At the Intersection of Anarchists and Autonomists: *Autogestioni* and *Centri Sociali*

Pierpaolo Mudu[1]

University of Washington - Tacoma
Urban Studies and Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences
email: pmudu@u.washington.edu

Each time a social group (generally the productive workers) refuses to accept passively its conditions of existence, of life or of survival, each time such a group forces itself not only to understand but to master its own conditions of existence, *autogestion* is occurring (Lefebvre, 2001, 779).

Introduction

The main topic of this paper is a discussion on the relationship between anarchists and autonomists, as it was historically produced in Italy in the last thirty-five years. By intersection I mean how and to what extent the people linked to anarchist or autonomist orientations shared principles of action and how individuals sharing these principles interacted. Autonomists, particularly active in the so-called 1977 movement, grew within contemporary Italian communist history, developing a heterodox marxism very close to some anarchist practices. During the late 1970s, to put it simply, the intersection with anarchists was weak. On the other hand, in the 1980s, with the establishment of Social Centers (*Centri Sociali*), politicized punks came to represent the intersection of the two instances. Recent Italian history suggests the need for a new intersection of actions between

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[2] In a 1984 questionnaire, it was found that the readers of *Umanità Nova* were 81,9% men and 18,1% women, with a majority below 30 years old (67,2%).

[3] The high speed railway project between Turin and Lyon has produced a long-term social movement based in the Susa Valley in Piedmont region in the north-west of Italy, close to the city of Turin. This social movement is formed by environmentalists, administrators from all political parties, social centres, anarchists, boy-scouts,

those that practice post-autonomist's and anarchist's visions to produce notable alternatives to dominant trends. Using the Social Centers movements as a case study in relation to issues of self-management (*autogestione*) and autonomy (*autonomia*), I argue for the centrality of *autogestione* in the resolution of "means and ends" debates and consider the problematic nature of decision-making process within the experiences of self-management. In Italy, most of these issues have been marginalized in recent debates, but they are still fundamental to the development of alternative forms of social organization.

The horizon of analysis: Anarchists and Autonomists in the 1970s and beyond

In considering two political orientations that have been differently defined, I decided to limit definitional issues in order to proceed with an analysis and comparison based on documented practices and actions. Agreeing with Owens, narrative, specifically the stories activists tell about the movement itself, is important in movement development. "Narratives not only give shape to the movement, but also constrain action and actors" (Owens, 2008: 248). Specifically, we face a big problem when investigating two movements with great asymmetry with respect to materials bequeathed to us, as autonomists left a very large amount of documents, often self-celebratory, compared to anarchists. In part, this is a function of the larger number of people involved in autonomist and post-autonomist movements.

It is worth noting that in Italy, contrary to what is currently happening in Anglo-Saxon countries, anarchism and autonomy designate two very distinct political paths; they are not synonyms. In contrast, outside Italy,

> There is also a reluctance to use the label 'anarchist' on part of many groups whose political culture and discourse obviously merit the designation. This stems not from any political disagreement with what the word represents to activists, but because of the will to avoid its negative baggage in public consciousness. Thus, movement participants often speak of themselves as 'autonomous', 'anti-authoritarian' or 'horizontal' (Gordon, 2007:32).

Anarchism and Marxism have common roots in the second half of the 19th century with the development of an organized class struggle and the birth of the First International. The traumatic split between Marxists and anarchists happened in 1872 during the Hague Congress. Classic anarchist "doctrine" can be represented as a set of thinkers active between the second part of the 19th century and the 1930s (e.g. Proudhon, Bakunin, Reclus, Kropotkin, Goldman and Malatesta) that share the following views: radical criticism of any authority principle, claims for a full individual autonomy, and a synthesis of freedom and equality principles (Berti, 1994). On other points, anarchists are divided between individualists (e.g. Max Stirner) and collectivists (e.g. Michael Bakunin). Post-classical anarchisms (e.g. Goodman, Clastres and Bookchin) marginalized the idea of mass revolution in favor of a gradual extension of areas regulated by freedom and equality (Berti,

1994). In any case, "Even if we proceed to extract from the history of libertarian thought a living, evolving tradition, […] it remains difficult to formulate its doctrines as a specific and determinate theory of society and social change" (Chomsky, 1998: 3). In the USA and UK, there has been increasing theoretical debate over the past recent years on anarchism and post-anarchism, where post-anarchism has completely abandoned any reference to class struggle, ignoring one of the major vectors of oppressive practices (Franks, 2007).

In Italy, the fascist dictatorship interrupted a long series of anarchist struggles and organizations operating since the unification of the country (De Jaco, 1971). After World War II, anarchists slowly regrouped, taking shape as organizations in the second half of the 1960s (Schirone, 2006). In the 1970s several small anarchist groups were active in Italy on top of more organized formations such as the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI), the *Gruppi di Iniziativa Anarchica* (GIA) or the *Gruppi Anarchici Federati* (GAF) (Cardella and Fenech, 2005). In 1973, a harsh debate developed within the FAI, with a strong conflict with the anarcho-communists, on the way to approach the question of mass organization and the need to restructure the anarchist movement. In 1975, the FAI organized a meeting on the possibility of intervention in social struggles of the working class. That debate spawned the notion of recreating the trade union, which had been inactive since it had been disbanded under fascism in 1925. In 1979 the Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI) was established. To simplify, the composition of the Italian anarchist movement at the end of the 1980s can be conceived as composed of two main fractions: the "organizationalists" and "anti-organizationalists". The organizationalist anarchists are mainly part of the FAI that publishes the weekly journal *l'Umanità Nova*, while the others had as main journals *Anarchismo* and *ProvocAzione*, and more recently *senzaTitolo*. The former groups advocate "revolutionary gradualism" while the latter is organized into cells which advocate sabotage and armed struggle against capitalism. The latter also advocate insurrection and are highly critical toward the rest of the anarchist movement, which they often label "social-democrats" (Editorial in "Anarchismo", 1987). Elements common to both these factions are the rejection of hierarchies or top-down structure in any form, the practice of decentralized bottom-up political action and the idea of an egalitarian society not organized into states.

