Effective co-ordination, achieved through the informal networks of affinity, kinship, traditional and intentional community, workplace and, yes, even perhaps ritual and religious practice. Socially embedded networks, developed at the level of the everyday, are as opaque to the authorities as they are indispensable to subversive activity. Let what’s left of the Left engage in monumental plans for grandiose national—now even global—federations. (Federations and movements of what? Paradises before the world’s TV cameras? No thanks.)

Effective subversion must be organised out of the gaze of domination, in a sequestered physical, cultural or social location; those areas that are least patrolled by authority. (Anarchist and eco-activist meetings are mostly conventions for police informers, wannabe reformist politicians and co-conspiracies.)

For those who look only on the surface of things, those seduced by the spectacular image of defiance, the strategy posed here might be seen as a retreat from ‘conventional’ class struggle. But all things are precisely not as they seem; this is the very form that traditional successful class struggle has always taken. The clandestine, apparently innocuous, maybe even anti-political assembly provides the fluidity, the guerrilla mobility, for effective subversive action.

No Name No Slogan
For us, there are immediate uses and gains in formations such as these; no leaders to round up.

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1. A close association of two independent animal or plant species. (Greek: a living together)

The Tuatara Lizard (Sphenodon punctatus) has a symbiotic relationship with two birds, the Diving Petrel (Pelecanoides sp.) and the Sooty Shearwater (Puffinus griseus). The Tuatara is a living fossil—the only remaining example of the reptilian order Rhynchocephalia; the rest of this group of animals have been extinct for about a hundred million years. The Tuatara has lived almost without change for two hundred million years, passed by evolution thanks in part to its isolation on islands off New Zealand. It sports a crest of elongated movable plates along its neck and back giving rise to its name, which means ‘spine bearer’ in Maori. Not reproducing until the age of twenty, it lays its eggs in burrows—usually those inhabited by birds. The eggs remain in the nest for up to sixteen months (a very long time for a lizard or a bird). Once hatched, the lizard can live for up to three hundred years. The birds with which it associates live in colonies with burrows close together, giving the lizard a measure of safety, as the birds have a noisy early warning system if danger threatens. From the birds’ point of view, the lizard protects eggs and nestlings from nest thieves and cleans the burrows of parasitic insects.

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Insurrectionary Anarchy

Organising for Attack!

"From a certain point onward, there is no turning back. That is the point that must be reached."—Franz Kafka.

For us anarchists the questions of how to act and how to organise are intimately linked. And it is these two questions, not the question of the desired form of a future society, that provide us with the most useful method for understanding the various forms of anarchism that exist.

Insurrectionary anarchism is one such form, although it is important to stress that insurrectionary anarchists don’t form one unified bloc, but are extremely varied in their perspectives. Insurrectionary anarchism is not an ideological solution to social problems, nor a commodity on the capitalist market of ideologies and opinions. Rather it is an ongoing practice aimed at putting an end to the domination of the state and the continuance of capitalism, which requires analysis and discussion to advance. Historically, most anarchists, except those who believed that society would evolve to the point that it would leave the state behind, have believed that some sort of insurrectionary activity would be necessary to radically transform society. Most simply, this means that the state has to be knocked out of existence by the exploited and excluded, thus anarchism must attack: waiting for the state to disappear is defeat.

Here we spell out some implications that we and some other insurrectionary anarchists have drawn from this general problem: if the state will not disappear on its own, how then do we end its existence? Insurrectionary anarchism is primarily a practice, and focuses on the organisation of attack. Thus, the adjective ‘insurrectionary’ does not indicate a specific model of the future. Anarchists who believe we must go through an insurrectionary period to rid the world of the institutions of domination and exploitation, moreover, take a variety of positions on the shape of a future society—they could be anarcho-communist, individualist or primitivist, for example. Many refuse to offer a specific, singular model of the future at all, believing that people will choose a variety of social forms to organise themselves when given the chance. They are critical of group or tendencies that believe they are ‘carriers of the truth’ and try to impose their ideological and formal solution to the problem of social organisation. Instead, many insurrectionary anarchists believe that it is through self-organisation in struggle that people will learn to live without institutions of domination.

