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Communizing Atlanta: Anarchist Economics in the City, 2009–2019

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Abstract

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Anarchists have a long-standing tradition of critiquing capitalism and envisioning and striving for alternative models of political-economy. This study looks at anarchists in Atlanta in the ten years following the Great Recession of 2008. I find that while Atlanta anarchists maintained utopian, anti-capitalist dreams consistent with the early anarchists of the turn of the twentieth century, global political-economic shifts meant their anti-capitalist efforts looked substantially different from their forebears. Changes to capitalism meant that, in contrast to the worker-centered revolutionary efforts of early anarchists, Atlantans put much of their time and energy into mutual aid projects which attempted merely to alleviate the worst effects of capitalism in the present moment. For much the same reasons, anarchists during this time spread their ideas not in the workplace, but in social movements, particularly Occupy Wall Street of 2011. In the latter half of the period I found that new ideas, most notably Tiquunism, began to rise to the fore of Atlanta anarchism. These ideas incorporated analyses of contemporary capitalism and proposed ways of living and developing revolutionary potential by making as much of everyday life communal as possible.

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Preface

I discovered anarchism, not, like many people I know, in the context of protest, or on Leftist Twitter, or out of some intrinsic distaste for authority. Rather, I met it in the classroom. I remember in my first weeks of college hearing whispers that a certain sociology professor was an anarchist. “An anarchist?!” students would gasp around the cafeteria table, some intrigued, leaning in, others horrified. “Like the Somalians?” they’d ask. “Like that guy that killed McKinley?” Such was, and is, the popular American knowledge of anarchism: limited, and largely misinformed.

Soon, though, I found myself in classes with this whispered-about professor. The rumors were true; he was in fact an anarchist, and he had a red and black libertarian flag tattooed down the length of his arm to prove it. But he was neither a Somalian, nor an assassin. His anarchist takes were mixed, non-dogmatically, into his lectures on standard sociological concepts, and I found myself fascinated. The anarchist ideas he shared on governance, morality, human nature, gender, and, most of all, political-economy offered me new and critical ways of looking at the world, ways I had been craving, that extended beyond the liberal and progressive politics of my upbringing and formative years.

I had entered college with a vague sense I wanted to “do something about the economy,” I planned to look, to this end, in the place that seemed most obvious, the field of Economics. Thankfully, though, the second semester of that first year, an ambitious philosophy professor assigned us eighteen and nineteen-year-olds the first half of *Das Kapital*. Marx helped me realize that Economics was really code for bourgeois economics, and political-economy, or that “type of

analysis that locates economics within larger relations of power, recognizing that economic processes cannot be coherently abstracted from the rest of social life,”¹ was what I truly sought to study.

However, while Marxist ideas are plenty accessible in the academy, I was, understandably I think, troubled by their violent global legacy. I was thankful, therefore, for the tattooed sociologist and his willingness to share with me the equally as vibrant, but less discussed, history of anarchist economics. Classes, conversations, and travels with him, in addition to the influence of some truly ingenious professors of Atlanta and capitalist histories, led directly into this project.

The late Mark Fisher noted that my generation has “experienced nothing but capitalist realism,”² his term for the ideological dimensions to the current period of late capitalism that ultimately work to make alternatives seem entirely impossible. Even for those of us who develop an analysis of the current political-economic system that is critical, we do not try to imagine past it; it seems too big, too all encompassing. We are left, then, with a kind of fatalism and resignation that ultimately serves the system’s perpetuation.³

For me, this research has been an attempt to break through capitalist realism, to not let the radically egalitarian beliefs, nurtured in me by my parents, my schooling, and the constant observation of the unequal world around me, be squashed down into the revolutionarily

¹ Deric Shannon, “Anti-Capitalism and Libertarian Political Economy,” in *The Palgrave Handbook on Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 92.

² Mark Fisher, “Exiting The Vampire Castle,” essay, last modified November 24 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/exiting-vampire-castle/>.

³ See a discussion of the concept in Mark Fisher and Jeremy Gilbert, “Capitalist Realism and neoliberal hegemony: A dialogue,” *New Formations* 80, no. 81 (2013), 89-101.

lukewarm world of academia or non-profiteering. It is my attempt to investigate utopia, not merely through what can be imagined, but what has actually been done.

This has all, really, been a long-winded way of explaining why I have taken on this thesis, and what it means to me. I write not, as many do, to decode anarchism for the academy. Neither do I write for intra-anarchist intellectualism, or to contribute to the field, so to speak. Rather, I write for me as a 16 year old, who was, like a Robert Penn Warren character, “blundering and groping his unwitting way toward the discovery of himself.”⁴

⁴ Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*, (United States: Random House, 1953 [1946]), 388.

Introduction

Anarchists everywhere love to read and dream over Ursula Le Guin’s science fiction novel, *The Dispossessed*. Over the nearly year-long course of my research, without seeking it out, I found myself at two formal talks on the book and was invited to join a weekly reading group on it as well. Several people even told me, “That book is what made me an anarchist.” Its celebration stems, in large part, from Le Guin’s mastery in imagining what a completely anarchist society could look like in practice. It is not easy for an American in 2020 to imagine an entire planet without a single government, a single piece of private property, and yet the ability to meet the basic needs of its every inhabitant. Le Guin’s fictional Anarres manages this feat of imagination, and, importantly, it does so without being overly optimistic; Anarres has plenty of problems, but, when Le Guin contrasts it with the neighboring planet Urras, a clear analog to our very own Earth, its merits become excitingly obvious.

Atlanta is not Anarres. In fact, it is a city built on business and boosterism. Originally a small railroad town, it grew to its current status only through unrepentant salesmanship by its economic elite. Beginning in the 1870s, Atlanta’s Henry Grady travelled the North, giving speeches on what he called “The New South,” the old Confederacy that atoned for its troubled past, and prepared—needing only a little assistance from Northern investment—to modernize and industrialize. Grady’s town of Atlanta, of course, would be the center of this new economic boom.⁵

⁵ Grady’s most famous speech of this sort was given to the New England Society in New York City in 1886, Henry Grady, “New South” Speech, December 22, 1886, <https://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/topics/history/article/late-nineteenth-century-1878-1900/henry-gradys-new-south-speech-dec.-22-1886>

The city's boosterish, business-centric tenor persisted through major changes in the twentieth century. As its substantial Black population began to gain political power, it was realized first and foremost not in the voting booth, but behind closed doors in meetings of the city's Black and white economic elites, what Kevin Kruse dubbed "the moderate coalition."⁶ As the civil rights movement got under way, it became crucial to this coalition that Atlanta appear calm and civilized, unlike its neighboring Southern cities, so as to keep the money flowing. To this end, the mayor at the time, William Hartsfield, famously named it, "A City too Busy to Hate."⁷ Even after Blacks had gained a majority in the city, and concretized their political power, the only thing to shift was *who* the city was being sold to. A 1971 article in *Ebony Magazine* touted Atlanta as the country's new "Black Mecca," enticing its middle and upper class Black readership to move their lives and business.⁸ Indeed, Atlanta is a city that has made its name by selling itself. From the Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895, to the Democratic Convention of 1988 and the 1996 Olympic Games, its political and financial leadership have moved mountains to make a buck.

I take Atlanta, as unlikely a place as it may seem, as my venue to study anarchist positivist and utopic economic ideas in the twenty-first century. I begin the study in 2009 for two reasons. Firstly, the Great Recession of 2007-2008 saw an upswing in anarchist activity across the country, particularly after the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011. Secondly, in Atlanta specifically, this time marked a nearly complete turnover in hubs of visible anarchist organizing. Anarchist organizations that existed prior to this time either dispersed or grew away from their

⁶ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, (Princeton University Press, 2005), 31-35.

⁷ Kruse, *White Flight*, 26.

⁸ Phyl Garland, "Atlanta: Black Mecca of the South," *Ebony Magazine*, August 1971, 152-157.

original anarchist ethos. Meanwhile, newcomers arrived in the city and began new projects. It is this group of people, their ideas, and their practices that I follow through the very recent past, the end of 2019.

To this end, over the course of ten months, I attempted to immerse myself in all things Atlanta anarchist. I attended countless talks and social events, an anarchist conference hosted in the city, and a rural gathering attended by anarchists from across the world. I spent the first three months as an active participant observer, taking field notes, while continuing to collect data more sporadically in the following seven months. In conversation, I picked up references to texts that anarchists found influential, which I would later track down and read. On the walls of houses and community centers, I snapped pictures of posters, fliers, and mission statements (several of which can be found in the appendix of this thesis), while also collecting “zines” and other anarchist self-publications. Crucially, I conducted seven semi-structured 60-90 minute interviews with anarchist and anarchist-adjacent Atlantans who had been present and active in the city for all or most of the period of my study.⁹ Additionally, I found valuable archival material in the Diana Eidson Papers at Georgia State University, and, to a lesser extent, Emory Rose Library’s Atlanta Punk Periodicals. Lastly, newspaper coverage, largely from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Georgia State University’s *The Signal*, and the *Emory Wheel*, proved invaluable for understanding perceptions of the press.

Together, these sources helped develop a picture of anarchist thought and practice in Atlanta over my ten-year period. My goal in this thesis is to put this data on recent Atlanta anarchism into conversation with, on the one hand, the utopian thought and revolutionary

⁹ All interviewees are provided with pseudonyms.

practice put forth by early anarchists at the turn of the twentieth century, and on the other, the changes that have come to global capitalism, and political-economy broadly, since anarchism's beginnings.

Ultimately, I argue that contemporary anarchist economics have not changed much in their vision. In the few places where I found clear articulations of utopic desire, though having some diversity, they generally mapped on to early anarchist thought: communes, federations, autonomy. However, the material world in which Atlanta anarchists operated was fundamentally different from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe in which anarchist ideas first took root. Capitalism and governance transformed remarkably, both to the disadvantage of revolutionary movements. While anarchists strove to adapt to these changes, and occasionally innovated new tactics or saw surges in popularity through their involvement with social protest, they were ultimately relegated to the political margins of Atlanta. While people lived out their anarchist principles as best they could, an anarchist communism of any meaningful scale—a way of producing, distributing, and consuming goods and services without hierarchy and based on need and desire—remained a dream.

I begin in the first chapter with an overview of the origins of anarchism. Arising as a response to the deleterious effects of early capitalism on the life of workers, anarchism combined old ideas with new material realities to envision and fight for a stateless, propertyless society. While sharing much in analysis with Marxism, anarchists were adamant that state power was to be avoided, that communism must come without transitions or intermediaries. Until the rise of Marxist-Leninism after the Russian Revolution, anarchism enjoyed broader popularity among European workers than its Marxist counterpart, reaching peak influence in the early 1900s in the

movement of revolutionary labor unions across the globe, known as syndicalism. However, the dominance of Marxism combined with changes to capitalism and state repression forced anarchism into partial hibernation thereafter.

In the second chapter, I jump forward nearly one hundred and fifty years to examine the establishment of the Teardown in Atlanta, an anarchist intentional community and center for activist activity. The Teardown embodied what I call “an anarchist economics of daily life,” a hold-over of thought and practice from the anti-globalization and anti-war movements of the previous decade. While theoretically committed to a similar utopic vision as the classical anarchist thinkers, the Teardown was primarily concerned, not with long term plotting and planning, but rather with redressing the most deleterious effects of contemporary capitalism on human beings. Through such efforts as food waste redistribution, the Teardown offered, in anarchist rhetoric, “mutual aid—” or ways to meet needs outside of the market— to many Atlantans. However, what the Teardown accomplished in practical short term anti-capitalist activity, it lacked in long term, revolutionary vision. The needs it spent its time addressing, would continue on endlessly until serious structural changes came afoot.

The third chapter highlights how social movements were the main territory for anarchist ideas, about the economy or anything else, to gain traction outside of and beyond subcultural networks. In syndicalism’s heyday, the spread of anarchist thought happened primarily in the workplace, but such possibilities had long since disappeared in the American context. Following the 2008 economic crash, various student movements around the city began to show anarchistic tendencies. I use “anarchistic” throughout this thesis, following Mark Bray, to distinguish those

people, ideas, and activities that, while reflecting general anarchist principles, did not consciously identify with, or were even necessarily aware of, the anarchist tradition.¹⁰

Anarchistic student movement energy funneled rather neatly into the Occupy Wall Street movement in the fall of 2011. The importance of the national Occupy movement for anarchism broadly cannot be overstated. As in most cities, Occupy in Atlanta attracted a wide array of people disillusioned with the effects of the economic recession, but the movement's predominantly anarchistic, and in many ways explicitly anarchist, ethos served to introduce and excite many participants. As one (now) anarchist put it, "I joke that I tried to go to college and start my future, and there was a literal social movement in the way."¹¹

Lastly, chapter four looks at a particular form of anarchist thought that emerged as dominant in Atlanta following Occupy. Drawing on the tradition of insurrectionary Marxism which developed following the events of May of 1968 in Paris, the French Tiqqunism posed a rearticulation of anarchist thinking that seemed to take historical shifts in capitalism into account. Abandoning any hope of using and repurposing capitalist infrastructure for anarchist ends, Tiqqunists advocated the building of alternative territories, with internally communist practices, for the ultimate destruction of the contemporary, globalized society. In Atlanta, anarchists of this bent developed a community of impressive membership, centered around the South Bend Commons community center. However, where the Teardown lacked vision, the South Bend Commons, and its Tiqqunist core, lacked material activity. While it created a thriving intellectual and social scene for anarchist thought, its antagonistic engagement with capital was minimal.

