The question of organization: A manifesto for alternatives*

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abstract

This paper is an attempt to articulate some general principles which might guide anarchist thinking about organized alternatives to market managerialism and might be read as a sort of manifesto for defining 'the alternative'. That is to say, it describes what we include in our list of useful possibilities, and what to exclude on the grounds that it doesn't fit with our definition of what counts as sufficiently different from the present. We suggest three principles which we believe that radicals should be guided by – autonomy, solidarity and responsibility – and that we think any reflection on the politics of organizing needs to deal with. We wish to encourage forms of organizing which respect personal autonomy, but within a framework of co-operation, and are attentive to the sorts of futures which they will produce. This is a simple statement to make but it produces some complex outcomes since gaining agreement on any of these ideas is not a simple matter.

Introduction

> ...anarchy is not the negation of organization but only of the governing function of the power of the State. (Dunois, 1907)

Anarchists are not against organization. The tired old joke needs to be treated as evidence that someone knows little about the ideas they so quickly dismiss. Indeed, we think that anarchist thought and practice is a crucial element in thinking about how progressive politics might be conducted. It is easy to point to

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the problems of the present, and then to suggest (at the end of a series of complaints) that a new world is possible. What is much harder is to systematically imagine what those alternatives might look like, to turn opposition and analysis into proposals. Colin Ward once suggested that anarchist organizations should be voluntary, functional, temporary and small (1966: 387). Whilst this is a provocative beginning, its shows the problem with any attempt to state general principles as if they were truths. 'Functional' for who? Could a temporary organization administer justice, or make computers? How small should an organization be, or how big can it get before we split it in two? Is slavery an alternative to capitalism? Is piracy, or the Kibbutz, or digging unused land for food? At some point, being critical of other economic ideas and institutions must turn into a strategy of providing suggestions, resources and models, but these themselves must be criticized. There are no grounds for assuming that 'alternatives' are somehow new, pure or uncontroversial. 'Politics' will not end because we have new organizational forms.

However, in this paper we want to explore just what sort of principles we might deploy to think about the question of organization. Anarchism is a really rich stream of thought to stimulate such ideas because it is, in an important sense, the first form of 'organization theory' in which 'organization' was assumed to be an open term. From the earliest forms of anarchism the problem was precisely how systems of governance might be arranged in the absence of the divine right of kings, the violence of the state, or the coercions of capital. Unlike the sort of organization theory which exists within the business school, and which assumes economic white man, managers, managed, the sale of labor, the superiority of markets and so on, anarchist organization theory assumes as little as it can. There might be a commitment to some version of individualism and/or community, but even these presuppositions need to be spelled out as a precursor to actual descriptions of communes, federations, syndicalism, mutual aid, co-operatives or whatever. This is to say that anarchism (like some feminisms and forms of green thought) is a system which proposes organizational answers to political questions. It is in this sense that we offer this paper as a contribution to the project of conjoining anarchism and critical management studies. Not anarchist organizing as a closed category, but certainly a theory of organization which is infused with anarchist ideas.

This paper is not a worked out manifesto for a new world which could be inaugurated tomorrow. The world is more complex than that, with different histories and spaces running parallel to the rise of different capitalisms. Neither do we believe that there will be another world one day in which all our problems will be solved once its logic is explained, or humans can become innocent again, or a prophet turns up with some instructions. Instead we argue here that all

forms of organizing are 'political', which is another way of saying that they are contested. They have upsides and downsides, and it simply isn't possible to say that there are some arrangements which are unambiguously good, and others that are unambiguously bad. Markets can be hugely helpful forms of reward and distribution in some circumstances, and communes can be oppressive and narrow places which crush individuals. Hierarchies of authority can be helpful too on occasion, particularly for making quick decisions, while democratic and popular education could easily reproduce sexist and racist ideas. The key issue that we want to bring out in this paper is an awareness of the consequences of particular forms, and to always understand that there are other ways of doing things. We have choices, individually and collectively, and we must never assume that 'there is no alternative' because of certain immutable laws of markets or organizing (Clegg, 1990: 58; Fisher 2007).