There is also another, more specific usage of the term ‘insurrection’—one that comes from the distinction Max Stirner, a 19th century German philosopher and individualist, drew between insurrection and revolution. 1. To Stirner, revolution implied a transition between two systems, whereas insurrection is an uprising that begins from an individual's discontent with their own life and through it the individual does not seek to build a
Without a Trace

Dominant culture rarely interests itself in evidence other than that which shows willing and enthusiastic complicity from its subjects. Acts of refusal and revolt are effaced from the historical record when they expose the tenuous control of authority. Even when they do appear, presence, motives and behaviour are all mediated through the lens of elite partiality which works to deny that we are capable of generating the ideas and means of our own liberation.

That much most of us recognize; it is the premise of class history developed in the 1960s by the likes of EP Thompson, Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawn. But theirs is also a particularist history, focused as it is on the same level of public appearance as that of the Establishment. Just as real life is elsewhere than on television, so the history of resistance is at the very least written between the lines of the official record of leaders, followers and climactic events. In the interests of self-preservation, the ruling class and its official recorders—journalists and other such vermin whose social position depends upon the maintenance of class society—invariably work to keep attention only on a protest leaders (whether real or imaginary) and particularly on those with superior status or privilege.

But as well as those who lack the influence to have their words and actions recognised as important are those who have no intention whatsoever to be identified. It is in this realm of individual and collective refusal that has proved the most resilient to exposure in the historical record. A vast area of active political life is ignored for the simple fact that it takes place at a level we rarely recognise as political. Trained by the mass media to applaud the spectacular action rather than the incremental and prudent, all is in the appearance, the image of revolt as reproduced through that same mass media. But much political activity is elaborated among an intentionally restricted public: that excludes or is hidden from the gaze of authority. So it is not only that the historical record is kept by elites, for those that subserves themselves have an interest in concealment of their activities (for starters, this gives us greater personal security and self control), such acts as these were never meant to be recordable, and they were often successful only insofar as they were invisible. The most successful poisoning of class oppressors, for example, are those never known as such. Just like the perfect crime, the subversive act seeks to escape all detection, cover its tracks and avoid appearance in the archives; for the perpetrators to strike (anonymously) again. Only those who wish to be martyrs, self publicists or media personalities would wish to wait around to offer their names and have their picture taken. Though the point, by its very nature, is impossible of proof, apparent docility is the measure of subterfuge, and is only broken by spreading of acts of sabotage. The anonymous practice of social self-liberation could spread to all fields, breaking the codes of prevention put into place by power.

In moments when larger scale insurrections are not taking place, small actions—which require unsophisticated means that are available to all and thus are easily reproducible—are by their very simplicity and spontaneously uncontrollable. They make a mockery of even the most advanced technological developments in counter-insurgency. In the United States, a string of arsonists of environmentally damaging projects, some claimed under the name Earth Liberation Front, have spread across the country due largely to the simplicity of the technique. In Italy, sabotage of high speed railways has spread uncontrollably, again because anyone can plan and carry out their own action without needing a large organisation with charts and constitutions, complex techniques or sophisticated knowledge.

In addition, contrary to the mathematicians of the grand revolutionary parties, it is never possible to see the outcome of a specific struggle in advance. Even a limited struggle can have the most unexpected consequences. The passage from the various insurrections—limited and circumscribed—to revolution can never be guaranteed in advance by any method, nor can one know in advance that present actions will not lead to a future insurrectionary moment.

