

Assembling Anarchism: on the Paradoxes of ‘Emancipatory Governmentalities’¹

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Introduction:

“If we think we can move to a world without power then we are already trapped within the world that oppresses us” (Newman 2001:4).

Neoliberalism as a ‘mobile technology of governing’ (Ong 2007:4) – or assemblage – weaves discourses of freedom and empowerment into a complex fabric of apparent self-rule or ‘governmentality’ (Sharma 2008). In this paper I look to another assemblage co-constituted by particular emancipatory discourses and practices: ‘contemporary anarchism’. I argue that it, like neoliberalism, is also a ‘mobile technology of governing’, if a rather more emancipatory and egalitarian one. Through this paradoxical perspective I argue that contemporary anarchism involves, on the one-hand, substantively different modes of empowerment to neoliberal technologies of the self (see Rose 1999), whilst on the other, that anarchism’s egalitarian *will to empower* cannot be entirely divorced from a will to govern.

As a number of ‘post’ or ‘contemporary’ anarchists have argued, Classical anarchism tends to rely on the notion of an essential, pure human subject, rational and good that is oppressed, yet uncorrupted by the power of the state (May 1994:63, Newman 2001:13). Appealing as such an essential binary sounds it can lead to precisely the universal, totalizing politics it rises against (Call 2003:130). As such, a key task facing theorists of emancipatory politics is to analyze the ways in which power flows through our purportedly radical practices. While there is no possibility of eliminating power altogether there are infinite possibilities for organising in such a way that the likelihood of domination is diffused.

Making an argument that an emancipatory assemblage or ensemble of purportedly emancipatory discourses, practices and ideas involves an attempt to govern avoids

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constructing resistance as a constitutive 'outside' from power. As such, a degree of reflexivity becomes possible through which we are able to make more credible normative statements on the basis of ethical positions – or to claim that differing forms of government and empowerment are *better* than others. This, I unashamedly identify as an 'urgent need'. Indeed it is only through such a nuanced normative position that it becomes possible for the term 'assemblage' to be meaningfully prefixed with the descriptor 'emancipatory'. Further, such an approach demands a sensitivity to the dynamics of our own power relations, but in a different way to the reflexivity regarding concealed modes of domination as articulated through anti-oppression praxis³. Instead, what a governmentality perspective on anarchism highlights is that this very imperative to be reflexive is itself a governmental intervention - but also, that that's OK

Empowerment as Governmentality

Be it crime control, foreign wars, surveillance, intelligence gathering, the reduction of civil liberties or the expansion of prisons, "the undoubted salience and persistence of coercive tactics [...] must also be justified as the price necessary for the maintenance of freedom" (Rose 1999:10). But freedom is more than just a legitimizing discourse for the coercive practices of the modern state, freedom is itself a technology of government under advanced liberalism (Rose 1992; 1999). Indeed, governmentality, that is the "diffusion of self-regulatory modes of governance throughout society and the imbrications of varied social actors including individuals and NGOs, in the project of rule" (Sharma 2008:xvii) hinges precisely on the production of 'freely' self-governing subjects. Government, then, refers to all endeavors to shape, guide and direct the conduct of others including the "ways in which one might one might be urged and educated to bridle one's own passions, to control one's own instincts, to govern oneself" (Rose 1999:3).

Empowering subjects to participate in their own governance, or governmentality, has become a defining rationality of neoliberalism (Ong 2007:5). As such the governmentality approach has been useful analytical lens on, for example, welfare (McDonald & Marston 2005; Dean 2009), self-help (Cruickshank 1999), housing policy (Gurney 1999; Flint 2004), and community development strategies (Marinetto 2003), particularly to the degree that these

³ "Anti-oppression" work is a broad term that encompasses approaches to group/interpersonal relations that actively challenge different forms of oppression. "Oppression" refers to a social dynamic in which certain ways of being in this world--including certain ways of identifying or being identified--are normalized or privileged while other ways are disadvantaged or marginalized. Forms of oppression include racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism, colonialism, and other "isms." See: <http://antioppressiveeducation.org/definition.html>

policies produce governable subjects through the mobilization of discourses of empowerment (Raco & Imrie 2000). Similarly, in the global south, governmentality theorists have analyzed, and forged a searing critique of forms of participatory development and so called strategies of empowerment. (Rankin 2001; Li 2007; Sharma 2008)

For Anarchists and others concerned with allegedly more ‘bottom-up’ modes of empowerment, the dominant thread within the governmentality literature is problematic. Firstly it tends focus on empowerment strategies that are initiated by dominant social groups or organisations, particularly the state. Secondly there seems to be a coding of normative claims behind a position that stresses the inefficacy of making normative claims and that masks the situatedness of the researcher. Indicative of this first point, Rose, following Foucault, argues that "rather than framing investigations in terms of states or politics, it might be more productive to investigate the formation and transformation of theories, proposals, strategies and technologies for the conduct of conduct" (Rose 1999:3). However, the strategies he looks to, whilst engaging the desires of others to facilitate self-government are nonetheless state led. Similarly, Adriana Sharma is interested in "the use of empowerment as a state-driven development policy targeting subaltern women in India" (Sharma 2009:xvi) framed within a global transition from welfare to empowerment or how "the 'end of welfare' (and of "dependence" becomes coded as "empowerment"" (IBID). Here, external agents urge and educated others to bridle their passions through the inculcation of variant technologies of the self – self-governance is not self-initiated, nor is there the possibility of the ‘empowered’ to reflect on the rationality driving their ‘empowerment’. Even if not explicitly about state led forms of empowerment, the point here, is that according to these analyses, self-governance is initiated by a dominant group who's interests are served by the subordinate groups autonomy within a framework that does not challenge dominant group's position. This looks somewhat different to the empowerment strategies proposed by anarchists.

