so far, include:
> > 1. Transport: coordination of rides to and from Six
> > Nations
> > 2. Finance/Legal: budgets for transportation,
> > supplies, money for Six Nations, legal support, etc.
> > 3. Action: Montreal solidarity actions and
> > coordination with toronto support
> > 4. Information: collecting and creating info, from
> > the ground, and translating it into French and
> > Spanish.
> >
> > Also, regular updates are available at
> > <http://sisis.nativeweb.org>
> > And a ride board is at:
> > <http://excoboard.com/exco/forum.php?forumid=91715>

⁸⁰ Normally the name of the specific listserve would appear here.

So who are these groups and how do they coordinate? The IPSM is the Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement, the PASC is the *Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie*, which organizes international accompaniment in Colombia; SAB is Solidarity Across Borders, which is a network organizing around justice for immigrants and refugees; PPL (*Pain, Panais et Liberté*⁸¹) and CLAC Latin America are both working groups of the CLAC (*Convergence des Luites Anti-Capitalistes*⁸²); NOII is No One is Illegal; CAPMA is the Collective for the Autonomy of the Mapuche⁸³ People; and the ISM is the International Solidarity Movement organized around the occupation of Palestine. While all of them are organized slightly differently, all are similarly decentralized into working groups, all are anti-authoritarian and use some form of consensus decision-making. These groups overlap considerably; some people are involved in only one project but in each group there are a few full-time activists that are involved, formally or informally, in a few groups at once and so are privileged in terms of access to information and people. They tend to be the informal agenda-setters among a network of “egalitarian” collectives and activists. All the groups that expressed interest above could technically boil down to 10 hardcore activists and their various affiliations. It’s never entirely clear. What happened at the Zapatista assembly is that the activists who are involved in multiple projects knew about it, came out of interest and also to use the meeting as an opportunity for outreach. They figure that people who are interested in the Zapatista movement are likely to also be concerned about the situation in Six Nations, so it’s worth passing around a sign-up sheet for the list-serve. This is common practice and demonstrates a major aspect of coordination among collectives, the Internet.

⁸¹ Bread, Parsnips and Liberty

⁸² Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Resistance. This is the network that emerged 7 years before in relation to the PGA.

⁸³ The Mapuche are indigenous people of Chile.

As the summer wore on, I worked with the La Otra collective around a tense situation that had erupted in Oaxaca, Mexico. The teachers union had stepped up their campaign for funding and a living wage by establishing a *plantón*⁸⁴ in the *zocalo*⁸⁵ of Oaxaca, the state capital. Since the privatization and corporatization of the Mexican school system under NAFTA, teachers unions have been mobilizing to protect and support public schools. Many in Oaxaca are being run autonomously, without funding or paid salaries, thanks to the cooperation of teachers, parents and students, who maintain the buildings and buy supplies collectively. The *plantón* of over 70 000 people was demonstrating against this situation and demanding funding for education. They were installed there from May 22 until June 14th, when over 3000 federal police entered the *zocalo* at dawn and attacked the sleeping camp, killing 4 people, wounding hundreds more, burning all tents, food and supplies, radio facilities and blanketing the downtown core in tear gas. Townspeople responded in support of the teachers and demonstrators by coming out in the streets during the repression to join the activists. They donated food and materials to rebuild the *plantón* and provided bricks, wood and other construction materials to build barricades and fight off the police. By noon that same day they had erected barricades around the entire downtown core. What had been a *plantón* and movement of 70, 000 was now a movement of hundreds of thousands of people occupying an autonomous zone that covered much of downtown Oaxaca. The

⁸⁴ camp, demonstration.

⁸⁵ town square, plaza

people convoked a march for the 16th of June as a response to the repression; it was an immense movement of 800, 000 people who in turn proposed a general assembly for the following day. It was held behind the barricades. Over 260 social organizations were present as well as thousands of individuals. Among them were labour unions, human rights organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations and councils, women's organizations, cultural associations, student groups, anarchists, punks and a variety of collectives and NGOs.

This assembly was called the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* and it was the first of a long series; it continued to meet weekly as the decision-making body for the social movement - and temporary autonomous government - of the city of Oaxaca. It was an open assembly in which people could participate as individuals or as groups, regardless of whether they had attended before, or intended to again. The 260 groups that formed part always had at least one member at the assemblies. If the usual attendee was murdered, arrested or otherwise unable to make it, someone else from the group went instead. In many groups rotation was encouraged in any case to prevent leaders from emerging. The structure made the APPO democratic, but also efficient and resilient; as assembly participants were slowly captured one-by-one by police, their places in the assembly were filled by others, allowing the assembly to continue intact.

The municipal police were increasingly unwilling to engage their neighbors in the APPO so the PFP⁸⁶ were dispatched to Oaxaca. They continually tried to invade the city but as soon as they would gain ground, the people would immediately take it back, succeeding with only sticks and stones. On August 9th, a march of 20 000 women marched over to the Channel 9 broadcasting station to protest the lies being diffused by the corporate media:

⁸⁶ Policia Federal Preventiva; the infamous *federales*.

The APPO was being labeled a “terrorist” organization by corporate networks. When Channel 9 refused to broadcast a message, the women spontaneously decided to enter and occupy the station, from which they broadcasted for 3 weeks until the antenna was cut. Even after there was no network connection, they held the building itself for months afterwards.

Meanwhile, *Radio Universidad* had become *Radio APPO* and was used throughout the summer to communicate among the movement, to convene meetings, assemblies, marches, to warn of police advances and to help people locate each other. Activists around the world listened to these minute-by-minute updates as Radio APPO was also broadcasted over the Internet. If there was a lack of food, water, medicine or other materials in a given neighborhood, this would also be broadcast over the radio and impromptu brigades would collect and deliver whatever was lacking. The powerful capacity of this movement to unite *Oaxaqueños* against the state government became all the more clear throughout the summer; rural people from all over flocked to the capital to support the movement. Collectives working within *La Otra Campaña* as well as anarchist activists from all over the country (especially Mexico City) traveled down to support the barricades.

On an international scale, both anarchist and autonomous activist collectives, including many adhering to *La Sexta Internacional*, organized solidarity campaigns around the APPO, the *Ici La Sexta* collective in Montreal being one example. Much of the collective’s energy in between the months of June and December 2006 was devoted to press releases, translation of updates, petitions, demonstrations, film screenings and other popular education politicizing the Oaxaca movement and repression it was suffering. All events and demonstrations were photographed, filmed and uploaded to the Internet. A variety of other collectives in Montreal began to collaborate together around solidarity with the APPO as it

became well-known. Block the Empire, an anti-authoritarian collective organized around capitalism and militarization, began to include Oaxaca in its list of "occupied territories"⁸⁷ and used its established network to rally mobilization for marches and events related to Oaxaca. Activists from the *Société Bolivarienne du Québec*⁸⁸, an organization in solidarity with Bolivarian Venezuela, also made contact with the *Ici La Sexta* collective wanting to collaborate organizing events, marches and fundraisers. Although hesitant to work with



sectarian organizations, everyone decided that it was most important to widen the resistance as much as possible. Due to the work of so many similar collectives around the world, by October 2006 the movement in Oaxaca had gained center-stage on the Indymedia websites and became common knowledge among radical activists all over the world, as well as among the wider demographic of leftists who routinely look for world news on Indymedia.

Corporate media around the world systematically ignored the conflict. Beyond the human rights organizations that began to arrive in Oaxaca in greater numbers, activists from anarchist and anti-fascist movements in Europe arrived on scene along with numerous anarchist activists and (more) Indymedia reporters from the United States. Reports and

⁸⁷ The phrase "occupied territories", most often used in reference to Palestine, is used by radical activists to refer likewise to Turtle Island occupied by Canada, Palestine occupied by Israel and, here, Oaxaca occupied by the Mexican state; a conscious conflation to articulate the parallel.

⁸⁸ The Bolivarian Society of Quebec

literature on the internet expanded exponentially, referencing the movement as a people's uprising, an indigenous peoples' movement and an autonomy movement in turn. Some started referring to it as the "Commune of Oaxaca", invoking analogy to the *Commune de Paris* of 1871, a shining moment in anarchist history.

During the summer months, activists from the *Ici la Sexta* collective, the *Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie*, the *Comité Chretien de Droits Humains en Amerique Latine* (CCDHAL), and the North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC), formed a working group to organize a speaking tour in Quebec and Ontario with two indigenous activists from Oaxaca. It was to be a month-long event during October, involving a relay of drivers and activists of different cities coordinating venues and dates over a listserve created expressly for the purpose. I am a housepainter so I am one of few activists with a car. I offered to drive for a week and ended up with the segment of the tour that went through Six Nations.

Six Nations and the Great Law Ceremony

We drove all day, arrived late in Six Nations and spread out on the floor in our host's extra bedroom. Juan, Magdalena and their local activist companions had done an event in Toronto that night and showed up shortly after we arrived. Whereas we had been in the car all day, they had been in Toronto and so had access to email; they immediately filled us in on the most recent attacks on the APPO by the PFP and paramilitaries. Four people had died that day, including an American Indymedia reporter named Brad Will who I had met in Venezuela. We split up into 3 groups: One fumbled with long-distance calling cards and bad phone connections trying to locate Juan's *compañeros* who were missing in action. The

second group drove around with a laptop looking for a wireless Internet connection to send out a press release and email a call-out for a demonstration at the consulate on Monday. The 3rd group, including me, the driver, slept.

The next day we arrived early at the reading of the Great Law. It was in a Lacrosse arena; the hallways were lined with folding tables offering sandwiches and coffee and there were a lot of people milling about; most were from Six Nations but there were people from other Nations present also. Our little delegation was totally exhausted and our guests were understandably preoccupied. They also seemed to be a little nervous about their presentation; their questions about Six Nations, the *Rotinoshón:ni*, the Great Law and the ceremony that day demonstrated much reverence for their “Brothers and Sisters of the North”; this meeting had meaning and significance beyond that of a lecture at some University. We settled in for the reading, arranging our seating so as to be able to translate into Spanish while disturbing as few people as possible. Speakers took turns sharing narratives, parables and poetry that each demonstrated different aspects of the Great Law of Peace. We learned about how peace is not a status but a never-ending process, not a reward but a way of acting in the world, a continual act of sharing, talking and listening to one another. We learned that there can only be peace if there is respect among people, among humans, as humanity, such that we may talk, listen and hear one another as equals. We learned that starting way before the Colonizers arrived, many nations of North America were slowly putting aside revenge and lasting feuds to join together under the Tree of Peace as the *Haudenosaunee* confederacy, and how the union was later strengthened in resisting the common colonial enemy. Juan and Magdalena listened intently, nodding their heads very seriously to the things they agreed with and pointing out similarities in their metaphors when they came up. Other times they stared silently ahead with brows furrowed, disturbed at

learning about residential schools, the loss of indigenous languages and the role of the Church in the violence and cultural genocide. Magdalena was a little anxious:

"But what happens if I mention the Creator? God made the water, the land and Life, he is the Creator, everything comes from Him, I am very religious."

"Oh come on Magdalena, whatever! We're not here to talk about religion anyway, what's important is the *struggle*!" I interrupted this guy and added:

"You can mention the Creator, Magdalena. They are talking about the Church, the problem is the Church not the Creator... Its true they are not Christian but I know if you talk about the Creator the way you do it will be OK..."

"And Jesus?"

"Ahh, fuck Jesus!"

"*Shhh!*"

"When you talk I think they will understand and will appreciate and respect your *palabra*. They will understand that yours is the Church of God and not this institution they are talking about now."

"I don't know... This is really their thing today, I don't know, maybe it's better if we don't take their time..."

"Oh no no! They are hear to listen to you both, they want to hear from you, you are the guests of honour!"

"Oh...Really? I don't know...."

A Condolence Ceremony

"Can everybody hear back there? Our brothers and sisters from the far South, the other part of the Turtle, Turtle Island - indigenous people, nations - have come to speak, and be one heart with us, one sacred prayer and mind, one sacred body. They have a message to share with everybody that will listen. I need your ears now, as well as your hearts, to feel what they are saying at this time. This is our way that we give everybody a chance to carry a message forth to the people. Its at this time now I'll invite my brothers and sisters of the spiritual circle of life to speak." He then began a ceremonial invitation in Mohawk while our translator translated the above into Spanish. Lucky for her, this pattern of alternating between Mohawk and English continued for the rest of the ceremony, always giving her time to catch up.

"What we said is they've come a long way to get here thus dirt has landed on them, and before they make a presentation to the people we'll wipe that off of them, clean that all off of them, welcome them into our community. And secondly, because of the amount of travel that they did, we see there's some burs - burdocks - you know those things that stick on your clothes when you're going through the bush? Well our ancestors used to always take that off. Alright, so that's what we did, we took all that off, the burdocks." Then back to Mohawk.

"Next we give them the clear water, which is the medicine, because on their trail their throat might have been dry from the long, long travel, so we give them the good water so that they can drink, and that it'll all clear up, and we will prepare them to address the people and they can speak clearly."

"And I explained to them that we also have food, that we welcome them to the territory, to our territory, and go get them food, and share with them the food that we have."

"Well, this one's a little bit late on this one, because this shoulda been done this morning... As soon as we realized we had visitors, by law, we are supposed to welcome them in this manner into our territory, that's our way, that's our cultural way. Ok... So this is supposed to happen." He brought out a large feather, held it up, and started again in Mohawk.

"On their trail, again, dust has accumulated and has filled their ears. So that they may hear our words, so that they can hear our words clearly, we take the dust and we unplug it from their ears." The feather was brushed on their ears. He turned to the crowd:

"Who's got a piece of leather, anyone...? Piece of leather? Anybody... Thank you, I got a little piece of leather here... And now we take, we take the fine soft leather of a young goat, the stomach of that young goat, because that's soft, and we wipe your tears, we wipe your eyes, because we are informed that you received bad news this morning." He paused and looked around the audience.

"Bad news. That from the land that they're from, they are struggling for their issues to stand, that they lost 5 of their people in struggle yesterday. They got that news, so... We understand here what that feels like, and we understand how heavy the mind is, too, and we understand how heavy the chest is at this time. So in order for you to see clearly, what we will do is take that leather and wipe the tears from your eyes, so you may see clearly what is happening at this time, of what is happening here today. So that is what we do, in this time, in welcoming you, our relatives from the South. Now...now we understand you have come a long way, and we ask you to come in front of the people because we know that you have

something of importance to share with us. At this time, those of us of this land would like to ask you if you have something official or of importance to share with us."

Magdalena didn't hesitate for a second, she stuck her hand out for the mic before Juan could say anything and began speaking. I guessed the elaborate welcome had increased her confidence; they were indeed the guests of honour.

"*Buenas tardes hermanos y hermanas*⁸⁹, my language is Zapoteca." She then offered a greeting in her language and continued on in Spanish.

"Thank you for receiving us with your open arms yesterday because we come from Oaxaca, Mexico and we would just like to share our story and history with you and its an honour to be here..." She paused for the translator to catch up.

"Since the beginning of Time, or beginning of *la Tierra*, God created water, water is our Life. And, in that way, everything is here is for us, to give us Life, and I want to talk to you about how the creator gave us these resources to take care of them. The earth is our Mother Earth, our grandmother..." The translator motioned for the mike.

"Our ancestors, the first fathers and mothers, took care of this earth and they asked permission of the earth to plant, they asked permission to bless the Earth. Because the Earth is also Life, and that's why the plants are here for us... This is what our parents gave to us, these forms, these ways to work the land so that it can be productive. We have to follow these ways, we have to ask permission of the Earth, and we have to pray."

She spoke for an hour straight, of the Earth and their ways of planting and harvesting, of the conquest of their land, of the ways of their *pueblo* that have been lost, of the ways of their *pueblo* that they still have. She spoke of the resistance of her people and the paramilitaries that come to murder their *compañeros*, she spoke of the sterilization programs

⁸⁹ Good afternoon brothers and sisters

they tried to get her to participate in when she just wanted to learn to be a nurse, and she spoke about peace, the Creator and God. Without mentioning Jesus once.

At the end of the presentation, the same man returned for a closing ceremony. It was also carried out bit by bit, first in Mohawk, then in English, but this time I have consolidated it:

"First of all, we thanked them for all the information that they gave to us, enlightened us on the situation that they are in back in their homeland. And we thanked them for that information. And then what we did is we, in the custom of our people, some of us went out and got something to take back with them, and they found what is referred to as the Warriors Flag, the Union Flag, which is meant for all indigenous peoples to come under one flag. We all have the same struggle. We all need to come into one, one circle, to fight that struggle. So they got 2 of them and that's what they sent back to you and your people. And also they put a Hiawatha Belt Flag in there, as a gift for them to take back to their people. And then they formed an Evergrowing Tree of Peace emblem, which they also send back as gifts from us to your people. And then the Wampum. The Wampum is something we have a lot of respect for, especially in our history. It was used constantly, it was a living book that our people used. It wasn't sacred and all of that stuff because it was used, it had everyday business about politics, our history, and so on, it was there, it was real. It's our way to send you back with a Wampum with our words from our people to your people, that you can take back, so we put that into the Wampum. And amongst our people, we had people that take care of all the ceremonies, and make sure that we never forget our ceremonies, our appreciation for Creation. And surely where you come from you have the same people, there, that take care of the ceremonies. So we take from our people in that position and send greetings to your people in that same position. And wish them the best in

strength. And amongst our people we have our people that are in public positions, take care of our political affairs, and surely you must have the same where you come from, your people must have representatives, and so our leaders send their greetings to your leaders and women leaders. We put those words in that too. And then you have the men and the women, our People, and surely you have the same thing where you come from, many people - probably a lot more than our people! Which is good. But anyways. Our people would like to send greetings to your people, and wish them the best, and hope that they are in good health and strong in what the Creator gave us, and they send their... the best words that they can find .. in staying strong in that struggle. So those are the words that our people sent back with you to your people. Thank you!”

Everyone stood up and began to clap. One by one they formed a long line: All the people in the audience filed to the front of the room to greet and thank their guests personally, to hold their hands and offer a few words. Us activists were grabbed by the shirtsleeves a few times to translate but in general they seemed to communicate fairly well without us, speaking in Mohawk, Zapoteca, English and Spanish respectively; the sentiment was clear. All the people who had already passed by began to form another long line in front of the folding tables that were now full of dinner.

Later on one of the guys from our crew came to talk to me alone: “You know what gets to me? How the activists are about spirituality, for them everything’s politics. As if you can have justice and create peace with manifestos and workshops alone! When really if people aren’t willing to *share*, to *listen*, to *respect* one another, what are all those manifestos gonna do? I mean are they really listening to what these guys are saying?”

“They always downplay the spiritual stuff, it’s true.”

“And the translators – even you do it – always translate all that stuff out, like turn “Brothers and Sisters defending the Circle of Life” into “Indigenous people fighting for autonomy” or something like that.”

“Yeah I been noticing that too actually, listening to recordings.”

“Man, it pissed me off before when they were making fun of religion, even before you came, it was worse. I mean its one thing to critique the Church, I mean, sure, all the anarchists hate the Church because its a structure of authority and domination, yeah sure fine, but it’s another thing entirely to hate-on Jesus himself, who was basically a radical mystic, and be dismissive of peoples’ spirituality, whatever-the-fuck it may be.”

“Yeah, shouldn’t being in solidarity with indigenous people – if that’s the idea here – mean...”

“Right, like what’s next? Someone gonna tell her she got “false consciousness”? Don’t they get it? That this means they are still trying to make up the rules about what’s true? Give me a fucking break. And what about Hiawatha and The Great Peacemaker? Are we gonna tell the Mohawks they are a bunch of backward believers for talking about *them*? Noo-o-o! We’ll shit on Jesus but we won’t shit on Hiawatha, and yknow why? Not because we have respect for “indigenous ways”, or whatever, we still think Bakunin knew best, we think religion is a function of politics, not the other way around... Anyways its not because we have respect for them, its just that we have this “polite” respect for difference. Like looking down on the culture still. Because we think that some secular anarchist analysis is somehow covers everything and anyone who is religious is fooling themselves. So we let them go on about their cosmology as some sort of political duty we have constructed for ourselves without really listening.”

“But of course it’s OK to dis Jesus because...”

“Our PC politeness doesn’t apply, Christians are the ‘bad guys’ or whatever, the evil Imperialists. But if we are to respect indigenous people’s perspectives, then that means respecting *Magdalena’s* indigenous spirituality, Jesus or no Jesus.”

“Right, and I mean some of the activists do, some are cool about that shit. Some even try to suggest going to Mass with the migrant workers...”

“But the rest raise their noses and prefer to not be associated with ‘structures of domination’.”

“Speaking of that, you know the CCDHAL, the human rights group that bought the tickets for this tour?”

“Yeah”

“So you know how the second C is for Christian? Well at the Anarchist Bookfair last year I noticed they were mentioned in some other propaganda, and some people had printed info out on them, and they removed the C!”

“No way... And they say they are not ‘sectarian’, that’s hilarious.”

“I know, very ironic.”