Autonomists have a more recent history than anarchists. The *Autonomia* movement, sometimes called *Autonomia Operaia* (Workers Autonomy) or *Autonomia Organizzata* (Organized Autonomy), had its origin in the first half of the 1970s (Comitati Autonomi Operai di Roma, 1976). Its theoretical origin lay in a 1960s heretical Marxist movement termed workerism (*operaismo*), whose more prominent exponents were Romano Alquati, Raniero Panzieri, Antonio Negri and Mario Tronti (Wright, 2002; Borio et al. 2002; Negri, 2005). In the mid 1970s, following the *operaismo*-founding group's break-up, *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power) was formed and joined by such intellectuals and activists as Luciano Ferrari Bravo, Antonio Negri, Franco Piperno and Oreste Scalzone (Borio et al., 2002). In

the late 1970s, with the partial decline, if not dissolution of new left organizations like the *Manifesto* group, *Lotta Continua*, *Avanguardia Operaia* and *Potere Operaio*, *Autonomia* became the leading extra-parliamentary movement (Balestrini and Moroni, 1997).

> "[*Autonomia*] is a series of independent groups based in a locality, workplace or around a particular issue. […] Indeed, within a given city there may be two or more autonomous groups which are divided by serious theoretical or tactical differences. At a national level all that exists is a group of well known theoreticians who put forward analyses which are then rejected or integrated into the politics of the various groups" (Fuller, 1981).

While currently the anarchist movement has several groups using the "anarchy" label, the same cannot be said for the autonomists. Although the *Comitati Autonomi Operai* existed until 1994 (Bianchi and Caminiti, 2007), since the end of 1980s there are almost no groups defining themselves as *autonomi*. This means that a proper comparison between autonomists and anarchists can only be made by taking into consideration the decade from mid 1970s to mid 1980s. Taking into account the Social Centers experience, an investigation into the relationship between anarchists and post-autonomists can be extended to successive years.

Anarchists and autonomists in the 1977 movement: few intersections and much divergence

In 1977, following a decade of mobilization, there emerged a radical antisystemic movement, in which anarchists and autonomists took part, that eventuated into a series of revolts lasting several months (Balestrini and Moroni, 1997; Ginsbourg, 2003). The uprising involved several large cities, spreading through factories and other workplaces and educational institutions. The movement actually took control of many streets, squares, and neighborhoods. In this way, the desire to break the postwar Fordist order – a desire for freedom from petty bourgeois lifestyle, from labor constraints, from gender and religious repression – was realized spatially.

Most documentation on the 1977 movement ignores the presence of anarchists in the movement. This absence can be attributed to a greater role for autonomists or to a conscious choice by anarchists not to join the larger movement. As 1977 marked the heyday of autonomism in Italy, it may be worthwhile to take a look at what happened that year. A review of the main autonomist and anarchist journals (*Anarchismo*, *Autogestione*, *Autonomia*, *Collegamenti*, *Rosso*, *Ultimi fuochi* and *Umanità Nova*) does not offer much news or analysis of anarchists in the movement. However, there is a book where a meeting of anarchists debating the 1977 movement is reported (VA, 1977). The meeting took place in Turin on 28-29 of May, which means that the participants met after some salient political

events had passed, such as the expulsion of the general secretary of the Communist trade union (CGIL) from the University of Rome (17 of February), the subsequent occupation of all Italian universities, police killings of leftist activists, and mass armed conflict with police in Rome. What transpired from that anarchist meeting is a lack of consensus over defining anarchist or revolutionary movements and the recognition of *Autonomia* as a politically heterogeneous grouping. Demonstrations were viewed as small revolutionary moments and the 1977 movement was perceived as prefiguring a post-revolutionary society (VA, 1977). It appears clear that the participants had difficulties in finding intersections between anarchists and autonomists. Nevertheless, some themes represented points of intersection:

- Anarchists are divided over the issue of political violence
- *Autonomia* differs from anarchism in its propensity for producing leaders and without any mechanism to suppress their emergence (VA, 1977: 56)
- The self-critical assessment of the use of irony as a paternalistic approach often due to being at the margins (VA, 1977: 73)
- An appreciation for the production of jokes, new slogans, dance, theatre, singing and other unusual forms of struggle that cannot be easily defeated by parties and institutions (VA, 1977: 118)
- The emergence of joy as a new political category, representing at once a new value corresponding to the same labor logic that produces leaves and vacation and a possibility of moving toward *autogestione* (VA, 1977: 68)
- A feeling that, regardless of the presence of anarchists in the movement, there was in the 1977 movement an anti-authoritarian direction (VA, 1977: 72)

In all this, it must be noted that the participants were all males. At that time the anarchist movement was composed by students (VA, 1977: 56) while the autonomists, though gender unbalanced, were a much more variegated group[2]. Conflicts between feminists and autonomists were common and occasionally very heated, while they were limited among anarchists, who also participated in feminist collectives (Matilde and Marina, 1976). Nevertheless, many anarchists claimed that the feminist movement had several limitations that could not be ignored: interclassism, sectarianism, and serious errors in leading the pro-abortion struggles (Gruppo Centocelle – F.A.I., 1977).