Moreover, the critique of state-led empowerment/freedom as advanced by Sharma, Rose and others carries with it the implicit position that this mode of 'empowerment' is not ‘really’ empowering. Indeed one of the central criticisms is that empowerment strategies do not permit the ‘empowered’ to challenge broader power-relations in society. As such "democratic citizenship is less a solution to political problems than a strategy of government" (Cruikshank 1999:1). Given the critical content of these analyses it is interesting that scholars ‘do not attempt to adjudicate the rights and wrongs’ of these assemblages (Li 2007a:263) or indeed to offer an “improvement on improvement” (Li 2007b:2). Instead Li “deploy[s] an analytic of assemblage to explore the practices that fill the gap between the will to govern and the

refractory processes that make government so difficult" (Li 2007:263). As such there is a sense in which the author positions herself as somehow beyond normative commitments and able to in some way objectively map the power-relations interacting in a particular context. Similarly, Sharma explicitly states that her project is not a 'success or failure analysis' but looks to the 'unintended consequences', avoiding "quick and easy 'good versus bad' judgments" (Sharma 2009: xix) yet elsewhere she states that social justice and equality is a key motivation for her work (Sharma 2009:xxv). A critique carries with it normative commitments – among them that critique itself is valuable as is its academic form and that its object *should* be challenged. Indeed, the act of writing is itself an intervention which seeks to convince and persuade rational subjects as to the validity of its claims. Moreover, whilst levying a critique of empowerment as governmentalised, yet not explicitly distinguishing between 'more empowering' and 'more governmentalised' modes of empowerment nor articulating them through any register of justice or explicit ethical frame, these authors seem to convey the idea that because elite/state-led 'empowerment' is a technology of neoliberal governance, empowerment must be thrown out altogether as a concept and goal.

In response to similar critiques in the development context Ute Bühler asks whether it is possible to take the valid criticisms of participation strategies seriously without abandoning the notion that exclusion is 'part of the problem' and thus participation 'part of the answer' (2002:3). Similarly, in the context of empowerment, I ask 'how can 'bottom-up' strategies of empowerment avoid playing into neoliberal governmentalities?' and 'how do we distinguish between the two?'. If we are prepared to commit to working towards a freer and more equal world, inspite of the philosophical problematics this implies, then we need to be able to make these difficult distinctions, that is, between degrees of freedom, degrees of empowerment, and code them normatively. Whilst the governmentality approach feels true to the unveiling of power and reflecting upon the 'rational and moral injunctions' of enlightenment thinking, in a sense using "the critical capacities of the Enlightenment against itself" (Newman 2007:15) it seems to miss the what Newman refers to as the strategic element of this move which is to "open[...] up public spaces for autonomy, freedom and critical reflection within its edifice" (IBID)

Thus in the same spirit that contemporary radicals within continental tradition, wish, following Foucault, to rescue the emancipatory sentiments of the enlightenment, I wish to rescue the emancipatory sentiments of empowerment from its representations as a crude mechanism of disciplinary power. In doing so I do not suggest an empowerment that is pure, divorced from governmental power but one that is very much wrapped up within it. Instead, through a conception of anarchism as assemblage it becomes possible to articulate the

disciplinarity of empowerment through an ethico-political praxis that is capable of persistently renegotiating the parameters of discipline – the relations of power towards a more diffuse configuration – a more empowering empowerment.

Assemblages

The concept of assemblage, introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), has received increasing attention in a variety of disciplines and fields particularly following its elaboration, albeit differently, by Bruno Latour (2005) and Manuel De Landa (2006). Most simply, (and least prescriptively) 'assemblage' refers to "a contingent ensemble of practices and things that can be differentiated... and can be aligned along the axes of territoriality and deterritorialization" (Sassen 2005:5). For De Landa, the assemblage concept allows us to grasp at the emergent character of objects, that is, the sense in which they are never fully actualized or 'always already incomplete' (Harman 2008:16).

Picking up on Foucault's use of the concept, assemblages have received particular attention in the global governmentality literatures where perceived global transformations have seemed to necessitate novel concepts to get at the networked, internally inconsistent, illusively bounded and mobile character of diffuse objects (See *inter-alia* Ong & Collier 2005, Sassen 2006; Li 2007; Ong 2007; Larner 2008). Ong argues that neoliberalism is a logic of governing that migrates and engenders novel milieus, defies schematic analysis and is therefore best conceptualised through 'an analytics of assemblage over an analytics of structure' (2007:3). Similarly, Sassen argues, that "we cannot understand x - in this case globalization - by confining our study to the characteristics of the x [...] This type of confinement is a kind of endogeneity trap" (Sassen 2006:4). 'Assemblages', and the composite concept: 'global assemblages' (Ong & Collier 2005:12), thus demand an analytic strategy that "does not posit the unit of study as an ideal type global form freed of context but examines the 'ensembles of heterogeneous elements' [...] through which the unit of study and its significance are articulated" (Ong & Collier 2005:4/5). It is thus both an anti-reductionist concept as well as an approach - or analytic (of assemblage).