The Caravan Continues

We arrived in Montreal at 3 pm and went directly to the Mexican consulate where the demonstration was underway. Since Friday, when the now-famous Brad Will and other unnamed Oaxacans were shot and killed, demonstrations and direct action against Mexican consulates were appearing all over the world. Activists in New York who knew Brad organized immediately; people in Madrid actually managed to enter, occupy and close down

the Mexican consulate for a period of time; activist computer-hackers sabotaged the computer system, which was offline all over the world until the next day. Hundreds of activists in Rome managed to close the consulate and entire street down; they demonstrated



all day broadcasting Radio APPO live on a PA. By 3 pm when we arrived in Montreal the consulate had closed up for the day as well. We photographed the sign on the door that said they were closed for "technical reasons" and uploaded it to Indymedia.

The next day, Wednesday the 1st of November, I met up with Juan and Magdalena to translate one Anglophone event at Dawson College and then went over to the *Coop sur Genereux*⁹⁰, where an *ofrenda*⁹¹ was being prepared in celebration of the *Día de los muertos*⁹² that night and the next; were to host an event there the following night: a presentation and

⁹⁰ The Coop sur Genereux is a household of 15 people who collectively manage their home and community venue space.

⁹¹ offering; shrine

⁹² Day of the Dead

discussion followed by a *fiesta*. When we were done setting up we went over to Concordia University where Juan and Magdalena were finishing up a presentation. By the time we got there, the audience was standing around.

"Some people from the audience asked some pretty annoying questions, they were giving them a hard time, one guy actually stood up and said that if the APPO was interested in the welfare of the people of Oaxaca they would be respecting the 'rule of law' and working within the legal system! Can you believe that?"

"Yeah but Juan responded really well, he really gave a strong presentation, that guy is really powerful."

"Yeah and remember that question challenging him about why they did not use political parties? And how he answered? It was just fantastic! He said 'We are against political parties and do not use them because we are indigenous people.' Just like that, *boom!* The guy didn't know how to respond to that of course. It was great."

"Yeah that guy is stellar."

"And how about Magdalena's presentation? How did that go?"

"Oh, well, it was good too"

"Yeah, Magdalena's got a lot of spirit."

"And I was really impressed with how Juan knew all those dates and figures offhand, no one can say he doesn't know his shit man."

And so on. I walked away feeling annoyed. When the tour began the two were splitting the talks in half. Over the course of the past week I had noticed that little by little Pedro was taking more of the time, leaving less space for Magdalena. Other women had noticed it too; the guys involved seemed to be oblivious, feeling pure enthusiasm for Juan's "charisma". I decided that I would confront some of them about it because the situation

was becoming unbearable, it was very difficult to watch Magdalena react by becoming ever-more silent, all very insidious and ironic for a tour that had been organized to validate and voice stories like hers. A few of us attempted a variety of conversations about it during the following days. Here's one that I had, a favorite:

"A lot of us have noticed how Juan more and more isn't giving Magdalena space to talk, she just sits there next to him and its starting to be problematic don't you think?"

"Magdalena doesn't want to talk, she's very shy and you know we have to respect cultural differences, we can't force her to do something she doesn't want to do."

"Has anyone asked her that or are we just assuming here? Because I've seen her talk for hours before at other events and its just that people are cutting her down now."

"Well maybe that's what it looks like to you, but like I said, we have to respect cultural differences and we can't be interfering to impose our own ideas of feminism."

"This has nothing to do with imposing ideas of 'feminism' this has to do with responding to a very specific situation where Magdalena is not being allowed to speak at her own speaking events, events that we all have organized and are responsible for. What's disrespectful is ignoring this obvious exclusion by referencing all sorts of assumptions about what we imagine she feels like without even asking her about it or what she wants."

"Well I'm sorry how it upsets you so personally but this isn't about your personal causes, we have to appreciate the reality here. First of all, Magdalena is so shy you have to take her by the arm if you want her to say anything. Second of all, the reality is that Juan has been in union movements and popular movements in Oaxaca for 15 years, living in the city, and knows all the history, and he's more educated, y'know?"

The *Día de los muertos* event at the Coop came and went; this time Juan introduced the event for 5 minutes, passed the mic to Magdalena to introduce herself as well, which also

took about 5 minutes, and then he took the mic back and spoke for an hour and a half straight until the crowd was restless and clapped at the end, anxious to go out for smokes and start the party. Four women came up to me that night to ask *"Just what the hell is going on in this speaking tour?!"*. While none of this ever came up in the collective meetings, of course, women activists talked together about it for the rest of the week. Below I have consolidated some of these conversations, paraphrased from notes; my participation is in italic.

Over Breakfast

"I came by the Coop the other day to hear the talk, I couldn't believe how Juan just totally bulldozed Magdalena."

"Yeah and you know what just drives me crazy? The guys just don't give a fuck."

"Yeah, I said something last week and got this bullshit 'Oh she's shy she doesn't want to talk' crap, and the worst part is these guys actually believe that shit and take themselves seriously."

"Yeah I got the 'She's just shy' thing from 3 different people last week. They are a bunch of broken records, those guys with their excuses."

"Yeah, and I mean if she's acting shy now, then no wonder! People have been patronizing her for two weeks straight and I mean after being undermined so much, duh! -maybe you don't feel so confident anymore!"

"Like if she's getting the message that her contribution is not valuable, which is what's happening now, then it makes sense if she feels less confident."

"And those dudes are just oh so happy to write it off as some sort of 'cultural difference' and that way they don't have to reflect on their bullshit."

"Yeah, typical."

"Also typical in the sense that we get shut down for being, like, racist, if we try to talk about gender at all! Its always the same bullshit."

"Yeah I gotta say that the 'cultural sensitivity' card was played all 3 times too, when I tried to bring it up. I got charged with being a 'racist white feminist'."

"I'm not even white and I get the same bullshit, can you believe it?! Guys actually have the nerve to write me off by saying I am espousing 'white feminism', I mean not any *white* guys of course, they wouldn't *dare*! But the guys-of-colour don't hesitate for a second!"

At that Laundromat on Marianne

"So then he says to me - literally - he says this: 'You have to take her by the arm if you want her to say anything'! Can you bel...."

"Oh god..."

"Don't even *tell* me, fuck, I can't even believe..."

"They are fucking infantilizing her and its disgusting."

"Yeah, like in every way..."

"We were talking about sex the other day and she was there, right? and Mike comes up and says to us how we should 'be more respectful' - can you believe that!?!?"

"Me and Maggie have talked about sex a lot! What the fuck is he talking about?!"

"Yeah, we had this great conversation about porn the other day, it was hilarious."

"They all act like she's some sort of delicate little flower, some sort of pure, pristine, exotic flower."

"When the reality is she's been around the fucking block, she's seen shit that we can't even imagine. She's stronger than all of us put together!"

"But they treat her like some naïve, innocent child, its totally true."

"They see her as so different they can't even come to know her, they can't see her as another human being, not that different from them, she's like some sort of cute endearing jungle creature to them."

"It's totally bizarre..."

"And disturbing."

On a Smoke Break, Outside of a Meeting

"It's true that Magdalena's presentations are very different from Juan's. Juan usually talks a lot about the APPO, unions and stuff, and he's got a lot of stats in his head and stuff, whereas Magdalena talks more about her community, how they live, lots of info on the plants, medicines, everyday things."

"But also about her role as a health worker and about the organization and stuff."
 "Oh yeah yeah, totally, I just mean how she talks about things is different."
 "More concrete..."
 "Subjective"
"It's like instead of saying 'In our indigenous culture we value nature and plant medicine' she says 'We go walking in the forest and find many beautiful plants that are good medicine'."
 "But whatever, I mean I think that's just as interesting, even more powerful than that other..."
 "But it's totally obvious that so many of the people, well, the guys especially, they just write her off..."
 "Yeah it's really obvious that Juan's university lecture style presentation and his "charismatic male orator" type delivery turns on all these guys who are like 'Oooh, Juan is so impressive.'"
"Yeah, one dude I spoke to, he actually said 'Well, yknow Juan is more educated than Magdalena' as some sort of bizarre excuse why he would – or should – get more time to speak."
 "What?!"
 "For real man."
 "And they call themselves anarchists..."
 "Yeah totally, when the whole idea is supposed to be to deconstruct this imperialist bullshit, no? Like we're all so 'Fuck Western education!' and *yadayadayada* and then when it comes down to it, in reality, we fuck it all up! And aren't even able to hear someone and what they are saying unless they morph it into an essay."
 "Well some people, anyways, not everyone."
 "No, not everyone, but I mean, come on! Saying Juan's word is more valuable than Maggie's because he's more educated?"
 "It's basically pretty fucking racist."
 "Yup."
 "Definitely, to imply that she has nothing to contribute because she's too uneducated *as in* not 'Western enough' in her speech, argumentation or logic."
 "But of course if we would challenge the guys on it they'd just say *we're* racist."
 "Yeah, like twist it around and say we were 'romanticizing' her or something."
 "Or just call us feminists and that's the end of *that* conversation."

At the Diner

"Yknow how some of us were talking the other day about how Magdalena's presentation is different than Juan's? About how her knowledge and speech is different?"
"Uh huh."
 "Well I have also been thinking... And, I mean, don't get me wrong, I find Maggie to be a wealth of information and I wish we were learning even *more* from her but...well..."
"But what?"
 "Well just that, in a way, its kind of weird somehow that they invited her when there's so many, *so, so many* other women involved in the social movements that have as much knowledge, and even *more*, and would, I mean, basically make Juan look like a 3rd grade student in comparison... I know that sounds sort of weird to say, but yknow what I mean?"
"Umm.. I think so, like... If they chose Maggie specifically because they wanted someone on the tour with her knowledge and perspective, then that's one thing, that's cool - but that's not what it seems like, right? Instead it seems like they chose Maggie – if I am understanding you here – just to 'accompany' Juan, and the important thing about Maggie is not the knowledge she DOES have about the world but rather all the stuff she DOESN'T know. Juan remains the superstar and gender stereotypes remain intact: Educated political worldly man, common-sense, apolitical, domestic, cultural woman who is allowed to speak about her daily life and plants but not make statements about the world."
 "You and your anthropology..."
 "Yeah but that's more or less it though. I mean, they could have invited any one of *so many* women who have such wisdom and great stories *and* who also have just as much political history in their heads as Juan, just as much experience in the social movements, charismatic speakers and all that..."
 "Yeah, well they're probably busy back in those movements right now, doing all the work!"
 "Pickin up everybody's slack as usual."
 "True."
 "Thing is, I mean its really upsetting to think about what's happening here. What's happening is that there's this superficial concern with gender that doesn't go any deeper than just games of representation. The tour invited specifically one man and one woman for the speaking tour, and everyone here in Montreal is so proud that they are so 'anti-sexist' by doing that, but really its a bunch of bullshit, they are not 'anti-sexist' at all, because women's voices and concerns are still marginalized - they are just treated as decorations to make events or whatever more PC⁹³."
 "Like at meetings when guys say 'Oh, it should be a woman that speaks at the demo' or 'It should be a man and a woman pair for the radio show' and we're put forth to represent the collective..."
"And also represent how anti-sexist it is..."
 "When really, behind the scenes, its still the guys who are arguing..."

⁹³ acronym for "politically correct"

"Wasting all the meeting time with their protagonism and inflated debates..."

"Oh my god and the *listserves* are the *worst!*"

"Yeah, I mean must *every* debate turn into a fucking cockfight?"

"I'm so sick of the dick jokes I don't even read the *listserves* anymore."

"Anyways *they* decide everything about the demos, radio shows, what the press release actually *says*, all that stuff, and then we go read it out loud and it looks like there's equal participation when there's not."

"Yeah, *us* doing all that stuff is just more grunt work for us half the time. They still monopolize the agenda, decide what the priorities for the collective should be, shoot down all our ideas, and then pontificate about 'the struggle' and 'vanguardism' and 'autonomy' while we facilitate and take minutes and then, after all that, they act like it's our duty to go and do all the interviews and speeches."

"And then, if we ever bring up these gender dynamics as an issue they totally act like we are 'evil manipulative females' trying to fuck up the collective by dividing all the people in it over personal problems."

"Oh man, in this meeting the other day, some of us were trying to talk about patriarchy and every time we would try to give an example they'd just shut us down saying it was personal problems, and the only way we could broach the subject at all was by making references to poor, barefoot indigenous women and saying how they are more screwed over than a man in the equivalent position cause of..."

"Oh yeah, I remember that, and then the response was 'Yes, those indigenous women *are* in a bad position but really that has to do with their being indigenous and nothing to do with being a woman.'!"

Smoking in the Kitchen

"For all the talk of 'solidarity', I certainly don't see much of it. I mean, when was the last time anyone asked you how you were doing? I was at that demo yesterday, and we don't even say Hi to each other. I don't even have any idea what's going on in any of our lives. I mean here we are all working together, in the spirit of 'changing the way we relate to each other', with the idea that we 'start with ourselves' and of course we focus on the 'process' and all that, but really we are not doing that at all."

"Totally, we act like democratic 'process' at meetings substitutes for actual democratic process in life itself."

"Yeah, we obsess over process in meetings, but then as soon as we leave – what? We are free to be selfish, manipulative, emotionally abusive assholes to each other? And I mean especially the guys, man they're the biggest hypocrites of all!"

"No shit."

"They blather on about process and 'anarchist theory' in meetings and workshops as if they invented the idea of cooperation, when, in fact, to look at how they actually behave in their lives it's obvious they have no grasp whatsoever on what 'cooperation' actually means at all! Like, for example, it doesn't mean taking on tasks in meetings only to try to hand them off to your women friends, room-mates or girlfriend, and make them feel that if they don't 'help' you they are betraying the fucking revolution. Give me a fucking break."

"Makes me puke how they don't know how to cooperate."

"Only delegate."

"It's like they don't see the crucial difference – *duh* – between doing something *themselves* and getting someone else to do it *for them*. And worse, they do it by way of this really disgusting political-emotional manipulation whereby to be a 'good woman activist' is really not that different from being a 'good woman' – one who does all the work, does not complain about it, takes pride in their 'supportive role' – like, bringing to fruition the ideas of all the guys who dominate the decision-making – and, like, on top of this is supposed to get some sort of satisfaction out of it..."

"Yeah! The whole scam is articulated as if it was for our own good, like, as if we can't expect to be treated properly until the downfall of capitalism and so we should just shut up and help the guys vanquish capitalism. When it comes to everything else they are like 'Start where you are man! The time is now! We gotta manifest democracy in the movement man! You can't take down the masters house with the masters tools man! We are the ones we've been waiting for!'"

"But when it comes to women they say: 'Wait'. They morph into Marxists and say 'after the revolution'."

"For people who talk so much about confronting power in everyday life..."

"And not working within structures of domination..."

"It's pretty pathetic they don't see that that's exactly what *they* are..."

"Time for an 'engaged withdrawal' from the anarchist scene."

"But then we are 'divisive feminists' of course..."

"Isn't that interesting though? How if we try to raise 'women's issues' within our collectives the response is that it's a 'women's issue', not a 'general' issue, so it's something women specifically should organize around..."

"Right – once I tried to get guys involved in organizing around sexual assault and they said 'you should start a women's collective for that'..."

"As if we rape each other..."

"Idiots"

"Anyways, yeah, so they say 'oh, that's something women should deal with separately' but then if we ever actually try to have a non-mixed event or collective they call us 'divisive!'"

"Fucking catch-22."

I left Montreal for D.F.⁹⁴ on November 20th. When I had bought the ticket months before, my intention was to go from there to Oaxaca. Now I had a dilemma. Should I really go down there? The PFP answered my question for me by bringing out the heavy artillery and attacking, murdering and disappearing thousands of people 5 days after my arrival in the country. There were stories of elderly women being murdered by gang rape and people being thrown from helicopters. I stayed in the capital.

I immediately went and found the *plantón* in solidarity with the APPO that was occupying Tacuba street. It had grown up over the summer and was now flooded with more people, refugees. It was 2 blocks long, a tent city including portable latrines, a medic



tent, a drop-off and distribution centre for donated clothes and food, a kitchen that served free meals twice a day, a media tent and many more that housed the 500 people that were

⁹⁴ I refer to Mexico City as it is referred to throughout Mexico: D.F. stands for *Distrito Federal* or Federal District

sleeping there each night. Every morning blankets and tables were set up in the middle of the street, which still served as a pedestrian walkway, and people sold books, posters, CDs of revolutionary folksongs, crafts and foodwares from Oaxaca to fundraise for the movement.

I introduced myself to the people in the media tent and said I wanted to help, that I had a videocamera and could also translate anything they wanted into English. I made some good friends there and worked with them throughout the month. We recorded and uploaded photos and footage of marches and actions in D.F. and translated radio capsules into English and French for the Indymedia Radio website, so activists and community radio



workers could download and broadcast them wherever they wanted. Hanging around with the APPO people in the *plantón* shed a lot of light on the cooperation and conflict among all the groups and actors involved. One of the people I learned a lot from was a guy named Uri, a Mixe⁹⁵ activist from Oaxaca who had been living in D.F. with a university scholarship for the past 3 years. He had been working the media tent with a friend from the same *pueblo*

⁹⁵ One of the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca; most Mixe live in towns in the rural Sierra between the capital and the coast and speak one of many Mixe languages; Uri learned Spanish when he came to D.F.

back home all summer and had a lot to say: “A lot of people come by wanting to know how to be part of the APPO, they ask if they can join, and I always say ‘You’re already here, if you want to be a part of it then you are, if you agree with our demands and principles and want to work with us, that’s the APPO.’”

“It’s an assembly structure, not an organization, right? That’s the thing”

“Yeah, it’s a peoples movement, its for everyone, that’s the whole point. If we were saying some could be part of the assembly and not others then that’s not a people’s movement, its sectarian. The APPO is not sectarian.”

“That’s what’s so powerful about it isn’t it, that you have unions and Communist party people, teachers and children, all kinds of different people, campesinos and anarchopunks, internationals and...”

“Oh yeah but the anarchists, man those guys, you know the anarchopunks were actually protesting the APPO when it began?”

“No way! Why?”

“Because there was union people and politicians⁹⁶ in it and we were saying anyone could be part of the assembly...”

“Right and they don’t like that theres institutional elements and reformists and stuff”

“Yeah... And I mean the whole time its been clear that the APPO is against political parties, but its one thing to be against parties and agree that the APPO will never become one, its another to prevent an individual from participating in the assembly because they are, or were, part of a political party at one time. The assembly is a people’s assembly, its open to everyone, that’s what *makes* it a people’s assembly, and yes, its true that there are

⁹⁶ Unions in Mexico are largely state-affiliated, corrupt institutions controlled *desde arriba*; there are certain exceptions such as the *Seccion 22*, the locale of the teacher’s union that organized the original *plantón* in Oaxaca. Mexicans differentiate between “*sindicatos radicales*” and “*sindicatos chorros*” or simply “*los chorros*” – the thieves.

*Perredistas*⁹⁷ there but as long as they are not trying to link the APPO with the PRD⁹⁸ in any way then they can be whoever they want.”

“But let me guess, the anarchists say they won’t work with sectarian organizations.”

“Uh huh, but in a way it’s the anarchists that are..”

“The most sectarian of all - they were the ones that wanted to exclude people.”

“Exactly.”

“So what happened in the end?”

“Well once it was clear that the APPO was gaining momentum, that it had such broad support and, well, legitimacy with the people, then a lot of the people that had protested it got on board too. Some of the anarchist groups were in it right from the beginning. Others just joined in later because it was the only thing to do - I mean a leftist opposition to the APPO was just not going to go over! They would have no support of the people. Some of the anarchists have been really solid y’know... but some of the anarchopunks just wanted to raise hell... Like at certain times when the APPO decided that we were not going to engage the police, like just try to hold a barricade defensively, the only people that would not respect the assembly decision would be the punks. Like they’d start throwing rocks or whatever and fuck up the whole strategy for everyone. There’s more cooperation and respect now though. *You’re not an anarchist are you?*”

“Uh, well, sort of just in the sense that I don’t think political parties or state governments are capable of serving justice or the people. But I’m not hung up on anarchism really.”

“Well a lot of people here, in fact most people in Mexico, don’t believe in political parties but that doesn’t make us anarchists. Like me, I’m not an anarchist, I’m a communist,

⁹⁷ Written word (used in formal text) based on the Spanish phonetic pronunciation of PRD-ista; the PRD is the Partido de la Revolución Democrática, the Left-leaning federal political party in Mexico.

⁹⁸ See above

because I believe society needs rules. At least now. We are not capable of running ourselves without rules. I mean you always need some rules. All the anarchists that are against all rules and order no matter what... I mean it's a phase of life, usually teenage guys, and they don't have any realistic long-term anything. Don't tell me you are an *anarchist* Erica!"

"Ok ok ok so tell me... If you're a communist does that mean you believe in the communist party or a communist revolution, like taking power of the state?"

"Nonononono hold on there, not at all. For me being a communist means theres a government but it's the peoples government. That's all. Like in my *pueblo* we have a municipal government run by assembly and I mean its basically autonomous. It's not officially recognized by the state of course, but it doesn't matter because basically there's no presence of the Mexican government or state or anything where we are anyways.... Except the paramilitaries that show up if they want to disappear someone or some bullshit but basically we are on our own. And we run things on our own, we have our own structure of assembly and representatives and stuff and its communist because it responds to the people."

"See, that's real interesting.. Y'see up North that's enough to make you an anarchist. Just the fact that you don't believe in political parties as the answer, state government and stuff, that's what makes someone an anarchist. And of course there's anarchopunks too, just like here, and what you say about how the anarchopunks interacted with the APPO actually sounds familiar to some of the problems between the punks and other activists back home too... The difference is that the definition of an anarchist is much wider than that, so the punks are seen to be just one, like, version I guess. There's also all kinds of others, lots of people who are for participatory democracy, like building grassroots autonomy movements, working through assembly and that's sort of understood as what it means to be an anarchist."