In 1977, it appears clear that: 1) autonomists were ignoring the anarchists, 2) the anarchists were on the margin of the movement and 3) most of them were critical of the behavior of autonomists, accusing them to trying to hegemonize the whole movement (Angelini, 1977). At the same time, some anarchists were

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interested in supporting the most violent actions carried out by the participants of the movement, particularly in March 1977 (Lombardi, 1977). Anarchist participation in workplace conflicts was actually rare (e.g., Anteo, 1987). More interesting is the activity of the *Indiani Metropolitani* (Metropolitan Indians), an anarchist group adopting situationist and Dadaist forms of protest (Echaurren, 2005). Also influential was the experience of the anarchists in Bologna running free Radio Alice and experimenting with new forms of expression and political discourse (Landi, 1976).

Differences with the autonomists were underlined in an editorial of the weekly anarchist magazine *Umanità Nova*, where it was stated that "Autonomia is not anarchist but marxist" and "it is not enough to define oneself and the political area of activity as autonomous if the practices carried out constantly reproduce authoritarian relationships and militarism" (*Umanità Nova*, 1977, translation by author). In 1986, a brief summary of the relationship during the 1970s between anarchists and autonomists was published in another article in *Umanità Nova* (Un compagno, 1986). In the article the heterogeneity of *Autonomia* is recognized, but stigmatized as a tendency toward vanguardism and Leninism. In contrast, a few years later, again in *Umanità Nova*, other articles described many anarchists' perception of autonomists as real revolutionaries well-rooted in social struggles (Siri, 1989) and the anarchist-autonomist relationship as one of parallel political vanguards (De Rose, 1989). Still, autonomists were treated as distant through, for example, disapproval of workerist enthusiasm for the development of productive forces achieved by the introduction of automation and information technology. Negri is explicitly criticized in his thesis that only the construction of capitalism can offer truly revolutionary conditions and that communism is imposed primarily by capital as a condition of production. Instead, for anarchists, the capitalist system has led to productive relationships for which society has become an appendage of the production cycle. In other words, capitalist relations of production have become capitalist social relations (Varengo, 1987). Such political differences are reinforced among autonomists. For example, Virno, a scholar close to *Autonomia*, surmises that critical thought in Italy is rooted in Workerism, Situationism, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, the journal *Primo Maggio*, and Sohn-Rethel (Virno, 2008: 16). Anarchism is entirely excluded. All in all, the heyday of the *Autonomia* movement saw very little intersection with the anarchist movement. What about the last twenty-five years?

The movement of the self-managed social centers in Italy over the last twenty-five years

In the second half of the 1980s the breakdown of *Autonomia* generated the Social Centers movement, which is still present in many Italian cities, the COBAS grassroots trade union and various, mostly locally rooted collectives (Bernocchi, 1997). The experience of the Social Centers represents a fundamental "exit strategy" for autonomists and corresponds to a new generation of anarchist

struggles. The expression Social Center is really a catch-all term for different experiences in space and time:

> [A Self-managed Social Center is a] Space, usually but not necessarily urban, conquered by a group (mostly heterogeneous) of people who use it directly to meet their own needs and to give space to any creative form that is totally outside any kind of commercial and speculative business and acting independently of any external political supervision (OACN, 1988, translation by author).

Although the 1970s saw many examples similar to Social Centers, the 1985 squatting campaign done in Rome and Milan marked a threshold and the birth of a second generation of squatting movements. Examples of squatting from other European countries were also discussed, but the movement had its peculiarity in absorbing and combining a novel generation of "activists". In fact, a new generation of anarchists, mostly punks, intersected with autonomists to become an important actor in squatting and discussing politics (De Sario, 2009). The punk movement was born as a radical critique of all standardized rules of life, using transgressive looks, behavior, music and featuring a rejection of political involvement with the simultaneous development of a political consciousness (Philopat, 2006). A slogan in the cover of a punk zine summarizes this attitude very well as "politicized punk-punkized politics!!!" (*punk politicizzato-politica punkizzata!!!*) (Figure 1). Many punks define themselves as anarchists, although the majority is unaware of any anarchist tradition and disconnected to other anarchist groups. Punks were connected to each other by strong personal links and nomadism. For example, in 1987, the fanzine "Pannokkia", produced by Roman punk anarchists, was distributed in Milan, Bologna, Turin, and Genova. The anti-profit self-production and self-management of music (similar to DIY in the US) constituted punks' main political activity (Finzi 1983; Punx anarchici di Roma, 1989).

Figure 1. Cover of the punk zine *Nuova Fahrenheit*

In the 1970s, autonomists were advocating for the possibility of exiting capitalist exploitation through the expansion and unsettling of labor activities in all aspects of life, with self-management representing a secondary aspect. But the recovery and development of these ideas only re-emerged in the 1980s, though in a situation where open conflict was no longer feasible. Punk anarchists mixed with the autonomists to produce spaces of amalgamation, that is spaces where the cooperation of people of ostensibly different inclinations embodies a social constitution project, and a prolific movement, exemplified by the Social Centers (Consorzio Aaster et al., 1996). The 50-page National Bulletin of "Punx Anarchists" (1987-89) represents the extent of this movement's political development and achievements in self-management. This document, among other themes, confronted the topics of self-production and distribution of music records, house squatting, sexism, anti-nuke struggles, ecological topics, and vivisection (Figure 2).

The 1990s opened a new phase for the Social Centers with the spread of a large protest movement throughout Italian Universities. Contrary to previous movements, this did not give birth to a new ruling class or mass arrests. A new generation of students then re-territorialized their new political skills with the number of Social Centers diffusing throughout Italy (Mudu, 2004). During the mid 1980s, anarchists and autonomists were also part of a common struggle against nuclear plants (Un compagno, 1986). In fact, anti-nuke rallies and demonstrations became sites of convergence over strategy, especially on "direct action" (Un compagno, 1986). This was reinforced at the end of 1989 when many were mobilized after the Milan Leoncavallo Social Center was attacked and destroyed by police (Scarinzi, 1989; Sternai and Decortes, 1993).