Roots of Insurrectionary Anarchism

As insurrectionary anarchism is a developing practice—not an ideological model of the future or a determinist history—insurrectionary anarchists do not take the work of any single revolutionary theorician as their central doctrine; thus insurrectionary anarchists are not Bakuninists, for example, and feel no need to defend all his writings and actions. Yet Bakunin was historically important to the development of an anarchism that focussed its force in insurrection. Unlike Marx, who built his support in the First International, mostly within the central executive structure, Bakunin worked to build support for co-ordinated action though autonomous insurrections at the base, especially in Southern Europe. And since Bakunin’s time insurrectionary anarchists have been concentrated in Southern Europe.

In the responses to the Paris Commune of 1871 and in the conflicts of the First International one can see the formation of insurrectionary anarchism’s basic concepts. Whereas Marx believed that the new political forms of the Commune (forms of democracy and representation) would advance the social revolution, Bakunin argued that political and organisational forms had held the social revolution back. Also influential to later insurrectionaries, Bakunin argued that it was one’s actions that would spread the revolution, not words. In 1871 Marx and his supporters allied themselves with the followers of Blanqui—from whom the concept of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” came—to cut Bakunin and his supporters out of a special conference of the International held in London. Bakuninists held their own conference in Sonviller, arguing that hierarchical and political means could never be used to gain social revolutionary ends. As the Sonviller circular stated, it was impossible “for a free and egalitarian society to come out of an authoritarian organisation.” Marx begrudgingly termed the Sonviller conference “anarchist,” and those in Sonviller called the London conference “Marxist” to mark its authoritarian attempt to control the International. In 1872, Marx succeeded in expelling Bakunin from the International and recouring all member organisations to advocate the conquest of political power as the necessary prerequisite to revolution.

Social and Individual Struggle

Another issue that has caused a lot of debate within anarchist circles is the supposed contradiction between individual and social struggle: again, this is a question of the organisation of struggle. This is a debate that has gone on and still goes on within the insurrectionary anarchist circles; Renzo Novatore stood for individual revolt, Enrico Maiastata for social struggle, whilst Luigi Galleani believed there was no contradiction between the two. Novatore, an Italian anarchist who died in a shoot-out with the police in 1922, wrote, “Anarchy is not a social form, but a method of individuation. No society will concede to an individual more than a limited freedom and a well-being that it grants to each of
multinational company whose headquarters is in Canada, there are thus many points at which revolutionary solidarity with the villagers of Styrminokos could have been enacted. Fundraising on behalf of one's comrades is necessary and surely appreciated, but this can be combined with more active forms of solidarity with those who struggle against our common enemies.

Revolutionary solidarity communicates the link between the exploitation and repression of others and our own fate, and it shows people the points at which capitalism or the state operate in similar ways in very different places. By creating links between struggles against the state and capital, revolutionary solidarity has the potential to take our local struggles to a global level.

Moreover, revolutionary solidarity is always an active attack; it always involves the recovery of our own active powers that multiply in combination—in solidarity—with the active powers of others. Many insurrectionary anarchists have been involved in the resistance against the RIES prison regime (Ficheras de Internos de Especial Seguimiento—Inmate Flies for Special Monitoring) in Spain. This is a revolutionary struggle because it is not only aimed at a normal prison, but ultimately its goal is the disappearance of prisons, which involves a radical social change. It is a self-organised struggle, in which there are not any leaders or representatives, neither inside the prisons nor outside, but only solidarity that grows between exploited people both from inside and outside the wall.

One of the primary strengths of informal organisation is that it allows anarchists to intervene in intermediate or specific struggles without our own fate, using principles or demanding uniformity of action and politics. Informally organised struggles may be composed of affinity groups with quite different political perspectives from each other, but will work together in their long-term goals might not come together. For example, an anti-genetic engineering (GE) group could form and decide to coordinate the burning of test crops and to circulate anti-GE material. In this case those who want an insurrectionary rupture with this social order and those who merely hate genetic engineering could easily work together towards this immediate goal. Groups that take a more insurrectionary approach to action, however, often end up in conflict with other groups working around similar issues. The Earth Liberation Front, an informally organised set of groups which have taken a position of attack on these they see as destroying the earth, have been vilified by the mainstream environmental movement. At the same time, they would probably be criticised by many insurrectionary anarchists for focusing defensively on the protection of the earth and ignoring the social aspect of revolution. What is important to allow different groups to work together is coordination with autonomy.