“Well that’s cause all these people only understand things the Western way, they have no real frame of reference so they call it anarchism but it’s not. Its possible to be all of those things, be for democracy and the assembly and against political parties and all of that and it has nothing to do with anarchism necessarily at all. Like I don’t need to say I’m an ‘anarchist’ to say those things, I’m Mixe and those things are part of the tradition of my *pueblo* and so I can just say I’m Mixe and that’s enough. It’s better even! Because you know why? Unlike anarchists, we are actually practicing democracy and the assembly. And have since forever! But this is a form of government, so its not anarchist, that’s why I say I’m communist if I have to pick, but the key thing about it is that the government actually responds to the people cause things are decided in the assembly.”

When I was in Venezuela I had met some anarchists from D.F. who had come to the ASF. I searched my inbox for the guy I knew best and he invited me to a meeting at their infoshop. They were pretty busy getting supplies and people ready for a shuttle bus to Oaxaca that night, but we went out for a beer after: “Well that’s why we call ourselves the *Alianza Magonista Zapatista* and avoid using the word anarchist, even though that’s what we are, because its tricky, yknow? What we say is “Magonista” because that’s more relevant to local history and so in a way its more respectful and, I mean, its more practical too, right? Like if our basic job is to be in solidarity with, like, grassroots indigenous movements, then we should be doing that, not trying to put forth a certain ideology or word that gets in the way. That wouldn’t be solidarity. So we adhere to libertarian principles, because we are anarchists, but because we are anarchists we want to be in real solidarity with the oppressed... So how important is it to be explicitly, like, an “anarchist”? right?”

“Yeah, totally, I know what you mean. Back home it’s not the same of course, the context is different, but the same stuff comes up in different ways. If you call yourself an “anarchist” then you alienate

some people right away because they assume lots of negative stereotypes, so a lot of the anarchist activists prefer to call themselves "autonomists" or just say they work in a consensus-based collective or something that sounds nicer... But then there's people that are like 'we shouldn't have to be ashamed of the word, we should USE the word, RECLAIM the word and change the public perception of what it means'. They set up workshops on "anarchism" itself and stuff like that. Anyways, what's the story with Magón? I read a bit of his prison writings but don't really know much about him."

"Magón was a kind of autonomist Marxist but an indigenist one, he was for autonomy of indigenous communities and stuff so its not like he was a Statist. In some ways he was very much an anarchist, I mean when he was exiled to the States he was with the IWW and wrote with the anarchists and was very much part of that whole intellectual movement, like those prison writings and stuff. Its just that he synthesized as he wrote, synthesized a lot of that stuff with his perspective as an indigenous person from Oaxaca and so... His legacy is something that resonates a lot with the people. Magón is a hero of the Mexican revolution so he's... he belongs to the people, its not like adopting and putting forward some foreign program, which people are really, well, sick of!" As it turned out, one of the guys present was a historian at the UNAM⁹⁹ and had written a book specifically about Magonismo; he gave me a copy and it's cited in this text.

During the month of December, I filmed every march, demonstration, rally, concert and cultural event I could find that had something to do with Oaxaca. With all the controversy over the federal election¹⁰⁰ on top of the tension around Oaxaca there was a march every 2 days all month. Some were organized by unions, some by *Perredistas*, some by

⁹⁹ *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

¹⁰⁰ A federal election took place in July 2006. The PRD won but the ultra-rightwing party PAN took the election anyway. *Perredistas* were demonstrating all over Mexico for months afterward. For example, the day I arrived in D.F. (Nov. 20) was the day the PAN president was to take office and there was a demonstration of over one *million* people downtown.

La Otra Campaña, some by the APPO, some by student groups, some by anarchist networks, some by human rights networks and indigenous peoples' organizations. What continually impressed me was that regardless of who convened the march, almost all of these various groups and constituencies would attend, resulting in a huge, colourful cacophony of discontent each and every time. The one exception was the march organized by the anarchists to demand freedom for the political prisoners of Oaxaca. Hardly anyone showed up to that one, less than a 1000 people, even though the anarchists had attended all the others. I understood why by the time the march was over: Mexican cops hate anarchists and Mexican cops are terrifying. There were 4 PFP in riot gear deployed for 1 person marching in order to envelope and accompany us to our destination, the courthouse, where thousands more PFP waited in formation behind temporary fences. These had been erected at strategic intersections, leaving us without escape. I saw it coming enough in advance to slip out of the march, playing the lost *gringa*¹⁰¹ tourist. I read about the beatings and arrests the next day in *La Jornada*¹⁰². That very day, the anarchists spontaneously convened another march in protest to the police brutality the day before. I was working in the media tent that day and wouldn't have known about it, except they picked the *plantón* as the destination of the march; they all showed up just after dark and took turns using the PA system to share their statements of solidarity with the APPO. Everything went smoothly, but the tension among the *plantonistas* was so thick you could cut it with a knife. A week later I had the following conversation with Marco, another friend I made while working in the media tent:

"Ever since the anarchists came by the other day the PFP have been watching this place even more. They came here in 'solidarity' and all that but wherever they go they bring

¹⁰¹ *gringa* is the most common Mexican term for American.

¹⁰² Most left-leaning mainstream national newspaper; relatively sympathetic to the APPO.

an army of cops, and that just ain't solidarity. The people here, we are trying to build - or salvage, or whatever - this movement, and we *need* this *plantón* as a base. This is real, its not just about making a point, and if we get fucked over cause of this its really bullshit."

"Have they come back at all since the march? Last night when I passed through there was some guys using the PA to play guitar, who were they?"

"Well that's the thing! Now there's like some different people coming by here, like those guys last night - they were drunk and playing that thing really loud, meanwhile people were trying to have an assembly in that tent just over there. They kept coming out and asking the guys to keep it down and they kept not listening. And yknow what else? You gotta hear this, its fucked! Yesterday María was down by the kitchen and this cop - just the city cops, not the *federales*, you know what I mean - came up to her with a poster that was demanding the removal of the *municipal government*, like the *mayor* and stuff, and you could tell it was an anarchist thing, like 'against all government' type stuff and they asked her 'Hey what do you know about this?' and she was like 'Nothing...why?' and they said 'Well we found it and others like it here in the *plantón*', can you believe that?"

"Man... so you think they put those up, did it say who it was...? I mean did it have an organization's name on it or something?"

"No, nothing, that's the thing. Put up whatever you want, but take responsibility for it, yknow? Don't just make it look like it was us when it wasn't, because that's what ends up happening if its here. We really don't want to be in a conflict with the municipal police and the city government here in D.F. because they are actually on our side! Because the municipal government is PRD and the *Perredistas* basically support the APPO, even if not officially, and its these D.F. cops that are basically protecting us here! They are surrounding the *plantón* to *protect* us. If ever the PFP tries to enter - and they have - the cops stop them

and say that this is a municipal issue. We've even seen fistfights break out between the cops over it. Once a D.F. cop even came to us and told us about an infiltrator that was here with us that he had noticed cause they were paying attention, and, I mean, it's a real long story but it turned out to be true."

"Wow, I hadn't picked up on this stuff, I thought all these cops were around to intimidate you all."

"Yeah... Y'know that's the other thing, you just never know... Like, about the infiltrator I just told you about? Well, that happens all the time too, right? It would be typical for the government to like... plant that poster here without a name just to cause problems, because they know the tension around the anarchist stuff – they *cause* most of it! - and anyway they know how it can divide some of us... And in a way that's the most reasonable explanation because, I mean, I don't agree with everything the anarchists do, coming to the *plantón* was kinda bullshit, but usually whatever they do they are open about it and are accountable for it. Like if any of those groups put up posters, they usually sign them. They aren't sneaky or malicious or anything like that, they just have an extreme position. Yknow? So it's possible all this bullshit is specifically a provocation, like what you have in America, what is it? Cointelpro¹⁰³?"

Later on that day I ran into Uri. The work at the *plantón* was getting to him, it was pretty heavy. The main task was cross-referencing reports of those confirmed dead, those confirmed in prison, and those reported simply gone, disappeared. This was the longest list, and every day people were emailing, phoning and coming by to add names to it, or look through the reams of paper for people they knew. And these lists were literally reams of paper. Needless to say, Uri wanted to get out of the tent for a break.

¹⁰³ COINTELPRO, acronym for Counter Intelligence Project; FBI project (1956-1971) to subversively misdirect, disrupt and incapacitate contemporary radical social movements.

We decided to go get a beer down the street at the *bodega*¹⁰⁴, a big old shell of a building used to store street vendors' wares each night. All night long people came in and out with shopping carts piled with stuff. I watched them come and go, thinking how if people came and dumped their livelihood in a big common room like that back home in Canada, someone would steal it all. This was a friendly, lively place with its own snacks and beer for sale, cheaper than in the bars of course. The old staircases were full of people lounging around drinking. Leo wanted to know about the *indígenas* back in Canada. Were there any left? Did they speak their language? How poor were they? Were they organized? Our conversation eventually brought us to the topic of the Zapatistas.

"So you went to visit the reserve with the Zapatista group you're in?"

"Well sort of, it was a speaking tour, some of the people involved were from the La Otra collective."

"Did they do stuff around Oaxaca this year?"

"Yeah, that sort of took over all other projects this summer and fall, we were gonna do other stuff but ended up swamped with Oaxaca all year, doing media campaigns and fundraising and stuff. We actually shut down the Mexican consulate one day!"

"Cause here in Mexico *La Otra Campaña* hasn't done anything for Oaxaca. Fucking Marcos¹⁰⁵ and his sectarian bullshit!"

"What do you mean? Are there no La Otra people down there? I thought there were tons."

"Well yeah, theres individual people who are in *La Otra Campaña* who are there, and there's groups and unions and stuff that are part of *La Otra Campaña* who have people down there, but *La Otra Campaña* itself is not officially part of the APPO, they said they wouldn't be part of it."

¹⁰⁴ warehouse

¹⁰⁵ Subcommandante Marcos is the famous masked spokesperson and icon of the EZLN

"What's the story there? What's the deal"

"Well its like they already have their *own* movement and don't want to be subsumed in something else. Its like *La Otra* officially proclaimed they were 'in solidarity' with the APPO, and called for solidarity actions and stuff, which is good, but they wouldn't actually *join* because they are already "*La Otra*". But the thing is, you don't have to *stop* being what you are to be part of the APPO, its not sectarian. It's just an assembly. They should participate in the assembly if they are down there because the assembly is the movement."

"Like they want everyone to sign on to their Otra Campaña, and talk a lot about going around listening and building solidarity but... when a peoples' uprising actually happens, like, organically, they are not in solidarity because really their priority is to build their own thing?"

"Fucking Marcos and his *protagonismo*, it makes me sick. Exactly. Like, if the point is to have indigenous movements organizing then fine, that's what the APPO is! The APPO is really and truly all of that stuff. Even more so than the EZLN, which is an *army* for fuck's sake, so why not come to the people's assembly, and actually participate in the people's movement rather than staying outside and sticking to your big 'plan' to listen when you're not actually listening!"

"Gotcha. The Zapatistas have to be the leaders and its bullshit."

"Yeah, when there have been indigenous movements in Oaxaca since *forever*! When there's so many of us in Oaxaca already organized, and I don't just mean the APPO, I mean the communities. The *indigenas* of Oaxaca are largely autonomous already, like I was telling you before. They already practice assembly from their own *pueblo* and experience, this building of *caracoles*¹⁰⁶ is redundant for them. Maybe Marcos and the Zapatistas need to make up this whole "*caracol*" thing, and I mean its fine, its good really, but *we* don't need to

¹⁰⁶Lit. snail; name of the Zapatista regional municipalities (i.e. built slowly and carefully).

create fucking *caracoles*, we have our own organization. The whole reason they need to go through this process is because they are an *army* trying to democratize themselves, its *their* process, not ours."

"How do you feel about how the Zapatistas are international superstars and how I, for example, am part of a Zapatista collective and up north we all think the Zapatistas are big heroes and all that?"

"Well... If the Zapatistas have made their struggle known in the world, it's a good thing for them at least. And how they tie together the indigenous stuff with anticapitalism, that's good too, that's important. But I gotta say, I don't think its very altruistic on Marcos' part, he used to be a guerilla and all into Marxism and it just never worked because the poor in the mountains don't relate to that crap. So he framed it like a new 'indigenous' movement and started with all his fancy-shmancy poetry about the *indígenas* and their autonomy and then it made sense to people. So it took off. And I can't say it's a bad thing... But we can't forget how many *indígenas* died in Chiapas because of that movement, the backlash, and meanwhile Marcos is sitting pretty... It's really very complicated."

"See what you mean. It's pretty weird isn't it, La Otra Campaña in Mexico is not responding much to the situation in Oaxaca, but then you have all these internationals showing up in Oaxaca to help and a lot of them are in the loop because of La Zexa Internacional. It's bizarre."

"It's funny, a lot of them are. And you know what else is funny? A lot of them say they are anarchists. Like that Brad Will guy. Which always sort of confused me. But since you and I had that conversation the other day I think I understand a lot more what's going on!"

"Yeah, everybody's an anarchist these days, it's the new brand of cool."

"It's like, there we are, trying to set up a people's government and here's all these 'anarchists' showing up to help - or protect us or whatever - and there I am thinking 'But

aren't anarchists *against* government? What's the fucking story here!?' And I mean some of them came down from California and Europe or wherever and went straight to the barricades to get their rocks off, punk-style, but then there was all these other reporters and human rights workers and stuff and a lot of them say they are anarchists. And I never really got it, but I never ask either, I just let it slide, because who wants to get into a conversation about anarchism? Pain in the ass." Leo's nose started to bleed. I gave him my scarf. It wouldn't stop. He explained that he had a cold and sometimes now when he gets colds his nose bleeds, ever since the cops beat him up and broke it once. When he got himself together we walked back to the *plantón* and I took the metro home.

Hanging around the *plantón* I heard a million stories; I repeat my conversations with Uri because the stuff he said was echoed by many others also. Making fun of Subcomandante Marcos was a favorite pastime, for example. The other common discussion was: What is the future of the APPO? Everyone was agreed that Ulises¹⁰⁷ must fall and that the political prisoners must be freed. Also, they were all agreed that the APPO under no circumstances would become a political party; the APPO is an assembly, so, by nature, can never be an organ or a party. There were certainly people involved that argued for a more "pragmatic" approach, saying it would be good to try to work with some of the Leftist parties or unions, but these were people who were in unions or parties themselves, a minority that did not gather consensus. It seemed to me that most of the people involved, certainly those that I met, were devoted to the assembly structure and considered it the very foundation of a social movement: To sacrifice or forego the assembly for the sake of "efficiency" or gaining institutional power would fly in the face of the entire cause. Because of the diverse elements brought together in the APPO however, these values were not self-

¹⁰⁷ Ulises Ruiz Ortiz is (still) the Governor of Oaxaca.

evident to all involved. Events were organized by the *comisión de cultura*, an autonomous working group empowered by the APPO, to discuss the historical significance of the APPO and its meaning vis-à-vis indigenous cosmology and practice. Uri was working in the *comisión de cultura* after I returned to Montreal we emailed back and forth about it; he said he didn't mind if I showed you:¹⁰⁸

date Jan 25, 2007 9:48 PM
subject Re: carta

Hi Erika

Im involved in so many projects I don't even know where to start. First of all I'm still collaborating with the *comision de cultura*, in November 2006 they did the first *Encuentro Filosófico APPO*, to renew general interest in living in community and to share fully and properly the deep and complex roots of the Oaxacan popular movements. There participated lots of intellectuals, artists, *indigenas*, *profesionistas*¹⁰⁹, politicians and *integrantes* of the APPO. We all went through the indigenous cosmovisions and different reasons and motivations why the Oaxacan movements emerge based on assemblies. So we are following up and proposing a variety of activities over the coming months. We are seeing some plans come together to give workshops for the members of the APPO and other organizations so we can help finally define the movement and its significance, explain well the logotype of the *bastones de mando*¹¹⁰ coming from our ancestral roots and this will start in 15 days.

The *Frente Popular Revolucionario* sold out the planton. The PRD paid the leaders of the FPR 50 000 each and they sold out the police have come to get rid of us all.

date Jan 31, 2007 9:48 PM
subject Re: carta

hey uri whats up?

about the different projects you're telling me about, the thing about the workshops for the movement seems really awesome idea, too bad i can't come and learn more myself! Tell me what does "*bastones de mando*" mean in this phrase "*explicar bien el logotipo y los bastones de mado, partiendo desde las raices de nuestros ancestros*".

about the FPR, what politicians, can't believe that shit. too bad it always ends the same and that you're losing the planton. What happens during the encuentro filosofico exactly?

oh, and attached are the templates for creating the web page.

what about the audio files?

take care, erica

date Feb 1, 2007 9:48 PM
subject Re: carta

Hi Erika: The workshop that we are thinking of doing is on the philosophical explanation of the APPO. "Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos": these words signify a lot for the *pueblos indigenas* of Oaxaca and all of Mexico. In all the indigenous communities, the election of authorities, community services, the *tequio* (communal work or work among all without any receiving any reward, salary, done only for the good of the community), the organization of the *pueblo*, the systems of charge, are elected and defined through an ASSEMBLY: on it we all depend for the good functioning of all the political projects and tasks of each community. When an assembly is convened its not to present *protagonistas*. Never within an assembly should an individual lead, what leads there is the people. The people elect their representative, pick the one who they want to give order to the community, and if this one, at any given moment, doesn't accomplish their function, immediately the people convene an ASSEMBLY to decide what to do with this representative. This is why we say POPULAR ASSEMBLY, its like all the people of Oaxaca should take a look behind them, to see again their history, their origins and leave aside the political parties that have caused much harm for the *pueblos*, they take advantage of the *pueblos*, they use them to justify their own benefit, for accumulating for themselves the riches of the people. Now the *bastones de mando* are what represents the customs of each community. Its what gives meaning to community life. The actions of the authorities and representatives of each *pueblo* depend on them. It is a symbol that has come to represent the political systems of the *indigenas*. A system that is totally distinct from the current political system. The base of this political system is the *cosmovision*, *la madre naturaleza*, the duality of things. This is what the *baston de mando* represents, the political and cultural issue. The one who represents the people is someone who should understand well

¹⁰⁸ Both voices translated from Spanish; I have corrected some typos while translating but left the e-grammar.

¹⁰⁹ Professionists; those who believe in the leadership of the professional class.

¹¹⁰ Lit. wands of leadership; variety of staffs symbolically corresponding to various community roles.

communal life, someone who has had a lot of experience in terms of the ways and customs of the people. In the representatives there are hierarchies, there are those who have higher charges, and those with others, as you work your way down to the lower levels, always corresponding to the *bastones de mando*. And during the time of their charge they must respect the *bastones de mando* and the assembly. All this is determined in assembly. IF YOU REALIZE, ALL THIS IS RELATED TO THE ASSEMBLY. That's why the APPO uses this symbol, because this is its struggle - BUILD OUR OWN AUTONOMOUS POLITICAL SYSTEM. The *bastones de mando* are sticks of different sizes, they are made depending on the level of hierarchy represented. On top of this stick is an adornment of ribbons. The ribbons are of different colours. Each color has a significance: green is nature, red is life, brown is earth, white is purity. SO ALL OF THIS WE WANT TO EXPLAIN TO THE ASSHOLES WHO DON'T KNOW WHAT THE MOVEMENT IS AT ROOT. Not what they SAY is resistance, confrontation with the riot cops and PFP, the barricades. Its just that it doesn't have to be like that, anyways it cant anymore, now we have to look for other strategies. Because whether through dialogue or molotovs¹¹¹ either way the fucking governments don't listen. anyways thanks to the APPO and to the strength of the people, many have understood that its possible to build a different world.

I'll continue writing later, *vale*

They are NOT giving me my bursary for 3 months because I failed a test. Fucking bureaucrats. Im gonna go rob banks yayayayayay not really, im not capable of doing that. Theres nothing left but to look for work, but the problem is theres no work these days. And I don't know how to do anything.

For the audio conversion you have to download Audacity, set it up and ill tell you what to do next.

URI

oh, also, here is the most recent manifesto from the APPO, translate that too so people know what we are doing. You'll see that the manifesto is called VOCAL, that's an acronym but "vocal" is also one of the community roles I was telling you about related to the *bastones de mando*, it's a secondary charge, a helper role, because the movement should be helping and secondary to the community it serves..

Here is the translation of the manifesto, only slightly abridged:

Voces Oaxaqueñas Construyendo Autonomía y Libertad (VOCAL)
(Oaxacan Voices Building Autonomy and Liberty)

Manifiesto

Those of us who are currently composing this space are autonomous individuals, libertarian collectives, *espacios autogestivos*¹¹², anti-authoritarian persons, Magonista organizations, Zapatista collectives, anarchist groups, people from the barricades, integrants of the APPO and some adherents of *La Otra Campaña*. All of us are activists in the current social movement in Oaxaca. This space is being put forth as a way of coordinating the autonomous forces of mobilized Oaxaca, those who are actively participating in the social movement forming part of the organizational structure of the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* (APPO) or not, and who are concerned with maintaining our social movement loyal to its principles, autonomous and independent of political parties and revindicating the assembly form as the most harmonious and just way of listening to one another, self-organizing and self-governing, where agreements of the people are not based on competition between the majority and the minority, nor on other forms of imposition that the power of those above collectively exercise; rather, are based on a relationship of mutual respect among the people.