In the 1990s, the political map of post-autonomist Social Centers became more complex with the former *Autonomia* divided into at least two factions. One was lead by the north-eastern Social Centers, later *Tute Bianche* (White Overalls) and then *Disobbedienti* (Dissenters). The other was more tied to the COBAS and local struggles. In contrast, the two main factions of the anarchist movement were linked through squatting experiences, with the "organizationalists" supporting Social Centers and the "anti-organizationalists" supporting more dispersed practices of squatting, like Temporary Autonomous Zones, or T.A.Z. (Bey, 1993; Quaderni Libertari, 1994). For the latter, squatting is associated with violating laws and undermining property relations (Colin, 2010). At the same time, local government officials in many cities began petitioning for the formal legal recognition of the Social Centers, thereby creating a split between those favoring and those refusing negotiation with the authorities. Such a split became increasingly visible with members of some Social Centers running for elections through various left-wing parties in 1998 (Dines, 1999).

Figure 2. 1988 and 1989 covers of national bulletin of punk anarchists

There were therefore both movements of convergence and divergence between post-autonomists and anarchists, depending on which faction one considers. For example, the relationship between *Disobbedienti* and anarchists became increasingly distant over the 1990s (El Paso and Barocchio Occupato, 1994), with the latter accusing the former of spectacularism and leaderism (Albertani, 2002). Music is another medium through fractures have arisen, with some Social Centers promoting and others rejecting hip-pop and ragamuffin groups over differing political and strategic considerations, especially in the content of the message and the relationship to the music industry. The anarchist Social Center *El Paso* in Turin, for instance, had on its web site a clear stance in this regard: "no slogans, no posers, no rock-star attitude" (Berzano et al., 2002).

Part of this divergence is due to changing social conditions. In the 1980s, anarchists were not averse to getting public funds, as long as they were not the

outcome of political compromise (Moroni, E., 1987). Fund-raising is still largely done through food and beverage catering and artistic events. In the anarchist Social Centers there is a preference for selling food and drinks at their cost, with no surcharge, and entry to concerts is free or covered by donation. The shift to a neoliberal service and knowledge economy has altered the nature of work and job precariousness has expanded rapidly. Volunteer work, which earlier constituted the only accepted form of labor, has come to mean something different. The dismantling of welfare states opened many opportunities for some Social Centers to cover social needs until then covered by state welfare, but this is viewed negatively by many anarchists because it undermines self-management by introducing self-exploitation (Porcu, 1987; Zanantoni, 1996). This contrasts with the view of the *Disobbedienti*, who have no compunction regarding having people working in Social Centers for a wage (Membretti, 2003). Paying salaries to some of the regular volunteers and negotiating with political institutions are some of the biggest points of contention dividing anarchists and fractions of post-autonomists.

In the 1980s and the 1990s, other than the few "mixed" Social Centers there was much overlap in counter-information campaigns on issues such as police repression, animal rights, and the use of new technologies (Miki, 1998). Sharing radio activities and the production of news, events in front of jails and the jail issue *per se*, and antifascist defense activities complete the picture of this intersection (Bersano et al., 2002). Once the political context changed (e.g., an increasingly reactionary institutional left) and the Social Centers movement spread out all over Italy, divisions developed and intensified. By the 2001 anti-G8 meeting in Genova, the Italian antagonistic (antifascist and anti-capitalist) movement was clearly divided (Mudu, 2009). Since then, separated anarchist and post-autonomist Social Centers have emerged, with very few intersections linked to local conditions on specific issues or single events such as in the Milan Mayday demonstrations, in referenda against the privatization of water and the reintroduction of nuclear energy, and in the struggles against the high speed railway project between Turin and Lyon (NO TAV)[3]. Anarchist Social Centers have also resisted several recent waves of repression and, like their post-autonomist counterparts, they have demonstrated concerns about avoiding degenerating into vanguardism. The integration of different factions and the search for alternatives to neoliberal politics have represented a difficult task for the whole Social Centers movement. This difficulty is also reflected in awkward debates or exchanges of opinion and a self-referential attitude that can lead to isolation, which is particularly strong in the anarchist's case. However, within the spaces of intersection between anarchists and

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[3] The high speed railway project between Turin and Lyon has produced a long-term social movement based in the Susa Valley in Piedmont region in the north-west of Italy, close to the city of Turin. This social movement is formed by environmentalists, administrators from all political parties, social centres, anarchists, boy-scouts, religious delegates, researchers, and many other individuals and groups, motivated by the need to protect the environment but it is also a political and cultural struggle against the development logic of globalisation. (Greyl et al., 2009).

post-autonomists there is a fundamental issue, *autogestione* (self-management), which is worth exploring more in detail as it lies at the core of running activities in Social Centers.

Autogestione: from factories to communities

In the 1970s and 1980s, the debate was animated by a set of old and relatively new questions. Is self-management an immediate means or a strategic objective? Does the practice of self-management imply "renouncing an overthrow of the old world"? Does self-management represent the most radical alternative to the current capitalist system? Or is self-management just a survival technique? It is useful here to recapitulate some of the answers that ensued from this debate. In Italy, self-management experiences derive from three main processes: 1) organization of intentional communities (communes), 2) organization of the work-force and 3) organization of struggles at the local scale.