For those who wish to open the possibility of insurrection, such co-operation will not close the door on their dreams. Informal organisations, with their ethics of autonomy and no compromise, does not control struggle, and uncontrollability opens the possibility for an insurrectionary rupture with the present social order.

Notes
2. 'Anarchists' who generally turn their back on direct action, and use legal politics to try and gain reforms and establish 'anarchist controlled' towns.
5. A Project of Anarchist Organisation by Enrico Malatesta (1927) See:
6. www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/6170/malatesta_project.html
8. When arrested Nikos refused to recognise the authority of the whole legal system. He made a radical anarchist statement to the court during his trial, giving the reasons for the bombing, and explaining his revolutionary hatred for the state and industry. He is now released.

Further Reading
It's worth looking at these two English language insurrectionary anarchist journals:

Killing King Abacus, PO Box 993, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, USA.
Email: kk_abacus@yahoo.com
Web: www.geocities.com/kk_abacus

Wild Disobedience

Web: www.geocities.com/kk_abacus/sbutterfly.html

Many insurrectionary anarchist writings can be obtained from Elephant Editions publications. These, many pamphlets, can be ordered from them at: Elephant Editions, BM Elephant, London WC1N 3XJ, England. Many of them can also be found on the web at:

www.geocities.com/kk_abacus/ia/ia/ssa.html
For insurrectionary anarchist texts in Spanish check out the Palabras de Guerra website at:
http://flag.blackednet.net/pdg/

there is no equality or identity of individuals implied in true communism. What forces us into an identity or an equality of being are the social roles laid upon us by our present system. Thus there is no contradiction between individuality and communism.

The insurrectionary anarchist project grows out of the individual's desire to determine how one will live one's life and with whom one will carry out this project of self-determination. But this desire is confronted on all sides by the existing social order, a reality in which the conditions of our existence and the social relationships through which our lives are created have already been determined in the interests of a ruling class who benefit from the activities that we are compelled to do for our own survival.

Thus the desire for individual self-determination and self-realisation leads to the necessity of a class analysis and class struggle. But the old workerist conceptions, which perceived the industrial working class as the central subject of revolution, are not adequate to this task. What defines us as a class is our dispossession, the fact that the current system of social relationships steals away our capacity to determine the conditions of our existence. Class struggle exists in all of the individual and collective acts of revolt in which small portions of our daily life are taken back or small portions of the apparatus of domination and exploitation are obstructed, damaged or destroyed. In a significant sense, there are no isolated, individual acts of revolt. All such acts are responses to the social situation, and many involve some level of complicity, indicating some level of collective struggle. Consider, for example, the spontaneous, mostly unspoken organisation of the theft of goods and the sabotage of the work process that goes on at most workplaces; this informal co-ordination of subversive activity carried out in the interest of each individual involved is a central principle of collective activity for insurrectionary anarchists, because the collective attitude towards the interests and desires of each of the individuals in re-appropriating their lives and often carries within it a conception of ways of relating free of exploitation and domination.

But even lone acts of revolt have their social aspects and are part of the general struggle of the dispossessed. Through a critical attitude towards the struggles of the past, the changes in the forces of domination and their variation between different places, and the development of present struggles, we can make our attack more strategic and targeted. Such a critical attitude is what allows struggles to circulate. Being strategic, however, does not mean there is only one way to struggle; clear strategies are necessary to allow different methods to be used in a co-ordinated and fruitful way. Individual and social struggle are neither contradictory, nor identical.