In this space we fight for the construction, strengthening and linking of autonomies. We consider the autonomy of peoples, groups, collectives, individuals, organizations and more to be a real alternative in opposition to the current system of authoritarian government. Autonomy, as a process of construction of other realities, shows there is another way to change things from the root, where peoples decide their own ways and forms of life, and not from the institutions of power that just reform the oppressive and repressive systems, like political parties that produce tyrants, caciques, and authoritarianism in the persons that work in them by being put in a position of authority. Its for this reason that the work of this space is not seen to be limited to election time; with or without elections, autonomy advances by way of the organization and proposal of another possible society...

The statewide assembly of the APPO, of the days 10 and 11 of February, determined that the APPO as a movement will not participate in the electoral process, a decision that is respectful of the principles of the APPO in the sense that it would never be a political party. It was agreed that organizations involved may decide to participate autonomously, but neither the name or any relationship with the APPO may be used to campaign. Council members of the APPO that participate in the electoral process must irrevocably renounce their role on the council as soon as they are accepted as a

¹¹¹ Molotov cocktail: glass bottle containing gasoline with a gas-soaked rag stuffed in the top. After lighting the rag there is a brief delay before the thing explodes, giving you just enough time to throw it at police.

¹¹² self-managed spaces

candidate for any political party. The participation of the APPO is strictly to rally the vote against the candidates of Ulises Ruiz and his allies...

The companionship among girls, boys, women, men and people in general does not emerge in moments in marches or in meetings where there is necessarily differentiation between those who speak and listen, this affinity and respect must be manifest in the *colonias*¹¹³, schools, communities, *pueblos*, towns and regions, in terms of discussion and action. All of these ideas correspond to the *pueblo* who mobilized to establish this dialogue, the APPO. They also correspond to the people who are participating in this struggle independently, but more than anything the organization and representation of this struggle is born from the *pueblo*. What we want from the governments, criminal bosses and exploiters they consider the worst crime: justice, dignity, not having fear to express our ideas, not being discriminated against for our colour, thoughts, language, tastes, our healthy food that we earn with our work that the rich don't steal; we want to use our creative energy for the common good, we want liberty for our political prisoners. We want liberty to choose our own way of life, to not have lies imposed on us, along with violence and their ways of government. We know that what we want is correct and just. We look to build affinity among us and join together from below, with all of us from the city and rural regions that have offered resistance against the owners of power and money, we look to join together experiences of struggle from every last nook and cranny in this state, we are looking to talk and exchange with the men and women of Oaxaca, the Afromexican@s, Zapotec@s, Mixtec@s, Huaves, Triquis, Chatin@s, Chontales, Mixes, Mazatec@s, Chinantec@s, Cuicatec@s, Ixcatec@s, Choch@s, Nahuas, Amuzgos, Zoques, Tacuates, as well as people from the cities, barricades, girls, boys, teachers, workers, campesin@s, migrants, emigrants, youth, students, homosexuals, bisexuals, lesbians, everyone who is fighting for a better world.

Primer Encuentro de los Pueblos Zapatista con los Pueblos del Mundo

From D.F. I left for Oventic, Chiapas with a *compañera* from the *La Otra* collective back home; being Mexican herself, she had come back for the holidays. After a long bus trip, we arrived in San Cristobal. It wasn't hard to figure out what to do from there; the Zapatistas and their liberated territories are truly an activist Mecca; the invitation to the *encuentro* had drawn thousands of pilgrims from around the world - literally. All we had to do was follow the parade of dreadlocks and sunburns and voilà – the shuttle bus site.

We ourselves had received a personal invitation to come from Comandante Moises – it seemed that as official correspondent for the *Intergalactico* he had taken it upon himself to write to every Zapatista collective that can be found on the internet. The Zapatistas are friendly that way. And organized.

¹¹³ neighborhoods

This last was obvious arriving at Oventic. Our hosts had set up campgrounds, toilets, restaurants, clinics, a live radio feed and an Indymedia centre, as well as an entire market of foodstuffs and crafts on site just for the 4 day event. Every night there was live



local music arranged and an outdoor dance party that went on until 4 am - complete with back-up generator and PA, in case the military cut the power as they tend to do. Zapatistas guarded the site in concentric rings. Everyone who entered the site was registered and counted; those who were doing media work were directed to the media desk, those who were observers were directed to the observer desk, and so on. Every morning the events started precisely on time – about 3 hours after the dance party - and were announced over the incredibly loud PA to rouse the still-sleeping guests. Zapatistas sat waiting patiently with clean clothing and neatly braided hair while foreigners dragged themselves out of their tents, muddy and scratching. Every event started with an inventory of lost-and-found objects, a growing collection of digital machines: “So here’s another one, this one is a camera AND a

phone, it's got a nice purple-ish case with it, we have had this for two days now, it looks pretty expensive – doesn't anyone want it back?" No response.



The *encuentro* was arranged into different *mesas*¹¹⁴ on different themes: *La Otra Educacion*, *La Otra Salud*, *La Otra Arte y Comunicacion*¹¹⁵ and so on, with "La Otra" signifying autonomous and congruent with the principles of the *Sexta Declaración*, like *La Otra Campaña*. Each one started with the *palabra* of the Zapatista *caracoles* and continued with a Q&A period and then another series of presentations by internationals on the same theme. The only *mesa* that was organized differently was the *rumbo al Intergalactico*¹¹⁶, the planning session for the *Intergalactico*, which consisted of 5 hours worth of 10 minute presentations by collectives

¹¹⁴ Lit. table; here: "roundtable"

¹¹⁵ The Other Education, The Other Health, The Other Art, The Other Communication, and so on.

¹¹⁶ towards the *Intergalactico*. The *Intergalactico* is the transnational-strategy-meeting proposed by the Zapatistas to occur in 2007 or 2008. The *encuentro* I attended was primarily meant to introduce the Zapatista autonomous communities to foreigners; the *rumbo al Intergalactico* was meant as a preliminary planning session to organize when, where, and how we will collectively organize the *Intergalactico* itself, as well as propose items for its *agenda de resistencia*.

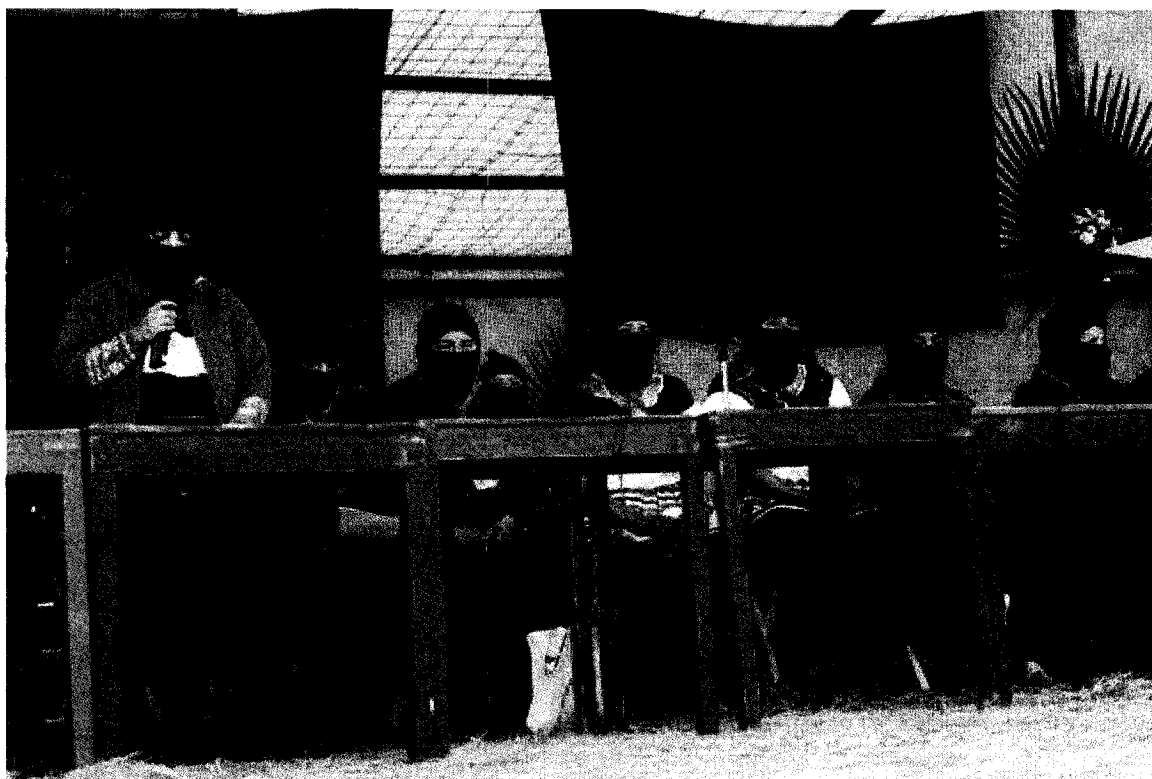
from 38¹¹⁷ countries. There were many impassioned speeches but fewer concrete proposals. Comandante Moisés said it best when it was all over, “*Compañeros*”, he said, “I like the idea of bringing down the wall, that fence they are building between our lands, and opening up the border... So maybe next time, at this *Encuentro Intergalactico* we are all planning together, we will talk about how. Because we can go there all together saying ‘Bring down the wall’ but this will not bring it down. For that we will need a plan and some small hatchets, or perhaps a large saw.”

Some of the anarchists decided to have a separate “anarchist” *encuentro* within the *encuentro*. Other anarchists called them sectarian by virtue of their mini-meeting. Some anarchists commented disdainfully at the hyperorganization of the Zapatistas; they called it bureaucratic, authoritarian and lamented the need for rules. Perhaps, but it seemed to me they felt oppressed simply because they weren’t allowed to drink beer. Listening to Subcomandante Marcos carry on for hours New Years Eve, sober, was a little boring at times I will admit, but I can certainly think of worse things. Others and I were quite comfortable with the lack of drunk men and the (related) cleanliness of the whole affair. There is, in fact, no alcohol allowed in Zapatista communities, ever, thanks to cooperation of Zapatista women, who have a different frame of reference regarding oppression than their anarchist guests.

In 1993, Zapatista women came together as a collective to politicize their struggle within the EZLN; they presented the Zapatista Revolutionary Law for Women¹¹⁸ and

¹¹⁷ Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Catalunya, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Norway, Pais Vasco, Poland, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Kurdistan, Ukraine, Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

¹¹⁸ Zapatista Revolutionary Law for Women: Women have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle wherever and to the degree that their own conscience and abilities dictate, without regard to race, creed, colour or political affiliation. Women have the right to work and receive a fair wage. Women have the right to decide the number of children that they



continue to organize as women within the larger movement to this day. Due to this organization, there was a plenary at the *encuentro* devoted specifically to the theme of Zapatista women's struggle. The *Mesa de Mujeres*¹¹⁹ was organized like the others, with presentations from the 5 *caracoles*. Almost all of them denounced the abuses of marriage and described the colonial roots of patriarchy; "These ideas they gave to the men when the Spanish *conquistadores* arrived in our country more than 500 years ago. And later the governments continued with the same ideas, that women only serve to procreate and obey the husband."¹²⁰ All of them emphasized that there is much work that remains to be done, but that the organization of women into the EZLN, thanks to a few original women

can have and care for. Women have the right to participate in community affairs and hold posts if they are freely and democratically elected. Women and their children have the right to basic health care and food. Women have the right to education. Women have the right to choose their partners and not be forced to marry. No woman may be struck or physically mistreated by either family members or strangers. The crimes of attempted rape and rape shall be severely punished. Women may hold leadership posts in the organization and military rank in the revolutionary armed forces. Women will enjoy all rights and obligations established in revolutionary laws and regulations. (as quoted in Millán 1998: 71)

¹¹⁹ Women's Roundtable

¹²⁰ Taken from the *palabra* of Magdalena of Caracol 2. My transcription and translation.

militants, has inspired and allowed unprecedented cooperation among women, as they now articulate it as part of the broader revolutionary process. Below is the entire *palabra* of Esmeralda, which illustrates much of the above¹²¹.

My name is Esmeralda. I am a member of the *Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena*. I was named by all the *compañeras* to bring you their *palabra*, so that you may know how we have engaged in the struggle and the construction of our autonomy. As women we have seen that it is necessary to fight so that the weeping of so many women may be transformed into laughter. Because for many years we have suffered, seeing our children die in our arms for a lack of care. Before 1994, they treated us *indígenas* very badly, they treated us like animals in the streets of the city. They steal our products, they don't let us vend, or they take them at very low prices. As if our products are worth nothing. And as women we have suffered in various ways for many years, we have suffered three times more the humiliation and contempt. As poor people, all day we have to work with the *patrón*¹²² and at night we work to sustain our families and feed our children. As *indígenas*, we have been humiliated by *los poderosos del dinero*¹²³, they say we are worth nothing, they have made fun of our way of dress and our own language. And as women, the men act like we should only be around to take care of our children, that we don't have the right to defend ourselves when we are mistreated, that we shouldn't participate or decide how we want to live. Our parents tell us with who we have to share our lives, as in... they tell us who to marry. But we can't take care of our children *alone*, or, when our *parents* get older, we don't have the capacity to take care of them. As women, you see, you have to obey the *patrón* and also endure the men, because when work is done with the *patrón*, there's no lack of money, no! But then the men take it to get drunk! So that the next day, the *patrón* says 'I'm not paying you anymore because I already gave you so-much money, until you finish paying me back', and with heavy interest. And that's how we suffer poverty. We don't have anything left with which to support our children. For this reason as women we suffer, we cry to see our children suffer hunger and cold, and many times they die from sicknesses just from not having money. There's no care, no attention given, we don't have clinics, and if there is one, it's full of spiders instead of medicine. And it's not because we don't work, on the contrary. We work from very early until late at night, but only to make the bosses rich. They cheat us so much, we have such a deep wound, that it has made us strong, to fight and resist all this.. Because our ancestors didn't live like this, they had their own way of working, among men and women, their way of respecting one another and nature. *Machismo* didn't exist but since the *poderosos del dinero* came to destroy us, they gave other ideas to our men, and also to us, about everything we have to obey. Since they came here with these bad ideas we started to suffer 3 times more. But thanks to our brave warrior women and men¹²⁴, who awoke us with their fighting, now we are fighting - men and women, boys and girls, elder men, elder women, to defend our dignity as *indígenas*, as women. We have learned to go forth and fight with rage, for all the mistreatment and humiliations, because as women we are the ones that have suffered so much. We are the beaten, but we defend ourselves. We are poor, but we resist in the struggle. We are not looking to be like *los de arriba*¹²⁵, or how the *men* treated us, we are not looking to cheat our own *compañeros*, what we are looking for is equality. That they take us into account. We don't want to be excluded anymore, we want that men and women fight together for our dignity as indigenous women. And have the same opportunities to participate and to decide how to live our lives. And together defeat that which has done us much harm. We're doing it so our children, our grandchildren, don't suffer what we suffered. But I'm not telling you so you have pity on us, I tell you so that everyone, all the men and women, lift our eyes to see the reality in which we are living, to see how they are destroying us and not stay silent. As Zapatista women we are fighting to demonstrate that yes we are capable to decide things about our own lives and yes we can improve things for our children¹²⁶. We don't need any *profesionistas* to come tell us how we should live. Thanks to our struggle, that gave us a dignified place, as indigenous women we have learned many things like... pride: Here we are, and we are not willing to humiliate ourselves! Our own *compañeros* have also understood that we have the same rights and that the struggle, without women or without men, does not advance. We are practicing being equal, because when we go out to work, the *compañeros* stay to take care of their children, and if we go out to work in the fields, with the men, they also help in the kitchen. Here we are practicing equality. This isn't easy, because *machismo* still exists and they make fun of us when they see that we are participating (in political organization) as women, while the men stay caring for the house and children. And there are *compañeros* who have trouble understanding, and sometimes dedicate themselves to creating problems to de-motivate us. But we are not going to fight with them, men or women, we are going to show, with all this, that what we are doing is better for our future, the future of our children. And we are sure, that one day, they are going to hear us and they will support us for what we are doing. We are not hoping for anything in exchange for our fight; we suffer persecution and death for the good of our children and humanity. We understand that some of our *hermanas y compañeras* have difficulty understanding all this because they have cheated us for many years, that's

¹²¹ My transcription and translation.

¹²² boss

¹²³ the powerful men of money

¹²⁴ *guerreras y guerreros*

¹²⁵ *those above, those on top*

¹²⁶ *sacar adelante a nuestros hijos*

why it's real stuck in their heads that women shouldn't go out and that the man shouldn't help in the kitchen. That's why there are women who have trouble going out, because they are afraid that they will make fun of her. For this reason, maybe, they realize that we (women militants) are few, but in our communities we are a *damn* force to be reckoned with! Because we know we are those who have *sustained* this struggle, who prepare everything so that our *compañeros* can go participate in whichever work while we stay helping in the fields. That's why as Zapatista women we aren't giving in an inch¹²⁷, until we arrive where we want to be. The powerful men of money who try to finish us off, they won't be able to, because we are the sons and daughters of the humiliated, the tortured, we are a community of men and women that feel that we have a huge obligation to search for something better for our people, for humanity, that we have to change all this. Like we said at the beginning, we have to turn all this pain into joy. To change all this, we have organized ourselves into collective work projects that rely on our own organization (as women). Also, in the municipalities we are members of the *Junta de buen gobierno*, *promotores*¹²⁸ of health and education, coordinators of collective work projects. To endure all the work of our struggle, we have organized to support one another as *compañeras*, and with the men also we have organized collective work like the gardens, embroidery, bakeries, collective chicken coops. These collective work projects have served to help cover the expenses of our (political) organization as well as cover necessities for the home. We don't have another way of getting money except working to support our families, the struggle, the resistance. We have also achieved other titles such as *responsable local*, *responsable regional*, up until being members of the *Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena*. And to achieve these powers hasn't been easy for us, we have to work and fight against everything, to show that *yes* it is possible. We have to work to name our *own* authorities by way of a meeting, where we discuss and see who will be the best daughter of the people, one who knows how to lead by obeying. And to do each and every task and project of our organization we have meetings with all the *compañeras* to see and to analyse (everything) such that all turns out well for our peoples. And all this has been achieved also thanks to you Brothers and Sisters of the world. *¡Animo pues!*¹²⁹ Onward in the struggle! It's the struggle of all men and women¹³⁰ and we are going to fight until we get what we want. *¡Gracias!*

It's the struggle of all men and women, but I looked around at the cheering audience – almost all women. The people that needed to hear them most were not listening. I wished my comrades from Montreal were there, I would have dared them to take the mic to tell Esmeralda that the only women who talk about male domination are white feminists. My little fantasy was broken by an interesting question from the audience: “Do you think it would be good to have a meeting with all the Zapatista women with other women of the world, without men? Or do you not think it necessary? The question is from Nadia of Spain.” Two Zapatista women answered in turn:

“I think it's necessary to have a meeting with all the women to raise ideas and strategies of resistance, to go forth organizing all together. That's all. *Gracias compañeras.*”

¹²⁷ *no vamos a dar ni un paso atras*

¹²⁸ Lit. promoters; here: as is understood in the context/vocabulary of Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), a radical pedagogy related to liberation theology.

¹²⁹ *Animar*. Lit. animate; here: Let's go then! Get up! Get motivated!

¹³⁰ *todos y todas*

“I think its very important, women *compañeras*, to make a meeting among all the women because there are women *compañeras* that don’t speak up, *que no se animen*¹³¹, who don’t get up and participate in the presence of the men *compañeros*. Among women, more ideas would come forth about how to strengthen and widen the struggle.”

¹³¹ Lit. “who do not animate themselves”; here: fig. “are not in the mood/ do not have the confidence”

Chapter 4

Anarchoindigenism: A Conversation

There are philosophical connections between indigenous and some strains of anarchist thought on the spirit of freedom and the ideals of a good society. Parallel critical ideas and visions of post-imperial futures have been noted by a few thinkers, but something that may be called anarcho-indigenism has yet to develop into a coherent philosophy... It is on this last point that connections have already been made between Onkwehonwe groups and non-indigenous activist groups, especially in collaborations between anarchists and Onkwehonwe in the anti-globalization movement. (Alfred 2005: 46)

Autonomist and anarchist activists position themselves in solidarity with indigenous peoples' self-determination movements for both pragmatic and ideological reasons. Such a move is pragmatic in a global movement against capitalism as it is indigenous peoples who have organized, and are still organizing, the most effective and sustained resistance to capitalist enclosure and commodification of life. Whereas white environmentalists preoccupy themselves with the vocabulary of the Kyoto accord, indigenous activists blockade highways to coal mines; whereas concerned citizens vote for the Green Party, indigenous activists act know that the state ultimately works in collusion with capitalism and its interests are not their own. Specifically because these movements engage with State/capitalism on their own terms and by way of direct-action (i.e. physically stopping mining companies from moving in), and do not honour state-capitalist bureaucracies that displace their grievances, they find themselves in direct confrontation with state violence in the form of armies, police and sustained paramilitary warfare. Any solidarity movement "against capitalism, for humanity" worth its name would respond to this tragic circumstance, for the sake reducing suffering among the indigenous communities themselves, as well as to support their continued resistance which benefits us all. Anarchists and autonomists believe it is imperative to honour militant indigenous movements' key roles in deterring the

enclosure and privatization of the world's peoples and natural resources; they are, and have always been, the last line of defense after all the Green Parties and Kyoto Accords have failed.