The old idea of creating alternative utopian space was revisited during the 1970s when there was a remarkable development of the communes movement, of which there has been a lack of careful attention (Olivares, 2007). In the past, this issue attracted the interest of the most prominent socialists and anarchists. According to Proudhon, self-management was the revolutionary fact of the 1848 revolts (Circolo Culturale "Errico Malatesta" Livorno, 1989). Eminent anarchists, such as Malatesta, presented a dissenting opinion on the issue. Malatesta, criticizing the project of a commune called *Cecilia* by Giovanni Rossi in Brazil, stated that "It offers to oppressed people vain hopes of emancipation without the need of a revolution" (letter by Malatesta to the journal "La Rivendicazione" of Forlì, 18 march 1891). In the 1970s, the revival of the experiences of communes – mostly rural and mostly a failure – to escape capitalist dominance has represented an important influence in addressing self-management issues. At the same time, at least in Western Europe, since 1968 there has been an increase of anti-authoritarianism particularly against the education system and the working conditions in factories. During the occupation of factories and the experience of self-management carried out by workers, the power and control that self-management enabled was clear, such as when taking crucial decisions on assembly line stoppages (Leonetti, 1974). In the debates of those years, self-management was envisaged as a working class revolutionary path, developed in work places, prefiguring a transformation in factories and in the whole of society.

In the 1970s, self-management was linked to working-class factory experience. A prevailing contemporary definition of self-management offers the following picture: "[self-management] is the management of a company, service or administration by those who participate one way or another in its operation. Nothing else!" (Leonetti, 1974: 5, translation by author). Working-class self-management (*gestione operaia*) and self-management were considered synonyms and marxists' activists often cited self-management experiences in China,

Yugoslavia and Algeria (Joyeux, 1979). The question of self-management arrived in Italy also thanks to a large international debate and from different yet related types of political struggles (e.g., the Black Panthers or the anti-Vietnam War movements). The geopolitical provenance of the question of self-management is important not only historically, but also in theoretical terms: the non-aligned movement, much like both anarchists and autonomists in Italy in the 1970s and beyond, were attempting to carve out a third space beyond both (U.S.) capitalism and (Soviet) socialism. It is from such political experiences, for example, that Samir Amin's notion of "delinking", that is a national refusal to bow to the dominant logic of the international capitalist system (Amin, 1990), emerges, a notion that is related to *Autonomia*.

The third experience of self-management is linked to local struggles (e.g. for housing) that increased in connection to working-class mobilization in factories and workplaces. In the 1980s, after the defeat of working-class struggles and the introduction of neoliberal policies, there was a recovery of the experience of self-management that also constituted a main pillar in the development of the Social Centers. This link between self-management and factory struggle required some central questions to be reformulated. How is self-management possible within a working environment that is successfully preserving a class structure? How is self-management possible within a surveillance oriented society? These questions reflected a shift in the focus of political discussion during the 1980's. Self-management lost appeal as a tool for the institutions or for the Communist Party as advocated by Lefebvre (2001) and became an experience not originating from workplace struggles, but an attempt to move from small community experiences toward the rest of society. This indicates considerable modification in the discourse on self-management. The term lost any connection to trade-union conquest of workplace and factory management. This term was also marginalized through the most prominent experiences of the movement and it developed according to different inspirations: ecological, existential and political (Matteo, 1996).

The practice of self-management is a fundamental point because the need to organize particular horizontal forms of organization represents one of the main areas of intersection and debate between the anarchists and the post-autonomists, who are both engaged in running self-managed Social Centers (Marelli, 1989).

Self-management and autonomy to taking and transforming space and time

Discussing and comparing how anarchists and autonomists differently conceive of self-management can be done through looking at the operation and conceptualization of their social centers. The conception of Social Centers leads us to analyze the meaning of self-management and autonomy and which components establish self-managed Social Centers. Self-management and autonomy are differently considered in debates between anarchists and post-autonomists. Historically, with the end of *Autonomia*, post-autonomists subsumed the idea of autonomy under self-management, and recent Italian experiences of self-

management have incorporated autonomy. The two concepts both refer to ways to manage activities, but as Berzano et al. report, in many discussions, the "autós" in autonomous can be considered as referring either to single individuals or to a collective (Berzano et al., 2002). However, since the 1980s, the concept of autonomy has dropped out of the anarchist narrative and most of the debate has been carried out by autonomists and post-autonomists.

From a theoretical point of view, the relationship between self-management and autonomy are complicated.

> In biology, an autonomous organism is an element that functions independently of other parts. Political autonomy is the desire to allow differences to deepen at the base without trying to synthesize them from above, to stress similar attitudes without imposing a "general line", to allow parts to co-exist side by side, in their singularity (Lotringer and Marazzi, 2007, 8).

According to Berardi, the concept of autonomy has three main meanings: 1) immediacy, 2) deregulation and 3) stratification (Berardi, 2007). First, autonomy means independence from the general interest of the capitalist class and the search for an immediate political answer/output not mediated by any party. Secondly and thirdly, autonomy is carried out by violating labor laws and rejecting rules, but by supporting deregulation and the possibility of building a layer of an autonomous network of people denying the dialectical vision of an alternative revolutionary force that abolishes the previous mode of production (Berardi, 2007). Quoting Agnoli, Katsiaficas assigns to the Italian *Autonomia* two dimensions: class struggle that attempts to develop autonomy from the circulation of capital and class struggle autonomous from leadership by the traditional organizations of the Left. He further states that the workerist definition of autonomy is but one of its many forms (Katsiaficas, 2006). If we consider autonomy etymologically, following Castoriadis, *auto-nomos* literally means self-legislating (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006). But this idea is at odds with the Italian experience if we do not specify which "legislative" aspect we refer to. All in all, this aspect can be identified with constitutional principles more than with a search for regulations or rules. The cooperative convergence of subjects for autonomy is perfomed through an active common experience, a *constituent power*. "With the performative aspect of deciding, determining, founding" [constitution] takes on the meaning of collective subjectivation and common positioning. Common agreement and decision-making, "con-stituting" in other words, found a common "con-stitution" (Raunig, 2007). The Italian case shows that autonomy does not take the form of establishing rules, although self-managed and independently chosen, but does establish principles for action, related to precise historical contexts and movements. Autonomy has developed as a constitutional frame that embraces long-term principles, such as freedom from labor exploitation or racist oppression, and generates new questions, for example on the commons. Both self-management and autonomy become meaningful within precise space-time contexts. Squatting has provided a

fundamental aspect of this constitutional framework. Conquering a space for self-management and autonomy is a fundamental "diversion", a *détournement*, meaning that:

> An existing space may outlive its original purpose and the raison d'être which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated ad put to a use quite different from its initial one (Lefebvre, 1991, 167).

