



Anarchism in the Web of Transnational Social Movements

Christopher Chase-Dunn

University of California-Riverside

chriscd@ucr.edu

John Aldecoa

University of California-Riverside

john.aldecoa@email.ucr.edu

Ian Breckenridge-Jackson

University of California-Riverside

ibrec001@ucr.edu

Joel S. Herrera

University of California-Los Angeles

isherrera@ucla.edu

Abstract

Anarchists have played a visible and significant role in global civil society since the 19th century and in the New Global Left since it emerged in the 1990s. Horizontalism and social libertarianism have been central components of the contemporary World Revolution and were also important in the world revolutions of 1968 and 1989. Anarchists have participated in the Social Forum process at the global, national and local levels and, in various ways, have influenced the contemporary world revolution far beyond their numbers. We use surveys from Social Forums to examine how self-identified actively involved anarchists are similar or different from other attendees. We also conduct a formal network analysis to examine the links that the anarchists have with other social movement themes. Despite the small number of self-identified anarchists, our findings suggest that anarchist organizational approaches and political values are widely shared among the activists who have been involved in the Social Forum process.

Keywords: Anarchism, Transnational Social Movements, TSMs, World Social Forum



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Anarchists and anarchist ideas have been important elements of the New Global Left since the Zapatista rebellion in Southern Mexico against the neoliberal North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994. The World Social Forum process has been an important venue for the formation of a New Global Left since 2001 (Santos 2006; Reitan 2007; Smith *et al.* 2014). The founding of the World Social Forum in 2001 was a reaction to the exclusivity of the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland since 1971. The emergence of the World Social Forum signaled the coming together of a movement of movements focused on issues of global justice and sustainability. The social forum process has since spread to all the regions of the world.¹

The Transnational Social Movement Research Working Group at the University of California-Riverside began conducting paper surveys of the attendees at Social Forum meetings at the world-level meeting held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2005.² Similar surveys were mounted at the United States Social Forum held in Atlanta, Georgia in 2007, the world-level Social Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2007 and the U.S. Social Forum meeting held in Detroit, Michigan in 2010. These surveys included questions on demographic characteristics, levels of activism, political attitudes and involvement in a long list of movement themes (Chase-Dunn *et al.* 2007 Coyne *et al.* 2010; Reese *et al.*, 2008, 2012).³

In this article, we use the Social Forum survey data to examine the ways in which Social Forum attendees who claim to be “actively involved” in anarchism are similar to, or different from, other attendees and other attendees who also are actively involved in other movements. We distinguish between those anarchists who “strongly identify” as anarchists and those who claim to be “actively involved” in the anarchist movement. Self-identified anarchists do not necessarily participate in protests or other social movement actions. Yet, to be actively involved in the anarchist movement implies *both* strong identification and participation in social movement actions. Distinguishing between the two categories elicits important differences in terms of political attitudes and behaviors. We also use the survey data to examine the connections that anarchists have with other social movements based on their assertions of active involvement in other movement themes.

Anarchism in the Geoculture

Important anarchist political principles include participatory democracy, delegation instead of representation, consensual decision-making, and refusal to participate in electoral politics and other institutionalized political mechanisms. The various strands of anarchist thought have converged around the shared ideals of individual liberty and egalitarianism. Right-wing and left-

¹ Demographic and attitudinal characteristics of attendees are presented in Reese et al. (2008).

² The project web site contains the WSF05, WSF07 and USSF07 and USSF 10 survey instruments. See <http://www.irows.ucr.edu/research/tsmstudy.htm>. All network calculations employed the UCINET 6.130 software package (Borgatti, Everett & Freeman 2002).

³ What we call “movement themes” include both ideological constellations (e.g. anarchism, communism, etc.) and topical issues. The latter groupings of social movement organizations around their goals have been called “social movement industries” (Zald and McCarthy, 1987; Snow and Soule 2010:152).

wing anarchists both emphasize individual liberty but differ with respect to the values of egalitarianism and communitarianism.