Non-indigenous activists turn to indigenous movements for inspiration, not merely because natives are valiantly suffering, but because they have social strategies, insights and perspectives gained from centuries of resistance, from maintaining to varying degree less alienated social relations on the fringes of the capitalist world order. In discussing the revolutionary potential of social cooperation among those least alienated and those most oppressed, Graeber remarks that indigenous peoples are “simultaneously the very least alienated and most oppressed people on earth; now that new, global communications technologies have made it possible to include them in revolutionary alliances, it is well nigh-inevitable that they should play a profoundly inspirational role in them.” (2004: 75). Richard Day, noticing this in his study of anarchist social movements, has said that perhaps “not surprisingly, given their hyper-exclusion from almost all of the so-called benefits of modernization and post-modernization, in combination with the precarious, yet vastly superior hold on traditional values and ways of life, it is indigenous people that are leading the way here.” (Day 192)

We will be analysing critically some of the projection and romanticization non-indigenous activists and academics perform on native peoples, but always keeping in mind that stereotypes of natives as “educators” are less dehumanizing – literally – than the more common stereotypical pity toward “dying cultures” (if not races) on the verge of “extinction”, so backward that their worlds are incommensurable with ours: Dialogue is useless and cooperation hopeless, as no insight on the part of indigenous peoples could possibly have any bearing on the whole of humanity; anything that natives say may have

relevance in their “local context” but only *we* are capable of a “global” analysis. Such paternalism, evident in both academia and popular culture, respects indigenous cultures merely as vestiges and argues for their protection in the same language of conservation otherwise used to refer to plants and animals: We should protect them for diversity’s sake, but not with the notion that we might have something to learn from them, not with the intention to listen and cooperate equally with them or honour their terms and discourses. Activists’ characterization of indigenous peoples as a collective wealth of knowledge and authentic sociality is not without its pitfalls, but it is nevertheless an improvement over its opposite, as many indigenous activists and peoples have agreed. It is this consensus among many anarchist and indigenous activists that we concern ourselves with.

On Postmodern Indigeneity

Who are “indigenous peoples”? It might be useful to clarify this at this point, because although this question is redundant, even insulting, as it flies in the face of so many emic definitions that should be taken at face-value, it is a question anthropologists worry about. They fill pages ruminating over whether the emerging Afro-Brazilian, self-identified “indigenous” peoples are really “indigenous” (Warren 2001); they are puzzled by Palestinians’ claim to indigeneity (Niezen: public lecture): Are all these people really indigenous? Or are they making strategic use of discourse, “localizing” the “global”? Basically: Or are they just saying so? In fact, this is a false dichotomy predicated on the idea that there is identity above-and-beyond identification-as-process, predicated on the idea that identity is essential. This, no doubt, reflects the history of anthropology, whose purported

task was to label things better than natives could themselves. By comparing them all to each other, anthropologists hoped to discern universal social patterns and essences. Emic descriptions and identifications were of value only in terms of honing the ultimate authoritative etic designation of the anthropologist. The persistent idea that anthropologists can identify “indigenous peoples” (or anyone else) notwithstanding self-designation is clearly reflective of this genealogy. While Warren (2001) sets out to honour indigenous self-identification, and challenges reductionism based on both “blood” and “tradition”, the extent of the blood/tradition discussion in his ethnography suggests that identifications that transcend this duality are still difficult to fathom within the discipline and require much justification. This is partially due to the stubborn tendency of anthropologists to associate “indigenous” peoples with markers of “primitive” society: Stateless and without politics or history, based on kinship relations and a subsistence economy. Otherwise, why would it be so difficult to imagine the Palestinians as indigenous people?

To be fair, the issue is not merely evolutionism on the part of anthropology, however; academics and laypeople alike ask good questions when they say: “Well, if its not because of this-that-or-the-other, then what is it that *does* make one “indigenous” or not? There’s got to be something people have in common in order to have - *take* - that name for themselves. It can’t simply be arbitrary. Indeed this rings suspiciously of postmodern nihilism, or cultural appropriation, and is not what I, nor a multitude of indigenous people, are saying. An individual simply saying s/he is indigenous does not makes her so; identification is necessarily a process of cooperation¹³². It is precisely due to vast cooperation across borders in reclaiming this term and imbuing it with new meaning that we

¹³² Every person is autonomous to identify as s/he chooses and may have plural and overlapping identities; identification is a collective process, however, in the sense that it emerges among a group of people who have discovered they share something in common; people cooperate to use common vocabulary because it resonates with common experience.

speak of it at all: The popular metamorphosis of the discourse of indigeneity is a function of disparate peoples and communities communicating among each other, finding they have something in common, and naming it “indigenous”. Understanding identification-as-process as opposed to identity-as-essential simply means recognizing this process of cooperation as the *essence* of identity itself. Once acknowledged, it becomes easy to understand otherwise elusive bases of identity and avoid blood/tradition conundrums. All we need to do in order to understand why all these different people are “all of a sudden” claiming the same identity is look at the process of their identification, i.e. ask why they’ve done it. If we take a moment to listen to all the people who are identifying as indigenous, we may just find a common denominator; this is precisely what I hope to sketch below, certain things that presuppose a shared vocabulary, discursive cooperation.

Commonalities underpinning the shared invocation of indigeneity are plentiful, although difficult to see for those informed by liberal philosophy. Anarchist analyses, however, allow perception of shared aspects that are otherwise not considered. As such, it is not coincidental that there is solidarity - or at least conversation - among anarchist and indigenous activists. The first step required to understand this cooperation among social movements is to consider the relationship of each to the State. We have already become acquainted with anarchist activist positions regarding the State; here we begin with an anarchist anthropology of the State and continue with some common indigenous perspectives on the State. These are not the only indigenous perspectives on the State, not put forth as definitive of indigenous “identity”, but it is meaningful here to point to their prevalence across borders as they demonstrate the nexus for indigenous and anarchist solidarity, which is what we are trying to understand.

Whereas a variety of anthropologists and other citizens seem to be comfortable with the idea that indigenous peoples are, or were, primitive societies that (could) benefit from state stewardship (if only, perhaps, it were done a little better), a variety of indigenous people see the institution of the State as inherently colonial and its presence inherently damaging to their societies' functioning, if not antithetical to their very existence. Perhaps we could rephrase the adage concerning "primitive" peoples cited above, that they are "stateless societies without politics or history, based on kinship relations and a subsistence economy" and restate it without a capitalist fetishization of economy or reification of government: Indigenous peoples are *communities with integrated cosmovision-kinship-politics-economy and concordant systems of value that were conquered or largely subsumed by capitalist nation-states*. This is more accurate and also better reflects an indigenous understanding of indigeneity.

While anthropology has played a key role in obscuring all of this by way of its original *raison d'être*, anthropologists have been the only ones (of all academics at least), to subsequently argue against themselves (and the entire academy) to develop this alternate understanding, probably because of all academics, anthropologists have been the only ones to actually go meet some of these people. While not mainstream, there exists a certain strain of anthropological thought that highlights the holistic interrelationship of (what we have isolated as) cosmology, economics, politics and kinship; while largely displaced by a reification of market logic, these insights deserve to be resurrected. A consideration of their antireductionism will help us understand both anarchist and indigenous critiques of

State/capitalism, and, with any luck, may help us reclaim radical social critique from poststructuralist nihilism.

Marcel Mauss, in his essay on the Gift (1925), put forth the notion that exchange in “archaic” societies is holistically embedded, impossible to distil from the social relations that precede and presuppose it. This is contrary to the enshrined Western assumption that the logic of “scarcity” and “calculated individual interest” drive social formation (thus predetermining the course of history).

Mauss proposes a concept of reciprocity that challenges the reductionism of market exchange - hence the Gift: Pre-capitalist societies were not “barter economies” they were “gift economies”; the word gift invokes the object’s location and participation in a web of social relations that is defined by, but also defines, the gift itself. A commodity has no such meaning, memory or particular attachments. While a “gift economy” has been illustrated in various contexts, a classic example concerns the *hau* of the Maori, translated alternately as spirit/profit/value/excess. It basically means “something you got in exchange for a gift someone gave to you”. This system of reciprocity always involves 3 parties. The idea is that if someone gives you something, you don’t owe them anything for it. If, however, by exchanging that same gift later on you end up with something more, or something else, you have to turn around and share it with the person who gave you the original gift, i.e. the *hau* returns to its source. In the words of Tamati Ranapiri, one of Mauss’s Maori informants:

I will explain it carefully to you. Now, you have something valuable which you give to me. We have no agreement about payment. Now, I give it to someone else, and a long time passes, and that man thinks he has the valuable, he should give some repayment to me, and so he does so. Now, that valuable which was given to me, that is the product of [*hau*] the valuable which was given to me [by you] before. I must give it to you. It would not be right to keep it for myself, whether it be something good, or bad, that valuable must be given to you from me. Because that valuable is a return on [*hau*] the other valuable. If I should hang onto that valuable for myself, I will become ill (or die). (Sahlins 1972: 162)

Mauss articulated the *hau* as a function of Maori mysticism and was attacked for romanticism; other theorists explained that the function of the *hau* is a function of economy, as if non-capitalism is merely latent capitalism. Levi Strauss remarked, “Are we not faced here with one of those instances (not altogether rare) in which the ethnologist allows himself to be mystified by the native?” (Sahlins 1972: 154), Levi-Strauss was, of course, one of those classical anthropologists mentioned earlier who refused to take anything the natives said at face value and succeeded in not learning anything new. His legacy involves the inspired idea that the equilibrium of all societies (presumably societies of men) is universally maintained by men’s exchange of women, and is remembered for his notion of “binary oppositions” - the concept of duality that most societies came up with thousands of years ago. Ironically, the third idea Levi Strauss is famous for is his proposed duality between his theory-based construction and *bricolage*, referring to natives’ fumbling around in the dark. But I digress. The vociferous attacks on Mauss are meaningful in and of themselves, because they demonstrate the high stakes involved. However you translate the *hau*, it seems to be anti-capitalist; one person’s gift should not be another person’s capital (160-1); the fruits of any gift should be shared with those who gave it, or, as the case may be, *made* it. Mauss points to the social equilibrium this system of reciprocity engenders and Sahlins clarifies that “The gift is the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the State. Where in the traditional view the contract was a form of political exchange, Mauss saw exchange as a form of political contract.” (169) With this view, whether you translate *hau* as “spirit” or “profit” is entirely redundant. Furthermore, in my view, the only reason theorists have struggled so much over this nomenclature are *a priori* notions of “economy” and

“spirituality”, already alienated from each other and the “total social fact”¹³³ within modern theory. There is no reason why “spirit” and “profit” should constitute a dichotomy.

Marshall Sahlins elaborated a complementary argument (1972) when he posited that stateless societies, particularly hunting and gathering societies, were the first “affluent societies”, as “scarcity is not an intrinsic property of technical means, it is a relation between means and ends” (5). The remainder of the book goes on to describe how most hunters, gatherers and horticulturalists had more than enough food, drink and other supplies from working a few hours a week; they did not work more because they preferred to do other things; if they did not accumulate wealth it was not because they were incapable; rather, they were not lacking anything and so did not bother (see also Clastres 190-201). The accumulation of material wealth is only seen as something worthwhile in-and-of-itself within the culture of capitalism as:

In capitalism, there is an inversion of the relations between people and things, between subject and object. There is an objectification of the subject and a subjectification of the object: things (money, capital, machines) become the subjects of society, while people (workers) become the objects. Social relations are not just apparently but really relations between things (between money and the state, between your money and mine), while humans are deprived of their sociality, transformed into ‘individuals’, the necessary complement of commodity exchange. (Holloway 2005: 51-52)

Capitalism isn’t a totality of course, up to the present day most people seem to be more preoccupied with enjoying leisure time, joking around, socializing with friends and lovers, making ritual and doing fun creative things than with accumulating objects¹³⁴; this is what Mauss was referring to when he said “pleasure and good were pursued and not material

¹³³ Phenomena as a function of the ‘total’ social fact: “These phenomena are at once legal, economic, religious, aesthetic, morphological and so on. They are legal in that they concern individual and collective rights, organized and diffuse morality; they may be entirely obligatory, or subject simply to praise or disapproval. They are at once political and domestic, being of interest to both classes and to clans and families. They are religious; they concern true religion, animism, magic and diffuse religious mentality. They are economic, for the notions of value, utility, interest, luxury, wealth, acquisition, accumulation, consumption and liberal and sumptuous expenditure are all present, although not perhaps in their modern senses.” (Mauss 1990: 77)

¹³⁴ And when people are concerned with acquiring objects, it is most often with the purpose of improving leisure and/or economizing time, i.e. in order to be able to enjoy the small amount of leisure time permitted by the capitalist economy.

utility.” (Mauss 1990: 74). European colonials were deeply offended by the lack of “respect” (possessiveness?) natives showed for their material possessions (Sahlins 1972: 13); “The victory of rationalism and mercantilism was required before the notions of profit and the individual were given currency and raised to the level of principles.” (Mauss 1990: 74) Pierre Clastres advanced this further (1987), “As a matter of fact, two axioms seem to have guided the advance of Western civilization from the outset: the first maintains that true societies unfold in the protective shadow of the State; the second states a categorical imperative: man must work.” (193). Clastres draws our attention to the relationship between the State and labour: only a high concentration of force could “induce primitive society to produce more, that is, to alienate its time by working for no good reason when that time is available for idleness, play, warfare or festivities.” That is the point at which one can begin to speak of labour, “when the egalitarian rule of exchange ceases to constitute the “civil code” of the society, when the activity of production is aimed at satisfying the needs of others... without exchange and without reciprocity.” (197). Here we see a conceptual synthesis of the function of capitalism/state. Clastres explains, “Alienation is political before it is economic; power precedes labor; the economic derives from the political; the emergence of the State determines the advent of classes.”¹³⁵ (198) With this statement, he challenges the hegemony of the theory of hegemony by effectively suggesting that French neo-marxism is misguided: The superstructure is political and the infrastructure is economic. In this sense, Clastres, like Mauss and Marx himself, takes exchange “as it is historically presented, not as a natural category explicable by a certain eternal disposition of humanity.” (Sahlins 181)

¹³⁵ Arguably reductionist as well; in fact stratification by gender and/or class must presuppose the state and their emergence is mutually constitutive.

While the respective origins of States/mercantilism/capitalism may be difficult to perceive in an analysis of Europe, it is obvious in case of the New World that a political superstructure of State(s) preceded and enforced capitalist economic relations. Even in Europe, as mentioned in Chapter 2, states had a requisite function in privatization of resources and relations; Europe was colonized also (see Brockway 1980).

In Chapter 2, I outlined the anarchist position regarding the State and its detrimental effect on mutual aid. While the anarchist philosophy associates the State to its role in maintaining capitalism, academics tend to shrug off these critiques as utopian: What is this ideal communalism in the past and future that you speak of? Where is its basis in history? The essay above is meant to sketch an answer in terms honoured by the discipline. The classic example of the *hau* of the Maori, along with so many other documented “idiosyncratic” indigenous practices, effectively disprove Liberal individual self-interest as innate to human nature. This is important and relates to a much needed discussion on the concomitant Liberal notion of freedom.

An Aside on “Freedom”

“Freedom”, in modern Western discourse, has been enshrined as the freedom of white men to organize government, control women and children and consume whatever they please with the money they extort from the labour of other men and women of all colours, i.e. to exercise their own “self-interest” which they garner as universal law. This has been ensconced in the academy and freedom has thus come to mean, even within certain anthropological thought, the freedom of the consumer to consume the world in creative

ways and the freedom of the labourer to labour in different ways - the discussion seems to stop there. And even these narrow freedoms are shrinking for most people in the world. Freedom has been reduced to mean having enough power in the capitalist system that you can do whatever you want, regardless of the effects on others, without anyone else being able to stop you.

It is worthwhile to reflect on this genealogy and function of the word “Freedom” when considering the indigenous and feminist perspectives that tend to be critical of its use. They suggest that Freedom is not the freedom of the consumer, not the freedom of the capitalist, and not the freedom of the citizen; they are suggesting that freedom, if anything, is cooperation, respect, dignity, harmony, equilibrium and peace; freedom is listening and being listened to; freedom is deciding together what’s best for everyone such that most people are happy, not just a tiny few; freedom is compromise, a certain elasticity in relationships, not the rigidity enforced by the spectre of violence which presupposes liberal freedom (of imperialist patriarchs).

Indeed, from the very beginning of modern politics, “freedom” has been rather suspicious. Even the “freeing of the serfs”, a famous reference to the benevolence of capitalism is just a semantic displacement: Labourers were not therein free to labour if, when and where they chose; emergent State/corporate militias forced them off the commons, privatized it, called anyone who wasn’t working for capitalists a vagrant, threw them all in prisons and, of course, all the people who tried to stop this from happening were tortured or hung. That doesn’t sound like Freedom to me. Serfs were no longer under the power of landlords, but they were under the power of States, which are simply oversized capitalist landlords, if you think about it. The national army and state borders replace the repression/protection of the estate holder. This is all the more poignantly obvious today: As

capitalist economy proceeds with its enclosures in an attempt to totalize its reign¹³⁶, state borders need keep people from moving, otherwise it would never work. If labourers were really free to stay or go, labour or not, they would leave and wouldn't labour at all, period¹³⁷. So, the most brutal exploitation of the global capitalist economy is being carried out in the confines of Majority World nations, far from the eyes of the Minority World who consume all the wealth, who have privileged agency against the system, but generally content themselves thinking that poverty in the South is a "local" problem. Local indeed, but only because border guards with deadly weapons, fancy computers, retina scanners, fingerprint readers, videocameras and big prisons make sure people don't leave. Neoliberalism is responsible for exponential amounts of illegal refugees.

Replacing Liberal Freedom with the Indigenous Path of Peace, Power and Righteousness

While anthropological logic is useful for corroborating anarchist or anarcho-indigenist arguments against the state and for cooperation, the *palabra* of indigenous activists themselves is richer, more profound, and more authoritative. Better than reading about them, we can actually talk to them, because indigenous peoples are not confined to the "primitives" of classical ethnography, they are alive against all odds and struggling to stay that way. Neither are they petrified relics of the past, "authentic" in their pre-modernity; they are complex and postmodern. Of all dynamic subjects, indigenous peoples have some

¹³⁶ There is virtually nothing left of nature that is not private property; not only are water sources being privatized but private enclosure of basic elements, molecules, nanotech and the human genome by way of patenting laws (TRIPS) has proliferated in the past decade, is fundamental to the neoliberal agenda, and involves new incursions into indigenous territories.

¹³⁷ This is not to say they would not work, make things, be creative and productive, only that they would not share or trade their works, creations and energies without exchange or reciprocity, our definition of labour.

unique insights into the function of state/capitalism because many have been trying to live outside it ever since it started, and have some historical memory or living practice of non-capitalist relations. This is not to say that all indigenous peoples are the same, not at all; it is to say that some of their practices are similarly different to capitalist ones¹³⁸.

While we have posited indigenous societies as antithetical to State/capitalism, and have begun to consider what alternate forms of cooperation may exist in anarchist and anthropological terms, we should qualify the narratives in the previous chapter by considering the *palabra* of indigenous/indigenist scholars:

To fight against genocide we are told to arm ourselves and take vengeance against the white man. To fight against economic oppression we are told to become capitalists and live for money. To fight against unfair laws we are told to become lawyers and change the system from within. None of these paths is our own! (Alfred 2005: 130)

Taiaiake Alfred is a controversial *Rotinonshón:ni* scholar who has written passionately against the concept of “aboriginality”, the possibility of indigenous people to maintain their indigeneity while subjects of nation-states. He calls on scholars to “recognize the aboriginalist identity as what the political theorists Hardt and Negri term a “mimetic eurosself” instrumentally constructed to serve the state” (Alfred 2005; 128). He explains that within the aboriginalist framework, “Indigeneity is legitimized and negotiated only as a set of state-derived individual rights aggregated into a community social context – a very different concept than that of collective rights pre-existing and independent of the state.” (112). Maria Smallface Marule and Dawn Maracle, also *Rotinonshón:ni* scholars, have argued that not only do colonial/nation-states disservice indigenous peoples through particular racist discrimination and a lack of recognition of collective rights, but that “the structures and

¹³⁸ Indigenous peoples, like all societies, have internal diversity, and include capitalists; it is not that indigenous persons are essentially anticapitalist, but rather that there is a globally-dominant anticapitalist position among indigenous peoples of the 21st century.

processes of bureaucracy that are necessary to postmodern sovereignty are oppressive as such, regardless of whether they are ‘imposed’ from ‘outside’, or ‘chosen’ from ‘inside’ a community” (as quoted in Day 2005: 195). While speaking from the perspective of the Mohawk nation, they suggest the oppression inherent in the notion of “sovereignty” can be extrapolated generally; “Native American political theorists also link these relations of subordination to the concept of sovereignty that serves as the horizon of the system of states itself.” (Day 2005: 194). Alfred speaks of sovereignty and citizenship when he says, “Rather than being liberatory possibilities, their true function in the world is to pacify and discipline populations and generate the mentalities that are necessary preconditions for maintaining dominion: subservience to authority, denial of obvious facts, and normalizing discipline by coercive violence.” (2005: 109).