The much repeated descriptor, 'ensemble', does not however do justice to the agency of assemblage - the work of assembling. Drawing on Latour, Ong and Collier argue that "as global forms are [...] territorialized in assemblages - they define new material, collective, and discursive relationships" and as such become the sites for the formation and reformation of anthropological problems which necessitate *intervention* (Ong & Collier 2005:4). Drawing on

Foucault, Li regards assemblages as 'technologies of government' alongside the '*dispositif*' or 'regime of practices' signifying the "various ways in which heterogeneous elements... are assembled to address an 'urgent need' and invested with strategic purpose (Foucault 1980:194)" (Li 2007:264). For Li as well as Sharma "elements are brought together *for specific strategic ends*" (Li 2007:264 in Sharma 2009:2 my emphasis). The sinister sounding purpose of such assembling is, she elaborates, "the will to govern, or, more specifically, the will to improve, to intervene in social processes to produce desired outcomes and avert undesired ones" (IBID).

This governmental view of assemblages is, in my view, overstated. Action towards 'specific strategic ends' seems to contradict the idea that an "assemblage is the product of multiple determinations that are not reducible to a single logic" (Ong & Collier 2005:12). Indeed, whilst "assemblage invokes nexus, it is radically different from concepts such as 'network society' or 'actor network theory' that seek to describe a fully-fledged system geared toward a single goal of maximization (e.g. see Latour 1990; Castells 1996)" (Ong 2007:5). However, whilst Li's view of assemblages overstates their governmental character, the agency of assembling remains a crucial feature of the concept and will be important to the analysis that follows.

Anarchism as Assemblage

If heterogeneity and emergence are key criteria for the applicability of an analytics of assemblage, then 'contemporary anarchism' could certainly be conceptualised as such. Anarchism is a heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, political theories, ethics, ideas, grassroots organizations, embodied knowledges (Franks 2007) and networked sets of practices through which certain logics (Day 2004, Juris 2004) and shared 'orientations towards doing politics' (Gordon 2008:14) overlap and diverge. It is multiple and internally inconsistent, contextually contingent and, like neoliberalism, engenders novel milieus that defy schematic analysis. There are, as Peter Marshall famously notes, many different tributaries, currents and eddies in the river of anarchism as it flows towards the wide ocean of freedom (Marshall 2008:3) an end, we might add, that it will never reach yet at which it is constantly arriving. Indeed, anarchism is at once an infinitely demanding (Critchley 2007) yet prefigurative political praxis (May 1994, Graeber 2002) and is thus, self-consciously emergent, always-already becoming, complete only in its incompleteness.

The rehearsed narrative of the emergence of Contemporary Anarchism as a global(ising)

social movement that charts an albeit striated progression from the 'dead male anarchists' through feminisms, anti-racism, ecological direct action, culminating in alter-globalization and the proliferation of social centres (Gordon 2008) is useful for highlighting points of convergence. However, such representations of Anarchism as an ideology (Gordon 2007) or as a political philosophy (May 1994; Newman 2001) tend to stress coherence at the expense of the constitutive tensions, the discord and disagreement that has crisscrossed and produced the present. Importantly, tensions reveal the disciplinarity of assembling, the agency involved as certain practices or discourses become engrained within a movement to the exclusion others.

Drawing on Geertz (1975), Gordon argues that “the 'prism of political culture' provides a useful way to talk about Anarchism that does not imply theoretical unity, ideological conformity, or linear movement structures” (Gordon 2008:14). Whilst this is useful, culture can be problematic for its tendency to rely on essentialised identity categories, which, as Wilson argues, must be rejected for their impossibility of assigning a meaningful identity to the multitude of anarchist movements (Wilson 2008:30). A conception of Anarchism as assemblage eschews essentialism and “allows apparent paradoxes and ironies to become integral aspects of our analysis” (Larner 2009:1577). As such, assemblage as analytic and concept, reflects a prefigurative approach to research in the sense that the mode of analysis or ‘means’ retains consistency with the object of enquiry – or ‘ends’. But it does more than this. The assemblage concept flags agency. Indeed, as Li strenuously made clear, global assemblages are more than just 'ensembles of heterogeneous elements' – there is also something linking them together. There is then a dual sense in which there is a governmental character to assemblages. The first refers to that which allows the assemblage itself to cohere – that which allows us to speak of an identifiable object. The second is the sense in which an assemblage itself is a mode of governing or of producing governable or self-governing subjects.

Li addresses this first instance of the governing of assemblages in her analysis of, 'community forest management', which she argues qualifies as an assemblage due to the consistency with which the set of elements are drawn together, and by the resonance of the label itself which 'flags an identifiable terrain of action and debate' (Li 2007: 226). For an assemblage to cohere there must be agents 'factoring risks into their calculations' (Li 2007:226) – doing the work of assembling. As such, whilst I have stressed importance of thinking the constitutive tensions within anarchism, I do not disregard certain organising logics which permit us to speak of an identifiable object. Thus, I agree with Day (2004) that a logic of affinity runs through contemporary anarchist praxis, with Graeber (2002) and others that such a praxis is

necessarily prefigurative, and with May to the extent that practices capitulate around a certain philosophical positioning that critiques domination and affirms freedom and equality as inseparable goals (2007:21,23). I recognise, however, that my articulation of these commonalities is itself an intervention that contributes to the production of anarchism. Anarchism emerges both through its incomplete performance and the processes of naming that identify it as such. Although anarchism seems to just 'come together' a variety of experts are involved in drawing together diverse elements, excluding others and legitimizing and naming logics of coherence. The bloggers, academics, pamphleteers and 'zinesters' are among this group of 'elite players' who work at branding libertarian currents or vaguely autonomist struggles around the globe part of the 'anarchist milieu'. This itself is a strategy of power, of naming, ordering and numbering (policing) that is about 'building movement' that is ever stronger and more 'inclusive and diverse' within the parameters of the ethical regime.