The values of individual liberty and egalitarianism have a long and complicated history that dates back to early hunter-gathering societies that highly valued—indeed, still value—the egalitarianism and autonomy of small polities (Flannery and Marcus 2012; Bettinger 2015; Scott 2009, 2017). The individualism and egalitarianism of small-scale polities is embedded in a kin-based mode of accumulation in which individual persons are understood to be importantly linked and co-dependent upon nature and other family members and autocratic behavior is strongly sanctioned. The emergence of complex and hierarchical societies produced new kinds of individualism rooted in the idea that each human person is a unique being that is endowed with important rights—“little gods” as John W. Meyer (2006: 160) put it.

Immanuel Wallerstein (2006; 2012) posits that the major contradictions of the modern geoculture (global political institutions and ideas) revolve around a central criticism of the logic and norms of Western liberal universalism—what he calls Centrist Liberalism. Western values of development and progress present a totalizing force of Western imperialism that includes and implies the racism and sexism upon which the modern world-system was founded. But the geoculture also includes the Global Right that began in the nineteenth century as defenders of established religions and aristocratic privileges and came to adopt a meritocratic vision of equal opportunity that legitimates existing inequalities (Noél and Thérien 2008). The Global Left [which Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein (1989) called “the family of antisystemic movements”] critiques and seeks to abolish class, racial, ethnic and gender inequalities.

Anarchist libertarianism appears on both sides of the geoculture—on the right as individual liberty over all else (e.g., Ayn Rand, Robert Nozick) and on the left as the autonomy and equality of individuals and local communities—but it is left-wing anarchism that we are studying in this paper as an important movement within the evolving Global Left. Both left-wing and right-wing anarchists profess anti-statism and treat all states as if they are institutions that allow exploitation and domination to occur. This stance decries the importance of the ideological and structural differences between authoritarian and democratic states, implying that democratic institutions are just a smoke screen to cover exploitation and domination.

Anti-statism also was an important value expressed by the New Left in the World Revolution of 1968⁴ and a stance that was adopted by the neoliberal globalization project that emerged as a reaction to 1968 but adopted some of the ideological tropes of the New Left. The New Global Left that emerged in the 1990s continued to espouse anti-statism, a stance that was embodied in the Zapatista refusal to participate in electoral politics in Mexico and in the constitution of the World Social Forum that emerged in 2001.

The anarchist ideals of individualism and personal liberty continue to reemerge in somewhat different forms across human history and societies. But anarchism is not just reproduced in every generation. We contend that its significance in the current “World Revolution of 20xx” is much

⁴World revolutions are decades-long periods in world history in which local rebellions cluster in time across the world-system. Iconic years of rebellions are used to symbolize the ideational and organizational nature of world revolutions: 1789, 1848, 1917, 1968, 1989 and 20xx for the one that is occurring now (Chase-Dunn and Niemeyer 2009).

greater than the number of activists who identify as anarchists or who are actively involved in anarchist movements. Both the culture of the New Global Left and Centrist Liberalism and the Global Right share ideological commitments to the ideals of individual autonomy and personal liberty. This may be one reason why anarchism is so attractive to many young people.

Moreover, we do not argue against the values of individual autonomy and personal liberty. These central tropes of human rights are heavily institutionalized in the geoculture and may be understood as one of the progressive institutional aspects of the contemporary world-system. But we do want to raise the issue of how ideological commitment to individual liberties and rights may pose obstacles to collective action and to dealing with environmental issues that must be central foci of efforts to organize a more humane and egalitarian institutional structure for the world-system going forward. Some of the anarchist ideals that have become central in the New Global Left may indeed be obstacles to more effective and capacious movements and political organizations that can confront the powers that be and move humanity toward a more progressive and egalitarian system.

Anarchism in the New Global Left

There are several reasons that might explain why anarchist ideals have become engrained in the geoculture and, as we argue, pervasive across movement themes in the New Global Left. First, social movements tend to go through a life cycle in which they begin as inchoate, spontaneous, and unorganized mass movements and then turn into more institutionalized organizations (Michels 1911; Schaeffer 2014). When they get to the organizational phase, they eventually shift their efforts toward the survival of the organization rather than in pursuing the original goals of the movement. Roberto Michels (1911) called this the oligarchical tendencies of political parties, but the same natural history is seen in all social movements.