¹⁰ Mark Bray, *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street*, (Washington: Zero Books, 2013), 42-43.

¹¹ Jada Garder interview with author, July 25, 2019.

Overall anarchism, and its utopian economic ideas, remained a fringe subculture in Atlanta over my period of study. It ebbed, flowed, and took different forms, but never approached the mass appeal necessary for revolutionary potential. Nevertheless, an analysis of it can be instructive, particularly in a popular discourse that so often constrains the venues of social change to electoral politics, policy work, charity, and volunteerism. What are we capable of if we reject these things outright? What could we do if we, ourselves, were the only authority?

Chapter 1: Situating Classical Anarchist Economics and Political-Economic Changes

Thinkers from the nineteenth century, such as Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin built and popularized the theoretical scaffolding for a stateless, non-capitalist society that continues to have salience to anarchists into the contemporary era. The political-economic context in which these ideas formed, however, was wildly different from my period of study in the early 2000s. Thus, in order to better understand the anarchist economics of today, this chapter explores the emergence of anarchist thought and the material circumstances that produced it.

Although the development of capitalism was already well underway by anarchism's emergence in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, this period saw the unprecedented acceleration of the process. Industrialization in such realms as textiles, coal, and steel soared, while the factory model of production spread far and wide. In this new development of capitalism, workers increasingly saw their labor specialized and separated from the rest of their lives—for the first time, wage labor in a “pure form.” For workers, the new arrangements were often less than desirable, with long hours, low wages, and poor living conditions.¹²

Generally, historians argue that anarchism emerged “as a response” to these developments in capitalism and the simultaneous centralization of state power.¹³ Like Marxists and other socialists, anarchists, who were fundamentally opposed to authority, observed that capitalism’s systems of private property and wage labor inevitably led to the creation of two broad classes, a “ruling class” that accumulated property and developed a great deal of control

¹² Jürgen Kocka, *Capitalism: A Short History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 131-133.

¹³ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), 4.

over society, and a working class that struggled to receive enough in wages to survive. As the divide between these two classes grew, the force of the state became increasingly necessary to suppress worker rebellion and possible appropriation of the wealth and resources of the ruling class.¹⁴ From an anarchist perspective, then, state and capital were coconstitutive forces of authority and domination that must be rid of and replaced with more communal relations.

The first self-proclaimed anarchist, the Frenchman Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, argued capitalism could best be challenged through cooperatively owned businesses and banks, a proposal that would come to be known as mutualism. Proudhon recognized the ways private property led to misery for French industrial workers, particularly in contrast to his job as a small, independent printer. However, he worried after his communist contemporaries' obsession with seizing state power and their willingness to subject the individual to some abstract common good.¹⁵

Proudhon imagined that market socialism would allow workers to gain collective control of property and encourage states to slowly dissolve. Cooperative banks, what he called "People's Banks," would offer free credit to their members.¹⁶ Credit could in turn be used to create worker's associations, or workers cooperatives, that would produce goods for the market, but return all profits to the worker-owners.¹⁷ In short, as contemporary anarchist writer Iain

¹⁴ Deric Shannon, "Anti-Capitalism and Libertarian Political Economy," 95.

¹⁵ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 237, 242, 259.

¹⁶ Charles A. Dana, "Proudhon and His Bank of the People," in *Patterns of Anarchy: A Collection of Writings on the Anarchist Tradition*, eds. Leonard I. Krimerman and Lewis Perry, (United States: Anchor Books, 1966), 333.

¹⁷ Rob Knowles, *Political Economy From Below: Economic Thought in Communitarian Anarchism, 1840-1914*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 137-141.

McKay puts it, mutualism would be a system of “socialized credit creating socialized property.”

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Importantly, as mutualist institutions took over, Proudhon imagined states would be replaced by voluntary, decentralized federations for the purposes of governance and coordination. Federations would bring together recallable delegates from autonomous regions, or communes, to coordinate decision making about production and distribution. The system would avoid coercion at every level so that individuals and collectivities would be assured autonomy: individuals could always leave their commune, the commune could always leave its federation, and a commune could always recall and replace a delegate felt not to be representing its collective interests.¹⁹

Proudhon’s ideas on federation are undoubtedly his most lasting contribution to anarchism (beyond, of course, coining the name). As later thinkers modified the content of anarchist visions, federalism would remain anarchism’s central organizational principle, even into the years of my study—a way to maintain order while minimizing authority.

Importantly, Proudhon’s ideas were not confined to the realm of utopian thinking. In 1849, Proudhon himself attempted to open one of his People’s Banks to jump start a mutualist movement. Though his project attracted many members, he was ultimately arrested shortly after its opening for unrelated reasons, forcing the project to a close.²⁰ More substantially, his ideas received increasingly popular attention from the French working class. The year before Proudhon’s death, in 1864, unionists and anti-capitalist minded thinkers across Europe came

¹⁸ Iain McKay, “Laying the Foundations: Proudhon’s Contribution to Anarchist Economics,” in *The Accumulation of Freedom: Writings on Anarchist Economics*, eds. Deric Shannon, Anthony J. Nocella II, and John Asimakopoulos (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 71.

¹⁹ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 252-253.

²⁰ Knowles, *Political Economy From Below*, 109-110.

together to form the International Working Men's Association (IWA), or the First International, and Proudhonists were its largest contingent.²¹

It was in the IWA that visions of anarchist economy would take fuller form. While many of the French delegates involved from the pushed an anti-statist, federalist vision from the beginning, Russian Mikhail Bakunin's 1866 entrance pushed the anarchist tendencies further, as he vehemently advocated for immediate and constant rebellion, the total collectivization of land, and the abolition of states.

From its founding, debates over the role of state power divided the International. Marxists factions saw the cooptation of the state, or a dictatorship of the proletariat, as a necessary step in a transition out of capitalism. The anarchists, with Bakunin at their helm, emphatically disagreed, arguing that state power invariably led to domination by a ruling class. In particular, they cited the French revolution of 1848, in which a new supposedly democratic government seized power from the monarchy, and yet slaughtered 10,000 working class people in the city streets. This event assuaged the likes of Proudhon and Bakunin, both of whom were in Paris at the time, of the belief that the use of state power had any utility to a revolutionary movement.²²

In 1871, the IWA's internal divisions came to a head as Marx, who led the state-communist faction of the International, expelled Bakunin and all other anti-statists, who, in turn, began to hold their own annual anti-authoritarian International Congress through 1877. In general, the vision developed in these anti-authoritarian Congresses was one of an economy built around

²¹ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 235.

²² Robert Graham, "Anarchism and the First International," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

communes, or voluntary collections of industrial and agricultural associations, that would send delegates to coordinate with other communes.²³

Bakunin, along with a slate of other Russian anarchists including Alexander Herzen and Peter Kropotkin, took inspiration for their vision from Russia's peasant communes, the *obshchina*, which were organized in village councils, or *mirs*. Though nominally feudal until 1861, the Russian system gave peasants a great deal of autonomy. For the most part peasants ran their villages with democratic councils, managed their own commons, and formed collectives on an ad-hoc basis to address communal problems.²⁴ Clearly such pre-capitalist models, not quite yet extinct, were central in informing what a *post*-capitalist society might look like for these early anarchists.

Bakunin's contemporary James Guillaume provided what is perhaps most clearly articulated vision of an anarchist future from this period in his 1876 essay "A New Social Order." In it, he described the need for a total revolution against state and private property that would immediately collectivize land and eliminate wage labor. Society would then restructure itself around communes, much like the *obshchina*, that would function as central hubs for the organization of production and distribution, made possible by careful record keeping. Communes would in turn be organized into voluntary federations within their region, and each federation organized into a yet larger federation, potentially reaching an international scale.²⁵

The central debate among the anti-authoritarian Internationalists was over what remuneration, or access to material necessities, might look like post-revolution. Initially, the

²³ Graham, "Anarchism and the First International," 327-329.

²⁴ Knowles, *Political Economy From Below*, 165-172, 183-185, 230.

²⁵ James Guillaume, "Ideas on Social Organization," in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York: Random House, 1971 [1876]), 356-379.

Bakunists argued that pure communism would need to be built slowly, and would necessarily require a period in which people received remuneration proportional to the work they did. By 1876, however, members began giving theoretical attention to those uncontrollable factors, such as natural ability, age, and climate, that would invariably lead different groups or individuals to produce more or less than others. Seeing how this might uphold or recreate macro-level inequalities, anarchists began advocating instead for the instant realization of communism at the moment of revolution, and access to the social product based on the maxim “from each according to ability, to each according to need.” This position of needs-based access came to be known as anarchist communism, and Peter Kropotkin became its chief champion.²⁶ To this day, it remains the most popular anarchist position on revolution.²⁷

Vision aside, the most successful strategy or tactic to come out of the anti-authoritarian International was not generalized revolution, but syndicalism. Syndicalism sought to place existing labor unions, focused primarily on improving worker conditions, at the center of *revolutionary* struggle. Unions, it argued, could and should be sites of political education and organizing to push for a revolution against capital. Furthermore they could structure themselves in a highly democratic, horizontal, and federal manner, and in doing so start building the anarchistic post-capitalist organizational structures they desired. Syndicalists ultimately aspired to build enough power across industries that they could call a general strike, shutting down the

²⁶ Graham, “Anarchism and the First International,” 338; Davide Turcation, “Anarchist Communism,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 238-239.

²⁷ Deric Shannon, Anthony J. Nocella II, and John Asimakopoulos, “Anarchist Economics: A Holistic View” in *The Accumulation of Freedom: Writings on Anarchist Economics* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 30.

economy and facilitating unionists take over of their own workplaces. At such a point, they would use their existing union structure to build a federated society.

While many histories place syndicalism's start in the 1890s with the French Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), recent work has traced the syndicalist form back to the 1870s in both Italy and Spain. In any case, syndicalism spread the world over by the beginning of the twentieth century, with sizable syndicalist unions in over 30 countries. In the United States, the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World reached a peak membership of 150,000 in 1917. Though the movement began to suffer after the First World War, with the rise of Marxist-Leninism and increased state repression (discussed below), in some places syndicalism continued to grow in power and influence into the 1930s. Most notably the Spanish Confederación Nacional del Trabajo and the Federación Anarquista Ibérica were able to gain control of substantial portions of Spain when the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936 using exactly the methods that early syndicalist advocates had envisioned: a general strike, the appropriation of the farms and factories, and the use of existing democratic union infrastructure to coordinate the economy.²⁸ However, when the anarchist territory of Spain fell to Franco in 1939, the global heyday of syndicalism, and anarchism in practice broadly, came to a close.²⁹

Anarchism rose to prominence in an era of rapid industrialization and the rise of the modern nation state. Looking back to pre-capitalist social organizations, but incorporating innovations made under capitalism, it generally aspired for a decentralized, voluntary economy

²⁸ Lucien van der Walt, "Syndicalism" in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 249-263; Kenyon Zimmer, "Haymarket and the Rise of Syndicalism" in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 353-359

²⁹ Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams, *The Palgrave Handbook on Anarchism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 2.

based around local units of production. In the 100 or so years that have elapsed since anarchism's peak popularity in revolutionary movements, much has changed in the global political-economic landscape. It's worth highlighting a few of these macro-level changes in broad strokes to set the scene for my study of Atlanta.

Firstly, with the success of the Bolsheviks in the 1917 October Revolution, Marxist-Leninism rose to the fore of anti-capitalist energy globally. Deviating from anarchists' most central normative claim in its reliance on state political power to achieve communism, Marxist-Leninism gained momentum and influenced the revolutions of China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba, among others.³⁰ On the one hand the rise of state-communism caused increased internal fracturing of the global Left and the marginalization of anarchist ideas. On the other, it facilitated state repression of revolutionaries of all stripes in capitalist countries scared of falling to communism. In the United States, Red Scares following each World War redoubled repression efforts of such anti-capitalist organizations.³¹

Throughout this period, capitalism itself saw tremendous shifts. As Kocka summarizes, beginning with the Great Depression and moving into the Second World War, the United States and many European countries implemented Keynesian interventionist policy that helped develop a welfare state, in many ways representing a compromise between free-market capitalism and the central planning of the state-communist countries. These policies, combined with the hard fought campaigns of workers and innovation in technology, generally improved the lives of workers, providing them various protections, shorter hours, and better wages. Arguably, better conditions for workers help keep revolutionary movements at bay.