Furthermore, by way of certain interpretation Alfred links the concept of sovereignty to monotheism arguing they are one and the same, that they reinforce, justify and reify one another (2005: 108). One must admit that the nation-state’s claim to sovereignty, exclusive legitimate use of violence, and ultimate arbitration of all that is good (legal) and evil (illegal) by way of an executive jury inaccessible to the vast majority of the populous rather mirrors institutionalized (if not mystic or popular) Judeo-Christian concepts of God. Except here there is no redemption or Grace: Prison is Hell. Alfred and his peers make an interesting point articulating that the moral executive in the State/capitalist world order and that of the Church both consist of white men with a stake in colonialism. Even God Himself seems to be a judgmental, vengeful, white man in many parables and illustrations, arguably a rather alienating depiction of divinity. Alfred suggests that “The first transcendence must be of the mentality of the “one right way” inherent in the monotheistic tradition, a recognition that there is no wisdom that is detached from nature in all of its diversity and complexity. This is

a self-conscious intellectual process of deconstructing the religious and philosophical justifications for imperialism.” (2005; 109). He suggests that the monotheistic belief system is ideally suited as the justification for subjugation as, “There is no such thing as nice monotheism. How could there be? Monotheism associates the One True God with one set of people, its tribe or converts, and the god of any other people is *traif* (non-kosher). It either has to be destroyed (by destroying its adherents) or, at a minimum, marked down as misled, mistaken, or non-existent.” (108). Alfred qualifies his critique in proposing an alternative: “Onkwehonwe and other non-Western cultures are not shackled to the monotheistic delusion and put acts in context of a situation... ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill’ provides moral security even if it is broken with impunity by Jews and Christians, compared to the *Onkwehonwe* pronouncement ‘Don’t Kill, Unless You Have To and the Circumstance Requires It’.” (2005: 54). *Onkwehonwe* ethics are thus situational and more exigent; they require communication, cooperation and human reason negotiating the complexity of the real world; they do not allow people to hide behind codes; one can act without conscience when the arbitration of morality is displaced to an external overarching body¹³⁹. The *Onkwehonwe* define themselves by the *Haudenosaunee* path of “peace, power and righteousness”; this is why, “If peace continues to be strictly defined as the maintenance of order and the rule of law, we will be defeated in our struggle to survive as Onkwehonwe.” (28).

¹³⁹ The only compelling arguments of this nature found within the Western tradition are the feminist critiques that argue against Kantian and Utilitarian philosophy and for a situational ethics; this is significant and speaks to the institutionalized state violence suffered by both indigenous peoples and women at the hands of colonial-patriarchal “arbiters of morality”.

The Onkwehonwe path of peace resonates with the anarchist path of process. Consider the words of John Mohawk, member of the Seneca nation and professor of American studies at SUNY until he passed on in December 2006:

The Haudenosaunee Law of Peace assumes that peace is not achievable as a static condition, just as relationships between human beings are not static but are always unfinished. What you can do is reach a place where you can work on resolving conflicts. You can find out why the two parties continue to have conflict and try to remove those irritants that have caused violence. You can reach enough of an agreement to take the conflict from warfare to a place where, as they used to say, thinking can replace violence, and where the conversation about peace is ongoing.¹⁴⁰

Isabel Altamirano, a *Zapoteca* political scientist from Oaxaca, echoes this from a slightly different perspective, “To be indigenous is to have a sense of community as a whole, a sense of exchanging and talking until we all have a similar vision of where we are going. To be indigenous is consensus and is reproducing certain ways of doing things.” (Alfred 2005: 143). In the words of *El Viejo Antonio*¹⁴¹, member and icon of the EZLN, justice is “not to punish, but to give back to each what s/he deserves”, liberty is “not that each one does what s/he wants, but to choose whatever road that the mirror¹⁴² wants in order to arrive at the true word.”; finally, democracy is “not that all think the same, but that all thoughts or the majority of the thoughts seek and arrive at a good agreement.” (Nash 2001: 23). When Stuart Myiow from the Mohawk Traditional Council of Kahnawake, spoke in Montreal on the 1st anniversary of the Six Nations land reclamation¹⁴³, he asked for dialogue between Six Nations and the Canadian State surrounding the continued criminalization of

¹⁴⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=1170> on April 27, 2007

¹⁴¹ Old Antonio, or Elder Antonio

¹⁴² In the *Popol Vuh*, the Maya creation story, the mirror refers to collective representation (see Nash 2001: 23).

¹⁴³ On February 28th 2007 I attended the demonstration that was held in downtown Montreal to commemorate this anniversary.

Six Nations activists; he did not invoke the violation of their rights as Canadian citizens but rather called for communication in good faith among all parties affected. He called for relations of respect among settlers and natives, among men and women, among the Brothers and Sisters of the Earth which is our Mother. When a Zapoteca activist from the *Consejo Indígena Popular de Oaxaca* (CIPO) was invited by anarchist and autonomist activists to speak at the Native Friendship Center in Montreal in April 2007¹⁴⁴, she articulated the indigenous social movement's goal as not one of winning recognition or rights so much as one of ultimate ungovernability. She spoke of how during the APPO summer there was a “magical relation among everyone”¹⁴⁵ once the city of Oaxaca was barricaded to be free of all police and agents of the state:

We all talked and shared and worked together, we did *tequios*. That's the traditional mutual aid, the collective work projects, of our *pueblos*, where people work together on something, not for money but for the common good, not expecting anything in return. We usually do *tequios* for weddings and the *fiestas del pueblo*, but also for anything else. If the *pueblo* needs a new barn, or to fix the school building, we make a *tequio*, and many people come to work. So we made *tequios*, those of us in the APPO, and for 6 months no one went hungry because when we cooked it was for everyone. And if someone was hurt or food was needed somewhere, we heard over the radio and went there with food. This was dangerous in the eyes of Ulises Ruiz - that there was no governability. Because we were self-governing so well, it was not possible to govern us. Even without arms we defended the city, because we were organized and cooperated together thanks to the *hermandad*¹⁴⁶ among the people and the assemblies. That's what frightens *los de arriba*¹⁴⁷ and that's why they attacked with the PFP.

June Nash is right to take as her “guiding assumption in assessing indigenous social movements that the reference points for action in indigenous societies stem from a logic distinct from that governing international capitalism.” (2001: 24). She explains how indigenous people do not invoke citizenship rights nor identity claims within the system of power but rather conceive of the neoliberal problematic in terms of deterritorialization, fragmentation of social relations, the commodification of exchange and deculturation. They

¹⁴⁴ I attended this event; the following quote is reconstructed from notes.

¹⁴⁵ *relacion magica entre todos*.

¹⁴⁶ brother/sisterhood

¹⁴⁷ those on top

often frame grievances in terms of dignity and respect; their morality stresses collective rather than individual goods (25). Moreover, she suggests that, “In the competition between the moral logic of indigenous people and rational logic of free market globalization, indigenous people are the protagonists for change who offer the greatest challenge to the New World Order defined by the superpowers.” (25).

Dialogue, dignity and respect are put forth by indigenous peoples as proper ways of relating among humanity, not rights due solely to them alone; “What accounts for the remarkable strength of Amerindian philosophy is the capacity of *all* Amerindian nations to agree about the unity and dignity of all beings.” (Sioui 1992: 23). In dialogue they will tell you that it is very important to them to keep their specific ways as indigenous peoples, absolutely; they will also say that other people may have different ways, and this is fine, but what is important is that we sit down and have a dignified, respectful conversation about how to get along all of us together, regardless.

The anarchist focus on congruency between ends and means is presupposed by the same, or equivalent, notion that all human beings are due dignity and respect. The anarchist concern with process mirrors the everyday politics evoked by certain indigenous teaching; Alfred writes that within the “Original Teachings, there is not supposed to be any space between the principles we hold and the practice of our lives.” (2005; 114) and that “All of the world’s big problems are in reality very small and local problems. They are brought into force as realities only in the choices made everyday and in many ways by people who are enticed by certain incentives and disciplined by their fears. So, confronting huge forces like colonialism is a personal and, in some ways, a mundane process.” (2005; 25). Resonant with anarchist postures, Alfred argues that energy and protest directed to the centralized powers merely affirms their legitimacy and strengthens their authority (2005; 228). He does not

alienate product from process and explains, “Whatever the specific means or rationale, violent, legalist and economic revolutions have never been successful in producing peaceful coexistence between peoples; in fact, they always reproduce the exact set of power relations they seek to change, rearranging only the outward face of power.” (22). Finally, “The ancestral movement always sought total freedom from domination and a complete revolt against empire, not halfway compromises and weak surrenders to watered-down injustices.” (28). Anarchists love this stuff. While here positioned as a scholarly resource, Alfred figures strongly in this text precisely because an activist recommended the book.

The cure for the colonizer’s disease is not a method of mass movement. People must be made whole and strong and real again before they can embark on a larger struggle. The antidote for this painful affliction consists of self-transformation encouraged through one-to-one mentoring, face-to-face interaction, and small group dialogue to effect the regeneration of our minds, bodies and spirits. This is the ancient way of the warrior. All cultures and ancient traditions contain essentially the same teaching on transcendence, which is that regeneration begins with a thorough and proper investigation of one’s own life. (Alfred 2005: 279-80).

Such is the revolution of everyday life.

So, I believe that a large part of the conversation going on between indigenous activists, anarchists and academics can be more or less summed up with the following:

Translating this ethical sense and idea of a way of being into a concise political philosophy is difficult, for it resists institutionalization. I might suggest, as a starting point, conceptualizing *anarcho-indigenism*. Why? And why this term? (...) The two elements that come to my mind are *indigenous*, evoking cultural and spiritual rootedness in this land and the Onkwehonwe struggle for justice and freedom, and the political philosophy and movement that is fundamentally anti-institutional, radically democratic, and committed to taking action to force change: *anarchism*. (Alfred 2005; 45)

It may be argued that to employ the term ‘anarchy’ for a major group of human societies is ethnocentric and confuses ideology with social classification. It is to take a highly emotionally charged word, one with a very clear ideological connotation, identified with Euro-American cultural traditions, and to apply it cross-culturally when those in other cultures would clearly lack the ideology and values of the anarchist. Thus, not only is the word distorted, but so also is the meaning of those cultures... But if this is true of the word ‘anarchy’, it applies equally to the use of such words as ‘democratic’, ‘government’, ‘law’, ‘capitalist’, ‘communist’ and a host of others employed daily by social scientists. (Barclay 1982: 18)

A theme seems to emerge around the significance of communication. Indigenous activists from Oaxaca organize themselves in assemblies, but also around the *concept* of the assembly, a space for each to share their *palabra* and listen to the *palabra* of others so as to be able to make the best decision for the community. Zapatistas from the *Juntas de buen gobierno* explain the relationship of communication and justice:¹⁴⁸

In the *Otro Gobierno*, we the Zapatistas have our way of living freely in our communities, but different types of problems do exist. So we seek a solution ourselves; what we do first is investigate the situation, give voice to both parts in the conflict, listen to the arguments and reasoning each give, and we decide together who comes out guilty and they do work in the service of the pueblo. In the *Otro Gobierno*, justice is not bought or negotiated, the power of money does not order Zapatista justice... We have gatherings that actually benefit the people, that don't benefit the bad government or the caciques that oppress the people. And if a project or movement is proposed, each pueblo thinks and analyses which is the best way to proceed, the way that doesn't disturb people... always with the mandate of *mandar obedeciendo*. By way of the community authorities, the good traditions are kept alive and the cultures of our peoples are strengthened because without them we would be a people without life, without future and without hope of a better world. It's the only thing they haven't been able to tear away from us, the cultural roots of our ancestors, the culture of struggle, resistance, *de no se rendir*¹⁴⁹. of not betraying our people and fighting til the last consequence, this is the real and true indigenous culture... Our way is to search out and build a common agreement, not apply the law. for this reason we think that when a conflict arrives we don't only see it as something bad, from there is born and is built a better accord. As authorities of the *junta* we are a bridge, we build a dialogue not a negotiation, and by way of dialogue we arrive at a solution.

Alfred highlights the emphasis of mutual listening within this system of value and contrasts it to Western ways of interrelating and teaching which he calls “knowledge fiduciary”, a “way of passing knowledge from learned people, who are confident in their position of authority, to ignorant people” (Alfred 2005; 199). This, he says, is in contrast to the indigenous way, the ‘aural tradition’¹⁵⁰ (ibid). The condolence ceremony for Juan and Magdalena given at Six Nations during the reading of the Great Law of Peace described in

¹⁴⁸ This text is a transcribed from a presentation at the *mesa de autonomia* (roundtable on autonomy) at the *encuentro* I attended in Dec 2006 – Jan 2007. This text is retrieved from Chiapas Indymedia, I did not transcribe it myself like the others, but I can confirm the translation is fairly accurate because I was present at the talk.

¹⁴⁹ The word *rendir* has multiple meanings, the constellation of which is significant: be dominated, be subject to one's control (animal), to surrender, to yield, to tire, to exhaust, to lay down arms.

¹⁵⁰ As opposed to an “oral” tradition, which is refers to speaking, not listening.

chapter 3 also reflects the value of communication in *Haudenosaunee* cosmology. Wampum belts functioned to consecrate dialogue, “By assembling, distributing, and presenting (wampum) as soothing words to unblock the obstructions of grief and anger in others, one actually created (that) peace and solidarity.” (Graeber 2001: 131). Condolence ceremonies ended feudal wars by “opening up channels of communication. Hence the rhetorical emphasis on ‘opening up the ears’ and ‘unstopping the throats’ of those that received it, and of otherwise putting them at ease with one another.” (126). By acknowledging others’ historical pain by way of conversation and imaginative identification, we may renounce vengeance to live in the present, decide together the best path for all concerned. Communication is prerequisite to consensus. Oftentimes, “the designs of wampum used to resolve disputes or to ‘open channels of communication’ were as ephemeral as ordinary conversation, but as in much ordinary conversation, what was said was not so important as the mere fact that people were speaking to one another.” (131). Conversation is the Path of Peace.

Some may suggest that such reference to the *Haudenosaunee* past is romantic, failing to see that this Path of Peace is neither distant nor iconosized but rather contemporary practice. The Path of Peace is an approach to life and society, applicable across context, no more bound to tradition or context than the concept of Law is bound to one judiciary tradition. Law and the Path of Peace are two ways of approaching conflict, one reifying communication and one precluding it in the interest of Power. The Path of Peace is not a “local belief system” but a certain logic that continues to inform many indigenous pathways of action and, arguably, should inform others as well.

Unfortunately the tendency is to view all indigenous logic as relevant only in regards to their “local context”: Only the Western expert may extrapolate beyond to humanity as a whole¹⁵¹. This is the archetypal violence of colonial logic, where indigenous peoples are the physical and intellectual fodder for Western Civilization. Not only were they literally enslaved, but their knowledge of plants and medicine provide the basis of Western scientific experimentation; their wisdom was reclassified in Latin and history was subsequently written as if the learning encounter had been between Scientists and Nature, rather than between ignorant white men and knowledgeable indigenous women (Tsing 2005: 89-112; see also Cunningham 2005). Indigenous peoples are thus treated as no more than an extension of the flora and fauna of a given ecosystem. Their wisdom continues to be dismissed; social scientists raid indigenous thought, word and action as raw material to create overarching (if no longer universal) statements on “indigeneity” according to set schemes of identity, methodology and logic; as such, the focus continues to be on classification-of rather than conversation-with. Any indigenous thought, word or action that is not congruent with these schemes is overlooked as a consequence or, worse, academics have the gall to question whether it can be said to be “indigenous”. And when the *palabra* of an indigenous person is considered, it is seen to be bound to, merely reflect, a given indigenous “identity”, as if all non-Western epistemology is bound and circular, applying only to itself.

¹⁵¹ In spite of all the postmodern discourse against Humanism, all social scientists continue to extrapolate to the rest of humanity; even though the extrapolation may be qualified and disclaimed with references to “historical specificity”, they are still studying patterns (Some Effects of Globalization, Women in Nationalist Movements, Modernity & Identity, etc.). My argument is not against a search for such patterns *per se*; rather, I suggest that indigenous and other subalterns must participate in such a project as equals for it to bear meaning and purpose, not to mention results.

Only when social scientists stop trying to classify indigenous peoples and start actually conversing with them as *people* above-and-against the “*indigenous people*” of the Western imaginary, i.e. as people who actually have insight as to the predicaments of humanity, will we be challenging this archetype of violence. This is the idealistic aspect of anarchoindigenism: Anarchists don’t care how “authentic” indigenous practices are, whether the Great Law of Peace was rewritten and when, whether the Zapatista philosophy contains elements of Marxism, whether the assembly form of the APPO is “truly” pre-colonial or developed during centuries of resistance. To them its not the point. The Great Law of Peace seems like a pretty good idea, so does the Zapatista philosophy, so do assemblies, and for them that’s a good enough reason to stop and listen awhile to indigenous activists. During this project various academics have asked me, “But do these indigenous activists really *represent* indigenous peoples? Is it *valid* to have them represent *indigeneity*?”, as if my task were to represent an essential indigeneity by way of an essentially indigenous sample. This is to miss the point. The indigenous activists in question are not concerned with establishing an “essential indigeneity” in academic terms and neither am I; neither are they claiming to speak for all indigenous people, nor am I. The obsession with representation and identity is academic; these activists are instead obsessed with vanquishing the capitalist system which presupposes this politics of identity. They are trying to transcend their identity, so to speak, not protect it. If these activists *must* be articulated as representing a group, then they are spokespeople for anti-imperialist indigenous social movements; they claim to represent *these* social movements (in an immediate sense) and *all of humanity* (in an extended sense), and certainly would not appreciate being factored out of the equation because they are not the archetypal Indian, thus representing nothing, thus having no say in the great game of identity which underpins (capitalist) politics these days. This is the meaning of the masked Zapatista,

“As the Zapatistas say of themselves, they were people without faces and without voices... postcard representations of a generalized Indian.”, who had to hide themselves in order to be seen (Nash 2001: 161; see also Vizenor 1994; Vizenor & Lee 1999).

Spokespeople chosen externally to represent given “cultures” is anathema to respectful communication, the Path of Peace, not to mention postcolonial theory. The discourse of cultural relativism that creates such spokespeople “assum(es) there are uniform entities that can be referred to as cultures or societies, authorities that can speak for them (...) and some fairly dependable system whereby the outside observer can identify them. In other words, about the only thing the relativist does have to universalize are structures of authority.” (Graeber 2007: in press). If there are to be spokespeople, let people choose their own spokes, which is basically what they are doing when they rally around the APPO, or Subcomandante Marcos, as it were. They are demonstrating with their participation in these social movements that they feel these people, (councils, assemblies, protagonists, what-have-you), are (at least on their good days) good spokespeople for the people involved (if not The People then at least a bunch of people). If they didn’t have popular support, these entities would not exist. One way out of anthropology’s uneasy postcolonial relationship with “culture” could be to respect human agency and take as its object social movements in the sense of this text – cooperating collectivities - and apply critical analysis to those: What are they doing? What do they want? Why? Who is participating and why? How did the situation come to be? Is it a movement for Peace or Violence? This framework is valuable precisely because it does not obfuscate agency; recognizing cooperation in any social situation requires us to seek motives and agendas; no historical phenomenon may be unquestioned as evolution or an unfolding of predetermined forces – including, for example, patriarchy and capitalism.

Nostalgia for an Authentic Past vs. Cooperation for an Authentic Future

We have lost our old ways, but the principles that we go by are not old: peace is not old, justice is not old, equity is not old, it's what everybody aspires to. Those (things) are ours... Old is in the mind of the person, old is in their education. We're contemporary people. I don't apologize for standing in these clothes today, for that's what I wear. This is me, this is the Hodenosaunee right now, right here... We don't expect to see Reagan with a white wig. (Oren Lyons, Onondaga Chief, as quoted in Sioui 1992: 32)

Indigenist and anarchist activists are not concerned with authenticity of the past so much as authenticity of the future. As such, they consider it irrelevant whether the practices or ethos of their movements harken back to precolonial times or were developed within the subaltern experience of coloniality. It may very well be that the insistence on communication and cooperation often comes as much from the experience of not being listened to under capitalism, and therefore the need to cooperate with each other, as much as it comes from pre-colonial cosmology. And so be it; this is their prerogative. When Alfred suggests, "We should also consider using high tech communications, taking advantage of media resources and building alliances with other movements." (208), he is suggesting the value of importing lessons learned by the Zapatista movement. He says that while the context is different, and the possibilities and character of revolution in Chiapas would not transport to Canada, it is important to learn and apply what may be applied from other "rebellions of indigenous truth" in Chiapas and Oaxaca as they provide a basis for action (59). So it would seem that while some are preoccupied with local authenticity, indigenous activists are self-consciously transcending such limits imposed externally. They contradict the presumption implicit in theory that all identities are self-interested and at odds with one another; they consciously communicate to build cooperation, knowing there are various relevant similarities across context.