Knowledge of this sequence has been known by social reformers and revolutionists for centuries. Parties try to revitalize by purging conservative elements. Mao Zedong developed a policy cycle approach that switches back and forth from moralistic mobilization based on transcendent (ideological) motivations to material incentives that appeal to the material interests of participants. This was intended to keep the communist party from sclerosis. Anarchists often conclude from their knowledge of the sclerosis problem that all institutions and organizations are fetters on human freedom. As such, they tend to glorify spontaneity and small-scale organization and shun larger scale organization and hierarchy.

Robert Schaeffer (2014) noted that social movements have learned from Roberto Michels's analysis of the oligarchical tendencies of political parties. Many social movement activists have devised methods to prevent the emergence of oligarchical tendencies. For example, anarchists abjure participation in electoral politics and utilize methods for direct democracy and face-to-face decision-making such as those employed by the Occupy Movement.⁵ They also abjure hierarchical

⁵ Participatory democracy has been incorporated into recent versions of 21st century socialism (see Williams and Satgar 2013; Harnecker 2015).

organizational structures and prescribe horizontalism.⁶ Similarly, the Zapatistas in Southern Mexico have refused to participate in Mexican electoral politics.

These anti-statist ideas have found broad support in the global justice movement, especially after the debacle of Syriza in Greece, which reinforced the idea that involvement in electoral politics leads to the sacrifice of radical alternatives to institutionalized structures. Social movements have seemingly taken a page from the anarchist playbook by promoting direct democratic practices and limiting their involvement in electoral politics.

Second, Robert Schaeffer (2014) contends that social movements that advocate and use violent tactics are less likely to be supported by women and Dana Williams (2016) notes that anarchists often display a greater degree of hypermasculinity than other movements. Indeed, our survey results show that anarchists are significantly more likely to be male (58.0%) than are other movements (42.3%). However, the World Social Forum Charter proscribes movements that advocate armed struggle from sending representatives and there has been a shift away from violent tactics in the New Global Left after the terrorist antics of some leftist groups in the 1970s. Anarchists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries advocated “propaganda of the deed” (assassinations and the use of explosives) but late 20th century and early 21st century anarchists (Black Bloc) target property and not persons.

This shift among anarchists toward less violence is part of a larger trend on the left to move away from violence as a tactic. This trend toward low intensity violence among anarchists could potentially increase the appeal of anarchist ideals across movement themes, especially those that are heavily comprised of women. Indeed, this is what we find in our study.

Third, anarchism has not suffered as much as socialism and communism from the perceived heritage of what happened in the 20th century. Socialists were major agents of the construction of the welfare state in the core, and Communists took state power in the semiperiphery. Anarchists do not bear the brunt of the perceived failures of the 20th century to the same extent as Socialists and Communists. This immunity allows them to claim plausibly that their political formulae have not yet failed because they have not yet been implemented, except in small and little-known contexts.

As we have mentioned, there are many kinds of anarchism, and the history of anarchist movements, though a global history, differs greatly from place to place and has diverse meanings for contemporary political activists. Nevertheless, the responses that we received from the four different survey venues are generally consistent with one another in terms of the underlying ideals

⁶ Horizontalism valorizes leaderlessness and zero formal organization, often paired with consensus decision-making. Horizontalist organization (also called “self-organization”) has some definite advantages: resilience (you can kill or repress some of the activists, but there is a lot of redundancy), flexibility and adaptability. Individual entities interact directly with one another, and there is no larger hierarchy that can be disrupted. These desirable characteristics are those that are stressed by proponents of horizontalist advocacy networks. But critics of horizontalism point out that structurelessness does not prevent the emergence of informal structures among groups of friends, and groups that embrace structurelessness have no mechanisms for regulating the power of these informal networks (Freeman 1972-73). And the absence of formal mechanisms of coordination make decision-making by the whole group and coordinated action on large scale very unlikely to occur.

of individualism and personal liberty. We cannot state with definitiveness what these words mean to the attendees in different countries, but we think the meanings are likely to be congruent enough to be sensibly interpreted.