This paper is an attempt to articulate some general principles, understood as qualified and contingent, which might guide thinking about alternatives to globalizing capitalism and market managerialism at the present time. We are trying to say what we are 'for' and not just endlessly moan about what we are 'against' (Parker, 2002a). Below, we outline some key principles which seem to tie together the forms of organizing that we are positive about, and might be read as a sort of manifesto for defining 'the alternative'. That is to say, it describes what we include in our list of useful possibilities, and what to exclude on the grounds that it doesn't fit with our definition of what counts as sufficiently different from the present. In broad terms, we will suggest three principles which we believe that radicals should be guided by – autonomy, solidarity and responsibility – and that we think any reflection on the politics of organizing needs to deal with. To summarize very briefly, we wish to encourage forms of organizing which respect personal autonomy, but within a framework of co-operation, and are attentive to the sorts of futures which they will produce. This is a simple statement to make, almost a vacuous one, but it actually produces some complex outcomes, because gaining agreement on any of these ideas is very tricky indeed.

The means and ends of organizing

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. (Foucault, 1983: 231-232)

It isn't always easy to decide what is 'alternative', and we think it would be hard to say that there are any forms of organization, or specific organizations, which we can always and forever decide to be good. There are plenty of accounts of

institutions which start well, but fall into bad habits, or become dominated by a cadre of leaders, or within which the excitement of the new becomes the atrophy of the old. Sometimes we could say that a noble goal has been displaced by a business logic, the logic of capitalism. Another possible explanation is that, as the sociologist Robert Michels suggested with his phrase the 'iron law of oligarchy', those who become powerful within an organization are often motivated by self-enhancement, self-preservation and the consolidation of power (Georgiou, 1981). This means that organizations often just keep on doing whatever it is that they do, like zombies that move, but have no consciousness or heart. As Cheney (2002) notes, organizations don't usually choose to self-destruct, regardless of whether their ends have been corrupted, or their means are still appropriate.

This means that we always need to be wary about organizing, even organizing that looks like it is 'alternative'. Part of the problem here rests on making some judgments about the inseparability of means and ends. That is to say, is it enough to decide that a particular form of organizing aims at an end that we deem to be 'good'? We might well say that it is, and consequently that certain ends justify almost any means. So, if a big bank is making money from microfinance, but people are being lifted out of poverty, then we might be satisfied. Or, if a very hierarchical form of managerialism is being used in a company that manufactures organic foods, then we could still potentially agree that this is a good organization. Of course we can also play these arguments in reverse, and suggest that the means are the evidence that we should use in our judgments. So if an organization was co-operatively owned, but engaged in a particularly cruel form of factory farming, we could perhaps discount the means in some way. Or perhaps we could imagine a form of community currency being used to exclude 'outsiders' from engaging in certain kinds of financial transactions. In these cases, it might be that our care for animals, or for a certain sort of humans, means that the ownership of the organization or the origin of the medium of exchange is pretty irrelevant to our final judgments.

As should be pretty clear, the distinctions we are making here are very troublesome, and could well create some rather paradoxical outcomes. In fact, we believe that any argument about a separation between means and ends should be treated with extreme skepticism, because we do not think you can make a judgment about one in isolation from the other. The distinction between the two often makes us assume that we have no choice, but to use particular methods, or to attempt to achieve particular goals. Max Weber captured the distinction rather nicely in terms of his distinction between the instrumentally rational action which in modern times he saw as characteristic of bureaucratic organizations (*Zweckrational*) and value rational action which was aimed at a particular ethical, political or spiritual goal (*Wertrational*) (Weber, 1978 [1922]). But though they

may seem different, the key issue for Weber is that they are both 'rational' in the sense that they are explanations that can be used to justify forms of action and organization. So the question is not whether one way of thinking is irrational, or less rational, because every form of life is underpinned by a certain sort of rationality. We can't simply disentangle the question of how something is done from the broader issue of why it should be done as if value rationality could simply be discounted, and neither do noble ends justify the use of any means necessary.