³⁰ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 28.

³¹ Robert Justin Goldstein, *Little Red Scares: Anti-Communism and Political Repression in the United States, 1921–1946*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), xiii-xiv.

As the economy began to stagnate in the 1970s with the rise of cheap imports from recently decolonized economies in the Global South, the rise of neoliberalism saw a return to laissez faire and mass deregulation. The general effect on production was to accelerate the outsourcing of labor to the Global South while in the Global North, “the workplace [began] losing the clear contours it first acquired in the nineteenth century” as more people worked outside of centralized locations and on part time jobs that had increasingly less to do with the production of material goods.³² With labor thus dispersed, the workplace became a less viable site for revolutionary planning, and radicals in the Global North began seeking out new venues in which to organize.

Some have argued that when investigating how revolutionary organizing has changed from the nineteenth century through today, we must not only consider changes to capitalism, but also the general effects of its longevity. Marx distinguished between formal subsumption, or a time in which capitalism took over pre-existing feudal, communal, or subsistence means of production for its own profit-seeking ends, with real subsumption, a time when all pre-capitalist production would be overtaken, and capitalism would begin producing its own original forms of production and corresponding social relations.³³

It is clear that early anarchists drew heavily on memories of social arrangements from the recent past (and rapidly disappearing present) to formulate their positivist visions. The Russian peasant communes, for instance, were incredibly influential for imagining an anarchist future that was self-organized, with land held in common, and organized through voluntary federations.

³² Koeka, *Capitalism*, 140.

³³ See Benjamin Noys’ discussion of subsumption in “The Fabric of Struggle,” in *Communization and Its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*, ed. Benjamin Noys (New York: Minor Compositions 2012), 10-13.

By the period of my study, many analysts saw the process of real subsumption as complete, capitalism having “absorbed the totality of social reality,”³⁴ making the process of envisioning and enacting anarchist utopia a more elaborate task of the imagination. Indeed, as the review above would indicate, the last 100 years have produced a capitalist economy that is enormously complex, deeply inter-dependent, and seemingly hegemonic. Subjects produced within this context have become increasingly accepting and subservient to this system, ultimately unable to imagine alternatives, a problem Mark Fisher calls “capitalist realism.”³⁵

In short, though contemporary anarchists have continued to champion utopian ideas akin to the classical thinkers, shifts in the economy—both in Atlanta and across the globe—mean that they operate in a fundamentally different context. The following chapters explore how Atlanta anarchists have made sense of these changes and what they are doing in response to them.

³⁴ Leon de Mattis, “Reflections on the Call,” in *Communization and Its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*, ed. Benjamin Noys (New York: Minor Compositions 2012), 73.

³⁵ Mark Fisher and Jeremy Gilbert, “Capitalist Realism and Neoliberal Hegemony,” 89-101.

Chapter 2: The Teardown and the Economics of Daily Life

In 2009, two Washington D.C. anarchists bought a house in Atlanta's Edgewood neighborhood for \$60,000 and named it the Teardown. They painted the walls with anarchist slogans, and set the circle A black flag flying in their front yard. While they carried on the legacy of their anarchist forebears, much had changed.

Levy and Adams acknowledge “three waves of anarchist revival” since the heyday of anarchism, and syndicalism in particular, in the early 20th century. The first, in the ‘40s and ‘50s, was largely contained within the intellectual and academic realms—a revival of ideas. The second followed the events of May 1968 (discussed at greater length in the fourth chapter), and was defined more by the insertion of anarchist ethos into issue-specific social movements, such as second wave feminism, the environmental movement, and the anti-nuclear movement than a conscious movement towards anarchy itself. Lastly, the third developed with the simultaneous fall of the USSR and the hegemony of state-communism and the far-reaching consequences of neoliberalism. First seen on mass public display in the uprising of the Zapatistas in southern Mexico in 1994, this energy was picked up in the Global North by the anti-globalization, or global justice, movement of the late 1990s and the anti-war movement of the early 2000s.³⁶

In Atlanta, these resurgences had local corollaries. A year following the events in Paris in May 1968, the Atlanta based radical newspaper *The Great Speckled Bird* offered its readers an introduction to anarchism, the “living doctrine under which people work out their own solutions to their problems.”³⁷ When punk hit the city in the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, local fanzines, such

³⁶ Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams, *The Palgrave Handbook on Anarchism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 2-4.

³⁷ Henry Bass, “Anarchism,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 2, 1969, Georgia State University Archives, <https://digitalcollections.library.gsu.edu/digital/collection/GSB/id/758>, accessed December 9, 2019.

as *Restless 'n' Bored*, extolled the virtues of a “government-less, cooperative, self-managed decentralized society,” calling on its readers to begin the work of building a federation among themselves.³⁸ The anti-globalization and anti-war movements came to Georgia when, in 2004, the G-8 summit was held in Sea Island, Georgia. In news coverage of the event, in a diverse array of leftist groups, anarchists can be seen waving their black and red flag alongside a large banner reading, “ANTI-CAPITALIST.”³⁹ Over the course of the protests, 14 protestors were arrested, including at least one self-described anarchist from Atlanta.⁴⁰

By the early 2000s, Atlanta anarchists were central in forming such organizations as the Sopo bicycle cooperative and the WonderRoot arts collective. While these organizations were quite successful—Sopo continues to operate until this day, and WonderRoot operated until August of 2019—they both quickly moved away from the anti-institutional politics of their founding to become conventional nonprofits.⁴¹ Projects more explicit in anarchist messaging also formed during this time, including the Madratz! Infoshop, which operated from 2005 to 2007, and a group called Capital Terminus Collective, which put out several issues of a newsletter called “Anarchist Atlanta” in 2005. Capital Terminus Collective defined itself unambiguously as “an anarchist-communist group” with a mission to bring about a revolution.⁴² However, by 2008,

³⁸ *Restless 'n' Bored* fanzine, 1984, SERIAL 2016, Folder 19, Atlanta Punk Periodical Collection, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, see appendix.

³⁹ AP Archive, “Protests as G8 leaders gather for summit,” July 21, 2015, video, 2:01, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imlIs4yIKQw>.

⁴⁰ Don Plummer and Christine Van Dusen, “G8 Summit: Stormy send-off 14 arrested as marchers, police clash,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 11, 2004.

⁴¹ Paul Torino interview with author, July 23, 2019. While I was unable to ascertain the reason(s) for these organizations’ shift towards the non-profit, Blair Taylor has argued that anarchist DIY (do-it-yourself) projects, along with cooperatives businesses and other alternative economic brick-and-mortars that developed in the early 2000s, were simply too difficult to keep afloat financially, either folding or becoming more business-like. See Blair Taylor, “From alterglobalization to Occupy Wall Street: Neoanarchism and the new spirit of the left,” *City* 17, no. 6 (2013), 737.

⁴² madratz, Library Thing, June 2007, <https://www.librarything.com/profile/madratz>; Capital Terminus Collective, *Anarchist Atlanta*, issue no. 2, October 2005, available at <http://nefac.net/files/atlantaanarchist2.pdf>.

all signs of it had disappeared, and so the arrival of the Teardown marked a turnover in visible hubs of anarchist organizing in Atlanta.

The Great Recession, taking shape in 2007 and reaching full blown crisis status in 2008, marked a watershed moment in the third wave resurgence of anarchism. The crisis further revealed the damaging consequences of the prevailing neoliberal system, and anarchists from the anti-globalization and anti-war movements, such as the Teardown's founders, were prepared. As the crisis devastated the economy, and affected the lives of most average people, it opened up political space for marginalized anarchist ideas to be taken more seriously, while simultaneously exacerbating real and pressing needs for which anarchism had some solutions. As discussed in the next chapter, the Occupy Wall Street Movement of 2011 would ultimately be a highly public response to the crisis, with anarchists at the core.

In the Edgewood neighborhood of Atlanta, the crisis dropped property values significantly, enabling the Teardown founders to purchase an old house and set up shop, moving in in early 2010. By the time I became familiar with the Teardown in the Summer of 2018, its internal walls were plastered from floor to ceiling with posters from actions, propaganda fliers, pages torn out of books, and newspaper articles. One torn-out book page drew my attention instantly. "There is a good chance," it read, "that you've heard the word Anarchy and wondered: 'What does it really mean?'" It went on to describe anarchists as those who "desire to live in a free society" in which everyone has sufficient access to the means of survival and the autonomy to determine the course of their own lives. The state and capitalism, it argued, stood in the way of this reality, exploiting people and nature alike, and anarchism meant the negation of these forces. It demanded both work in and for the present— "sharing food, helping raise each other's

children, taking care of each other when we go crazy and trying to be true to our desires”— and a revolutionary striving for systems level change: “we must stand up to the forces which destroy the land and use our labor for profit and to build empires.”⁴³

The Teardown, in my observation, lived out this creed. First and foremost, its members’ daily energy went into efforts to make the present more livable, both for themselves and Atlanta’s most poor and vulnerable, including many of its neighbors. This was seen in a variety of projects, but primarily in developing networks of free food distribution. Secondly, the Teardown strove to support and offer resources to social movements, protests, and political projects actively antagonistic to the systems they opposed, ranging from prisons, to police violence, to capitalism itself. Together, these practices made what I call an anarchist economics of daily life. Though clearly quite different in method, scale, and power from the mass labor organizing of the early syndicalists, the Teardown exemplified a highly active and consistent striving for anarchist ideals, all with a realistic awareness of its limitations and politically marginal status.

From its founding, one of the central goals of the Teardown was simply to create an affordable residential community in which anarchists could live. As founder Ammar May put it,

Lots of people would like to spend all their time working on radical political struggle. They’d like to be activists, full time, so to speak. But the reality is, in order to live, especially to live in the city, it costs a bunch of money. So what would it look like to create a house that is able to mostly cover those types of expenses through reducing cost of living and also communizing cost of living as much as possible, to create a situation where it’s possible for people to have very low monthly expenses, so that they can—rather than spending all of their time working for a boss— they can spend their time working for the types of projects in the world they would like to see?⁴⁴

⁴³ Unattributed book page, walls of the Teardown, see appendix.

⁴⁴ Lamar May interview with author, July 23, 2019.

Given that the founders had bought the building outright, made efforts to minimize utilities usage, and were plugged into significant networks of free food and other necessities (discussed below), they were able to maintain a low living expense of around \$200 per person per month, at a time when rents in the area started at \$500 at an absolute minimum. Though this cheap cost of living did not liberate Teardown members entirely from needing to work for income, and in fact most people who lived in the house throughout the years needed to work at least part time, it did tend to offer them substantial free time in which to organize.⁴⁵

Simply creating free time for people may seem an odd ambition for an anarchist project, one that, like the early anarchist utopians, ultimately aspired for a stateless communism. However, the economic reality of urban life in Atlanta, like many American cities, was expensive. There were, of course, ways to live outside of the mainstream economic institutions of property, labor, and market consumption. In fact, one of the Teardown founders, Dirt Mollusk, had previously spent a streak of three years attempting to live as far outside the capitalist system as possible, hitchhiking between anti-globalization demonstrations, dumpster diving, sleeping where she could, and spending as little money as possible. This was a common anarchist lifestyle in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but many, including Mollusk, came to be critical of it because it was “not doing the local work of building . . . local infrastructures.” Mollusk came to realize that “you have to make compromises with the capitalist system. . . if you want to be effective [at challenging it],”⁴⁶ and she incorporated these insights into the Teardown.

Teardown members were involved in an impressively diverse array of outward-facing projects, ranging from sending mail to prisoners, to filming local police activity to counter police

⁴⁵ Dirt Mollusk, interview with the author, June 10, 2019.

⁴⁶ Mollusk interview.

violence, to offering legal and financial help to those arrested in political protest and actions of all stripes. Undoubtedly, however, their greatest amount of time and resources went into building and sustaining networks of food rescue and distribution.