Social movements are very fluid and complicated objects of study (Gitlin 2012). The rigors of survey research generate answers that provide snapshots of a very fluid reality. Anarchist ideas cross organizations and, in many ways, permeate movements of the left. Many feminists share anarchist sentiments, while others question whether rejecting the state is the right way forward. It is important to not reify movement categories in the effort to find the significance of a social movement and its ideas based on a study of activists at the World Social Forum. Survey research is a blunt instrument that does not obviate the necessity of using other methods, but it does provide us with a more general picture of average differences and similarities. We also were told that anarchists do not fill out survey questionnaires and it is plausible that people have different levels of resistance to being surveyed, but we found that about ¼ of all the attendees who did fill out our questionnaires at the Detroit meeting said that they strongly identified with anarchism.

Who are the Anarchist Activists in the Social Forum Process?

We used survey responses from the four Social Forum meetings at which surveys were mounted to see how many attendees responded as either being “strongly identified with,” or “actively involved in,” anarchism. Each of the surveys included around 500 respondents, but we are not entirely sure how representative the samples were of all the people who attended the Social Forum meetings and so we are not sure how well we can generalize to the whole group of attendees. A truly random sample would have required a complete list of participants, which we did not have. In order to improve the representativeness of the sample, the surveys were distributed at a variety of locations where people congregated at each meeting (e.g. registration lines, workshops, food stalls, etc.). Combining the results from all the surveys increased the number of respondents to 1977, which is useful for this study because we are examining a group that is a small minority among the whole sample of attendees.

There also were difficulties involved in combining the results from the different surveys. For one, the wording of some of the questions was a bit different between surveys. Also, and more importantly, anarchism may not have a uniform global meaning. Anarchism very likely means something different in Brazil and Kenya from what it means in the United States. Also, self-identified anarchists who chose to participate in the Social Forums may differ in motivation and orientation in different regions of the world or from anarchists who did not attend. The surveys were done in the major languages that were used at the different venues (English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Swahili).

We used the survey results to see whether anarchist activists were similar to, or different from, other attendees regarding demographic characteristics and attitudes toward political issues.⁷ Regarding identification and active involvement in movement themes, the survey question was

⁷ The data set and additional tables and figures that we produced for this paper are available from the paper appendix at <http://irows.ucr.edu/cd/appendices/anarchpap/anarchpapapp.htm>

worded as follows: “Check all of the following movements with which you: (a) strongly identify (b) are actively involved in.”

In the 2005 Porto Alegre survey, this question was followed by a list of 18 movement themes,⁸ including “Anarchist.” All other surveys included the expanded list of 27 movement themes. Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of those who responded as either identifying with, or being actively involved in, anarchism at each of the four venues.

Table 1: Anarchist Identification and Activism at the Social Forums

	Porto Alegre 2005	Nairobi 2007	Atlanta 2007	Detroit 2010	All
Strongly identify with anarchism	66 (11.7%)	23 (5.5%)	77 (14.7%)	121 (25.9%)	287 (14.5%)
Actively involved in anarchism	20 (3.6%)	6 (1.4%)	41(7.8%)	46 (9.8%)	113 (5.7%)
Number of attendees surveyed	563	422	524	468	1977

Table 1 shows that only a small proportion of respondents report active involvement in anarchist movements—less than 6% across all four meetings. These proportions are especially small in the global meetings where only 3.6% and 1.4% of respondents said they were actively involved anarchists (in Porto Alegre and Nairobi, respectively). Although still small, there were proportionately more anarchists at the U.S. Social Forum, where close to 8% and 10% of respondents at the Atlanta and Detroit meetings, respectively, were actively involved in anarchism. Comparing the rows in Table 1 shows the large drop-off from “strongly identify” to “actively involved.” A similarly large drop-off for social movement themes has been previously found in each of these surveys (e.g. Chase-Dunn and Kaneshiro 2009); therefore, it is not unique to the anarchist movement. This finding indicates that attendees make an important distinction between sympathizing with a movement and doing work for that movement. Table 1 also shows that about one-fourth (26%) of the surveyed attendees in Detroit said they strongly identified as anarchists and the percentage that said they were actively involved in the anarchist movement was higher than at any of the other venue (9.8%), including Atlanta.⁹

Similarities and Differences between Anarchists and other Attendees at the Social Forums

The following tables compare, across the four venues, actively involved anarchists with all other attendees and with all other attendees who also were actively involved in at least one of the other social movement themes. We compare with activists who are actively involved in other social movements because some of our findings imply greater radicalism on the part of the anarchist activists, but we want to know if this is related to the focus on anarchism or is just a feature of all

⁸ We discuss what we mean by movement themes in Footnote 3 above.