This diversion is itself an appropriation, not creation, a re-appropriation which can call but a temporary halt to domination (Lefebvre, 1991). Re-appropriation through transgression becomes a long-term device for rethinking the nature of the public-private boundaries and demanding a public space in which resistance can be exercised (Mitchell, 2003). In Europe, several scholars have turned their attention to the construction and functioning of spaces of convergence within the global justice movement, where various types of spaces exist (e.g. autonomous, situationists, queer; see among others Routledge, 2003; Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; Brown, 2007). By participating in spaces of convergence, activists embody their particular places of political, cultural, economic and ecological experience with common concerns, which lead to expanded spatiotemporal horizons of actions (Routledge, 2003). Most of the theoretical efforts have been proposed after considering Harvey's arguments that place-based resistance frequently articulates a "militant particularism" incapable of global ambition. "Anti-capitalist movements […] are generally better at organizing in and dominating 'their' places than at commanding space" (Harvey, 1996, 324). Nevertheless, the space dominated by capitalist relations has contained alternative experiments linked by the practice of self-management that constitute a way to command space. In the narrative produced by Social Centers, self-management is generally used with a double meaning. Firstly as a way to manage specific activities, and secondly to refer to a general system of social relations, in a kind of utopian vision (Scarinzi, 1991). According to *il Collettivo del Labirinto* (1994): "Self-management involves self-organization, the ability to be with others in the repudiation of racism, sexism, social climbing, hierarchy and all forms of oppression to create organizations that are the basic germ of a new freer and fairer society" (Il Collettivo del Labirinto, 1994, translation by author).

Analyzing Social Centers, it has to be recognized that self-management consists of three different components: 1) a component related to the establishment of an alternative public sphere with direct and autonomous participation of individuals and collectives, where decision-making is channeled into an assembly and not delegated (Mudu, 2004); 2) a wide area related to social relations, art, health, education, solidarity, knowledge, emotions, birth and death, communication and the promotion of similar experiences elsewhere (Martìnez, 2002); 3) a reproductive and economic component, which allows the Social Centers to survive, conflicting with the hierarchies organized by the market and industrial and financial structures (Padovan, 1995). All these components constitute the current

meaning of self-management, and they include three core dimensions: 1) a decision-making process for specific activities, 2) a general system of social relations, and 3) a hidden process of class struggle.

Self-management dimensions: decision-making processes

At the core of self-management lies a dilemma, choosing an organizational form and adopting a decision-making process. The background to this dilemma lies in the fact that capitalism is constantly promoting institutionalization, using it as a way to control external opposition forces. Institutionalization means that a movement is channeled into a stable pattern based on formalized rules and laws and this can happen through three different ways: flexible institutionalization, terminal institutionalization, and cooptation (Pruijt, 2003: 134). In this regard, it is worth quoting the following definition: "A Social Center is a "space" within which you can experiment with forms of non-institutional action and association" (Scarinzi, 1989, 5; translation by author). All Social Centers have had to face this issue. Flexible institutionalization happened in Amsterdam and terminal institutionalization in New York (Pruijt, 2003). While in Denmark, the BZ movement differed from most other social movements in not being institutionalized (Mikkelsen and Karpantschof, 2001). Social Centers always run the risk of becoming institutions in the sense of an organized knowledge and power structure. Institutionalization is in many discussions a synonym for organization. The discussion over an "anarchist organization" has crossed the whole history of the Italian Anarchist Federation (Rossi, 1986). Luigi Fabbri in 1907 wrote:

> As they say, organization is a method and not a purpose. This is wrong. [...] For this reason, the organization propaganda must be carried out as unceasingly as the propaganda for all other principles of the anarchist ideal … Organization is the lesser evil in making our work effective, it represents a theoretically discriminating factor. The alternative is not between organization and freedom, but between authoritarian organization and libertarian organization. (FAI, 1986, 4; translation by author).

Various past self-managed organizations have disappeared, for example many religious orders, and this is certainly linked to the fact that organizational forms are historically produced. Max Weber considered bureaucracy a rational entity, a closed system, superior to any past organization in terms of social organization. Bureaucracy is a vertical hierarchical system while decision-making processes adopted by Social Centers incorporate an assembly and deliberative democracy model (Piazza, 2011). The different decisional processes adopted are very seldom a topic of discussion among Social Centers (Punk, 1987). In the discussions published by most of the Social Centers, the general assembly is "the only decisional moment" (e.g. CSA Palermo, 1989). Decision-making is a social process that implies the selection of a problem, discussion, production of a limited set of alternatives, agreement, and execution (Snyder et al., 1962). But the decisional

process cannot be, in any way, reduced to the way meetings are organized. The scale of the squatted place and of the people involved has an obvious effect on self-management decision-making processes. In the case of big squatted buildings with the presence of several activities the decision-making process is constituted by a continuous process of nested decision-making micro-dynamics. This nested system of decision-making actions is a framework that can range from very complex systems of interactions to very simple ones. While political decision-making can be conceived of as involving both the search for both problems and alternatives, in many Social Centers the decision making process is "degraded" to problem-solving tasks where both the problem to be solved and the alternative solutions are given and oriented by previous informal meetings and discussions. In a small structure with a limited number of activists, there will probably be a "single" collective able to control and organize the space and time for activities, as with a regular weekly meeting. In many other cases, decision-making is a continuous process. In practice, the running of a Social Center is granted by regular or irregular interactions (also through the use of the web) of a set of variable semi-open networks that share and transform the same self-managed space.