Critical to this practice of assembling is identification of 'problem spaces': "domains in which the forms and values of individual or collective existence are problematized or at stake" (Ong and Collier 2005:5). The problematizing of a situation renders it amenable to interventions in accordance with an ethical regime (Li 2007:7) and specifically, amenable to the types of interventions experts have to offer (Ferguson 1990). Thinking anarchism through this analytic, domination and hierarchy can be thought of as the problem space that assumes different forms in accordance with the multiple axes along which oppression is articulated in a particular context. This problematization renders the situation amenable to practices which address a lack of freedom and equality. This functions as an emancipatory organising logic which allows the assemblage to cohere and frames intervention. It is both governmental to the extent that it names and orders space rendering certain practices possible, yet emancipatory to the extent that forms of intervention are set within a particular renegotiable ethico-political frame. As such, the assemblage and 'problem' space are mutually constituted reflecting Foucault's claim that "resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power... points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network [...]" (Foucault 1978, 95-6).

At the beginning of this section I identified two senses in which there is a governmental character to assemblages – one that allows the assemblage to cohere enabling us to speak of an identifiable object, and another that is concerned with the way in which both practices of neoliberal and anarchist assemblage are concerned with the production of empowered self-governing subjects imbued with particular technologies of the self or govern-mentalities. It is this second sense of empowerment as technology of government that I turn to in the following sections, looking specifically to the question of how anarchism governs anarchists and how this differs from neoliberalism as a more emancipatory governmentality.

Anarchism & Empowerment

Firstly it is useful to clarify why it is that anarchists are concerned with empowerment and what that means. Whilst anarchism has been represented as opposing power *per se* “[w]hat anarchism criticizes is not power, strictly speaking, but domination (May 2007:21). Domination is an effect of power – an effect of authoritarian structures (Newman 2001:12). Authoritarian structures are necessarily hierarchical – there is an inequality of power which allows one to dominate the will of another or as May terms it, for power to operate deleteriously (2007:21). Thus, in order to make domination impossible, anarchists desire equal relations of power – this requires empowering those at the bottom and disempowering those at the top. Crucially, because of the prefigurative ethic, empowerment should be bottom-up – not handed down after the revolution to ‘the people’ by a vanguard party or state (see Franks 2010). As such anarchist praxis takes on three strategic courses of action: (1) self-empowerment, (2) the promotion/facilitation of the self-empowerment of others and (3) proactive attack on the power of elites. I introduce the problematics of these in turn before looking to the ways in which these modes of empowerment discipline or govern the anarchist movement in relation to itself and in relation broader social processes.

1. Self empowerment

Self-empowerment seems, at the outset, least problematic. Indeed, if empowerment resides in the ability of the individual to make decisions which affect their life (Rappaport 1987; Page & Cuzuba 1999), that is as to control their own ‘destiny’, and to set their own rules rather than be governed by the rules of another, then self-empowerment is the attainment of this capacity without the help of another. However, unless we retain a totalizing concept of the autonomy of the individual, the self-originating character of this mode of empowerment can never be complete. Such a commitment to a notion of the autonomous self has become increasingly untenable for its reliance on an essentialised figure of the human, its tendency to construct an ethical equivalence of subject positions (Whatmore 1997:6) and, as Foucault argued, to the degree that the notion of the autonomous individual and the modern state co-emerge (Foucault 1978/1982b:16,17; 1982a:220-1 cited in Lemke 2000:3). Instead, the self is relationally constructed, or co-constituted by the other. As such, individual autonomy remains possible yet qualified by its self-conscious incompleteness and the positionality of the subject.

Thus, although self-empowerment can never be thought in isolation from the social world in

which the subject emerges it can be differentiated from, for example, the granting of power to a subordinate. Instead, self-empowerment is concerned with taking or seizing control of the ability to shape the rules which govern one's conduct. Where anarchists eschew the rule of an other over the self, self-empowerment for anarchists refers to the degree to which one has the freedom to cultivate self-discipline – that is, to inculcate and modify our own technologies of the self in accordance with a moral/ethical frame.

The ethical frame then, for anarchists, is a positioning of the self against all forms of domination and a commitment to enact this (if incompletely) in the present. Thus the anarchist subject enacts variant technologies of the self to bridle the passions of the individual so as to take account of the other. These technologies discipline daily practices in varied contexts from so called 'lifestyle choices' such as diet, housing, transportation etc. to interpersonal relations that seek to destabilize the emergence of oppressive practices through reflexivity towards one's positionality and privilege. Self-empowerment is then, even, or especially for anarchists, inherently disciplinary.

Anarchism, like neoliberalism, is concerned with the production of a rational self-governing subject. The difference is twofold, on one level concerning the ethical frame within which the subject is produced and on another, the degree to which that self can challenge the parameters of its production, that is to question the rationalities by which they are empowered. An anarchist ethical-self is thus in permanent state of flux through the inculcation of technologies of reflection that aim to permanently question the parameters of its production. Where the anarchist subject diverts most clearly from the responsible neoliberal subject is however, through the concept of the inseparability of the freedom of one from the freedom of all (Bakunin 1871). As such, though I am urged to bridle my passions on account of an ethical position of non-domination, if I accept that my freedom is bound up in the freedom of the other then the domination of the other becomes an affront to my own emancipation. The point is not that anarchism escapes a governmental logic but simply that the desire to inculcate technologies of the self is driven by an egalitarian ethic.