⁹ We are not sure why there were proportionately more anarchists at the Detroit meeting, but it might have been caused by the upswing of radicalism after the financial crisis of 2008.

those who are actively involved. It is generally known from social movement research that higher participation by individuals is related to greater concern for movement issues and we suspect that this also may be related to greater radicalism (McCauley and Moskalenko 2017).

Table 2: Age Composition at the Social Forum Venues

Age	Not actively involved	Actively involved in any movement	Actively involved Anarchists	Total
17 and under	3 1%	19 2%	2 2%	24 2%
18-25	88 36%	245 24%	46 53% ¹	379 28% ¹
26-35	54 22%	251 25%	26 30%	331 25%
36-45	42 17%	147 15%	8 9%	197 15%
46-55	28 11%	148 15%	3 3%	179 13%
56-65	26 11%	130 13%	1 1% ²	157 12% ²
65 +	3 1%	59 6%	1 1%	63 5%
Total	244	999	87	1330

¹Two-tailed z-test on actively involved Anarchist and Total ($z = 4.81, p < .001$)

²Two-tailed z-test on actively involved Anarchist and Total ($z = -3.06, p < .01$)

Findings in Table 2 demonstrate that anarchist activists are significantly younger than other activists and the whole sample of attendees. Fifty-three percent of the anarchist activists are in the 18- to 25-year-old age group, whereas only 38% of the attendees are in that group. Whereas 12% of the attendees were between 56- and 65-years-old, only 1% of the anarchist activists are that old. We also found that anarchists are much less likely to be religious than other attendees and that they are more than twice as likely to say that they are radicals than the other activists (Table A5 in the Appendix). Further, as we mentioned above, more of the anarchist activists are male than are the other activists (58% vs. 42% [sig. $P < .05$]).

Table 3: Racial/ethnic Composition of Anarchists at the Social Forums

	Porto Alegre 2005	Nairobi 2007	Atlanta 2007	Detroit 2010	All
<i>Actively involved in anarchism</i>					
White or Caucasian	6 (33%)	0 (0.0%)	25 (66%)	23 (60%)	54 (54%) ¹
Black, African	2 (11%)	4 (68%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	8 (8%) ²
Latina/o	3 (17%)	1 (17%)	4 (10%)	5 (13%)	13 (13%)

Multi-ethnic/racial	3 (17%)	1 (17%)	6 (16%)	3 (8%)	13 (13%)
Arabic/Middle Eastern	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Asian	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (10%)	4 (4%)
Indigenous	1 (6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	3 (3%)
Other	3 (17%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	5 (5%)
Total	18 (18%)	6 (6.0%)	38 (38%)	38 (38%)	100 (100%)
<i>NOT actively involved in anarchism</i>					
White or Caucasian	147 (39.8%)	94 (33.0%)	193 (50.5%)	181 (54.2%)	615 (44.9%) ¹
Black, African	54 (15%)	117 (41%)	51 (13%)	33 (10%)	255 (18.6%) ²
Latina/o	23 (6%)	10 (3%)	53 (14%)	51 (15%)	137 (10%)
Multi-ethnic/racial	33 (9%)	10 (3%)	38 (10%)	34 (10%)	115 (8%)
Arabic/Middle Eastern	3 (1%)	6 (2%)	7 (2%)	3 (1%)	19 (1%)
Asian	25 (7%)	30 (10%)	17 (4%)	17 (5%)	89 (6%)
Indigenous	7 (2%)	9 (3%)	2 (0.5%)	3 (1%)	21 (1%)
Other	77 (21%)	9 (3%)	21 (5%)	12 (4%)	119 (8%)
Total	369 (27%)	285 (21%)	382 (28%)	334 (24%)	1370 (100%)
<i>Strongly identify with anarchism</i>					
White or Caucasian	17 (39%)	5 (31%)	42 (65%)	50 (62%)	114 (56%)
Black, African	6 (14%)	8 (50%)	2 (3%)	7 (9%)	23 (11%)
Latina/o	3 (7%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (9%)	10 (12%)	19 (9%)
Multi-ethnic/racial	3 (7%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (11%)	7 (9%)	17 (8%)
Arabic/Middle Eastern	0 (0.0%)	1 (6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)
Asian	4 (9%)	1 (6%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	8 (4%)
Indigenous	1 (2%)	1 (6%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	4 (2%)
Other	10 (23%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (9%)	2 (2%)	18 (9%)
Total	44 (21%)	16 (8%)	65 (32%)	80 (39%)	205 (100%)