Two additional important aspects in decision-making processes are the selection of topics discussed and consequent actions carried out and the degree of heterogeneity and openness of the network that acts over a small or large structure, and in particular small networks are fundamental (Mikkelsen and Karpantschof, 2001). On the process of selecting topics within self-managed Social Centers, it is true that some issues are still considered private and not important or appropriate for group decision and taking action often seen as the more urgent matter (Wilkinson, 2009). According to the Social Center scale of work, actions are usually taken as mutual support of a "movement of movements" agenda, that is a mix of glocal (e.g. NO TAV) and global struggles (e.g. support to the EZLN). On the degree of network tightness there is a deep disagreement among anarchists. Organizationalist anarchists polemically maintain their support for an organization by "synthesis", with heterogeneous subjects, against the anti-organizationalist anarchists who are supporters of an organization by "affinity", with homogeneous subjects, often made up, for example, of trusted friends (Comidad, 1988). According to supporters of affinity-based organization, the organization by "synthesis" is an empty formalism, absolutely devoid of content, where people come together without a common scale of values and precise objectives and the organization becomes a useless end in itself. According to those who support the organization by "synthesis", an affinity-based organization means selecting only absolutely similar subjects with the exclusion of diverse subjects, and the best example of affinity organization is the KKK, where white supremacist groups get along together closed to any contamination (Comidad, 1988). Part of the post-autonomist Social Centers, in particular those linked to the *Disobbedienti* (the most famous example being *Leoncavallo* in Milan) adopted a process of decision-making that recognizes the existence of leaders. Most *Disobbedienti* Social Centers have a spokesperson that speaks on behalf of the group (Montagna, 2006). Both

COBAS and anarchists have been critical of the *Disobbedienti* approach. When the debate on the possible legalization of Social Centers reached its peak, anarchists, without distinction, wrote that self-management represents: 1) a way to expand individual and collective subjectivities, 2) a possibility to break the distinction between manual and intellectual work and 3) the core of anarchy and the only governmental procedure acceptable (El Paso and Barocchio Occupato, 1994). Self-management represents the economic theory of anarchism, the attempt to create a new economic system based on anarchist theory (Canovas, 1979), while in the post-autonomists' debate self-management has a slightly reduced role as means, as a way to support larger activities. The different approach of anarchists and post-autonomists on organizational and decision-making forms suggests a set of critical issues that lie above any idea of an alternative society based on solidarity and equity.

Self-management dimensions: critical issues in building an alternative system of social relations

A key concept in activism is prefiguring the society you want to live in (Wilkinson, 2009). Currently, this prefiguration is very limited not only because it is bounded by several constraints, but also because it ignores the different irreducible subjectivities that form the movement. When self-management is referred to as a general system of social relations, a social organization, to be invented, then the discussion is very problematic. In any case, some problems have to be addressed in the construction of a self-managed project. First, there is the impossibility of cutting links with the external world and the difficulty of networking with similar experiences. This is sometimes linked to the fact that self-managed activities absorb almost all the energy and time of the people involved, leaving little space for contacts development. Second, the existence of a social order in liberated spaces that promotes participation and refusal of work discipline, but recognizes the individual right not to participate, introduces the issue of how to deal with anti-social behavior. This issue assumes a system of juridical regulation that has to be invented (Crespi, 1979). This means a shift from the idea of harmonious self-managed communities (like the ones projected in the nineteen century by Owen or Fourier) toward self-managed communities that are internally conflictual (Crespi, 1979). Third, there is a hidden agenda, difficult to perceive, that represents a relevant, real, common ground for action. This is the difficulty of building a mechanism of relations and spatialities able to lessen dominance patterns (e.g., leadership production and masculine forms of reproducing "revolutionary" subjectivities prone to martyrdom and sacrifice). The only way out of reproducing dominance patterns appears to be the building of a self-management project based on the recognition of subjective differences that reduce power relations, as proposed and discussed within the anarchist movement and based on Foucault's ideas (Vaccaro, 1996). Fourth, self-management must be specified clearly and practiced transparently. This point is important because the promotion of self-management is not in itself a clear dividing line in our societies. It can degenerate,

for example, into co-management (Lefebvre, 1991) and capitalists can agree on the promotion of self-management as valuable. Either a condominium or a concentration camp can offer examples of self-management experiences. The same ambiguity that can be attached to self-management can also be attached to the concept of autonomy, which can originate from a liberal and individualistic affiliation (Bookchin, 1998). Autonomy can avoid cooptation only if it is within a self-managed project that is oriented to produce ways of preempting dominance patterns.