2. Promotion/Facilitation of the empowerment of the other

Empowering others is conceptually more challenging for anarchists. This involves a number of difficult assumptions: that the 'other' is in a position of subordination in relation to the

facilitator/donor of empowerment, that the *form* or *relationality of empowerment*⁴ offered is desirable to the other or is in their ‘interests’ and indeed that it is possible to ascertain/know objectively the interests of an other. These assumptions in turn draw upon analyses of a ‘situation’ or ‘problem space’ which render it amenable to intervention in particular ways. Empowerment that takes place between two subjects whose power is unequal in relation to each other, resonates more clearly with the forms of empowerment and participation that come under criticism within the governmentality literatures. As I shall argue, however, this reading does not render empowerment void as simply another mode of domination – instead it provokes questions concerning how it could be improved in accordance with an explicit anarchist ethico-political frame, that is, one which values equality and freedom as inseparable and seeks to minimize domination through reflexive practices.

Again, the notion of the inseparability of the freedom of one from the freedom of the other is important here. In the context of empowering others, this provides motivational ethics for solidarity – my freedom is bound up with yours, therefore I do not desire your freedom on the basis of charity, or some innate concept of ‘the good’, but because I too desire to be free. This links freedom and equality since equal power relations are a prerequisite for collective emancipation. This stands in direct contrast to the concept of a liberal citizen-subject whose freedom is dependent on the state. Indeed, the liberal citizen is able to obtain freedom via this relation whilst others remain unfree – that is whilst the relations of power in society remain unequal. As such, emancipatory politics within liberalism remains either restricted to individualised and identity based groupings or to a paternalistic, charitable relation with an ‘unfree other’. By contrast, for anarchists it is precisely the fact that the desire for freedom of the self cannot be decoupled from a desire for the freedom of the other (indeed all others!) that produces a truly collective the political subject – a subject that is necessarily interpersonal (see May 2008:71).

3. Proactive attack on the Power of Elites

The third aspect of empowerment I have mentioned regards the disempowerment of others. As Churchill (1986), Jensen (2006), Gelderloos (2007) and others have forcefully argued, self-empowerment and the facilitation of the empowerment of others is only one aspect of a universalising egalibertarian praxis. Indeed, as William S. Burroughs poetically quipped, “The people in power will not disappear voluntarily; giving flowers to the cops just isn’t

⁴ Empowerment is only ever relational – we can never be empowered “as such”, only in relation to objects which have the capacity to dominate us.

going to work” (cited in Jensen 2006). As such, actively taking power, impeding the flows of state and corporate power (Day 2004:125), that is, undermining the capacity of elites to dominate, remains an inevitable approach amongst a diversity of tactics. This can be eminently problematic from an ethical standpoint and as such, is one which many contemporary anarchists either sidestep or avert using the ideology of non-violence (for a critique of non-violence see: Churchill 1986; Jensen 2006; Gelderloos 2007).

Targeting supposed elites or elite groupings is often interpreted as expressing an analysis of power that rests on totalizing representations of institutions, states or leaders as the sole locations in which power resides (e.g. Badiou 2007). Stepping away from these binaries is important. Indeed to attack a bank, a McDonalds or to blockade a summit does not imply that this is the sole location of power or that anti-oppression should not inform our daily practices. Instead, such acts rest on an analysis of social space as imbued with power in a number of ways. As Brenner and Theodore (2002) have argued, cities have played a strategic role in contemporary remaking of political-economic space’, space that “not only manifests various forms of injustice, but actually produces and reproduces them” (Dikec 2002:96). As such the spatial ordering of the city can itself be conceived as a policing of the political (Dikec 2005:94). Breaking with post political the order of city space through forms of symbolic violence (Juris 2004) such as property destruction works on the two levels of empowerment covered thus far and shows how these are wrapped up in the third. Firstly, it can be conceived as a mode of self-empowerment, to the extent that an individual or collectivity negates the rules of another to act in accordance with their own ethical code. Indeed, if city space is imbued with disciplinary power which urge a particular way of being and consuming under the watchful eye of surveillance technologies (see Lyon 2004, Graham 2004; Bigo 2006, Amore 2006). Negating these complex and effective attempts to discipline the subject through the destruction of this material can certainly be thought of as empowering. Secondly this act functions as an attempt to inculcate a specific anarchist ethical self-formation in others, one that is un-constrained by the legal implications of property destruction and shows the ability to negate the disciplinarity of the city – put simply, it attempts to inspire others that resistance is possible – a governmental intervention with universalising ambitions. Thirdly in accordance with an analysis of capitalism that sees the capacity of a firm to make profits as intimately tied in with its ability to dominate others – or rather that its power is derived largely from its profits – this act seeks to disempower the firm through economic sabotage – that is to damage profits with the goal of putting them out of business, to disable them from perpetrating perceived abuses against others (see Day 2004:125). Similarly the strike as a form of industrial action is concerned with a seizing of power that detracts from the power of the other, of the bosses and politicians. These practices hinge again on an analysis of the

situation which renders it technical – that is amenable to the types of calculated interventions experts are equipped to enact but one which aim to undermine the power base of elites and in doing so to minimize their capacity for the domination of others.

Empowerment As Governmentality

Thus far I have covered the forms of discipline that allow anarchism as an assemblage to cohere, and the three strategies of empowerment that run through it, how can these be said to constitute a logic of governing? What are the effects of power? – or more specifically ‘what are the effects of empowerment strategies and how do they differ from the strategies employed under neoliberalism’?