Take for example the question of the university. Can we detach 'how' something is being taught from why it is being taught? Many policy makers and students might argue that the university should be relevant to the economy and business, which typically seems to be a way of saying that it should fit students for jobs. In which case, the university is merely a means to get a degree certificate. But it is very difficult to argue that the end of certifying potential employees is the *only* purpose of the university, simply because the means are crucial in order to achieve the end. The process of learning is what we learn, and the certificate you get when you leave states that you have undergone that process, not simply that you have learnt certain facts and can repeat them when poked. Hypnosis or smart drugs would be more effective if this was the case, and we wouldn't bother with reading, listening or talking. Indeed in some sense the educational means are the end, unless we argue that a university is only there to award degree certificates in return for money. To use a different example, we sometimes walk because we want to get somewhere in particular, but we also go for walks because we like walking, and it keeps us healthy, and we can talk with our friends and see interesting things. Which is the means and which is the end?

Think about the idea of making a decision. Within conventional organizations, decisions are made by those with power and status. We could say that a decision is a means to an end, and having 'managers' to make those decisions is a means that ensures that getting to the end is more speedy and efficient. Perhaps, but as many radicals – but particularly anarchists – have argued, we could treat a collective form of decision making as an end in itself as well as a means. This might be based, not on an utilitarian meta-ethics which assumed that means and ends could be clearly distinguished, but an account which orients social practices to virtues which can be collectively discussed (Franks, 2008). We might then think about the art of cooperating, and not about organizing as simply a means to some end (Lovink and Scholz, 2007). If the intention of the organization's members is to take decisions slowly and democratically, then the very process of organizing in a particular way becomes its own reward, as well as a process by which other goals might be achieved. As Maeckelberg's work on the alter-globalization movement shows (2009; 2011), such organizing is 'prefigurative',

in the sense that it attempts to bring new forms of social relationships into being. A distinction between means and end, cause and effect, which seems quite secure in common sense (and utilitarian reasoning) begins to look rather suspicious, and politically loaded, in the context of alternative organizing which attempts to build a new world in the context of the old.

Hence we are suspicious of arguments which suggest that any means are acceptable to achieve certain ends, just as we are about suggestions that only certain means are 'efficient' or justifiable. Allowing big financial institutions to make money from the poor is an useful example here, because deeming microfinance or 'bottom of the pyramid' arguments not to be 'alternative' doesn't mean that we are against poverty reduction, simply that we do not think that any means are justifiable. (And in any case, there might be better means than these.) A key part of our argument here is to show that we can, and should, treat all assertions about the relationship between means and ends as political ones. We should always be suspicious if someone tells that there is no alternative, no choice, and that we should be 'realistic'. The end point of many arguments against change is that things have to be like this because of 'the market', or 'the bottom line', or 'human nature' which are usually assertions that suit pro-capitalists and those who have something to defend in the present state of affairs. In fact, we think that almost no particular forms of human organizing are inevitable, and that there are always choices about means, ends and the relations between them. For example, if we imagine the university as a mechanism for producing the future, then perhaps it can produce different futures, and different sorts of people to inhabit those futures? The only other position is that history has ended and there are no alternatives, in which case writing articles like this, in journals like this one, is an exercise in futility.

Three principles

> ...everyone organizes themselves – organizers and anti-organizers. Only those who do little or nothing can live in isolation, contemplating. This is the truth; why not recognize it. (Malatesta, 1907)

Opening up the politics and possibilities of organizing, whether using anarchist theory or any other, like this doesn't solve our problems. It makes things much more difficult because we can longer admit of any arguments about inevitability, and instead have to justify our individual and collective choices on the basis of what forms of rationality we wish to encourage. These will have to be reasons which encompass both means and ends, processes and purposes, and rest upon some sort of idea about the kinds of society and people we wish to encourage. This means that visions of a better form of social order, ideas about utopia if you

will (Parker 2002b; Parker, Fournier and Reedy 2007), are central to the judgments we might make concerning what is alternative and what is mainstream, about the difference between community and coercion, fair exchange and appropriation. We cannot assume that we will ever know the 'one best way' to organize (to borrow Frederick Taylor's term), and might instead encourage debate about ideas that are different to the way that we do things now – whether old, new, marginal, hidden, possible or imaginary.