The emergence of anarchoindigenism among anarchist activists is partially related to this strengthening pan-indigenous movement and the transnational diffusion of Zapatista indigenism. It is also largely related to specific historical genealogies of autonomist activism before, during and since the globalization movement. In contemporary anthropological parlance, the phenomenon is partially “local” and partially “global”. But let’s not give credence to this framework; this “local/global” lens currently in vogue does not impart to us anything useful; it does not differentiate between transnational cooperation from below and the conspiracy of capitalist imperialism, whereby the knitting of the global anti-capitalist movement and the exponential commodification of Life, the Universe and Everything are seen to be due to the same “invisible hand” of “globalization”. They are not, of course; one is the function of cooperation among business elites and state leaders and the other is a function of cooperation *desde abajo y a la izquierda*. This cooperation is only a function of globalization insomuch as it is in resistance to it. With capitalist globalization comes the globalization of resistance, which has always existed, as an autonomist history of social movements demonstrates. It is true that the Internet has been pivotal, but using a given piece of modern technology does not make one a capitalist – it’s what you do with it that counts¹⁵². The Internet emerges as pivotal precisely because it engenders conversation.

¹⁵² The suggestion that capitalism is a totality, that anything we do within it is bound to reproduce its violence, is an ironic fetishization; for example, to suggest using a machine made by capitalists makes one a capitalist is to invert relationships between people as relationships between things, a function of commodity fetishism.

Cosmology vs. Political Economy: Gendered Implications

This project began with my desire to conduct an ethnographic analysis of the anarchist globalization movement. Specifically, I aimed to discern implicit logic informing anarchist activist practice, as well as analyse the congruency of anarchist theory and practice within activism itself. I carried out research in multiple sites (activist projects), with a focus on their particularities as well as the interactions among them: the Alternative Social Forum in Venezuela, the Concordia Anarchist Reading Circle, the Montreal Anarchist Bookfair, The *La Otra Campaña* collective in Montreal, the *Indymixe* collective in Mexico City and the *Primer Encuentro de los Pueblos Zapatistas con los Pueblos del Mundo* in Chiapas. Ethnographic research revealed that, although contemporary anarchism offers an important critique of the State and institutional politics, its failure to incorporate diverse perspectives and gender analysis ultimately weakens that critique. Specifically, the experience of women in the anarchist movement is misrepresented and the cosmological vision of indigenous activists is listened to only selectively. Anarchists' persistence in viewing politics as a partial, "public" enterprise leaves their analysis ultimately rooted in the precise political-economic model they claim to overturn. The major findings of this thesis emerge from these two exclusions:

- 1) Although anarchoindigenism is currently a popular discourse of anarchism, the cosmological visions related to indigeneity are subsumed into pre-existing anarchist frameworks rather than modify and advance these in innovative and revolutionary ways.

2) The silencing of feminist critique within anarchist activism is a second missed opportunity to refine and enrich the revolutionary agenda through creative and radical collaboration.

In this concluding chapter I elaborate on these points and suggest their interrelationship.

Cosmology vs. Politics

When indigenous activists speak of cosmology, they are not illustrating their different “identities” variously associated with their “traditions”; a politics of difference does not exist as such but is produced through alienation and constructed in postmodernity. The classification of native cosmologies is a Western endeavor; indigenous activists do not seem so concerned with the relative differences among various cosmologies as much as their similarity in the face of secularized Western politics: Diverse indigenous peoples unify themselves as indigenous by way of parallel reverence for humanity and cosmology as such. As Alfred writes:

This is another part of being Onkwehonwe: the transcendence of national and patriotic identities to a sense of self and relationship based on the commonality of belief that is shared among Onkwehonwe in other nations... There is nothing unique taught in the Lodge, the Longhouse, or Hogan or through the tobacco or sweetgrass. All over the world, all indigenous peoples’ dances and songs tell us the same things. Wherever people are still close to the earth and living in harmony with nature, the teachings are the same. The ceremonies do more than connect us to a particular tradition or community, they connect us to the earth and to our true, natural existences as human beings. (2005: 140, 250).

Isabel Altamirano, the Zapoteca political scientist we heard from in chapter 4, also suggests:

Well, there is not a unique indigenous identity, because indigenous peoples are diverse. However, there are many common things in the way we all see our culture and history. I think that there are several elements that are common to indigenous peoples, not only in the North, but anywhere. The most evident element is that indigenous peoples have a strong relationship with their land and

territories; they see them as the social space where they recreate themselves, so land and territory are not only commodities. To indigenous peoples, religion and culture are linked to their natural contexts. It is not rare to find animal representations being linked to human beings, as with the raven in cultures of the Pacific of the deer in Northern Mexico. The role of the elder is something shared among indigenous peoples too. Elders are seen as those who have accumulated knowledge, who have answers, or who know how to do things according to tradition. In many communities, the idea of keeping balance or equilibrium among the different elements within a community is expressed in the way those who transgress the rules are punished. In non-indigenous peoples' justice, those who do something wrong must go to jail. For many indigenous communities, punishment has to be implemented more as a way to restore the equilibrium and heal communities than as punishment. These are some of the things I see indigenous peoples here and anywhere share. (Alfred 2005; 142)

In one of our e-conversations, Uri refers to the cosmovision of his *pueblo* and says it is:

A system that is totally distinct from the current political system. The base of this political system is the cosmovision, *la madre naturaleza*, the duality of things. This is the source of being responsible in the political charges of the community, of having respect toward others and towards nature. *La madre naturaleza* is considered the giver of life. Such a conception of life is based on a profound respect for nature in all of its dimensions. She is the source of life, we must take care, protect and help her so that she maintains her equilibrium, because on her depends the existence of the community. Just as nature must be respected, so should the community and its inhabitants be respected, to maintain equilibrium.

and

So the intention of the APPO is that all the *pueblos* leave the parties, that they forget about trying to get the support of the governments which in reality are just pathetic. So that they return to practicing the assembly like the ancestors, and of course in many communities they are still doing (my *pueblo*). In this way all the *pueblos* of Oaxaca will become autonomous, and leave aside this bullshit neoliberal capitalist political system.

and

We're going to discuss all the stuff I told you just now, the *bastones de mando*, the assembly, autonomy, *la vida comunitaria indígena*, the systems of charge. In this meeting we're going to see how people who don't live in an indigenous community respond. And even more how the intellectuals react. We'll see if they understand all this about the *bastones de mando*.

Here Uri is not referring to a need to imbue Western political forms with religious meaning, i.e. make "local" the "global", he is rather suggesting we reject Western "politics" altogether and replace it with indigenous cosmology. He suggests that revolutionary action is necessarily and explicitly rooted in cosmology, that a cosmological dimension subsumes all others, and that this is one of the principal imports of an indigenist politics. And he is not convinced the intellectuals will understand this. He is right to be concerned. Most if not all people oriented by Western notions of politics, academics and anarchists included, seem to think that "politics" and its lens provide a secular and universal framework that subsumes

questions of cosmology; Marxist notions of false consciousness prevail - cosmology is seen to be a function of politics rather than the reverse. In fact, politics is not exterior to cosmology but is a function of it; Western secularism is not outside cosmology but rather cosmology displaced.

Politics is Fetishized Religion

Secularism is the product of Judeo-Christian genealogy. In this historical context, Judeo-Christian morality was used to argue against the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church and thus for separation of State and Church. Western politics is thus borne of religiosity, borne of the Church, and defined negatively against it. Thus, secularism is only secular vis-à-vis the Church. Vis-à-vis other cosmologies it is distinctly Judeo-Christian in nature, evidenced by so many tenets embedded *a priori*: Predefined notions of individuality, authority and personhood all inform Western secularism; particularly noteworthy is the fact that Western politics takes as its definitive object relations between men. Modern politics is literally a series of contracts among men, contracts which serve to consolidate their power as well as sanctify their relationships as the “political sphere”; this speaks to no natural object of “politics” but reflects the Judeo-Christian patriarchy. Western secularism thus retains institutional Christianity with new leaders: Elite male intellectuals replace the original transcendental subject – God. (Bowman 1997: 39). Politics is fetishized religion.

Anarchism is also a function of this fetishization; most anarchist activists are dedicated to secular analyses informed by both Marx and “authorities” on anarchism such as Bakunin who declared, “If God really existed it would be necessary to abolish him.”

(Bakunin 1970: foreword). In the same volume, God and the State (1970), he goes on to say that people who believe in God are ignorant (16) and in other essays he suggests religion is rooted in animal life as the substance of religion is “precisely (the) feeling of the absolute dependence of the ephemeral individual upon eternal and all-powerful Nature.” (107). Much of indigenous activists’ articulation of cosmological harmony does indeed evoke a reverence for eternal and powerful Nature, but in terms of equilibrium, not in terms of domination and subjugation. Such dichotomies implicit in Bakunin’s thought are historically situated in the Enlightenment:

How Could the Idea of Dualism Ever Arise? More than ever are we convinced of the urgent necessity of solving the following question: *Since man forms one whole with Nature and is but the material product of an indefinite quantity of exclusively material causes, how did this duality – the assumed existence of two opposite worlds, one spiritual, the other material, one divine, the other natural – ever come into existence, become established, and take such deep roots in human consciousness?* (Bakunin 1953; 106)

It is specifically within the Judeo-Christian tradition, however, that material and spiritual spheres are separated; dualism in many other traditions refers precisely to the paradox whereby everything is at once material and spiritual. The polarity of natural-divine does not exist in much indigenous cosmology; if anything, it is precisely the unity of these that is the forceful characteristic of the cosmological “politics” put forth by indigenous activists.

On Selective Listening

Despite the anarchists’ declared humility and willingness to learn from indigenous peoples, their learning process is delimited by the framework of Western anarchist ideology; for example, activists tend to be interested and focused on indigenous movements’ rejection

of State forms of government but relegate cosmological references to secondary importance if not irrelevance. While declaring themselves to be anti-racist by virtue of their reverence for indigenous cultures, in fact they continue to pick and choose, appropriating the aspects of indigenous discourses that support and resonate with anarchist agendas while ignoring the rest.

The dynamics among Juan, Magdalena and the activists illustrate this: Juan is revered precisely due to his mastery of the discourse and style of political oration related to Western education and logic. Magdalena, on the other hand, is coddled and paternalized as white male activists interpret her humility and storytelling style as indicative of naïveté and ignorance. Here we see a confluence of axes of marginalization: Magdalena's *palabra* is undervalued because 1) in terms of form, its texture does not emulate the oration style socialized in capitalist institutionalized education and the masculine culture of formal politics; 2) in terms of content, her stories relate to the texture of everyday life in her people's communities and evoke cosmological dimensions of resistance.

While anarchist activists, particularly the men, applaud Juan's denouncement of political parties and feel proud of themselves for learning from "indigenous peoples", their pretensions are disingenuous as they are merely listening to and applauding the things they know already from anarchist books, zines and workshops. If activists had a sincere interest in learning from "indigenous people" then they would not favor the *palabra* of Juan by citing authority concomitant with Western scholarship. A reverence for specifically Western discourses marginalizes Magdalena's contribution as well as real and potential contributions of other indigenous women who are often marginalized from politics and formal education. More problematic, however, is the fact that socialization into normative Western behaviour

is the sign of legitimation in the first place. In other words, it is important to recognize not only the gendered nature of such exclusion, but its racist rationalization.

Such a dimension is glossed over when activists suggest that the solution to such gendered exclusion involves “consciousness raising”, increased awareness or assimilation of indigenous women into Western political culture by way of formal or popular education. Of course if these are desired by the women themselves or are autonomous initiatives then they are wonderful; what concerns me is the hypocrisy of a white male-dominated “anarchoindigenist” subculture that incorporates Western-educated indigenous men as astute while marginalizing “uneducated” indigenous women’s contribution as backward and apolitical.

Rather than toting Juan as a spokesperson for anarchist politics, one would imagine that a real interest in learning from indigenous peoples would instead involve listening and appreciating the diverse insights and aspects that are actually *indigenous*. This is what I have tried to do during this project; various lessons emerged from the research. The most principle of these is that the political articulations of indigenous activists are inextricable from their cosmological dimensions as presented by indigenous activists themselves, that it is indigenous women who articulate this holism most strongly, and that while this holism appears the most powerfully sustaining force driving many indigenous movements, it is precisely the dimension ignored within the male-dominated and secular anarchist activist scene.

Gender and Diversity in Anarchist Theory and Practice

Through my research it has become clear to me that the anarchist rejection of cosmology and depoliticization of women's contributions and concerns are related. While these may be separately attributed to secularism of the anarchist scene on one hand, and its characteristic sexism on the other, even more disturbing is the interaction of these and how they support and reproduce each other. Sexism allows men to rationalize not listening to women's discourses, spiritual or otherwise; secularism allows men to rationalize their sexism towards indigenous women. Furthermore, such secularism and ethnocentricity produce the exoticization of indigenous women; projected difference is manifest in the sudden relativism that emerges in a political scene ostensibly concerned with humanity: White male activists rationalize both white and indigenous men's belittlement of Magdalena on the basis of "cultural difference".

Invoking cultural difference suggests that there is a cultural authority that speaks for her and should preempt her desire or option to speak. In other cases, anarchists advance the notion of individual autonomy and self-determination of all human beings; in the case of indigenous women, anarchists suggest they may be spoken for by others. Not only does this maneuver slight Magdalena personally, but it prevents the rest of us from hearing and learning from her *palabra*.

As described in Chapter 3, anarchists were "compelled" to "give voice" to the caravan from Oaxaca, to politicize indigenous struggles as a corrective to colonialist politics, but also "compelled" to ignore the *silencing* of Magdalena's *palabra*, supposedly also as a corrective to colonialist politics. Anarchists adopt discourses of universality and humanity when convenient to give anarchism an air of authenticity by associating it with non-Western indigeneity. When not convenient, because it challenges the hegemony of male power in the anarchist scene, humanity and universality are replaced by identity politics. We cannot

interfere with Juan's interrupting Magdalena because it is "tradition", the anarchist men say, without having spoken with Magdalena about it. It is "tradition", they say, and any contestation or conversation about it being problematic is always and necessarily imperialism of "white feminism". All of this betrays a racism that obviates from existence the indigenous women who have been the ones to question "tradition" most strongly, not to mention Magdalena herself.

Zapatista women, for example, explicitly question the complicity between "respect for tradition" and continued marginalization when they say, "It is not true, as some *mestizos* think, that it is our custom to only eat vegetables and *pozol*. We want the right to eat meat and drink milk, and our children not to die of malnutrition or women to die in childbirth." (Millán 1998: 70). It is precisely because "tradition" is often invoked to justify male domination that it is poignantly obvious to Zapatista women that "tradition" often masks processes of marginalization; as June Nash writes: "By raising the concrete practices of male dominance and the need to renounce them in a democratic society, they suggest a way around the polemic of tradition as an ultimate canon condoning all practices that invoke it. There are, as the Zapatista women assert, bad traditions as well as good, and not all customs should be respected." (2001: 248). Subcommandante Marcos acknowledges that it is precisely due to interventions of Zapatista women in the EZLN movement that the idea has expanded "of a more just world, enriched with humanitarian, ethical, moral elements, more than strictly indigenous. Suddenly, the revolution was transformed into something essentially moral. Ethical. More than the redistribution of wealth or the expropriation of the means of production, the revolution begins to be the possibility of the human being having a space for dignity." (as quoted in Nash 2001: 226). Anarchist activists and theorists,

while devoted to learning from indigenous people, seem to have missed this debate within the EZLN movement as well as its import.

It is common practice among anarchist activists to cite the necessity of listening and responding to those “most affected” by given structures of domination in order to come up with the best analyses and strategies of resistance; it is common to hear reference to such epistemic authority in explaining attention given indigenous struggles. While this argument is (selectively) invoked to (at times) privilege the *palabra* of indigenous peoples, refugees, immigrants and, to a lesser extent, people of colour in general, this same logic is not commonly applied to cleavages of gender at all. It is very rare to hear the suggestion that women may have especially insightful analyses of the dimensions of capitalism and ideas for resistance due to their particular subject-positions within it. If there existed a real effort to learn from those most affected in structures of domination, we would be paying specific attention to the insights and strategies of poor and indigenous women for, as Mohanty reminds us, “It is precisely their critical reflections on their everyday lives as poor women of colour that allow the kind of analysis of the power structure that has led to many victories... the particular standpoint of poor indigenous and Third World/South women provides the most inclusive viewing of systemic power.” (2003: 232; see also Nash 2002: 237). Despite the restructuring of gender relations under neoliberalism, “antiglobalization work does not seem to draw on feminist analysis or strategies.” (Mohanty 2003: 249). We will not learn how to vanquish capitalism or patriarchy without the thoughts, words and actions that are inspired by their insights; “it is easier and more likely for the oppressed to have critical insights into the conditions of their own oppression than it is for those who live outside those structures. Those who actually live the oppressions of class, race, or gender, have faced the issues that

such oppressions generate in a variety of different situations.” (Uma Narayan as quoted in Hirschmann 2004: 329). As Mohanty writes:

An analysis that pays attention to the everyday experiences of tribal women and the micropolitics of their ultimately anticapitalist struggles illuminates the macropolitics of global restructuring... If these particular gendered, classed, and racialised realities of globalization are unseen and undertheorized, even the most radical critiques of globalization effectively render Third World/South women and girls as absent... Without this recognition, a necessary link between feminist scholarship/analytic frames and organizing/activist projects is impossible. Faulty and inadequate analytic frames engender ineffective political action and strategizing for social transformation. (2003: 233, 236).

Furthermore, insomuch as anarchists are interested in indigenous insights due to a perceived “indigenous positionality”, i.e. a relative exteriority to capitalist society, then should not anarchists be interested in the perspectives of women and men who have *not* been socialized into modern paradigms and discourses? One would imagine that a search for alternative “ways of doing politics” would specifically seek out such challenges rather than seek corroborating evidence for anarchist theory. It seems white anti-racism has come short once more, whereby non-Western peoples and ideas are yet again subsumed into an overarching Western framework, treated as raw material for constructing another universalist paradigm or as examples proving the existence of one. This paradigm is no different than other modern metanarratives in the sense that it is constructed in terms of Western theory: political economy. Anarchist activists order indigenous thought, word and action as “anarchist” rather than actually contemplating the cosmological discourses of indigenous peoples and, in so doing, avoid questioning their own cosmological assumptions embedded in their own analysis. The secular anarchist analysis that designates indigenous cultures as “Stateless” is a foreign political-economic reductionism. A unifying aspect of indigeneity is precisely the antireductionism inherent in cosmology. Perhaps the salient lesson to be learned from our indigenous brothers and sisters is precisely the strength of holistic analysis that lies therein.

When indigenous women speak as sisters, daughters, wives and mothers, they are performing a revolutionary act against the displacement of kinship as politics. Amy Lind, in her study of indigenous women's movements in Ecuador, describes how women activists insist on their collectivity as mothers, not as citizens or even as political subjects *per se*: “Their refusal to identify as “political” indicates their distrust of and alienation from the formal political process and attests to their feeling that they do not belong to that sphere, nor perhaps do they necessarily want to be there.” (2005: 108). Rather than “false consciousness”, this reflects a heightened consciousness that displacing kinship to politics is a profound alienation that belies the rest. June Nash explains that “Chiapas Mayans continue to draw upon primordial sources of cosmology and belief” (2001: 163); not due to limited knowledge of the courts, or lack of access, but specifically due to an explicit rejection of “the gender subordination implicit in Western laws”, indigenous women phrase their “rights in words that evoke a primordial sense of balance on the cosmic level related to gender balance in communities.” (Nash 2001: 249). By Zapatista women’s insistence on politicizing and combating the “debilitating effects of alcoholism and violence against women within their communities, they are rejecting the imposed codes of Western powers that divide private practices from the public morality of state legal codes...” (249). The indigenous women ecologists I met in Venezuela are also conscious of this ruse, declaring that constitutional rights “only exist for citizens, not for *indígenas* or for women.”.

Insomuch as political theory is a mystification of a particular patriarchal kinship system, the patriarchy (and its effect: capitalism) may be challenged more profoundly within cosmological frameworks than anarchist ones. According to Nash, in most of the Americas,

origin myths contain androgynous or dual creative powers and “the balanced cosmogony of the Sun and Moon related to human gender differences is a metaphor for gender complementarity that is widespread in (the) hemisphere.” (2001: 246). The concept of harmony related to this cosmology is that “of a universal order and the generation of continuity in life as a product of a constant struggle of opposite forces... Implicit in this view is the possibility of maintaining distinct spheres of behaviour without hierarchy.” (ibid). Cosmological forces enter into “a daily contest to maintain the gendered balance achieved in the diurnal cycle”, thus projecting “human behaviour in the cosmic world by affirming the responsibility that humans have to maintain this balance.” (ibid).

Nash’s argument parallels Alfred’s - that in the Original Teachings there is supposed to be no space between principles and practice. The call for Peace, then, is a call for harmony not homogeneity, a call to maintain equilibrium among opposing forces as a responsibility of everyday life. For many indigenous women, the modern discourse of political equality is alienating and rejected as it does not encompass this expansive notion of peace and rather imposes a “false harmony” mediated by institutional power that is “based on the repression of difference, which they expose as the hegemonic denial of protest against the injustices of gender, race and class. The novelty of their message lies in the assertion of the generative value of conflict as they seek a balance in society between genders, among races of humans and other species, and with nature.” (Nash 2001: 245). Whereas cosmology may involve gender egalitarianism; politics does not acknowledge its possibility because it assumes that all difference is unequal. One of the foundational propositions of political-economy is that a “natural” sexual division of labour implies different and/or unequal roles in “politics”; this logic therein becomes the premise invoked to naturalize men’s authority in politics: the supposition of “spheres”. Cosmological notions

of justice surpass those of political theory in terms of utility specifically because they reject the division of life into spheres and, therefore, encompass the realm of kinship rather than depoliticize it. I suggest that:

Cosmology involves accountability to kin, humanity and the universe.