I propose that the forms of empowerment highlighted thus far can be said to have a disciplinary function along two distinct axes. The first of these refers to the ways in which anarchist practices of empowerment discipline groups of anarchists with the shared aim of egalitarian social change. For brevity, this can be thought of as how practices discipline the ‘*movement*’⁵ in relation to its broader aims. The second axis, or relation of governance refers to disciplining ‘movement’ *participants*: this involves looking at anarchist practices and thinking how norms are produced and socialized, hierarchies averted and individuals disciplined, controlled or excluded. These two axes concern on the one hand governing *anarchism*, and on the other, *anarchists*. Jo Freeman's classic critique of informal modes of organising within the feminist movement "The Tyranny of Structureless" similarly refers to the way in which power dynamics operate along these two relationalities of governance. The first refers to the relation between group micro-practices and the ability of the group to affect broader social change. The second, and more significant, refers to intra-group dynamics, concerning the ways in which informal organising facilitates the domination by some members and groups of members (elites) over others. Of course, the two can never be entirely separated but for the purposes of clarity I set them apart in the analysis that follows.

1 Disciplining Anarchism

Through her critique of participatory development strategies Kothari, makes a similar argument to Freeman's and one not uncommon in Marxist social science (Peck and Tickell

⁵ I recognise, however, that this term is deeply problematic (See Diani 1999), and thus use it sparingly and in quotation marks where it contributes to intelligibility of the argument.

2002) in relation to broader political change; namely that the valorization of the personal and local comes at the expense of an analysis and challenge of broader power structures to the extent that "empowerment, participation, and 'consensus' may translate as ever more effective incorporation agendas set elsewhere" (Kothari 2001 cited in Buhler 2002:2). Similarly, Cruickshank (1999:27) and Li (2007:10), though in very different contexts, refer to the *depoliticizing* character of 'improvement' programmes (Li) and 'self-help schemes (Cruikshank) to the extent that they fail to address broader, or causal social relations of inequality.

In the context of state-led 'empowerment' schemes this is an important critique. However where the self-empowerment practices of social movements set out precisely to challenge these very relations, this criticism is less relevant. Indeed, non-state-initiated self-empowerment groups retain the ability to define and renegotiate the rationale for empowerment so it serves their own, self defined interests. The idea of citizenship is useful here for distinguishing between the 'deleterious effects' of empowerment and the rather more emancipatory ones. Cruickshank's potent analysis of 'self-help' in the US context is ostensibly a critique of the production of good autonomous citizens that are less demanding of the state. Although they are more "empowered" they do not challenge state power or supposed structural relations of inequality. By contrast, anarchist conceptions of empowerment do not aspire to citizenship, rights or participation in liberal democratic society. Instead, they seek to challenge the basic legitimacy as well as the material power of these institutionalized constructions. Thus if challenging structural relations of power or inequality is the driving rationale for self-empowerment then group practices can be constantly renegotiated towards this end through critique and reflexive.

Moreover, the notion that anarchist practices are ineffective, or lack the possibility to be universalising in virtue of their situatedness has been largely discredited by insights around the mutually constituted character of the global/local (e.g. Swyngedouw 2004). Further, for anarchists, the well-rehearsed maxim that 'personal is political' reflects a deep commitment to prefigurative praxis, which sees the means (daily organising practices and everyday life) as necessarily prefiguring, and thus being consistent with the world we wish to create. As such, a stark division between the personal and political or global and local is tenuous at best.

More interesting as regards to the relation between anarchist practices of empowerment and the possibilities of 'broader' social change is the question of to what degree do autonomous projects end up unburdening or taking on the disciplinary functions of the state. Appadurai notes that as the nation state has transformed certain functions have been transferred

'downwards' as NGOs and citizens' movements have appropriated significant parts of the means of governance (Appadurai 2001:26). Similarly, Chatterton argues that 'services' provided by anti-capitalist social centres unintentionally unburden the local welfare state of its responsibilities (Chatterton 2010:1220). As such, moves towards local autonomy risk playing into precisely the disciplinary modes of neoliberal governance they attempt to resist by burdening would be dissidents with the everyday, unpaid work of replacing the state. Effectively, governing themselves through a neoliberal concept of freedom. Of course, this is by no means inevitable but requires participants to consciously reflect on how to replace, negate yet proactively confront state power through everyday practice.

As I have noted above, Li's analysis of neoliberal practices of assemblage refers to the way in which problems are rendered technical, that is rendered intelligible to authorities or are translated into issues upon which it becomes possible for authorities to act. Whilst anarchists would consciously seek to avoid such a process, this dynamic can take place through the incorporation of direct action into the intelligible frame of civil disobedience. As such, a rave becomes understood as a demand for a legal festival whilst a blockade of a Coca Cola factory or BP station is read as a demand for corporate social responsibility. Direct action is rendered intelligible as civil disobedience where the former seeks to circumvent the legitimacy of law altogether by enacting or pre-figuring the future possibility in the present, and the latter seeks merely to effect a change within the liberal democratic framework through tactics that contravene its accepted norms/laws. Thus without care, the empowering practice of direct action can inadvertently re-legitimise the system of law it rises against. Empowerment can govern the borders of possibility of a movement if not accompanied by critical reflection and a commitment to constant adaptation.

1a Disciplining Anarchism (Empowering others)

"Universalism is implicated in both emancipatory as well as disciplinary projects. It inspires expansion for the powerful as well as the powerless, it beckon[s] to the elite and the excluded alike" (Tsing:p8)

Thus far, I have largely focused on self-empowerment and contrasted this against the empowerment strategies *of* dominant groups *for* subordinate groups – that which I have termed 'top-down empowerment'. However, as outlined above, anarchists are also concerned with the empowerment of others. Numerous anarchist practices seek to empower a supposedly disempowered, 'non-political' or 'non-politicized' subject such as 'workers' or

'community members'. Here, reminiscent of the politics of hegemony there exists a desire on the part of a 'specialist' or 'expert' 'activist' to facilitate the supposed liberation of others from the chains of consumerism, capitalism or the security state of which they are unaware. This is eminently more problematic for the present argument.