¹ Two-tailed z-test on actively involved Anarchists and Total ($z = 3.05, p < .01$)

² Two-tailed z-test on actively involved Anarchists and Total ($z = -3.81, p < .001$)

Table 3 shows the racial/ethnic composition of the actively involved anarchists compared with the racial/ethnic breakdown of the other Social Forum attendees.⁹ The majority of both actively involved and strongly identified anarchists in our entire combined sample (the last column in Table 3) identify as white (54% and 55%), which is considerably larger than the proportion of whites that are not actively involved anarchists (44%). This difference holds for the Atlanta and Detroit surveys, but not for the Porto Alegre or Nairobi surveys. So whiteness is related to anarchism in the United States but not at the global meetings. In the combined sample (last column), actively involved anarchists are less likely to be black (8% versus 18.6%) as are strongly

¹⁰ The question was asked in somewhat different ways in the different surveys (see <http://www.irows.ucr.edu/research/tsmstudy.htm>) but we have combined the answers to make them as comparable as possible.

identified anarchists (11.2% vs. 18.6%), and this difference holds for Atlanta, Detroit and Porto Alegre, but not for Nairobi. In Nairobi, both the actively involved and the strongly identified anarchists were more likely to be black and less likely to be white in part because there were no white anarchists attending the Nairobi meeting. The percentage of all attendees who were black in Nairobi is much higher than in the other venues because the meeting was in Africa. The next two largest racial/ethnic groups are Latinos and mixed-race persons—both of whom comprise 13% of anarchists. Latinos and mixed-race persons also are slightly overrepresented in comparison to non-anarchists and strongly identified anarchists, but these differences are not statistically significant.

We also found that anarchists are more likely to claim that they are part of the working class (38%) than other activists (27%). Equally, anarchists are twice as likely to claim to be part of the lower class (20%) than are other activists (10%).

Table 4: Attitudes toward capitalism

Do you think we need to reform capitalism or abolish it?

	Non-activist	Activist	Anarchist	All
Reform it	179 (56%)	558 (41%)	19 (18%)	756 (42%)
Abolish it	105 (33%)	726 (53%) ²	81 (76%) ^{1,2}	912 (51%) ¹
Neither	35 (11%)	80 (6%)	6 (6%)	121 (7%)
Total	319	1364	106	1789

¹Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = 5.10$, $p < .001$)

²Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and Activist ($z = 4.62$, $p < .001$)

The results in Table 4 suggest that anarchists are more radically anti-capitalist in comparison with other activists as well as non-activists. Fewer anarchists want to reform capitalism, and three-fourths of the anarchists think capitalism should be abolished, whereas only one-half of the other actively involved activists and one-third of the non-activists want to abolish capitalism. Z-tests show that these differences are statistically significant.

Table 5: Attitudes toward the World Bank¹⁰

In the long run, what do you think should be done about these existing global institutions: World Bank

	Non-activist	Activist	Anarchist	All
Reform	110 (52%)	322 (34%)	7 (8%)	439 (35%)
Replace	30 (14%)	204 (21%)	19 (23%)	253 (20%)
Abolish	58 (27%)	406 (42%) ²	54 (66%) ^{1,2}	518 (41%) ¹
Do Nothing	14 (7%)	27 (3%)	2 (2%)	43 (3%)
Total	212	959	82	1253

Note: This table does not include respondents at the Porto Alegre meeting.