Having said that, it seems necessary to try to explain the general principles that we think tie together what we mean by 'alternative' because we are not suggesting that 'anything goes'. There are many 'alternatives' to the present, including fascism, feudalism and slavery, but we are not advocating any of these here. As we noted quickly above, we think there are three broad orientations, values, logics or principles at work here – autonomy, solidarity and responsibility – and in this section we will explore them in a bit more detail.

First, we think that any alternative worth exploring must be able to protect some fairly conventional notions of individual autonomy, that is to say, to respect ourselves. This is not a controversial or novel idea, but one that underpins most conservative, liberal and libertarian political philosophy (Mill, 2005 [1859]; Nozick, 1974). Words like liberty, diversity, dignity and difference are more often honored in the breach rather than the observance but still gesture towards the radical proposal that individual freedoms really do matter. When we feel that we have been forced to do something that we don't want to do we are diminished in an important way and any social system which relies on coercion of an economic, ideological or physical form is not one which we can support easily. This means that we do think that individuals should have choices about some of the most important ways in which they live their lives. If there is no autonomy within a given social system, only rules, then we are justified in calling it totalitarian, uniform and intolerant of difference. For most people this will be an easy principle to establish, because it underlies so much of the ideology which supports neo-liberal capitalism, and yet we also want to argue that it contains a principle which must lie at the heart of any robust 'alternative'. As anarchists like Godwin, Proudhon and Stirner showed, a serious investigation of the conditions of possibility for freedom rapidly leads to a thoroughgoing criticism of the present, even if it is a present which claims to value individuals and encourage difference.

Our second principle reverses the assumptions of the first, and begins with the collective and our duties to others. This could be variously underpinned with forms of communist, socialist and communitarian thought, as well as virtue ethics, and insists that we are social creatures who are necessarily reliant on

others (MacIntyre 1981; Marx and Engels 1848/1967; Mulhall and Swift, 1992). This means that words like solidarity, co-operation, community and equality become both descriptions of the way that human beings are, and prescriptions for the way that they should be. On their own, human beings are vulnerable and powerless, victims of nature and circumstance. Collectively – bound together by language, culture and organization – they become powerful, and capable of turning the world to their purposes. Perhaps even more important than this is the way in which we humans actually make each other, providing the meanings and care which allow us to recognize ourselves as ourselves. In the most general sense, this is what 'social construction' means (Berger and Luckmann 1967), the making of the human through and with other humans in such a way that it becomes impossible to imagine even being human without some conception of a society to be oriented to. In terms of anarchist thought, the collectivism and mutualism of Bakunin, Kropotkin and anarchist communists of the First International fit fairly well with these sort of understandings.

Let's pause a moment before thinking about the third principle, because it's fairly clear that one and two are at best in tension with one another, at worst contradictory. How can we be both true to ourselves and at the same time orient ourselves to the collective? How can we value freedom, but then give it up to the group? Our answer to these problems is that we need to understand both principles as co-produced. For example, when we speak of being free, we usually mean 'free to', in the sense of being free to be able to exercise choices about where to go, who to vote for, what to buy and so on. This is precisely the idea of liberty that we are very often encouraged to imagine as being the pre-eminent principle around which our lives *should* be organized within a consumer society. But a moment's thought also allows us to see that 'freedom to' is only possible if we also experience 'freedom from'. As the political philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1969) put it, 'positive' and 'negative' liberty are not the same things, even if they appear to be aimed at the same goals. The individual freedom to be who we want to be rests on our freedoms from hunger, dislocation, violence and so on which can only be pursued collectively. We, as individuals, can only exercise our autonomy within some sort of collective agreement, a social contract if you like, which provides us with a shelter against events. So 'freedom' is an entirely abstract concept unless it is embedded within some sort of institutions. Otherwise, we might as well talk about being free to starve or pay high interest rates on loans, or at liberty to become a refugee or political prisoner. This is what liberalism, and extreme libertarianism, so often misses. In its entirely credible and modern defense of individual autonomy against despotic exercises of power it tends to have an allergic reaction towards the institutions which are needed to ensure that we can eat well and sleep safely in our beds.