Critique of Organisation

In Italy, the failure of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s led some to reassess the revolutionary movement and others to abandon it altogether. During the '70s, many Leninist groups concluded that capitalism was in the throes of its final crisis, and they moved to armed struggle. These groups acted as professional revolutionaries, reducing their lives to a singular social role. But by the 1980s they came to believe that the time for revolutionary social struggle had ended, and they thus called for an amnesty for movement prisoners from the '70s, some even going so far as to disassociate themselves from the struggle. This separated them from insurrectionary anarchists who believed that a revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism and the state still continued, for no determinist history could name the present people may wish to open the possibility for insurrection, while others are only concerned with an immediate goal. There is no reason why those who share an immediate practical aim not divided in their long-term goals might not come together. For example, an anti-genetic engineering (GE) group could form and decide to coordinate the burning of test crops and to circulate anti-GE material. In this case those who want an insurrectionary rupture with this social order and those who merely hate genetic engineering could easily work together towards this immediate goal. Groups that take a more insurrectionary approach to action, however, often end up in conflict with other groups working around similar issues. The Earth Liberation Front, an informally organised set of groups which have taken a position of attack on these they see as destroying the earth, have been vilified by the
organisation of struggle: permanent conflict, self-management and attack. Permanent conflict meant that the struggle would remain in conflict with the construction of the base until it was defeated without mediatising or negotiating. The leagues were self-organised and self-managed: they refused permanent delegation of representatives and the professionalisation of struggle. The leagues were organisations of attack on the construction of the base, not the defence of the interests of this or that group. This style of organisation allowed groups to take the actions they saw as most effective while still being able to co-ordinate attack when they saw the potential of struggle spread. It also kept the focus of organisation on the goal of ending the construction of the base instead of the building of permanent organisations, for which mediating with state institutions for a share of power usually becomes the focus and limiting the autonomy of struggle the means.

As the anarchists involved in the Comiso struggle understood, one of the central reasons that social struggles are kept from developing in a positive direction is the prevalence of forms of organisation that cut us off from our own power to act and close off the potential of insurrection. These are permanent organisations, those that synthesise, produce within a single organisation, and organisations that mediate struggles with the institutions of domination. Permanent organisations tend to develop into institutions that stand above the struggles. They tend to develop a formal or informal hierarchy and to disempower the multitude: power is alienated from the multitude and institutionalised within the organisation. This transforms the active multitude into a passive mass. The hierarchical constitution of power relations removes decision from the multitude and the issue of need necessary and places it within the organisation. The practical consequence of such an organisation is that the active powers of those involved in the struggle are stifled by the organisation. Decisions that should be made by these involved in an action are deferred to the organisation; moreover, permanent organisations tend to make decisions based not on the necessity of a specific goal or action, but on the needs of that organisation, especially its preservation. The organisation becomes an end in itself. One needs only to look at the operations of the many socialist parties to see this in its most blatant form.

As an organisation moves towards permanence and institutions to stand above the multitude, the organisation appears—often claiming to have created the struggle—and begins to speak for the mass. It is the job of the organisation to transform the multitude into a controllable mass and to repress that mass to the media or state institutions. Organisers rarely view themselves as part of the multitude, thus they don't see it as their task to act, but to propagandise and organise, for it is the masses that act.

The Opinion Factory

For the organiser, who takes as their motto "only that which appears in the media exists", real action always takes a back seat to the maintenance of the media image. The goal of such image maintenance is never to attack a specific institution of domination, but to affect public opinion, to forever build the movement or, even worse, the organisation. The organiser must always worry about how the actions of others will reflect on the movement; they must, therefore, both attempt to discipline the struggling multitude and try to control how the movement is represented in the media. Image usually replaces action for the permanent organisation and the organiser.

The attempt to control the vast image and opinion-making factories of our society is a losing battle, as if we could ever try to match the quantity of images put forward by the media or get them to "tell the truth". Thus, many insurrectionary anarchists have been very critical of carrying on the struggle within the capitalist mass media. In this, they have put them at odds with organisations such as Ya Basal which see the media as a key vehicle for their movement; in other parts of the world, the question of how anarchists should relate to the media has been a focus of debate in recent years—especially since 1999 in Seattle—and it is therefore important for us to spell out the critical position of some insurrectionary anarchists.