Food Not Bombs (FNB) is now a widely recognized organization with chapters all over the world. It was founded in the 1980s in California in response, as the name implies, to neoliberal cuts to welfare in the United States while military spending remained high. From its beginning, FNB rooted itself in an anarchistic ethos, both in its diagnosis—noting that hunger in a world of vastly overproduced and wasted food was ultimately a product of capitalism—and in its prescription—the development of an alternative, horizontally and autonomously run non-market based food system. In general, the practical activity of FNB chapters was collecting donated or “dumpstered” food and making massive meals to serve for free in public to anyone who was hungry. In many ways, FNB activity resembled the soup kitchens of various religious and non-profit organizations, but it was adamant that its work was “solidarity, not charity,” not a bandage for a social problem, but a practical alternative model, one that could ideally be extended to other spheres of political-economy.⁴⁷

The Teardown founders began an FNB chapter as soon as they opened their doors in 2010, serving a weekly Sunday meal in Atlanta’s central downtown Woodruff Park. At first, much of the food they used was found in the dumpsters of grocery stores around the city. However, they slowly began to inherit, from other food distribution groups, connections to grocery stores that were willing to donate their expired food. Most helpfully, they developed relationships with wholesale sellers at the Atlanta State Farmers Market, just south of the city,

⁴⁷ KeithMcHenry, *Hungry for Peace : How You Can Help End Poverty and War with Food Not Bombs*, (Kent: See Sharp Press, 2013), 17-23.

who would donate vast quantities of produce. As their connections to grocery businesses expanded, and their capacity to move food grew as a result of an increase in volunteers and the acquisition of a van, the Teardown found itself at the heart of a substantial food-waste redistribution network. In fact in part because the volume of food was so large, in 2018, breaking from the conventional FNB model, the Teardown stopped cooking meals and started simply handing out raw produce to people to take home with them. Eventually, they were even able to establish a second site of food distribution at the South Bend Commons when it opened in 2018 (discussed in chapter four).⁴⁸

As with the efforts to make activist life affordable, expending a great deal of daily energy to redistribute food in a model completely reliant on capitalist overproduction may seem a far cry from realizing anarchist communism. Yet, the Teardown's FNB efforts provided the most regular and consistent anarchist economic practice in the city. It provided food to people, including members of the Teardown, at the point of their need, without restriction. May noted it was

a way of not just making a demonstration of another kind of politics, but exploring what it looks like strategically and logistically to build supply chains that don't operate according to the market. It's one thing for me to do something for you for free, and it's like, 'Oh, that's anti-capitalist exchange.' But I think what's more interesting is how to organize people in more sophisticated structures that involve division of labor and people consistently doing tasks that maybe they don't feel moved to in the immediate [sic], but nevertheless getting all of these moving parts and people cooperating in more and more sophisticated ways, but still not using the market and traditional economics as the organizing principle behind it, and see how far we can push that and how big we can make it.⁴⁹

In this way, the Teardown modeled anarchist alternative projects from across time and space. For instance, the French syndicalist in the early 1900s, composed of a diverse array of political

⁴⁸ Dirt Mollusk interview; Miles Keenlyside, "The Teardown House: Revolutionary activist group Food Not Bombs fight hunger in Woodruff Park each week," *The Signal*, Dec 4, 2012.

⁴⁹ Lamar May interview.

leanings, including anarchists, created alternative community institutions for workers called *bourses du travail*. These physical, worker-owned, and often quite extravagant community centers gave French workers space to congregate for union business, but also to support each other materially, particularly in providing schooling and training programs.⁵⁰

The Teardown's practices specifically grew most immediately out of the "neanarchism"⁵¹ of the anti-globalization and anti-war movements, to which both founders were proximate. Blair Taylor describes neanarchism as "an attempt to revive the revolutionary project" while incorporating renewed caution about authoritarianism provoked by the failed state communist projects of the twentieth century, as well a cognizance of race, gender, and sexuality based oppressions raised by the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s. To account for these insights in practice, neanarchists endorsed "a pluralistic flowering of autonomous projects, practices, communities and institutions" that included voluntary social services such as Food Not Bombs, independent media, and cooperative businesses.

Such institutions have received criticism from the likes of Taylor for failing to constitute a meaningful threat to state or capitalism, and in fact, in the few niches where they found success, supporting these structures by stepping into the vacuum they left with their neoliberal retreat from popular welfare.⁵² However, to be fair to such organizations, including the Teardown, changes to global capitalism, and labor specifically, made organizing alternatives economic projects of any scale substantially more difficult. Decades of "real subsumption" —the process by which capitalism as a system "transforms, and keeps transforming, production

⁵⁰ *No Gods, No Masters*, part 1, "1840-1906," directed by Tancredè Ramonet (2016; New York, New York: Icarus Films).

⁵¹ Neanarchism is approximate to the third revival of anarchism as described by Levy and Adams taxonomy in the first paragraph of this section.

⁵² Taylor, "From alterglobalization to Occupy Wall Street," 733-735.

processes materially (and socially) into forms that are more adequate to capital for the simple reason that they press out more surplus-value—”⁵³ had resulted in fragmented and decentralized labor in the Global North, placing limits on the ability to recreate revolutionary alternative economic institutions like the *bourses du travail*.

Though paling in comparison to the projects of their classical anarchist predecessors, neoanarchist efforts such as FNB should not be dismissed as negligible. For the Teardown FNB heavily subsidized the food needs of the internal community, aiding in its goal of living cheaply and somewhat outside the market, freeing its members for non-work activity. Externally, it offered those in need of high quality food an ideological and practical alternative to conventional soup kitchens and food pantries. With no barriers to entry and individuals encouraged to take as much as they needed, FNB embodied the principle of “to each according to need.”

The Teardown was ultimately the most visible and active explicitly anarchist political front in the city. It did not fully embody any of the classical anarchist economic concepts: it was not a cooperative, it was not a commune, it was not connected to a larger formal federation, or funded by a cooperative credit institution. Instead, like neoanarchists throughout the Global North, its members lived out anarchist principles to the extent they were able under the constraints of twenty-first century gentrifying urbanity, in what I call an anarchist economics of daily life. When understood in the context of the constraints of the political economic infrastructure in which they were situated, the Teardown’s efforts were actually quite impressive.

⁵³Patrick Murray, "The Social and Material Transformation of Production by Capital: Formal and Real Subsumption in Capital, Volume I," in *The Constitution of Capital*, eds. Ricardo Bellofiore and Nicola Taylor, (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2004), 257.

Chapter 3: Occupy Atlanta and the Social Movement

On October 7, 2011, civil rights movement icon and long time congressman John Lewis approached a crowd of thousands in downtown Atlanta's Woodruff Park. Protestors were gathered there as part of the, by this point, international Occupy Wall Street movement, responding to the consequences of the Great Recession. This would be their first night occupying the park.

Lewis approached in the midst of the "general assembly," the consensus decision making meetings that became Occupy's trademark. The facilitators polled the crowd to see if it should put its meeting agenda on pause to allow Lewis to speak. While many in attendance were in favor, others suggested letting the congressman speak out of turn would be inconsistent with the ethos of Occupy and its criticism of existing political institutions. Ultimately, the group decided that if Lewis wanted to speak, he would be placed at the end of the agenda and have to wait. Having other commitments, Lewis left without speaking to the crowd, but said he respected its decision.⁵⁴

This event was significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, while the apparent rejection of a champion of Black political struggle sparked angry headlines across the country, it had particular import in the racialized space of Atlanta itself, and alienated a good number of potential Occupy participants.⁵⁵ Secondly, it fits with the long-standing Atlanta tradition of more radical political mobilizations clashing with the city's self-proclaimed "progressive" formal

⁵⁴ Joan Walsh, "The man who blocked John Lewis speaks," *Salon Magazine*, October 13, 2011; video of event available on YouTube, conservARTive, "Occupy Atlanta Silences Civil Rights Hero John Lewis!," October 8, 2011, video, 10:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QZlp3eGMNI>.

⁵⁵ Craig Schneider, "Occupy Protesters Move for Diversity: Atlanta Effort Draws a Subgroup to Help Boost Overall Representation," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 22, 2011.

leadership.⁵⁶ Lastly, and most importantly for my purposes, though the event provoked tension in the nascent Atlanta movement, it marked an assertion of anarchist politics in its rejection of formal authority in preference for an autonomous way of organization.

Indeed, Occupy Wall Street, in its national and local dimensions, was evidence of a process that had long been underway: the movement of anarchism's influence around the globe from labor organizing to various social movements, such as the anti-globalization and anti-war. During my period of study in Atlanta, anti-capitalist ideas and dreams found new life not only in Occupy, but also in social movements that preceded and followed this central event. It was in these spaces that many people encountered, and even enacted, anarchist ideas for the first time.

Revolutionary labor organizing was still alive in the city at this time. The Atlanta chapter of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was revived in the early 2000s, and continued in its efforts to organize workers into "one big union." However, its work remained small in scale, in large part as a result of the shifts to labor described in the first and second chapters. As an interviewee in the IWW put it, union work in general was quite difficult in this era because "the structure of society is so frayed."⁵⁷

While classical syndicalism languished, some anarchists in the city attempted a new kind of labor (and, to a lesser extent, tenant) organizing beginning in early 2011. Developed specifically for the atomized nature of the 21st century urban economy, the "solidarity network," sought to gather radically minded individuals from across workplaces and housing complexes to confront, or birdog, bosses and landlords over specific grievances. As opposed to the traditional union that relied on those within the same workplace or housing complex to cooperate and

⁵⁶ For a typical example, see Kruse's discussion of conflict between student activists and the Black political establishment, Kruse, *White Flight*, 180-204.

⁵⁷ Valente Cecilio interview with author, February 22, 2020.

leverage their collective power against a boss or landlord, the solidarity network used a critical mass of individuals from across workplaces and/or housing complexes to confront, humiliate, and shame bosses and landlords into listening and responding to member demands. Though many types of unions have used such birdogging tactics, they were the sole tool of the solidarity network. And though primarily concerned with winning small, concrete victories for individual members, as articulated in its mission statement, it ultimately strove for a classically anarchist economic arrangement constituted by “horizontally organized workers councils.”⁵⁸

The Atlanta Solidarity Network (ASOL) appears to have been active for only a short while in early 2011. After recruiting members by plastering posters around the city with such taglines as “Sick of carrying your bosses dead weight?,” “Is your boss or landlord taking advantage of you?,” and “Missing wages?,”⁵⁹ ASOL began its organizing. In a campaign publicized on its blog, as well as in a short documentary, nine ASOL members accompanied an employee of the Belly General Store in the Virginia Highlands neighborhood as she read a letter to her manager, explaining that she had not received back pay despite repeated requests. She gave 48 hours to pay, or threatened escalation from the larger ASOL group. When the manager failed to pay in the allotted period, ASOL members began passing out fliers condemning the store’s unjust labor practices to people walking by and entering the store during its lunch rush hour. When she still did not pay, ASOL escalated further, pasting full sized posters in the area

⁵⁸ Paul Torino interview; Jada Garder interview; Valente Cecilio interview; “ASOL Mission Statement,” *Atlanta Solidarity Network Blog*, March 22, 2011, <http://atlsolidaritynetwork.blogspot.com/>.

⁵⁹ ASOL poster, walls of the Teardown; also posters from Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/196005457086866/photos/rpp.196005457086866/196010740419671/?type=3&theater>, <https://www.facebook.com/196005457086866/photos/rpp.196005457086866/196010647086347/?type=3&theater>, see appendix.

immediately around the store calling attention to the issue, and encouraging its network to incessantly call the boss and management of the store to complain. Finally, after five days of escalation, the manager called the aggrieved employee and asked, “If I pay you now, will this end?”⁶⁰

ASOL carried on several similar campaigns with apparent success,⁶¹ proving an adept understanding of mobilizing worker and tenant power in the “frayed society.” It also undoubtedly embodied anarchist principles of anti-authoritarianism and collective action, realizing its posters’ boasting that “we don’t have to go to the ‘officials’ or ‘professionals’ to help us with our problems—the power belongs to the people!”⁶² Ultimately, however, it did not prove any more capable of developing meaningful anti-capitalist power than the IWW. Even the innovation of tactics could not overcome a material reality of decentralized work and weakened labor organizing power. As explained to me by IWW members, where sizable labor organizing did exist in Atlanta, it took the form of the large, bureaucratic and reformist “business unions” that were far too eager to come to the negotiating table with employers to offer workers anything resembling revolutionary power.⁶³ The social movement was the new terrain of revolutionary politics.

⁶⁰ “Atlanta Solidarity Network Makes Their First Demands,” Atlanta Indymedia, April 22, 2011, <https://archive.org/details/AtlantaSolidarityNetworkMakesTheirFirstDemands>; “ASOL vs. Belly General Store!!!,” *Atlanta Solidarity Network Blog*, April 25, 2011, <http://atlsolidaritynetwork.blogspot.com/2011/04/asol-vs-belly-general-store.html>; “ASOL Delivers Demand Letter to Belly General Store,” *Atlanta Solidarity Network Blog*, April 25, 2011, <http://atlsolidaritynetwork.blogspot.com/2011/04/asol-delivers-demand-letter-to-belly.html>; “ASOL vs. Belly General Store DAY 1,” *Atlanta Solidarity Network Blog*, April 25, 2011, <http://atlsolidaritynetwork.blogspot.com/2011/04/asol-vs-belly-general-store-day-1.html>; “Belly General Store DAY 2,” *Atlanta Solidarity Network Blog*, April 26, 2011, <http://atlsolidaritynetwork.blogspot.com/2011/04/asol-vs-belly-general-store-day-2.html>; “Tentative Win!,” *Atlanta Solidarity Network Blog*, April 27, 2011, <http://atlsolidaritynetwork.blogspot.com/2011/04/tentative-win.html>.