The reverse is also true of course. As the history of the 20th century showed very clearly, just because a social system claims to be collective (whether communist, nationalist, capitalist or national socialist) it doesn't mean that it is. Even if it is supported by a majority, there might be compelling reasons not to support certain dominant norms, to stand out against the mass (Arendt, 1994 [1963]). Often enough, loud claims to be representing others are actually providing a warrant for the powerful to do what they want. The suggestion that individual preferences should always be dissolved in the collective, and that any dissent from the dominant line is heretical, is one that we find in a wide variety of flavors. Liberty is usually suppressed in the name of a greater good – 'the corporation', 'the people', 'the state', 'the nation' – but what is common is that it requires conformity, fear, exile or death to enforce it. There is not such a merit in being collective that the destruction of all liberties is necessary in order to achieve it. Indeed, as Zygmunt Bauman has argued, the impulse to create the perfect collectivity is itself something to be distrusted (1989, 2007). The idea of creating the ideal human within the ideal city is one that requires that people and things which don't fit are 'weeded' out, and that all the contradictions and politics of real people in real places are reduced to a 'year zero' from which we can begin again. It is because of such assumptions - often enough wielded by feudal kings, generals and bishops – that assertions of individual liberty matter.

That being said, the dichotomy between the individual and society is not quite so straightforward or dramatic because it also often mediated by some sort of identity as a member of a group, class or category *within* or *between* wider societies (Jenkins, 2008). When organizing happens on this level – social movements, women's groups, indigenous organizations, social class based politics – it is often protecting a form of collective autonomy against perceived repression or ignorance. The politics of identity insists on the importance of some form of collective distinctions and on the 'right' to express them. Here we can see many practical examples of how a certain sort of individual difference becomes aligned with a cooperative strategy, and, consequently, a form of distinctiveness can be articulated as the precondition for a form of solidarity. When a group of anarchists establish their own co-operative, or the Somali migrants in an Italian city establish self-help groups, they are making an identity claim. We can be 'different together', a position which appears to dissolve a clear distinction between liberalism and communitarianism, between the demand for freedom and the embracing of a collective. This is not the same as insisting on radical autonomy, but neither is it necessarily a form of totalitarianism. As with many matters, the messy reality of actual organizing is rarely as simple as theoretical distinctions would suggest. The fluidity and hybridity of many identities today, including those of class, pose challenges to scholars just as they do to citizens and activists.

In any case, even if we acknowledge that our two first principles do embody a profound contradiction, does this matter? Contradiction is not something to be feared or eliminated by arguments in papers like this, as if the 'one best way' could be described once and for all. Instead it is a lived reality for people who take on the responsibilities of organizing people and things, as they juggle mixed motives and outcomes individually and collectively. The tensions between being free, making enough money, having an impact, worrying about the future or whatever are not ones which will go away by making theoretical gestures. Indeed, if there were no tensions or conflicts in a particular set of ideas it would be difficult to understand it as living thought. If we already have all the answers, if we already know how to do things, then there would be little point in debating alternatives, or learning from anarchism, and no way to understand what a word like 'politics' might mean.