On a basic level, we need to ask, what is opinion? An opinion is not something first found among the public in general and then, afterwards, replayed through the media. The simple reporting of the public opinion. An opinion exists in the media first. Secondly, the media then reproduces the opinion many times over, linking the opinion to a certain type of person (conservatives think X, liberals think Y). Thirdly, as Alfredo Bonanno points out, "An opinion is not a preconceived idea, an idea that has been unironed in order to make it acceptable to the largest number of people. Opinions are massified ideas." Public opinion is produced as a series of simple choices or solutions ("I'm for globalisation and free trade" or "I'm for more national control and protectionism"). We are all supposed to choose—as we choose our leaders or our fate—without the need of thinking for ourselves. It is obvious, therefore, that anarchists cannot use the opinion-making factory to create counter-opinions, and hopefully anarchists would never want to operate on the level of opinion even if we could somehow exert control over the content spewed out of the factory gates. Anyhow, the ethic of anarchism could never be communicated in the form of opinion; it would distance massified. Yet, it is exactly on the level of opinion that the organiser works, for opinion and image-maintenance are the very tools of power, tools used to shape and discipline a multitude into a controllable mass.

Instead of moving power and decision making into an organisation, most insurrectionary anarchists believe we need to organise in a fashion that lacks the formality and authority which separate organisations and organised; this is called informal organisation. For example, the organiser's role is to plan and control, the activity of the organisation is the perpetuation of the organisation over other goals. Informal organisations, on the other hand, don't have the goal of achieving a goal; instead, the result of the organisation is the perpetuation of the organisation over other goals. Informal organisations, on the other hand, don't have the goal of achieving a goal; instead, the result of the organisation is the perpetuation of the organisation over other goals.

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mean to say however that we shouldn't think strategically about the future and make agreements or plans. On the contrary, plans and agreements are useful and important. What is emphasised is a flexibility that allows people to discard plans when they are inadequate and develop new plans. Plans should be adaptable to events as they unfold. Just as an informal organisation must have an ethic of autonomy or it will be transformed into an authoritarian organisation, an organisation that鮯s to the alienation of our active powers, it must also have an ethic of no compromise with respect to the organisation's agreed goal. The organisation's goal should be a renunciation of a power, not a new kind of power. Compromising with those who we oppose (e.g. the state or a corporation) defeats all true opposition, it replaces our power to act with that of our enemies.

The scraps handed down to appease and divert us by those we oppose must be refused. Compromise with any institution of domination (the state, the police, WTO, IMF, 'The Party', etc.) is always the alienation of our power to the very institutions we supposedly wish to destroy; this sort of compromise results in the forfeiture of our power to act decisively, to make decisions and actions when we choose. As such, compromise only makes the state and capital stronger. For anarchists who wish to confront and defeat the institutions of domination, for those who don't wish to wait for the supposedly appropriate material conditions for revolution, for those who don't want a revolution which is merely the creation of a new power structure but want the destruction of all structures which alienate power from the people, compromise is contrary to their aims and continually refuse to compromise is to be in perpetual conflict with the established order and its structures of domination and deprivation. Permanent conflict is uncontrollable autonomous action that does not compromise with power.

Revolutionary Solidarity

Revolutionary solidarity, another central practice of insurrectionary anarchism, allows us to move far beyond the 'send a cheque' style of solidarity that so pervades the Left, as well as solidarity that relies on petitioning the state for relief or mercy.

One example of revolutionary solidarity was Nikos Mazotis' action against TVX Gold in December 1997. Many people in the villagers against the installation of a gold mining plant in their area. In solidarity with the villagers, Nikos placed a bomb in an abandoned hotel Development that was intended to explode when no one was in the building; unfortunately, it never went off at all. Nikos was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but is now free. TVX Gold is a