Buhler, in the context of Zapatista solidarity work, questions whether it is "possible for 'outsiders' to make a difference to the very real material problems that poor and marginalized people are facing" (2002:9) "without once again marginalizing the voices of those who have been most excluded?" (2002:10). Indeed, is it even possible to garner the participation of others on an equal footing, when the initial relations of power are unequal? Buhler argues for the necessity of a dialogue that recognises the dignity of the other. Importantly this must not involve "the assumption that whatever 'local people' say is valid [since this] is as patronizing as its opposite" (2002:10).

The unquestioning valorization of the other in virtue of their otherness is not uncommon in the context of anarchist social centre organising. Here supposed 'members of the community', that is, local residents not associated with an 'activist' identity, are held up as valid representatives of a mythical cohesive group who must be listened to and whose opinions are more highly valued than participants perceived as 'activists'. Indeed, Chatterton notes that often there is much more enthusiasm for including those perceived to be 'non-activists' than there is for including other groups on the political left. 'Openness' is thus conditional and may exclude those perceived to be 'too political' as well as those considered to be 'not political enough' (2010:1217).

Over-valorizing the input of 'non-activists' creates a division between a 'we' and a 'them', between 'expert' participants and a supposed community which functions as an exclusion to the extent that you will only be regarded as a participant if you are not a 'normal' member of the community or, in other words, if you perform some essentialised activist identity. Similarly, it is not uncommon for people of colour to be informally asked by white co-participants how "we" (that is, supposedly "normal", white folk) can appeal more to other people of colour to gain their participation. Thus, self-identifying activists mobilize an exclusionary 'we' that normalizes white dominance yet wants to include the 'other' within *their* space.

These, practices ostensibly directed at the 'empowerment' of the other reproduce the exclusionary relations they attempt to resistance. As such they not only function so as to govern the inclusion/exclusion of participants within a supposedly universalising politics but

discipline the capacity of 'the movement' to achieve the types of broader social change anarchists claim to desire. This is less due to their inability to consolidate a mass and more on the failure to prefigure the forms of universalising egalitarian social relations anarchists strive to enact. Kothari (2001) is right, 'programmes designed to bring the excluded in often result in forms of control that are more difficult to challenge' (Kothari 2001:143). However, not all participatory approaches are designed by the state. The distinction is important. Indeed, whilst these practices replicate statist modes of interaction with the other they can again be differentiated from state-empowerment programmes along the lines of re-negotiability in accordance with an ethical frame – hence the point of critique.

2 Disciplining Anarchists

"Both counterhegemonic and hegemonic uses of empowerment are, following Foucault (1991), governmental, in that they aim to produce aware and active citizen-subjects who participate in the project of governance to mold their behaviour toward certain ends" (Sharma 2009:3)

It seems perverse, to define an emancipatory 'way of being' as a technology of government. But "[a]s with all serious movements concerned with consciousness-changing and self-mobilization, there is a conscious effort to inculcate protocols of speech, style and organizational form" (Appadurai 2001:31) both inside and outside the group. Virtually all social centres outside of Italy and Spain that run cafes will only cook vegan food. This is the 'lowest common denominator' that 'everyone can eat' and thus the practice of vegan cooking is a way of operationalising the value of 'inclusivity'. Whilst the logics that drive these practices are radical, emancipatory and constantly up for discussion, certain modes of behaviour, organisation and ideas are necessarily and willfully excluded. Within anarchist groups, values are operationalised through particular disciplinary technologies such as the rules of consensus decision-making in meetings or through practices and ways of being with each other that construct particular norms, e.g. anti-racism/sexism or (bounded) 'inclusivity', as proper behaviour.

Similarly, 'horizontal' organizing practices such as participatory decision-making function as inherently disciplinary systems of group-self management. They at once serve to repress the will of the minority or individual so as to guard against their domination over the majority, whilst repressing the will of the majority so as to guard against their domination of the minority. During such a process proposals for collective action are reviewed and reformulated

through sets of mechanisms intended to diffuse antagonism and reach a consensus over a course of action all participants can 'live with' – though none may consider ideal. These techniques actively police the emergence of leaders as well as making the emergence of leadership more difficult.

The formalization of new technologies for averting the production of informal hierarchies and minimizing domination within groups must be seen as governmental interventions in their own right. They can however be considered more emancipatory modes of governance to the extent that there exists the possibility for their constant renegotiation towards the impossible demand of free and equal group process. Such reformulation in response to critique is exemplified by the gradual response to "The Tyranny of Structureless" within the anarchist milieu. Indeed, Freeman's critique prompted the development of formalized practices that attempt both to avoid the tyranny of structure within formally hierarchical groups, as well as the tyranny of structurelessness in informally hierarchical groups (Graeber 2010). As an example, contemporary anarchists attempt an awareness of the concentrations of knowledge in individuals and there exists a permanent attempt to diffuse it through lived practices – skill-sharing, workshops, coproduction, rotation of roles and responsibilities etc. There also exist varied practices of openness and accountability such as formalized agreements to make no decisions via email, or to only discuss something 'on list' or using technologies such as Crabgrass (a software libre web application designed for group and network organizing). Thus new forms of discipline that emerge in response to critique attempt to facilitate more equal and empowering interactions.