Our third principle is a little easier however, in the sense that it presents a more direct challenge to the externalizing tendencies of capitalism. We think that any alternative worth the name must have a responsibility to the future – to the conditions for our individual and collective flourishing. This will involve words which are used often nowadays, but not always taken very seriously as practices, such as sustainability, accountability, stewarding, development and progress. The economic and organizational structures of the present tend not to encourage such responsibilities, instead treating people and planet as resources which can be used for short term gain by a few. In large part, these are matters which bear upon questions of climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, but not exclusively. The conditions for our individual and collective flourishing are also institutional and cultural; any responsibility to the future must also have regard to the sorts of people we create and the sort of organizational arrangements that they make and that make them. This means, for example, being attentive to what technologies do to us and for us; what sort of assumptions about democracy and hierarchy we embed into our workplaces; or how the architecture of our dwellings separates home from work, or women from men. We take responsibility to be a term which presses us to think about all sorts of consequences, which encourages us to respond to the 'long future', and not insulate ourselves with the usual arguments which merely end up displacing problems to some other place, and some other time. As the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy was supposed to have it – 'In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations'.

What we have here then are three principles which we require of alternative forms of organization, three responsibilities which must be negotiated and understood – to ourselves, to others, and to our future. All three are elements of what we believe to be alternative and any one in isolation is insufficient. An

organization which only defends individual liberty will not be able to co-ordinate very much, but an organization which only demands collective loyalty must necessarily expel disagreement. And, since we don't know and probably won't agree on what the future should look like then the balance between individualism and collectivism will also be written across our futures. These three cannot be treated as matters that can ever be solved for once and for all, but rather as concerns that must be raised, and addressed, in the certain knowledge that there will always be disagreements. Too much concern for ourselves ends up as possessive individualism and selfishness; too much direction from others and bending to the collective will is a form of coercion; and too many promises about the ideal future neglects the mucky problems of the present. For us, evidence of all three is required before we deem something to be 'alternative'.

Organizing as politics

> Certainly in every collective undertaking on a large scale there is need for division of labour, for technical direction, administration, etc. But the authoritarians are merely playing with words, when they deduce a reason for the existence of government, from the very real necessity for organization of labour. The government, we must repeat, is the aggregate of the individuals who have received or have taken the right or the mean to make laws, and force the people to obey them. The administrators, engineers, etc., on the other hand, are men who receive or assume the charge of doing a certain work. Government signifies delegation of power, that is, abdication of the initiative and sovereignty of everyone into the hand of the few. Administration signifies delegation of work, that is, the free exchange of services founded on free agreement. (Malatesta, 1891)

Errico Maletesta, like so many other anarchists, is not against organization. In this closing paragraph of his pamphlet *Anarchism*, he uses the word 'administration', and opposes it to 'government'. For Malatesta and many others, the question of administration, of organization, is open once we refuse the naturalization of government imposed by the state. But this does not mean that anarchists can show us how to organize, and neither should we expect that they can. This would be to abdicate our own choices to another set of experts. Instead, we have suggested three broad ways in which we might judge forms of organization for their radical politics. Thinking about these three dimensions makes organization into a series of choices and encourages us to see that there is always another way of getting things done. It problematizes the relationship between means and ends, often making means into ends themselves. Rather than believing that 'we have no alternative', we become able to see that 'organizing' is an open process, and become more able to understand and debate the values which underpin particular institutions and ways of doing things.

Another implication of this is to think of organizing as a kind of politics made durable[1]. Our current versions of markets, management, hierarchy, leaders, employees, consumption and so on constitute a particular set of political assumptions which are solidified in organizational configurations. These aren't necessary and inevitable arrangements, dictated by the structure of our monkey genes or the misleading metaphor of the invisible hand of the market. Rather than seeing organizing as a technical matter, something to be left to experts with MBAs perhaps, we can understand it as a way of working through the complex ways of being human with other humans and hence a responsibility and possibility for all of us (Parker et al. 2007; 2014). This is why critical management studies has much to learn from anarchism, as well as feminisms, deep green thought and socialism, because it *makes organization radically contingent.* This is the most important implication of all forms of anarchist thought, the reason why anarchists cannot be opposed to organization. Instead anarchists of all stripes have continually problematized the concept, making the implications of social arrangements transparent to those who engage in them. This is what we might call 'reflexive organizing', a form of working which deliberately and continually reflects on how people and things are being put together.