¹Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = 4.35$, $p < .001$)

²Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and Activist ($z = 4.12$, $p < .001$)

¹¹ See Appendix Table A2 for the separate breakdown at Nairobi, Atlanta and Detroit.

Table 5 shows the pattern of responses to a question about global institutions, specifically the World Bank. The Porto Alegre survey is not included because this question was not asked in a way that clearly separated the World Bank from the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations in the Porto Alegre survey. The results in Table 4 indicate that 66% of the actively involved anarchists are in favor of abolishing the World Bank, whereas only 42% of the activists in other movements want to abolish the World Bank. The differences between these proportions and between anarchists and the overall sample are statistically significant. The same differences were found in response to questions about the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

Table 6: Attitudes toward the United Nations¹¹

In the long run, what do you think should be done about these existing global institutions: United Nations

	Non-activist	Activist	Anarchist	All
Reform	158 (74%)	713 (76%)	37 (46%)	908 (74%)
Replace	17 (8%)	122 (13%)	19 (23%)	158 (13%)
Abolish	14 (7%)	57 (6%) ²	24 (30%) ^{1,2}	95(8%) ¹
Do Nothing	23 (11%)	49 (5%)	1 (1%)	73 (6%)
Total	212	941	81	1234

Notes: This table does not include respondents at the Porto Alegre meeting.

¹Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = 6.66, p < .001$)

²Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and Activist ($z = 7.54, p < .001$)

A similar pattern is found in responses to a question about the United Nations, but there also is an interesting difference. As with the other international institutions discussed above, anarchists are more likely than other attendees to favor abolition and less likely to favor reform. But in comparison with the other international institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization) anarchists are much more supportive of the United Nations. Only 30% of the actively involved anarchists want to abolish the U.N. whereas 66% want to abolish the World Bank.

Table 7: Democratic World Government

Do you think it is a good or bad idea to have a democratic world government?

	Non-activist	Activist	Anarchist	All
Good idea and plausible	126 (39.7%)	497 (38.8%)	32 (33%)	655 (38.6%)
Good idea but not plausible	106 (33.4%)	450 (35.1%) ²	17 (17.5%) ^{1,2}	573 (33.8%) ¹
Bad idea	85 (26.8%)	334 (26.1%) ⁴	48 (49.5%) ^{3,4}	467 (27.6%) ³
Total	317	1281	97	1695

¹ Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = -3.32, p < .001$)

² Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and Activist ($z = -3.53, p < .001$)

³ Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = 4.64, p < .001$)

⁴ Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and Activist ($z = 4.97, p < .001$)

¹² See Appendix Table A4 for the separate breakdown at Nairobi, Atlanta and Detroit.

The surveys also asked Social Forum attendees about their attitude toward the idea of a democratic world government. Table 7 shows that anarchist activists are more likely to think that a democratic world government is bad than those who are not involved in anarchist movements, and this is not related to active involvement in general. These differences are statistically significant.

Table 8: Best Level for Solving Problems

Out of the following, which level is most important for solving the majority of contemporary problems?

	Non-activist	Activist	Anarchist	All
Communities/sub-national	177 (59%)	730 (59.1%) ²	76 (78%) ^{1,2}	983 (60.2%) ¹
Nation-states	27 (9%)	126 (10.2%)	4 (4%)	157 (9.6%)
International/global	96 (32%)	380 (30.7%)	17 (18%) ³	493 (30.2%) ³
Total	300	1236	97	1633

¹ Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = 3.57, p < .001$)

² Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and Activist ($z = 3.74, p < .001$)

³ Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = -2.6577, p < .01$)

The surveys also asked about which level is most important for solving the majority of contemporary problems: communities, nation-states, or international/global. Table 8 shows that 78% of anarchist activists indicated that the community level is most important and this percentage was higher than for those who were actively involved in other movement themes (59.1%). The differences in proportions are statistically significant according to the z-test.