Politics involves accountability to men, the public realm and the state.

Alfred explains the path of peace as inherent to, and inextricable from, accountability to kin:

There are fundamental differences between Onkwehonwe and Western models of societal organization and governance. Onkwehonwe cultures and the governing structures that emerged from within them are founded on relationships and obligations of kinship relations, on the economic view that sustainability of relationships and perpetual reproduction of material life are prime objectives, on the belief that organizations should bind family units together with their land, and on a conception of political freedom that balances a person's autonomy with accountability to one's family. (Alfred 2005; 155)

Below, June Nash refers to colonial times, while I suggest the same holds true today:

Europeans could not imagine any institutions with autonomy for all members, least of all the family. It is autonomy in this radical sense that the indigenous movements are espousing....This autonomy, in the sense of the recognition of differentiation by sex and age and the necessity of giving space for its exercise, was denied in Western philosophy from at least the time of Aristotle, and even by anthropologists as late as the first wave of feminism. Implicit in this construction is the emphasis on sameness instead of the principle of difference that is so important among indigenous societies.... Even within [Pre-Colombian] empires, the principle of subordination based on gender and ethnicity was not presupposed, as it was in Europe at the time of the conquest. The term 'egalitarian' used by ethnohistorians goes far beyond that implied by 'equality' in Western democracies; it refers to societies without classes that demonstrated full sexual symmetry, where individual autonomy prevailed, and the exercises of authority over others, even that of adults over children, was discouraged. (2001: 246)

This limited notion of equality is manifest as much in the radical Left as elsewhere, as displayed in the persistent reluctance to attach importance to inequality and oppression based on gender and sexuality (Guerin as quoted in Day 2005: 96). Anarchism is no exception and this is because: 1) as an ideology it is founded in political economy; 2) its

genealogy lies in analyses of the situation of male workers during, and immediately previous to, the Industrial Revolution; 3) its roots in theory concern injustices of the State towards male workers; 4) its elaboration in practice is found originally and primarily in syndicalist movements. Most significantly, anarchist theorists maintain the political-economic theory of separate spheres that mystifies the patriarchy. Clastres, for example, defines men's alienated labour as when they "produce for others, without exchange and without reciprocity. That is the point at which it becomes possible to speak of labour: ... when the activity of production is aimed at satisfying the needs of others..." (1987: 198); he is unable, however, to conceive of alienation as regards gender, whereby women's activity is aimed at satisfying the needs of others without exchange or reciprocity. The notion of spheres spares the conscience; women, relegated to a sphere outside politics, are not even considered as relevant objects, much less subjects, of analysis. Consider the following argument Clastres makes in describing the idleness and beauty of "Stateless" societies; here he refers to the Tupi-Guarani of South America:

The biggest part of the work, performed by the men, consisted of clearing the necessary area by the slash and burn technique, using stone axes. This job, accomplished at the end of the rainy season, would keep the men busy for a month or two. Nearly all the rest of the agricultural process – planting, weeding, harvesting – was the responsibility of the women, keeping with the sexual division of labour. This happy conclusion follows: the men (i.e. one-half the population) worked about two months for every 4 years! As for the rest of the time, they reserved it for the occupations experienced not as pain but as pleasure: hunting and fishing; entertainments and drinking sessions; and finally for satisfying their passionate liking for warfare. (1987: 194)

Not only does he consider men drinking and playing war while women work to feed them for months and years on end a "happy conclusion", but he is so unaware of his own blindness that he suggests that within this society, "the biggest part of the work is done by the men." Notably, he writes this off as "keeping with the sexual division of labour." The notion that concomitant with difference is domination reflects the "equality" of modern

Humanism; the notion of separate spheres engenders analyses such as these, which only consider justice as it applies to men. Without the idea of spheres, it would be evident that before there is alienation of male workers due to State coercion, there is alienation of women vis-à-vis men, whereby their activity becomes labour as soon as it is aimed at satisfying men's needs without reciprocity. This is an obvious precursor to centralized male governments – men have to exercise collective power over women before being able to consolidate and enshrine it in centralizing schemes. The gendered aspect of States is lost to anarchist theorists informed by political economy; Clastres asks, “What made it so that the State ceased to be impossible? Why did some peoples cease to be primitives? What tremendous event, what revolution, allowed the figure of the Despot, of he who gives orders to those who obey, to emerge? *Where does political power come from?*” (1987: 205) he asks; Barclay answers, “Most authority commences as the raw power of the gangster and evolves into the ‘legitimate’ authority of tacit acquiescence. This is certainly the history of the nation-state.” (1982: 22). These questions and answers obscure the most fundamental requisite precursor of States, male domination. This is because male dominance is taken for granted even among anarchist theorists; while other ingrained ideas about power and control are radically questioned and deconstructed, domination of men over women is mystified as a natural sexual division of labour. Anarchist theorists do not challenge but struggle to naturalize this arbitrary divide:

In the broadest sense politics can be applied to any kind of social group. That is, there may even be politics within the family – where clearly the distribution of power between father, mother, son and daughter is a major issue.... Ordinarily, however, when one speaks of politics or political organization, one does not think of the internal affairs of the family. Political organization applies more to ‘public’ affairs – relations which are territorial and cut across kinship groupings. Politics involves a substantial geographical area or a community, or at least an extensive neighborhood. Yet even this kind of conceptualisation leads to ambiguity as to whether one is dealing with political or family affairs. We may have a confrontation between two groups related by kinship, but beyond the level of extended family (for example, two patrilineages), which would be considered at least as a quasi-public affair. (Barclay 1982: 23-24)

No wonder it is hard to distinguish these spheres at times: they don't exist. Modern politics creates them. Earlier on I suggested that *cosmology involves accountability to kin, humanity and the universe; politics involves accountability to men, the public realm and the state*. This may appear disingenuous considering the bulk of this text concerns an anarchist, or anti-state, politics. I offer this formulation, however, as an important correction to demonstrate the overwhelming similarities of anarchism to other modern political paradigms in contrast to alternative frameworks offered by indigenous cosmology. While anarchism is radical vis-à-vis marxism and liberalism, it only involves a partial deconstruction of both and a partial critique of structures of colonial domination generally. Anarchism is born of modernity and retains its terms. While rejecting the State, anarchists continue to displace politics into one of two spheres; their preoccupation is the "public" sphere as they relegate most violence to an unquestioned private area of activity. More so than the State itself, this is the fundamental violence of modernity and presupposes all subsequent violence: the embedded notion that only relations among half the population - men - are social whereas relations with the other half - women - form part of the animal world; i.e. male theories of natural "desire" are constructed to define them as biological (Laurin-Frenette 1981: 185). Politics is, of course, the realm where men act on the world; nature is the realm where the world acts on men; by juxtaposing morality to biological imperatives in this way, men alleviate themselves of all moral accountability towards women, attributing male domination to biological "desire" as is constructed in their philosophy (ibid).

Not just theorists but anarchist activists also relegate women's concerns to "private" concerns. When women denounce male violence or sexual oppression, these are sidelined as apolitical and a function of personal resentments. Even when women speak on a macropolitical scale in ideological terms, making no reference to their specific experiences, anarchists dismiss their *palabra* as "personal politics". This exposes the tautological construction that silences women as apolitical, regardless of in which "sphere" they operate: If women's concerns are imagined to be personal because they navigate primarily the private sphere, then why does this charge continue when women operate outside this sphere, if not because "personal" is co-defined with women in the first place? The only reason women's problems are labeled personal is precisely because they are women's and do not apply to men – the quintessential subjects of politics. Without recognizing this tautology there is no revolution.

A more complete analysis of the State function in capitalism would regard the axis State-Family rather than just one of its poles (Laurin-Frenette 1981: 185). Anarchists fail in this regard due to their reliance on political economic parameters. Whereas feminists have presented analyses regarding the State's multiple oppressive functions, anarchist analyses of the State have largely focused on the exploitation of adult male workers of various colours. Anarchists posit vaguely that "anarchist theory is egalitarian and anti-hierarchical, as well as being decentralist (and that) discrimination based on 'race, colour, or creed' or sex are always anathema." (Barclay 1982: 16). In fact, domination beyond that attributed to capitalists and police is not structurally integrated into anarchist discourse; extensions of the discourse of autonomy to women and other subjects are tacked on *post facto*. The retroactive inclusion of

other forms of domination is the reformist maneuver of identity politics; to paraphrase Holloway from Chapter 2: In order to challenge capitalism and its compounded and divisive oppressions, we must avoid the trap of starting with multiplicity; “we need to start with the prior multiplication that gives rise to this multiplicity.” (2005: 42)

Not only do anarchist activists fail to perceive the form and location of gender oppression, but they perpetuate and profit from it within the movement itself. Since in-between meetings it is women who do the bulk of the logistical and social work constituting the anarchist social movements, anarchist projects are founded in processes of extracting and exploiting female labour. If women attempt to avoid doing the majority of this work, they are charged with “bad politics”; if they attempt to denounce the male domination inherent in this maneuver, they are charged with “bad process”, i.e. being disruptive of “process”. This is probably the most insidious displacement of all. Instead of engaging with the call to politicize everyday life, they co-opt this discourse in a superficial reform of “public” process while retaining private license. The discourses of anarchist politics are not congruent with their processes; the energy that propels the movement is extracted within the private sphere by way of coercion in “personal” relationships. Anarchist reverence for autonomy and “process” occurs only onstage; it is spectacular, in the full Situationist sense.

Anarchism as Authoritarian

So, anarchists are indivisible from liberals and Marxists in their accountability to men and the public sphere, but what of their relationship to the State? Anarchists reject the State but have replaced this ultimate authority with anarchist doctrine. They nominally reject

the State and centralized government but they do not deconstruct authority. These anarchist men, who are most often white, resent government and police (their oppressors) but retain authority along axes of race, class and gender. They replace State authorities with a vanguard of anarchists positioned as the ultimate authority on revolution, antiauthoritarian analysis and democratic “process”. This can only be seen as an authoritarian maneuver to subsume and thus “manage” both indigenous and feminist theory/practice. While many of the conceptual foundations (i.e. epistemic authority of subaltern subjects) of contemporary anarchist activism have their genealogy in postcolonial feminism, their subsumption as “anarchism” serves to reinstate white men as ultimate authority in intellectual matters (see Mohanty 2003; Lamoureux 2004; Masson 2003).

One of the salient features of colonial patriarchy is white men’s claim to authorship of others’ insight and an exclusive claim to New Ideas (Mascia Lees 1989). Intellectual creations of others are regarded as partial truths, bound to the subject-positions from whence they came, whereas insights of white men are purported to apply to other people. When critical insight emerges from the work of others, anarchist theorists reformulate it in their interest; when it has been sufficiently neutralized, it can then be said to bear on the exterior world and is introduced as a New Idea (14, 17). Donna Haraway proposed that women are a class, linked “through coalition – affinity not identity” (as quoted in Fuss 1989: 36), yet Day (2005) puts forth such a “politics of affinity” as an anarchist invention and, furthermore, says “although it is clear much work remains to be done, many first-world feminists have responded favourably to the challenges posed by those who reject an identity-based politics of recognition.” (186-7). Likewise, Holloway (2005) elaborates an argument around identity and fetishization that is compelling, but it is largely a repeat of strategic essentialism as put forth by feminists, without the feminist critique (see Nash 2001: 20;

Haraway 2004: 87; Harding 2004: 131; Hirschman 2004: 319; Fuss 1989). Such competition is unfortunate, as there is specific value in drawing the parallel between the anti/essentialism debate and fetishization; it is precisely identity-fetishization which silences feminists as essentialist.¹⁵³ Anarchist theorists demonstrate a lack of solidarity to those “most affected” when they seek intellectual supremacy instead of cooperating with those who have been struggling to be heard. Judging from anarchist bibliographies, Marx, Kropotkin, Bakunin, anarchists in Spain and a variety of similar figures have figured things out on their own; such research does not reflect the ideal of consensus, nor an expansive conversation. In the spirit of this text, I suggest that such conversation is of specific value, and suggest we engage to learn as much as possible from each other, against-and-beyond identity, thus unifying ourselves as Revolutionaries rather than Post-Anarchists or Fourth-Wave Feminists or some other sectarian designation. Even Anarchoindigenism is but a moment in time. It is historically-situated discursive cooperation, a function of human agency, not essential truth. The Zapatistas themselves, quintessential “indigenists” as it were, speak of the dignity due all humanity. It is the anarchists who are concerned with denomination.

Beyond Sectarianism

Our collective aim as autonomist activists should be to challenge neoliberalism - not to advance sectarian agendas. Working to advance the status of a particular ideology and

¹⁵³ “(T)here is no compelling reason to assume that the natural is, in essence, essentialist, and that the social is, in essence, constructionist. If we are to intervene effectively in the impasse created by the essentialist/constructionist divide, it might be necessary to begin questioning the *constructionist* assumption that nature and fixity go together (naturally) just as sociality and change go together (naturally).” (Fuss 1989: 6)

legitimize it as authoritative is merely vying for power by way of recognition within the structures of domination. If we are to move against-and-beyond the fetishization that perpetuates capitalism, we must understand forms of social relations as *processes of forming* social relations, “Once the categories of thought are understood as expressions not of objectified social relations but of the struggle to objectify them, then a whole storm of unpredictability blows through them.” (Holloway 2005: 99). This storm is disconcerting but prerequisite to revolution, whose imperative by nature is not to reproduce or “expand the caste of militants (the organization) but to blast open the continuum of history” (215).

Anarchism is a word representing a moment of learning within the white male Left that State/party-based politics come short of revolutionary, and then objectifying that with a name. This is good inasmuch that it does signify a process of learning; it is a mistake, however, to then start fighting for “anarchism” as opposed to revolution. Revolution requires transcending fetishization; if anarchists are interested in transcending the colonial parameters of modern thought in order to be in solidarity with indigenous and other marginalized peoples - including women - then they must move against-and-beyond Anarchism (i.e. we are anarchist-but-more-than-that). To be attached to a name *per se* is inherently sectarian. Many activists do not seem to realize this as they suggest education about anarchism to be part of the revolutionary process. This is in contrast to appreciating the *palabra* of others, as well as heeding the *palabra* of so many indigenous heroes who argue for listening as a revolutionary value: “*Preguntamos caminando*” – “Asking we walk” – suggest the Zapatistas of *La Otra Campaña*, not only because as revolutionaries we do not know the way, but because asking is part of the revolutionary process itself.

As for anarchoindigenism, it emerges as a convenient word to understand and designate emerging practice, but any attachment to it beyond this utility is likewise mistaken.

The refusal of *Alianza Magonista Zapatista* anarchists in Mexico city to prioritize a name - “anarchism” - over relationships with people is perhaps exemplary of ideal, if ironic, anarchist humility. In my view, I feel it is also significant that the activists of Oaxaca - largely indigenous - who work with the APPO are specifically against political parties, advance many of the same ethics as anarchism, yet refuse to be labeled “anarchist” and are explicitly inclusive of all people who wish to participate in the assembly, be they anarchists or politicians, as long as they respect the assembly. This is in contrast to certain anarchists, who are inclined to boycott APPO activities because politician-type-people are welcome as well. In their railings against sectarianism, anarchists run the risk of becoming the ultimate sect. Perhaps we should listen to the *palabra* of others not merely to confirm what we already know, nor to be “polite”, but with an open mind to learn. Anarchist analysis is improved by a cosmological perspective; the reverse is not necessarily true.

Secularism is a sectarian problem in and of itself; not only because of how it interacts with political economy to slight the standpoints and intellectual contribution of indigenous women, but because of how it defines every single spiritual woman and man, as well as entire peoples who are cosmologically-oriented, as delusional. Inasmuch as *los de abajo y a la izquierda* honour egalitarianism over equality, mystical unity over homogeneity, and spirituality over politics, then these are conversations we are bound to have.

*I tried to listen the best I can during the conversations I had; I tried to recount them the best I could.
I thank the people that told me stories, that listened to me, that helped me learn, that helped me write.*

*And this was my palabra, imperfect and unfinished, already obsolete.
May it be taken as a gift; may it be cut up into a million pieces and rearranged in conversation.*

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Glossary of Spanish Terms

<i>abajo y a la izquierda</i>	below and to the left
<i>aguardiente</i>	a sort of liquor
<i>autogestionado</i>	self managed
<i>bastones de mando</i>	staffs corresponding to community roles
<i>bodega</i>	warehouse
<i>campesin@</i>	rural labourer
<i>caracol</i>	lit. snail; name of Zapatista regional councils
<i>cargo</i>	role, task, responsibility
<i>Chavista</i>	supporter of Hugo Chavez
<i>colonias</i>	neighborhoods
<i>compañer@</i>	companion, friend, comrade
<i>conquistadores</i>	conquerors
<i>Día de los muertos</i>	Day of the Dead; a party on Nov. 1 & 2 in Mexico
<i>denuncias</i>	denunciations
<i>encuentro libre</i>	free/open meeting
<i>espacios autogestivos</i>	self-manageed spaces
<i>fiesta</i>	party
<i>gring@</i>	American, derogatory
<i>herman@s</i>	brothers/sisters
<i>indígenas</i>	indigenous persons
<i>Juntas de buen gobierno</i>	Zapatista municipal authorities
<i>la Otra Campaña</i>	national campaign of the EZLN

<i>La Zetza Internacional</i>	international network of <i>La Otra Campaña</i>
<i>Libertario</i>	libertarian, anarchist
<i>los de abajo</i>	those below
<i>machismo</i>	machismo
<i>madre naturaleza</i>	mother nature
<i>Madretierra</i>	Mother Earth
<i>Magonismo</i>	practice related to Ricardo Flores Magón
<i>mal gobierno</i>	bad government
<i>mesa</i>	table, in this text: roundtable
<i>mestizo</i>	Mexican of mixed ancestry; most of Mexico
<i>mandar obedeciendo</i>	lead by obeying
<i>maquiladoras</i>	large manufacturing plants
<i>Pachamama</i>	Andean term for Mother Earth
<i>Ofrenda</i>	offering; shrine
<i>Palabra</i>	word, act of speech
<i>Plantón</i>	camp, demonstration
<i>poderosos del dinero</i>	powerful (men) of money
<i>políticos de arriba</i>	politicians of above
<i>pozol</i>	corn stew
<i>protagonista</i>	one who seeks to be a hero.
<i>preguntamos caminando</i>	asking we walk, Zapatista saying
<i>pueblo</i>	people, also town
<i>Perredistas</i>	those who support the PRD
<i>profesionistas</i>	believers in the leadership of professionals

<i>pueblos indios</i>	indian peoples
<i>pres@s politic@s</i>	political prisoners
<i>trabajo de base</i>	work among the base; groundwork
<i>tequio</i>	collective work
<i>tierra</i>	land, soil, the Earth
<i>zocalo</i>	town square, plaza

Glossary of Acronyms

AFTA.....	Andean Free Trade Agreement
AMIGRANSA.....	<i>Amigas de la Gran Sabana</i> (Friends of the Gran Sabana)
AMZ.....	<i>Alianza Magonista Zapatista</i>
APPO.....	<i>Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca</i>
ASF.....	Alternative Social Forum
CAFTA.....	Central American Free Trade Agreement
CCRI.....	<i>Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena</i>
CESL.....	<i>Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios</i>
CKUT.....	Bandwidth of McGill University Radio, Mtl
CLAC.....	<i>Convergences des Luites Anticapitalistes</i>
CLPP.....	<i>Consejos Locales de Planificacion Publica</i>
COINTELPRO.....	Counter Intelligence Program
CRA.....	<i>Comision de Relaciones Anarquistas</i>
D.F.....	<i>Distrito Federal</i>
EZLN.....	<i>Ejército Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional</i>
FLA.....	<i>Federacion Libertario Argentina</i>
FSA.....	<i>Foro Social Alternativo</i>
FSM.....	<i>Foro Social Mundial</i>
FTAA.....	Free Trade Area of the Americas
IFA.....	International Federation of Anarchists
IIRSA.....	<i>Integracion de la Infraestructura Regional Sur America</i>
IPSM.....	Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement

ISM.....	International Solidarity Movement
IWW.....	Industrial Workers of the World
MLC.....	<i>Movimiento Libertario Cubano</i>
NEFAC.....	North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
NOII.....	No One Is Illegal
ONG.....	<i>Organizacion Nelson Garrido</i>
PAN.....	<i>Partido Accion Nacional</i>
PASC.....	<i>Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie</i>
PGA.....	People's Global Action
PFP.....	<i>Policia Federal Preventiva</i>
PPL.....	<i>Pain, Panais, Liberté</i>
PPP.....	<i>Plan Puebla Panama</i>
PRD.....	<i>Partido Revolucionario Democrática</i>
SAB.....	Solidarity Across Borders
TLC.....	<i>Trato de Libre Comercio</i>
UNAM.....	<i>Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México</i>
VOCAL.....	<i>Voces Oaxaqueñas Construyendo Autonomia y Libertad</i>
WRI.....	War Resisters International
WSF.....	World Social Forum