For example, if we claim that democracy – the rule of the people – is a value that we care about then we might reasonably ask just why so many decisions in workplaces are taken autocratically, by a small minority. Arguments from expertise or efficiency might work in particular cases – such as when a doctor uses their expertise to diagnose a medical problem, or something has to be done quickly – but this is not the case in many situations. Why assume that all forms of organization need a class of people called 'managers', and that these people should be paid so much more than the workers? Why are these managers appointed, and not elected? Why assume that the people who work for a company will be different to the people who own it? Why not have workers or trade union representatives sitting on boards of directors? Why do shareholders have votes, but not employees, members of local communities, customers and so on?

Once these sorts of questions and many others are opened up, it is difficult to get them back in the box. The answers become prefigurative of a certain attitude, a constitutive politics in themselves. This is to stress the open ended quality of organizing and the importance of thinking about organizational processes as part of thinking through the recognition of individual autonomy, the encouragement of solidarity, and taking responsibility for the future. As we explored above, how

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1   To rephrase Bruno Latour (1991)

we reach decisions can be as important as the decisions themselves. This is a really important shift, because it moves us away from thinking that organizing is what happens *after* decisions have been taken, and that it can be left to other people. In a society with a complex division of labor, professional politicians and policy makers, global supply chains and gigantic corporations, it is not surprising we should believe this. Most often, the responsibility does not seem to be ours when we swipe a credit card, buy some shoes or tick a box on a ballot paper. We make a choice, and someone else organizes things for us. In this paper we are proposing that organizing is a decision too, a means and an end, a decision which prefigures and shapes what follows.

In some rather important ways, we also think that these principles press us to think locally, to think small (Schumacher, 1993 [1973]), because any meaningful use of words like difference, community, sustainability and so on must refer to a particular group of people with names and faces. Otherwise the words are merely hopeful labels with no referent to the times and places where we live our lives. One of the features of the 'there is no alternative' argument is to point to forces outside the local which constrain decision making. 'If it was up to me...'; 'in an ideal world...'; 'if we don't do this...', are all phrases which deny local agency and point to a framework which means that things just have to be like they are. Other people and things – 'head office', 'the market', 'the customer' – can be given the responsibility for the maintenance of the social order. But this buck passing has a cost in terms of the way that it prevents us from thinking that these responsibilities are ours, and that we can imagine different ways that things can be done. That is why many of our alternatives confront us with the local, with what is in front of our noses, because it is there that we spend most of our lives.

That being said, small isn't always beautiful, particularly when it comes to the avoidance of insularity and the building of (real and metaphorical) bridges. In addition, as Jo Freeman argued in 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' (1970), small groups can also reproduce all the hegemonic problems of larger ones, but in ways that are less perceptible and more difficult to struggle against. Finally, as anarchists from Kropotkin to Bookchin have argued, small institutions can also become large through federalist arrangements entered into freely and with the intention of mutual aid. In networked and connected times like ours the 'will of the many' can be expressed through forms of virtual collectivity which can have demonstrably powerful effects, within the alter-globalization movement for example (Maeckelbergh, 2009). Nonetheless, in the most general terms, smallness is less likely to do as much damage as giganticism. In other words, we don't have to assume that organizations must grow and become big, because in taking our three responsibilities seriously we might decide that local works

better. But whatever the scale, the point is that how we organize reflects political choices.

Not that any of this is easy, because simply imagining that the world could be different merely builds castles in the air. So this manifesto is not merely an idealistic project, in the sense of putting forward some images of what a perfect world might look like, but more like a recipe book, in which the arguments are intended to function to provide some ideas and inspiration. Browsing through a recipe book, you are not told what to make, when to make it, and how to eat it, but are encouraged to think that you don't need to keep on eating Chicken McNuggets if you desire something else. Other theories of organization are available.

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