Conclusions

My conclusions are that viable self-management projects can be identified at the intersection of anarchist and autonomist experiences, enabling the delineation of some critical issues for building self-managed projects, as described below. From an historical point of view, autonomists and anarchists have uneven connections. It is irrelevant to go back to the past in search of common origins or common "fathers" or to look for analytical definitions derived by theoretical speculation. Moving along this line, we need to avoid assigning a conceptual unity for movements that do not constitute a unity but are a function of self-labeling and a feature of concrete activities, including strong narrative formations. When we have to analyze a set of events, of facts that are distributed and characterized by the action of different antagonistic agents, a relevant point is to track the practices of intersection that revolutionary movements have built and reproduce. It is important to work at the intersection of this line of actions particularly when the intersection is connected to an amalgamation. In Italy, at the core of this intersection lies the issue of self-management. The word self-management, at the center of a large political debate in the 1970s, was transformed by the 1980s into a project attached to the experience of Social Centers, where anarchists and autonomists initially interacted to produce such projects. The 1980s Social Centers represent a case of a strong social amalgamation generating a space for the constitution of alternatives. During the 1990s, self-management remained, but its meaning changed. The word was associated through anarchist and post-autonomist practices with a clear set of experiences and emancipatory projects. In this context, self-management brings into question the system of decision-making, the process of producing *nomos*, and hence the power of authorities or other control mechanisms. It is important to recognize decision-making within self-managed experiences as a continuum of conflictual processes, in opposition to separated, delegated, passive performances. From one side, self-management is completely influenced by the issue of limitation and extinction of private property rights (where anarchist reflection is usually focussed) and labor exploitation conditions (where autonomist and post-autonomist reflection is usually centered). From another side, self-management defines spaces of resistance with different scalar impacts, from very local to global, and it constitutes one of the conditions that allow networks of resistance to move through space-time frames left out of the neoliberal domain. Self-management frontiers represent a window into the spatiality of many different fundamental aspects, such

as decision-making processes, labor time, and the production of artistic performances. The historical experiences seem to suggest overcoming the discussion on self-management as a problem of means/ends to concretely tackle the way to build and maintain a more open self-management project able to enlarge the public purview of its intervention to more problematic fields like health or education, energy and environment. While we know very well the mechanisms of privatization of existing space, we still lack a coherent discourse on the process to building new public space. Social Centers provide one example of communing space and land de-grabbing. But self-management expansion requires three conditions to be met: 1) a search for the area of intersection between the refusal of any form of exploitation and domination (being labor or gender or ethnically based) and the organization of social activities; 2) the recognition that this intersection is embedded in a spatio-temporal experiment of innovative, inclusive property forms that leads to the definition of new public space; 3) an awareness that the potential advances that become available through self-management will not "guarantee" any evolution towards a predefined socialism.

Italian Social Centers have demonstrated the long-term capacity to resist capitalist supremacy. Even in the most surveilled and patrolled areas of the planet, where security policies attempt to dominate the whole life of people, it is possible to build forms of antagonisms, alternative living, different decision-making processes, capable of governing important aspects related to a broad range of social activities. This generates the paradox of a search, of a definition of a form of government, or better a self-government, that is an "anarchist government" or "an autonomous" one, when anarchism and autonomy are supposed to be a search of the absence of any government domination (Scrima and Vaccaro, 1994). We have to reconsider the idea that the only way to achieve self-managed and egalitarian society is entrusted to a remote future social revolution carried out by more marginal social classes. We have to consider at this time the possibility not only of exploring and implementing practical and autonomous situations of self-management but also to stress the extreme connections, the reshaping of lived spaces and times originating from these experiences. Recent Italian history suggests the need for a new intersection of actions between those that practice post-autonomists and anarchists visions to produce notable social alternatives to dominant structures. It is then necessary to build a political practice able to disassemble the cage, the barriers, borders, clichés, and exclusive and parochial notions of identity, community, activism and life-style.

At least at the beginning of the Centri Sociali experience, the distinction between anarchists and autonomists on self-management practices was not constitutive of the Italian debate on the production of alternative practices to capitalism. This may have the salutary effect that the split between anarchist and post-autonomist approaches is less profound than it appears, and the combination of different collectives is again possible. Furthermore, the rich and heterogeneous tradition of examples and experiments of the Italian radical scene should be taken

more systematically into account to build forms of resistance and antagonism more positively correlated than in the recent past. The Italian case has to be considered in particular when considering the alter-globalization movements where the autonomists/anarchists dynamics are renowned (Gautney, 2009). In fact, in the alter-globalization movements all the various heterogeneous experiences opposing capitalism have to rescale their notions and understand where global issues become localized.

The Italian context sees corruption as the leading political process of neoliberalization and a quite stable reactionary hegemonic block that also includes the majority of the institutional left, supported by the Vatican, ruling the country. Neoliberal policies are enforced with the support of a media system entirely monopolized by few groups and private interests. Within this context there are various possibilities to ignite struggles at different scales (and even have them as successful as in the NO TAV case in Piedmont), but there are very few possibilities to make changes that could affect most of the population. These possibilities should be explored because movements can make visible those processes of exploitation and dispossession that have not been perceived as such. Extreme complications arise when imagining the framing of scales as networked common spaces?. Currently, only a set of alliances based on the defense of the commons pays in terms of mobilization and circulation of counter-hegemonic information (De Angelis, 2010). Alliance is rightly considered as a mainly opportunistic action and it is much better to shift our focus to what can be defined as "spaces of amalgamation", where heterogeneous subjects and networks can combine, mix and change and make changes. If a space of amalgamation is necessary (and the internet can be a supportive tool), it is not sufficient to ensure enduring positive results. Again, the case of NO TAV is very notable in showing the fact that, alongside repression through the courts, even a military invasion can be planned and imposed by neoliberal forces. This means imagining radically different scalar measures of resistance. It is clear that a self-managed experience, an autonomous mutual aid and free society, in the midst of a capitalist society is impossible, but the existence of what can be defined as "relatively autonomous" spaces of social action, such as the ones of the Social Centers, support the formation of conditions for larger spaces of amalgamation of anti-capitalist forces. The big issue is then how to enlarge and intertwine these spaces by a network of constantly evolving links. Neither anarchists, nor post-autonomists alone provide the answer.

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