⁶¹ Interviewees Paul Torino and Jada Garder described other success stories.

⁶² ASOL Poster, walls of the Teardown.

⁶³ IWW meeting notes, June 6, 2019.

In Atlanta, the wave of movement energy that reached its peak in Occupy Wall Street can be traced back to student movements following the economic crash of 2008. In 2010, as part of addressing its budget shortfalls, the Georgia state legislature cut \$227 million from the higher education budget, leading to tuition hikes for students.⁶⁴ Later that year, the Georgia Board of Regents voted to ban undocumented immigrants from attending Georgia's top 5 research institutions, including Atlanta's Georgia State University (GSU),⁶⁵ and the following year, House Bill 326 made the requirements to receive scholarship money through the state's HOPE program much more stringent.⁶⁶ These measures, framed in the language of necessary austerity, mobilized students across the state, and at GSU in particular. A variety of student organizations emerged, most notably the militant Georgia Students for Public Higher Education (GSPHE). GSPHE held numerous demonstrations, disrupted Board of Regents meetings, and even accosted GSU's president.

From its founding, GSPHE had the anarchist influence of both student and non-student organizers, and over time it developed a fairly anarchistic outward-facing philosophy. Not only did it organize itself in a non-hierarchical federation across Georgia colleges and universities,⁶⁷ but it included explicitly in its demands that higher education in Georgia be "democratically structured, meaning direct participation from below [by students] as a basis for the decision

⁶⁴ Laura Diamond, "Regents hike tuition: Costs to rise more than 16% for some students. Increase follows budget cuts of \$227 million," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 12, 2010; Daniel Beauregard, "The price keeps rising," *The Signal* Sep. 14, 2010.

⁶⁵ Laura Diamond, "Colleges will bar illegal students: Ban applies to UGA, Tech, 3 other colleges; legislators want more," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 14, 2010.

⁶⁶ Laura Diamond, "Less HOPE becomes a fact: Gov. Deal scheduled to sign bill next week," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 11, 2011.

⁶⁷ Anonymous, "Seven Years of Student Struggles in Atlanta: From the Perspective of a Non-Student Participant," *CrimethInc*, August 31, 2017, <https://crimethinc.com/2017/08/31/a-non-student-in-the-student-movement-seven-years-of-student-struggles-in-atlanta>.

making process.”⁶⁸ While pushback against budget cuts and student bans remained unsuccessful, the politicizing effect of the campaigns began to develop a milieu of radical students in the heart of the city, many of them taking an anarchist bent.

Across town at Emory University, another strain of organizing mobilized young people of a radical mind. Students and Workers in Solidarity (SWS) formed in early 2010 to advocate for better labor conditions for the University's food-service workers, contracted through the third party company Sodexo. After over a year of their campaign, events came to a head on April 20, 2011, as students set up a tent city in the University's central quadrangle, with plans to occupy the space until their demands were met. Ultimately, Emory President Jim Wagner opted to forcibly remove the occupation from the quad five days after it began, including arresting seven students, without addressing SWS demands.⁶⁹

Over the course of the five day protest, disparate networks of Atlanta activists, including anarchists from the Teardown and elsewhere, as well as students involved in GSPHE at GSU, came together to support the encampment. Several interviewees noted that participation in the quad occupation gave participants important practice in the political tactic of occupation, which would be applied by some of them a few months later in Atlanta's Occupy protest.⁷⁰

All of Atlanta's student struggles took place in a broader context of global popular rebellions following the economic crisis. The Arab Spring took off at full speed in January of 2011 as Egyptian protests formed an encampment in Tahrir Square, advocating for more

⁶⁸ Georgia Students for Public Higher Education, “Our Demands,” accessible at <https://georgiastudents.wordpress.com/our-demands/>.

⁶⁹ Laura Emiko, “Where Courageous Inquiry Leads,” available at <https://emoryarrests.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/long-student-statement1.pdf>; Tiffany Han, “Protestors Camp Out on Quad,” *Emory Wheel*, Apr 22, 2011; Roshani Chokshi, “Emory Police Arrest Seven for Trespassing on the Quad,” *Emory Wheel*, Apr 26, 2011.

⁷⁰ Brighton Suffix interview July 2, 2019; Dirt Mollusk interview.

democratic control of the country, and Cairo breathed new life into the protest tactic of mass occupation, which was picked up that May in Spain as fifty thousand people occupied Madrid's central Puerta del Sol in an anti-austerity protest.⁷¹

Writers for the anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters* plotted to bring the public occupation concept to the United States, most immediately in response to the Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* ruling, which removed limits for corporate spending on political campaigns, but also as a general attack on the American class system. At *Adbuster's* invitation, on September 17, 2011 the occupation of Zuccotti Park in the heart of New York's Financial District began. At first, the movement remained fairly localized, but when, during one of its marches, police arrested 700 people on the Brooklyn Bridge, it was launched into the global spotlight and triggered copycat occupations in cities across the country.⁷²

Atlanta's Occupation began on October 7 and remained in Woodruff Park until it was forcibly removed by police, with more than 50 arrests, in the early morning of October 26. The *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* tracked its growth from "hundreds" of attendees and only a few tents in the park, to 30 tents after 5 days and 70 tents after ten days.⁷³

⁷¹ Micah White, *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution*, (Penguin Random House Limited: Toronto, 2016), 9-12. Notably, White references politically-motivated occupations of American college campuses preceding Tahrir square in 2009 and 2010. Occupation tactics also found a home in the U.S. pre-Occupy Wall Street in the February of 2011 occupation of the Wisconsin state capitol led by teachers facing cuts to benefits and compensation, see Taylan Acar et. al, "Inside the Wisconsin Occupation," *Contexts* 10, no. 3 (2011), 50-55.

⁷² White, *The End of Protest*, 14-22.

⁷³ Bo, Emerson, "Wall Street Movement Hits Atlanta: Occupy Atlanta to Assemble Tonight in Downtown Park," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 07, 2011; Bill Rankin, "Occupy Atlanta Protesters Settle into Woodruff Park: Hundreds Gather, some Camp Out in Solidarity with N.Y. Movement," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 09, 2011; Christian Boone, and Rhonda Cook, "Amid Misery, a Miracle City Evicts Protesters from Atlanta Park: Order to Leave Comes just Prior to Midnight. Some Waited to be Arrested, While Others Moved to Leave the Park," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 26, 2011; Jeremiah McWilliams, "Reed Faces Heat from all Sides on Park Action," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 27, 2011; Boone, Christian and Jeremiah McWilliams. "OCCUPY ATLANTA PROTESTS: City Takes Hands-Off Approach to Crowd: But Mayor Insists Demonstrators can't Occupy Park Indefinitely." *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 12, 2011; Schneider, Craig and Jeremiah

From the beginning, self identified Atlanta anarchists from groups like the Teardown, Food Not Bombs, and GSHPE established a presence in the organization of the occupation. In addition to their anti-capitalist and anti-state politics, anarchists brought with them valuable experience with occupations, horizontal organizing, cooking food for large numbers of people, and confronting police, all of which were absolutely essential to pull off a successful occupation. They therefore had outsized influence in a crowd that was, as described by one participant, mostly “liberals, or socialists, or people who didn’t even have a thing, but were just new on the scene, and knew that the bank bailout was a mess.”⁷⁴

A number of scholars,⁷⁵ have commented on the various ways anarchism permeated Occupy across the country. David Graeber, for instance, argues that Occupy clearly drew on anarchism in four ways: it refused to recognize the legitimacy of existing political institutions by, for the most part, refraining from making demands; it refused to accept the legitimacy of the existing laws by illegally occupying public space; it organized in a non-hierarchical, horizontal manner using consensus based decision making; and it had an “embrace of prefigurative politics,” meaning it attempted to build the society that protesters desired in the Occupations themselves.⁷⁶

These observations were true of Atlanta. While a great deal of Occupiers’ energy went towards protest activity, including demonstrations against Bank of America,⁷⁷ police violence,⁷⁸

McWilliams. "As City Backs Off, Occupy Settles in: Ready for Jail, Protesters Exult as Stay Extended; Feelings Mixed Nearby." *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 18, 2011.

⁷⁴ Dirt Mollusk interview.

⁷⁵ In addition to Graeber, see John L. Hammond, "The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street," *Science & Society* 79, no. 2 (2015) and Bray, *Translating Anarchy*.

⁷⁶ David Graeber, "Occupy Wall Street's Anarchist Roots," in *The Occupy Handbook*, edited by Janet Byrne and Robin Wells (New York: Back Bay Books, 2012), 144-145.

⁷⁷ On October 11 there was a march of 100 people from Woodruff Park to the Bank of America building, Christian Boone and Jeremiah McWilliams, "OCCUPY ATLANTA PROTESTS: City Takes

and the closing of Atlanta's largest homeless shelter, Peachtree Pine,⁷⁹ at least as much energy went into the communal occupational form itself. As one participant told me, Occupy put "its own reproduction as immanent to its subversive practice,"⁸⁰ or, in other words, it took the traditional, antagonistic protest and wedded it to a new, inspiring, and notably anarchist way of daily life. As another participant described it:

The way life worked while we were living there was post-capitalist, it was anti-capitalist. Anybody was welcome there, regardless of their economic class or economic status. . . . All of the resources that were at these encampments were just available to the people there on the basis of what they needed. So food would be contributed, and food was distributed on the basis of who was hungry. There were volunteers there who were running a 24-hour medical clinic, and medical services were provided to the basis of whether they were hurt or sick, not on whether they could pay or whether they had insurance, or any of those things. . . It was just kind of obvious to everyone there that, of course this is how resources should be organized. . . . it was a political demonstration to the world of 'Hey look, we can do things another way,' but I think it was also proof to the people who were there, who were already feeling troubled and sick about the state of capitalism—this was a lived experience that showed them that another way could actually really happen, could actually really be possible.⁸¹

From the beginning Teardown members and FNB began serving daily lunches alongside another anarchist collective, C7.⁸² Food sharing immediately introduced unfamiliar Occupiers to practiced anarchist alternatives to the market. Meals, of course, were essential—the basic fuel of any occupation. The fact that Atlanta had an existing organized infrastructure to produce enough food to feed everyone living in Woodruff park

Hands-Off Approach to Crowd: But Mayor Insists Demonstrators can't Occupy Park Indefinitely," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 12, 2011.

⁷⁸ On October 17th, one to two hundred people protested the killing of 19 year old Robert Waldo by the Atlanta Police Department, Anonymous, "Don't Die Wondering: Atlanta Against the Police," Zine, 2012, available at <https://libcom.org/files/ddw-small-cleaned.pdf>, 7.

⁷⁹ Jeremiah McWilliams and Christian Boone, "Occupy Atlanta Rallies Planned," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, Oct 14, 2011.

⁸⁰ Paul Torino interview.

⁸¹ Amar May interview.

⁸² Jada Garder interview.

for days on end, gave credence to FNB's belief in the possibility of replacing the "unsustainable political and economic system with a decentralized democratic set of grassroots solutions *that address the real needs of everyone* [emphasis mine]."⁸³

Anarchists also shared their ideas more explicitly by handing out fliers and other literature, which generally had utopic economic envisioning at their core. "Most anarchists dream," read one such flier, "of a world where all resources are directly controlled by the communities that depend on those resources."⁸⁴ Another, signed by "somes scheming anarchists," elaborated that

The occupation is a commoning, if you will, of resources and tools. The occupation must expand to all other spheres of social life as a necessary consequence of what it is: we must take over more shit so we can share it!; communization of this sort does not need to wait for the proper structures or the 'right time' just as we do not need to go to culinary school before planning pot-luck dinners with our friends and neighbors.⁸⁵

Even "official" Occupy Atlanta literature (i.e. that which was produced not exclusively by anarchists, but by the larger ,diverse body of Occupiers) came to reflect similar ideas about the economy. In a pamphlet entitled "Why Join Occupy Atlanta?," the authors acknowledge that

many of us within the movement are learning about the types of economic models (local co-opertives, Mondragon regional unionized co-operatives, participatory economic workers' enterprises and urban/organic farms, etc.) that we can build in and around our localities to help create a society that is more economically fair and socially just . . . that would develop its own community general assemblies, economic goods & services, modes & mediums of

⁸³ Keith McHenry, *Hungry for Peace*, 18.