Appadurai's case study of 'the Alliance' a grassroots group that uses "mechanisms of self-monitoring, self-enumeration and documentation - precisely those statistical technologies that in Foucauldian terms formed the basis of bio-power " – to help articulate demands and stake claims to land and other resources – or rather as a tool of empowerment – is interesting in comparison to the tactics used by contemporary anarchists. In much the same way, the 'Activist Legal Project'⁶ tracks and traces activists (as well as police) to help keep activists safe on the street in demonstrations and to collect evidence to be used later against the police in court. Appadurai argues "that this sort of governmentality from below, [...] is a kind of counter-governmentality, animated by the social relations of shared poverty, by the excitement of active participation in the politics of knowledge, and by its own openness to correction through other forms of intimate knowledge and spontaneous everyday politics"

⁶ "The Activists' Legal Project is a not for profit collective which provides information about the law to a wide range of grassroots social change activists as well as people who are considering taking action for the first time. We provide information sheets on legal issues relevant to direct activists and offer free legal workshops facilitated by activists, with first hand experience of the criminal and civil 'justice' systems" Taken from: <http://www.activistslegalproject.org.uk/>

(Appadurai 2001:35).

Whilst I would agree with Larner that "counter-governmentalities are still governmentalities" (Larner:2009:4), I think Appadurai has a point in signaling that something else is happening here. Indeed, not all governmentalities are the same. These interventions clearly differ from the neoliberal governmentalities Rose describes – there is no sense in which an authority is giving others freedom and thus conducting their conduct, instead, subordinate groups are seizing the ability to govern themselves on their own terms, and as part of a social struggle.

Interestingly, here we see here the voluntary submission of autonomy to trusted peers (allowing others to record personal data), for the purposes of a broader social struggle that goes beyond the self. Returning to the politics of consensus decision-making, we see something similar. An argument can be made for the anti-political character of consensus process to the extent that antagonistic relations are repeatedly reconciled. This is not strictly correct given that an explicit pre-requisite for a consensus process is that participants begin with a shared aim – as such antagonism does not even enter the process. Nonetheless, the sublimation of an antagonistic position prior to starting a process is equally interesting. Here participants willfully forgo a degree of autonomy for the express purposes of reaching a decision on a particular issue is conceived as more important in the context of a broader struggle. Thus a technique that is, at the level of the group, anti-political, if pro-equality, may be precisely political in relation to a social force outside of the group.

Conclusions

Todd May following Foucault (1978:89) argues, that although "power is always a matter of constraints upon action, it does not imply that we must define constraints in terms of restraints" (May 1996:68). In other words, although power is everywhere, domination is not. While there is no possibility of eliminating power altogether there are infinite possibilities for organising in such a way that the likelihood of domination is diffused. Freedom thus is not an end point but a prefigurative practice - it is enacted in the present, albeit incompletely.

Through this paper I have argued that a conception of anarchism as global assemblage provides a useful way of thinking the disciplinatory, or incompleteness of liberation. I have proposed that anarchism involves multiple logics of empowerment which govern anarchists and anarchism in myriad ways. As we have seen, anarchism like neoliberalism, is concerned with ethical self-formation - the production subjects inculcated with technologies of the self

that are empowered to self-govern. I have proposed that this is the point at which a governmentality critique usually stops. Against this I have argued that a more empowering empowerment, that is one that come closer to the impossible goals of freedom and equality is both possible and partially actual. Indeed modes of self-discipline that operate within anarchist groups can be seen as substantively different from modes of self-discipline inculcated by the State or dominant social groups in subordinate social groups for a number of reasons. Firstly, the mutually constituted character of the anarchist political subject, which emerges through the inseparability of the freedom of one from the freedom of all, provides a relational ethics for empowerment as solidarity as opposed to as charity. Secondly the ability of the 'empowered' to construct and modify the rationale by-which they are empowered is an important distinction. If people are being gifted empowerment because another group deems it to be in their interests/to their benefit but the 'empowered' are un-able to set the parameters of what constitutes that benefit, empowerment is likely to serve the donor rather than the recipient. It is crucial then, as we have seen with some of the strategies of empowerment enacted by anarchists, not only that the ethico-political rationality of empowerment is explicit, but that it is persistently re-negotiable through reflexive practices.

A further telling metric as regards to the disciplinarity vs. emancipatory character of empowerment strategies is the degree to which programmes are repressed by dominant social groups. Indeed, whilst the 'top-down-bottom-up' neoliberal modes of empowerment highlighted by the governmentality theorists are state sanctioned, anarchist practices are generally blocked, hindered or disrupted in some way or other by the state, institutionalised authorities, private police forces or landlords or other vested interests. Indeed If social centres were so effective at unburdening the state and governing dissent they would not routinely be raided by police. Another a clue to the distinction is that dominant discourses of empowerment as articulated by states, NGOs, or the corporate social responsibility sections of multinational companies do not refer to the desirability of their own *disempowerment*. Where groups are in a position as to dominate others, it is not simply that those at the bottom need to be empowered – those at the top need also to come down a notch or two, as such radical empowerment must be also at the expense of the oppressor. As such, empowerment is something be rarely given, only won.

Contemporary Anarchism departs from its modernist roots not by discarding universals such as freedom and equality but by departing from them as absolutes or possible static endpoints and reconceptualising them as processual concepts towards which we are always working, paradoxically, by attempting to live them in the present. Government like power is never absolute – it is the imperative of anarchists then to develop more emancipatory

governmentalities.

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