⁸⁴ Flier entitled, "Anarchists: Who do these people think they are?," Y004, Box 1, Folder 16, Diana Eidson Papers, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia, see appendix.

⁸⁵ Flier entitled, "Occupy Everything! (really)," Y004, Box 1, Folder 16, Diana Eidson Papers, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia, see appendix.

exchange, co-operative banks & credit unions, mutual legal & medical aid, multimedia journalism, arts & literature and educational system to better serve the needs of the remnant middle-class, the working-class and the unemployed.⁸⁶

Neither in practice nor on paper did Atlanta anarchists present a unified economic theory or program during Occupy. There were strong hints that a tendency of thought known as “communization—” which, as discussed in the next chapter, melded antiauthoritarian politics with an understanding that global capitalism was past the point of no return, necessitating not a take-over by workers, but complete destruction and rebuilding—was gaining popularity. But during Occupy itself, anarchists brought a smorgasbord of ideas that pulled on classical anarchism, neoanarchism, and everything in between. Still, Occupy had success in introducing new people to the anarchist tradition in the general sense and was the single most important event in my period of study for growing the number of active anarchists in the city. As one Teardown founder said, “A lot of our comrades that we have now [2019], some of our most tight best friends, are people we met through Occupy.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, and quite uniquely, it gave people experience, though only fleeting, of living in an alternative economic reality—a utopia. It was a proof of concept for anarchist communism, the taste of something different that would be hard to forget.

The importance of social movements continued to play out beyond Occupy, most notably in Black Lives Matter (BLM). BLM was not centrally focused on critiquing capitalism or building alternative economic structures, but was rather a response to the police killings of Black men. Anarchists and others, however, understood the police violence it contested as a product of

⁸⁶ Pamphlet entitled, “Why Join Occupy Atlanta?,” Y004, Box 1, Folder 17, Diana Eidson Papers, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁷ Dirt Mollusk interview.

a political-economic system that must protect economic inequalities through violence.

Organizing under the name the Atlanta-Ferguson Solidarity Committee, anarchists tried to push the militancy of the Atlanta segment of the movement. On their blog, they credited themselves with organizing the headline-making November 25, 2014 march that blocked the 75/85 interstate connector in downtown Atlanta following the non-indictment of white police officer Darren Wilson for the killing of the unarmed and Black Michael Brown.⁸⁸ Similar to occupy, this period of activism was important for galvanizing interest in anarchism and attracting new activist energy.⁸⁹

Clearly, the central mechanism of anarchist idea dispersal shifted, following changes to global capitalism and the structure of labor, from the labor movements of the turn of the twentieth century to the social movement in the twenty-first. By my period of study, this fact had become common sense for anarchists, one noting simply, “That’s how you find out about things, you participate in a movement.”⁹⁰ Indeed, the oldest anarchist I interviewed, who had been active in the city for decades, explained that in his time spikes of anarchist activity could be neatly mapped onto three key social movements: the anti-globalization movement of the late 1990s, the

⁸⁸ “12/2 An Incomplete Timeline of the Struggle So Far,” Atlanta-Ferguson Solidarity Committee Website, available at <https://atlfergusonsolidarity.wordpress.com/>.

⁸⁹ Paul Torino interview. In regards to the overwhelming whiteness of anarchists, Torino noted that “Most of us [white anarchists] benefited from not having a politics based on shame and guilt, and just willing to be like, ok we’re just going to do our best to participate as much as we can, and we’re going to hurt people’s feelings and we’re going to have to be accountable for that. People are going to yell at us and it’s going to be awkward sometimes, but we’re dedicated to learning as much as possible and participating as sincerely as possible.” However, it remains unclear what the material relationship between the largely white anarchists and Black BLM activists looked like. Given the contentious relationships that existed between white anarchists and Black organizers during Occupy Atlanta, in addition to the grievances raised by Black activists about anarchist spaces such as the South Bend Commons (see the next chapter), there is ample reason to doubt the relationship was as smooth as Torino suggested.

⁹⁰ Dirt Mollusk interview.

anti-war movement of the early 2000s, and, of course, Occupy Wall Street in 2011. “Most of the folks we see,” he said, “were radicalized somewhere along that path.”⁹¹

⁹¹ Sasha Callens interview with the author, June 13, 2019.

Chapter 4: Tiquunism, The New Anarchist Economics?

On July 1, 2009, conservative television commentator Glenn Beck held up a small booklet entitled *The Coming Insurrection* on his Fox News program. He expressed grave concern, calling it a “dangerous book” that sought “to bring down capitalism and the Western way of life.”⁹² Originally published in France in 2007, *The Coming Insurrection* was the latest in a series of texts of similar rhetoric and style written by an anonymous French collective, likely with philosophy Ph.D. Julien Coupat at its head. This collective was at first known, in the late 1990s, as Tiquun, and later as The Invisible Committee, but for my purposes, I will refer to the ideas of both groups of authors as “Tiquunist.” Tiquunism broadly received international attention in late 2008, when nine members of the French commune Tarnac, including Julien Coupat, were arrested on terroristic charges for allegedly sabotaging a French rail system. *The Coming Insurrection* itself, and the arrestees alleged but unsubstantiated role in writing it, was the main piece of evidence against them.⁹³

This final chapter looks at how, following Occupy Wall Street, Tiquunist ideas found a home in Atlanta, and eventually, with the establishment of the South Bend Commons, came to supplant what in chapter two I called an anarchist economics of daily life as the most visible and popular form of anarchist political-economic activity in the city.

In discussing its origins, most observers put Tiquunist thought in conversation with the larger field of communization theory.⁹⁴ Contemporary communization emerged following the

⁹² Video available on YouTube, goingbeing, “FOX NEWS reviews ‘The Coming Insurrection,’” July, 1, 2009, video, 6:55, [youtube.com/watch?v=ZKyi2qNskJc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKyi2qNskJc).

⁹³ Andy Merrifield, “The coming of *The Coming Insurrection*: notes on a politics of neocommunist,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (2010), 202-203.

⁹⁴ Notably Nick Clare and Victoria Habermehl, “Towards a Theory of ‘Commonization’” in *Theories of Resistance: Anarchism, Geography, and the Spirit of Revolt*, eds. Marcelo Lopes de Souza, Richard J. White, and Simon Springer (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016) 101-121 and

occupations, riots, and strikes of May 1968 in France, a period generally historicized as a reaction to the limits of the Fordist capitalism in producing benefits for workers, and a simultaneous rebellion against the violence and stagnation of the old left, as embodied in the Marxist-Leninism of the USSR.⁹⁵ First championed by the likes of Gilles Dauvé and François Martin following 1968, communization reinstated what was for anarchists an old and foundational idea, that at the moment of a revolution, capitalist institutions “have to be done away with and not just run by collectives or turned over to public ownership. They must be replaced by communal, moneyless, profitless, stateless forms of life.”⁹⁶

While on the one hand communization might be read as the mere reinstatement of normative claims made a century earlier by various anarchists and anti-state communists, it emerged out of an empirical analysis of the failures of times past. In particular, it critiqued what it called “programatism,” noting that as workers organized for better conditions in the framework of Keynesian or welfare economics, they actually fortified and preserved the power of capitalist relations in the long term.⁹⁷

For those of this original communizing current, communization, though necessarily immediate, was nevertheless a process that must wait for a moment of revolutionary break with the status quo on a large scale, i.e. the classically conceived revolution. Tiqqun, entering the conversation in the late 1990s, broke from these

Benjamin Noys, “The Fabric of Struggle,” in *Communization and Its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*, ed. Benjamin Noys (New York: Minor Compositions 2012), 7-22.

⁹⁵ David Berry, “Anarchism and 1968,” in *The Palgrave Handbook on Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 453.

⁹⁶ Gilles Dauvé, *From Crisis to Communisation* (Oakland: PM Press, 2019), 29.

⁹⁷ Noys, “The Fabric of Struggle,” 11-12. Endnotes, “What are we to do?,” in *Communization and Its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*, ed. Benjamin Noys (New York: Minor Compositions 2012), 26-27

“explicitly communizing currents” to argue that communization can and should happen “prefiguratively,” in the present.

In fanciful and poetic style reminiscent of May 1968’s The Situationists International, Tiqqun advocated for radicals to abandon outdated forms of class-based organizing in favor of merely finding others with similar revolutionary desires, wherever they may be in the fragmented neoliberal world, and form somewhat nebulously defined, “communes.” Communes would serve the dual function of initiating communism in the present for their members, and, in the long term, developing “new and alternate territories” capable of contesting the state and capitalism.⁹⁸

Importantly, Tiqqunism reacted to changes to the global economy by elaborating a fundamentally destructive or negationist position, its object “to live at war” with civilization broadly, through sabotage and rioting, “while knowing how to live together in peace” amongst fellow radicals in the nebulously defined communes.⁹⁹ This position differed markedly from, for instance, that advocated by James Guillaume, that saw the capture and appropriation of existing political-economic infrastructure as a viable revolutionary way forward. Indeed, the Spanish syndicalists proved the viability of such tactics during the 1936 civil war. But by the 1990s, Tiqqun observed a world in which real subsumption was complete, a world inhospitable to any forms of anti-capitalist organizing beyond negation.

In the United States, Glenn Beck likely helped launch Tiqqunist ideas to the fore, his coverage of *The Coming Insurrection* briefly making the book Amazon’s top seller in July of

⁹⁸ Clare and Habermehl, “Towards a Theory of ‘Commonization,’” 105.

⁹⁹ Merrifield, “The coming of *The Coming Insurrection*,” 208-212.

2009.¹⁰⁰ In Atlanta, traces of Tiqqunist influence could be seen in the student movements discussed in the previous chapter; one participant, who moved to Atlanta in 2010, told me that he and his anarchist friends were already privy to Tiqqun at this time, calling the group's 2004 work, *Call*, their "secret bible."¹⁰¹ And as discussed in the previous chapter, some of these anarchists pushed a Tiqqunist/communization line during Occupy Atlanta, one of the fliers even using the term "communization."¹⁰²

The influence of Tiqqun really took off, however, following Occupy. Once evicted from Woodruff Park, many of the younger anarchists already familiar with Tiqqunist ideas, in conjunction with new people they had encountered and attracted through the wave of social movements, began trying to intentionally foster a commune in the Tiqqunist sense. For them, this meant moving into shared housing, such as a big rental house known as "the Mansion," in Reynoldstown and surrounding Atlanta eastside neighborhoods.¹⁰³ Additional efforts at communizing life in line with Tiqqun's prefigurative prescription included a weekly dinner, as a means to gather all the dispersed anarchists from around the city, a shared nightlife, and, of course active participation in political protest.¹⁰⁴

At the same time, some of these anarchists began articulating their ideas on paper. In the summer of 2012, they launched a newsletter, at first called *The Black Door*, and later *Atlanta is Burning*. While largely reporting on anarchist activity around the city, the paper took a clear Tiqqunist bent, editorializing about the power of the commune, the "organizational form" that

¹⁰⁰ Noam Cohen, "A Book Attacking Capitalism Gets Sales Help From a Fox Host," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2010.

¹⁰¹ Paul Torino interview.

¹⁰² Flier entitled, "Occupy Everything! (really)," Y004, Box 1, Folder 16, Diana Eidson Papers, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia, see appendix.

¹⁰³ Paul Torino interview.

¹⁰⁴ Jada Garder interview.

allows “a secession from this world while prefiguring the forms life might take after Capital and State.”¹⁰⁵ In 2014, this same crowd anonymously published a zine called *How to Start a Fire*, a near copycat of *The Coming Insurrection*. The zine explicated Tiqqun’s basic revolutionary program: find each other, build communes, and expand the network. By working cleverly within the constraints of the existing capitalist system, they argued that radicals could work towards building “a material, insurrectional force.”¹⁰⁶

Around 2015, the economics of living on the eastside of town began to prove untenable, as property values and the cost of living soared under gentrification pressures. Several of the anarchists began searching for other areas in the city to move and, even more intentionally than they had on the eastside, build a Tiqqunist commune.¹⁰⁷ Following their own advice from *How to Start a Fire*, they looked for areas in which they could afford to “get property” to live in and, perhaps more importantly, purchase a centralized meeting place to be the commune’s core. This meeting place would be one “whose addressed [sic] can be publicized,” “that can hold the crowd of fifty that won’t fit into a house.”¹⁰⁸

Lakewood Heights, a predominantly Black neighborhood south of downtown, economically devastated when General Motors closed a major production plant in the area in 1990, fit the bill.¹⁰⁹ With very low property costs, anarchists were able to collectively purchase a convenience store in the center of the neighborhood and slowly begin converting it into a

¹⁰⁵ Newsletters and other materials are available from blackdoordistro.wordpress.com. Quotation from “The primary organizational form of 2011 was not the Assembly. The primary organizational form of 2011 was the commune,” *The Black Door*, no. 2, July 2012.

¹⁰⁶ “How to Start a Fire,” zine, 2014, available at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-how-to-start-a-fire>.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Torino interview; Jada Garder interview.

¹⁰⁸ How to Start a Fire,” zine.

¹⁰⁹ Associated Press, “GM to Shut Lakewood Plant in Atlanta Aug. 6,” *Associated Press*, May 17, 1990.

community center, what they would call the South Bend Commons. Meanwhile, they began to buy and rent houses throughout the surrounding neighborhood.¹¹⁰

On December 14, 2018, the South Bend Commons (SBC) formally opened. As intended, it quickly became a publicly visible entry point to anarchist politics in the city. In particular, its weekly dinners, carried over from the eastside commune, attracted newcomers and the curious. From the time it opened, to the close of this study, at the end of 2019, SBC was primarily used for these dinners, in addition to hosting a wide variety of film screenings, book discussions, and talks on radical political concepts and history. Additionally, the space was made available as a meeting place for various Leftist political groups in the city outside of the direct SBC community.¹¹¹

The SBC's "principles," which hung on its bathroom wall, articulated a position consistent with revolutionary communization:

1. Reappropriate and collectivize resources, energies, and knowledges to construct the conditions necessary for a good life. . . .
2. Collaborate, and develop skills for that end. . . .
3. Reject and work to overcome intolerance, hierarchy, and discrimination. . . .
4. Organize for collective autonomy and freedom in the here and now. . . ¹¹²

One must ask if the largely social and educational programming that took place at the SBC in its first year approached these lofty revolutionary goals. Indeed, in 2019 its only substantive program to meet material needs was its weekly Free Grocery Program, which distributed produce to both SBC anarchists and any Lakewood Heights neighbors in need.

¹¹⁰ Paul Torino interview.

¹¹¹ These data come from my own observations and field notes.

¹¹² Poster entitled "The South Bend Commons," see appendix

However, the SBC cannot take full credit for this Program, as it was largely run by FNB volunteers out of the Teardown and local, non-anarchist neighbors.

The apparent discrepancy between SBC's articulated purpose and its actual activity sparked a great deal of criticism from the broader Atlanta Left. During my period of participant observation, I encountered myriad accusations from outsiders that the SBC, and its core membership, talked more than they walked. This foundational criticism bled into a series of other complaints, including that that SBC members were exclusive, unwelcoming, or hedonistic. My sense was that critics did not have a problem with these behaviors per se, but they appeared hypocritical when juxtaposed with SBC's stated mission of radically equitable revolutionary change. Perhaps most substantially, SBC received a great deal of criticism around its treatment of race. A nearly entirely white membership in an almost completely Black neighborhood, it did little, I was told, to connect with Black neighbors or mitigate its role in racial gentrification. Furthermore, anarchists and other Leftists of color that attended SBC's various social and educational events, often reported feeling unwelcome and uncomfortable, and often would not return.

While I will not get into any of these criticisms in detail here, it is certainly safe to say that SBC's activity was less externally and materially impactful than the economics of daily life exhibited by the Teardown. While the Teardown perhaps lacked such a coherent ideological framework as Tiqqunism, its members, as noted above, participated in an impressive array of outward facing political activity, from writing letters to prisoners, to coordinating activist bail, to moving thousands of pounds of food around the city each week to those in need. In contrast, SBC had few intentional long-term projects—either in

the Commons space itself, or in the surrounding houses shared by anarchists. It certainly filled its role of being “a real life gathering place,”¹¹³ but is this all that Tiqqun had in mind with their concept of the commune?

Despite its limitations, SBC quickly became the most visible hub of anarchist politics in the city, and likewise an entry point for many newcomers. In consequence, its Tiqqunist ideas likely began to grow in influence over and above the mutual-aid ethos of the Teardown, carried over from the anti-globalization and anti-war movements.

On the surface, Tiqqunism appeared as the cutting edge of anarchist theory and practice. It seemed to grasp the complexity of contemporary capitalism, taking into account “neoliberalism, deindustrialization, financialization, neoliberal housing redevelopment, enclosure of subversive subcultures, and deep commodification,”¹¹⁴ and abandon all outdated forms of struggle in favor of a somewhat vague but actionable set of practices. Its ideas had resonance across the United States, with models similar to that of SBC sprouting up in Oakland (Tamarack) in New York City (Woodbine). Similarly, Atlanta’s *How to Start a Fire* was not the only Tiqqun copy-cat manifesto, anarchists in New York published *Inhabit* in 2018.¹¹⁵ Perhaps most promisingly, Tiqqun-influenced radicals from across the country would regularly host gatherings to reflect, share ideas, and organize, in this sense building a potentially scalable, federalist network in ways that would have made classical anarchists proud.

By the close of my study, however, it was as of yet unclear what exactly Tiqqunism was producing, if anything, in terms of alternative or revolutionary economics.

¹¹³ Poster entitled “The South Bend Commons,” see appendix.

¹¹⁴ Paul Torino interview.

¹¹⁵ Available online at <https://inhabit.global/>.

I observed at the SBC a collectivity of like-minded people, living similar, transgressive lifestyles, and using the language of commons and communization. Unlike, the languishing IWW, most of these anarchists did not expend effort organizing in workplaces. With the exception of the weekly Free Grocery Program, they also did not endeavor to take on the laborious mutual aid projects of their neoanarchist friends at the Teardown. They, rightly in my view, understood these older forms of organizing as grossly inadequate for the contemporary era. But what they, via Tiquun, offered instead was vague and ultimately fairly passive, deeply intellectual, but hardly material.

For the Atlanta anarchist project, the rise to dominance of SBC should cause some concerns. If, as I argue, it became the city's main entry point into anarchism, it was attracting the greatest numbers of anarcho-curious newcomers into a politics that were, in my view, largely unthreatening. A politics of negation looked eerily similar to a politics of non-engagement. To be fair, in the period of my study, mounting meaningful challenges to the state and capitalism was a herculean task. Other anarchist practices, such as those enacted by the Teardown, did not necessarily offer a more powerful way forward. Nevertheless, in their first year of running the South Bend Commons, Atlanta Tiquunists left much to be desired in terms of building an anarchist communism.

Conclusion

In Atlanta from 2009 through 2019, anarchist visions of different economic arrangements might be best characterized as a small but persistent gadfly to the city. Small milieus of anarchists held varying positivist economic visions, ebbing and flowing in visibility and influence. In the mix was a fairly wide spread of ideas and commitments, ranging from the more classical syndicalist aspirations of the IWW, to the much more theoretical and abstract adherents to Tiqqunist communization theory. As I have shown, all of these ideas were to a large degree, shaped by the state of the global political economy, and particularly the enormous impact of the Great Recession.

Following the recession, the Teardown brought ideas and practices to Atlanta that were common to the anti-globalization and anti-war movements of the late 1990s and the early 2000s, focused largely on projects of what anarchists called “mutual aid,” providing informal relief to populations marginalized by the state and capitalism. The Teardown deserves a great deal of credit for developing a stable and consistent presence in the city in the often fickle territory of Leftist organizing. Its founders were non-dogmatic, welcoming, but unapologetic in their anarchist stances, with “Smash the State!” scrawled in massive letters across the side of the house. Through the intentional community that the Teardown founders nurtured in their house, and especially in the community’s outward facing work, it developed what I call an anarchist economics of daily life. While loosely attached to classical anarchist ideas, the Teardown focused its efforts on practical ways to anarchistically address the social problems they saw rooted in capitalism. Their most ambitious and consistent commitment was to Food Not Bombs, rescuing untold tons of food and distributing it for free on the basis of need alone.

Anarchist ideas, however, were not primarily spread through the likes of the Teardown. Rather, new interest of any meaningful scale came to anarchism as a result of active social movements. In Atlanta, organizing on college campuses across the city, beginning in 2009, helped develop a radical milieu of young anarchists. In the fall of 2011, Occupy Wall Street (and analogous movements the world over) erupted, marking a watershed moment for anarchism globally. In Atlanta, anarchists fresh from student protests played a key role in the local occupation. They brought practical, practiced knowledge about illegally occupying public space, operating non-hierarchically, sharing resources communally, and combating police and governance. They also brought, what were to many, novel critiques of the status quo. The Occupation gave many participants a glimpse of what a non-capitalist world might look like, if only for 20 days. Though nothing as significant as Occupy would follow the fall of 2011, social movements such as Black Lives Matter continued to be important sites of anarchist exposure. Ultimately, the era further evidenced the trends already visible: the terrain for encountering and spreading anarchist ideas had moved from the workplaces of syndicalism's heyday to the social movement.

Following Occupy, a specific brand of anarchism, and a corresponding positivist economic vision rose to the fore. The Situationist influenced Tiqqun, with poetic and insurrectionary rhetoric, advocated building collectives of those with anarchist affinity and attempting to "communize" as much as possible in the present. After several years of "building an insurrectionary force" following Occupy, many anarchists began planning a more formal community in the Lakewood Heights neighborhood with a community center, the South Bend Commons, at its core. While the influence Tiqqunism had on Atlanta anarchists was clear, its

implications for political economy were less so. After several months of participant observation in and around the South Bend Commons, it became clear that the bulk of the community activity, whether intentional or not, was limited to the intellectual realm. Its members succeeded in creating a largely homogeneous social subculture, but rarely mobilized as a collective for material projects. Beyond the occasional and largely informal sharing of resources, there was little intentional activity that engaged with or challenged the broader economic structures on a significant and/or consistent basis.


Some attempt to combine the pointed Tiqqunist analysis of the contemporary era with the action-oriented ethos exemplified by the Teardown would seem to be the most obviously constructive way forward for anarchists in Atlanta. While the changes to global capitalism and the nature of labor described throughout this thesis seem to make organizing resistance and alternatives difficult if not impossible, anarchists must not fall victim to what Fisher's described capitalist realism, giving up on their belief in and their striving for different possibilities.

In Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, the anarchist society on Anarres was formed only when the mass of dissatisfied and oppressed people on Urras—Le Guin's proxy for Earth—developed such a strong revolutionary movement that the governments and wealthy citizens of Urras agreed to give the revolutionaries their habitable moon to live on and develop an anarchist society. In my period of study, Atlanta anarchists were far from being offered any moons to live on. Their numbers, however, certainly grew, and their thinking diversified. The day may not be incredibly far off when society looks to their knowledge for alternatives to the unsustainability of the current macro-structures.

Appendix

3

future societies all set in the year 2000--a marxist society, a fascist society, etc. His "anarchist future" novel is Commune, 2000 A.D. Incidentally, all of his books take a relatively progressive viewpoint, and are worth checking out. Ursula K. LeGuin, perhaps the best of today's science fiction writers altogether, is a philosophical anarchist. Her most anarchistic works include THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST, THE DISPOSESSED and THE EYE OF THE HERON (just recently released in paperback). Also check her short story (related to THE DISPOSESSED) "The Day Before the Revolution", published in the collection THE WIND'S TWELVE QUARTERS. Michael Moorcock, also an anarchist and highly rated writer of sword-and-sorcery type fiction, has written an 'alternate present' novel called WARLORD OF THE AIR, worth looking at. I don't know what Norman Spinrad's politics are exactly, but AGENT OF CHAOS is a weirdly proanarchist sf novel, while BUG JACK BARRON is a classic of modern antiauthoritarian social commentary.



"SPRAY PAINT YOUR WAY TO FREEDOM"

IT'S A CRAZY IDEA BUT IT JUST MIGHT WORK - ANARCHY IN THE USA

Let's face it, kidz. The present economic and political system in Amerika, like it or not (I don't), is going to collapse in the next ten to fifteen years, give or take a little. This is bound to happen, not because its written in the stars or anything, but because, although it hasn't yet become obvious in the world of everyday life (the hamburgers at McDonald's are a little thinner, but what of it?), the nation's basic resources at all levels are nearly exhausted. There's not much more usable fuel to run our junkie technology, the country's so heavily in debt if it were, say, a car company instead of a country it would have long ago filed for bankruptcy, nobody really believes in the system anymore---its just all washed up.

When a society falls apart (as all societies do, eventually), unemployment, crime, disease and social unrest always run rampant; people become desperate, seeking new answers where old ones have failed. The Amerikan character is such that, whatever the dreams of a few ivory tower intellectuals, even in a social crisis people here will never turn to the tried-and-failed "answers" of marxist socialism. Extreme right-wing "answers" -- even outright fascism -- might seem appealing to some desperate but unthinking people, but fascism denies all personal freedom, much cherished by even the most conservative factions of Amerikans, and in any case would probably lead to ultimate nuclear confrontation with the marxist world, which would be the END of the world altogether, most likely.

Some people will turn to an individualist "survivalism"--but this would pit the would-be "survivor" against the whole of desperate humanity in a crisis period, a chaos-ridden, nuclear-tipped age. In such conditions, even the most considered "plan for survival" has slim chances of success.

"I don't know what's gonna happen, man, but I'm gonna get my kicks before the whole shithouse falls in." said Jim Morrison, who died shortly thereafter, shithouse still standing. No, there IS another, saner alternative people can go for, though not an easy one, and its called "anarchism".

There is a good chance that you've heard the word

Anarchy

and wondered:

"What does it really mean?"

Actually, many anarchists keep asking themselves the same question. Being an anarchist does not mean one has reached a certainty; or said once and for all "There from now on I hold the truth." And because there isn't a party line to adhere to, one anarchist's ideas can be very different from the next.

However, we do share many common bonds. The strongest link between anarchists is the desire to live in a free society. What is a free society? Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of freedom is having access to the means of our own survival, the ability to determine collectively and individually the conditions of our own lives. But it is difficult to achieve this as the land is eaten up by privatization and development, as our fresh water is poisoned, as the fish and other wild animals are being depleted, it becomes harder and harder to even imagine an existence of our own.


Another link between anarchists is the idea of mutual aid; to give without expectation of receiving, to share our creativity, skill and knowledge without barter or obligation, based on our desire to live in a genuine community. Of course this characteristic is not specific to anarchists; many people who want real relationships of respect and reciprocity share it with us.

For some people freedom means to be free to dance, sing, play music and love, but for me this is only part of my freedom. These are things that feed my soul and I will do them if I am free or not, but still I am left unsatisfied. Anarchy is sharing food, helping raise each other's children, taking care of each other when we go crazy and trying to be true to our desires. It is an acknowledgement that in order to be free, in order to have access to our own survival, now, and for generations to come, we must stand up to the forces which destroy the land and use our labor for profit and to build empires. Anarchists describe these forces or institutions as the state and capitalism, although many also use the term civilization to express the totality of what prevents humans from creating societies without exploitation.

SICK OF CARRYING YOUR BOSSES DEAD WEIGHT? SHRUG IT OFF. WE CAN HELP.

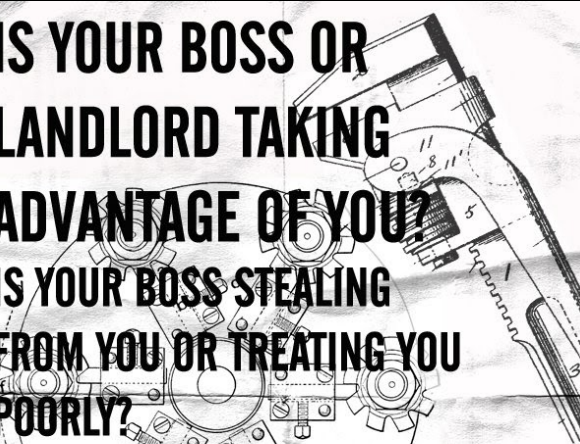


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ATLANTA SOLIDARITY NETWORK

WORKERS EVERYWHERE ARE TREATED POORLY BY BOSSES AND OWNERS. MOST OF US DON'T HAVE MONEY FOR LAWYERS AND THERE ISN'T A UNION IN OUR WARD.
 ALONG THE CITY, TENANTS LIVE IN ILLEGAL SUBSTANDARD HOUSING OWNED BY A SLIMY CROWD WHO WANT US TO LEAVE THE LEASE - BUT IS NEVER LATE TO PICK UP THE BENT THE CO. WE DON'T CARE ABOUT US ENOUGH TO PAY THEM OUT.
 BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO GO TO THE "OFFICIALS" OR "PROFESSIONALS" TO HELP US WITH OUR PROBLEMS - THE POWER BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE!
 THE ATLANTA SOLIDARITY NETWORK IS A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS WE ARE NOT LAWYERS AND WE ARE NOT PROFESSIONALS WE ARE WORKERS AND FROM THE BOTTOM UP WE BELIEVE IN SOLIDARITY AND MUTUAL AID. WE BELIEVE IN DIRECT ACTION WHO MANIFESTING OUR DEMANDS. WE BELIEVE IN FIGHTING DOWN OLD DEMONS. WE BELIEVE IN FIGHTING FOR SOLIDARITY, NOT GAIN.

ASOL poster, walls of the Teardown; also posters from Facebook,
<https://www.facebook.com/196005457086866/photos/rpp.196005457086866/196010740419671/?type=3&theater>,
<https://www.facebook.com/196005457086866/photos/rpp.196005457086866/196010647086347/?type=3&theater>

Anarchists: Who do these people think they are?

One description of anarchism, by one anarchist. Let it be stated, there are as many types of anarchism as there are anarchists - diversity and autonomy are, like, our favorite things.

Anarchy comes from a Greek phrase meaning "without rulers." With that said, anarchism is a specific way of navigating power dynamics, not a singular political ideology. By that, I mean: anarchists do not bind themselves to abstract political ideals, we simply do whatever it is we can, in any given situation, to make sure that power is distributed evenly among participants, through whatever means are available to us.

In this spirit, although there is much that makes us unique, there are a few things that unite anarchists:

1) OPPOSITION TO DOMINATION/HIERARCHY:

Anarchists expressly reject all forms of domination and hierarchy including racism, capitalism, patriarchy, homophobia, as well as political structures that privilege the decision-making capacity of some participants over others: governments, your place-of-work, schools and prisons etc. By opposing domination and hierarchy, we actively resist the powers-that-be. Sometimes, this subversion causes conflict with police who enforce the current system of inequality. Although some anarchists are pacifists, most believe in self-defense, just like most people do.

2) REJECTION OF POLITICAL REFORM.

Anarchists believe that the problems we face today require overturning power structures completely, and not simply reforming them and hoping that by giving new people power they will be nicer. Being that the institutions are based on domination, freedom cannot be given, it must be taken. Distributing power evenly among us all would require a completely new way of organizing society.

3) SOLIDARITY IS A WEAPON

Anarchists have learned a lot, and seek to continue learning, from people in struggle against colonialism and domination all over the world. We stand in absolute solidarity with indigenous peoples and prisoners and this solidarity is not like charity.

We recognize that our fight is the same fight and that if we want success for ourselves, we must help the most oppressed in their fight, as well. We do not speak for others or fight for them, but with them - whenever our ideas intersect, that is (when they do not intersect, we respect autonomy and do not expect others to conform to our vision).

4) DIRECT ACTION AND MUTUAL-AID

We do not wait for recognition from political parties or corporations to act. If there is some particular injustice or some particular goal we have, we do what we can to take what we need right now and we help each other whenever possible. Similarly, we do what we can to directly halt the ability of our oppressors to function in such a way that is going to harm us. Most direct action is non-controversial (like strikes, feeding the homeless, or sharing our clothing) however, sometimes we do things that are more controversial to fight against oppression (like sabotaging environmentally devastating machinery, for instance.)

Most anarchists dream of a world where all resources are directly controlled by the communities who depend on those resources. That means no bosses, no cops, no politicians, no prisons, no banks - all decisions would be made by the people for the mutual-benefit of all participants (perhaps in the form of neighborhood assemblies). We do not wait for this dream to just happen, we actively engage in struggle to create those conditions right now. Although this may sound idealistic to you now, consider that anarchism has a long, vibrant, history all over the world. We aren't just dreamers, many of us are students, workers, farmers, professors and maybe even your neighbors! We have thought long and hard about these ideas and we fight wherever we stand. If you are interested, perhaps start off by checking out the Wikipedia page or talking to an anarchist! From there, you can find a lot of useful links and hopefully some inspiration. Good luck.

-an anarchist

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Flier entitled, "Anarchists: Who do these people think they are?" Y004, Box 1, Folder 16, Diana Eidson Papers, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia



In a crisis, it does not make sense anymore to beg. Though it is certainly no longer possible, many of us do not yearn to "go back" to the golden-age of our grandparents generation - a Keynesian control that resulted in the complete flattening out of any adventure, on the one hand, and the real subsumption of production into an ever-expanding, ecologically perilous, global factory on the other. The age of austerity, which we face today, is a necessary result of the so-called "responsible capitalism" of the last few decades.

Although we are active in the current "Occupy Together" movement, many of us are distressed by the presence of those for whom the seizure of public parks and plazas represents a forum in which to "voice grievances" to Power - as if anyone was listening anyway.

The point of an occupation is not to "send a message" to Power, nor is it to demand of Power this-or-that restoration of normalcy. The occupation is a commoning, if you will, of resources and tools. The occupation must expand to all other spheres of social life as a necessary consequence of what it is: we must take over more shit so we can share it!; communization of this sort does not need to wait for the proper structures or the "right time" just as we do not need to go to culinary school before planning pot-luck dinners with our friends and neighbors. It is this sense of urgency that brought us into the parks in the first place - when so many in the established "activist" milieu remained skeptical, we came together to act outside of the political script to create something that was frankly unimaginable in scope just a few months ago.

The precedent has been set, and everyone already feels it on the tip of their tongues anyway:

To move forward, we have to start taking over buildings.

In Oakland, as well as in Chapel Hill, the landscape of struggle is being questioned altogether - that is to say, the struggle over landscape is being addressed for the first time in a meaningful way: how are we supposed to defend a park from police violence? how are we supposed to stay warm in the winter?

The answer is obvious to many of us.

This question, the question of weathering abuse as well as the question of expansion, is not a new one. Many of us occupiers have spent the last several weeks building relationships with houseless people - ask them how they live through the winter. More than likely, there are vacant buildings all over your city and most, if not all, of them can be used in new and exciting ways. Or perhaps the city is littered with buildings begging for a new content - universities come to mind as does city hall.

"Stop taking orders - Start taking over."

Our comrades in Europe have been taking over buildings for decades now. Abandoned buildings everywhere have been transformed into "social centers" that serve as matrices of struggle and activity in the face of global capitalism which would render the buildings lifeless. Perhaps the "Occupy Together" movement can learn some lessons from the autonomous movements of decades past in the European context and expand on it for the American landscape.

- some scheming anarchists

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Flier entitled, "Occupy Everything! (really)" Y004, Box 1, Folder 16, Diana Eidson Papers, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia

THE SOUTH BEND COMMONS

EVIDENCE THAT A JOYFUL AND COLLECTIVE WAY OF LIVING IS POSSIBLE NOW

- GOALS -

The South Bend Commons is dedicated to autonomous self-organization in Lakewood Heights/South Atlanta and the surrounding area: *a real-life gathering place for urban experiments in community, autonomy, and resilience*. The Commons will be home to several projects developed in Atlanta since 2011, including the weekly Free Grocery Program, radically-inspired cultural events, and a martial arts gym.

From free food distribution to public trainings in self-defense, from herbal remedies to poetry readings, The South Bend Commons aims to bring together efforts from every area of life. *The Commons is one moment in an inter-generational effort to move beyond the monotonous and depressing realities of the economy, work, and consumption. We aim to be evidence that a joyful and collective way of living is possible now.*

- CONTEXT -

Everywhere, the landlords have raised rent prices, the streets have been covered with cameras, and condos have replaced our homes and neighborhood spaces. Animal and plant species go extinct everyday - bats, bananas, tomatoes, olives and bees - while the US government props up dictators across the globe in the name of democracy. In revolutions and rebellions across the world, millions of people have risen up to ask themselves: *how do we rid ourselves of this pointless suffering?* We are a humble part of those millions.

- PRINCIPLES -

1) *Reappropriate and collectivize resources, energies, and knowledges to construct the conditions necessary for a good life, outside of and against the constraints of the economy and capitalist exploitation. We organize to overcome the exploitation of our labor, ideas, vulnerabilities and relationships by the rich and ruling classes, and the exploitative extraction of resources from the forests, oceans, and mines of the world.*

2) *Collaborate, and develop skills for that end. We recognize hard work and respect each other's diverse contributions. None of us knows exactly which methods or initiatives will help us to attain our goals, so we appreciate also the efforts we do not understand or involve ourselves in, as long as they retain a sincere connection to our general principles and ethos. Experiments are necessary.*

3) *Reject and work to overcome intolerance, hierarchy, and discrimination based on ethnic, racial, nationalist, and religious differences, along with sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression. Instead of retaining a judgemental distance from the deep-seated conflicts of our lives, we wish to resolve our disputes, to reach a higher understanding of ourselves and our shared world, and forgive ourselves when we fail to do so perfectly.*

4) *Organize for collective autonomy and freedom in the here and now. We coordinate our own initiatives and do not impose or accept the control of authority figures in our efforts. We organize on the basis of shared desires and needs and do not wait for validation from politicians, police, or leaders, regardless of how popular their mandate appears to be. We want to build power that builds power.*

Poster entitled "The South Bend Commons," walls of South Bend Commons.