Table 9: Global Social Movement?

Do you consider yourself to be a part of a global social movement?

	Non-activist	Activist	Anarchist	All
No	88 (38.3%)	141 (14.2%)	7 (7.6%)	236 (18%)
Yes	142 (61.7%)	851 (85.8%)	85 (92.4%) ¹	1078 (82%) ¹
Total	230	992	92	1314

Notes: This table does not include respondents at the Porto Alegre meeting.

¹ Two-tailed z-test on Anarchist and All ($z = 2.54, p < .05$)

The local focus indicated by the results in Table 8 is somewhat contradicted by the results in Table 9. The surveys asked attendees whether they think of themselves as involved in a global social movement. Ninety-two percent of the anarchist activists said “yes,” and this was a higher percentage than those who were actively involved in other movement themes and with the total sample. The difference between anarchists and other activists is not statistically significant according to the z-tests reported in Table 9, but the difference between anarchists and the total sample is. The results of Table 8 and Table 9 indicate that anarchists are more likely to see themselves as involved in a global movement but less likely to want to organize at the global level to solve problems.

The Connections that Anarchists have with other Social Movements

Social movement organizations, like other human groups, are usually integrated both informally and formally. At the formal level, organizations sometimes make agreements to provide legitimacy and support to one another and to collaborate on joint actions. Informally, they may be connected by the choices of individuals who are participants in more than one movement. Both formal and informal connections enable learning and influence to pass among movement organizations. Informal links do this even when formal links are weak or non-existent. In the analysis below, we assess the extent and patterns of informal linkages among social movement themes based on the responses we received from our surveys of attendees at the four Social Forum meetings we studied.

The Porto Alegre survey included eighteen movement themes and combined human rights with anti-racism. This original list of movements was created based on previous studies of global justice movements (Starr 2000; Fisher and Ponniah 2003) and our guesses about which movements would be represented at the Porto Alegre event. The Nairobi, Atlanta and Detroit surveys included a longer list of 27 movement themes and separated human rights from anti-racism. The formal network analyses that follow do not use the results of the Porto Alegre survey because of the difficulties of combining the shorter and longer list of movement themes. We use the results of surveys administered in Nairobi, Atlanta, and Detroit, each of which employed the longer list of 27 movement themes.¹²

The affiliation matrix (see Appendix, Table A6) for the Nairobi, Atlanta, and Detroit surveys displays all the instances in which respondents chose two or more movement themes as ones in which they were actively involved. As we found in our earlier studies, the affiliation matrix shows that all of the movement themes are connected with all of the other movement themes by at least some overlaps. There are no zeros. This demonstrates that the structure of movement themes is a multicentric network that does not contain separate factions. The smallest number of activists who overlap between movement themes is 9, which, ironically, occurs in the intersection between Communism and Open Source/Intellectual Property Rights (communists and neo-communists).¹³

There were 93 attendees at the Nairobi, Atlanta and Detroit meetings who indicated that they were actively involved in the anarchist movement (See Table 10). Of these, the movement theme with the least overlaps with anarchist activism is socialism (10) whereas the movement theme with the largest number of overlaps with anarchism is the anticorporate movement (56).

Table 10 uses the affiliation matrix data to look at the percentage of overlaps between movement themes from the perspective of the anarchist movement theme, a so-called “ego network” approach that looks at the structure of a network from the perspective of a single node (anarchists) rather than from the perspective of the entire network. Column 3 in Table 10 percentages the number of connections on the relative sizes of the other movement themes, that is,

¹³ Earlier studies have looked at the networks produced from each Social Forum meeting separately and have found that, although there are some differences from meeting to meeting, the overall pattern of a single multicentric network in which all the movement themes are connected with one another holds across all meetings (e.g. Chase-Dunn and Kaneshiro 2009; Chase-Dunn and Breckenridge-Jackson 2013).

¹⁴ A network diagram for this whole affiliation matrix has been published elsewhere (see Chase-Dunn, Fenelon, Hall, Breckenridge-Jackson, and Herrera 2015).

it shows the percentage of each movement that is made up of anarchists. Autonomism has the highest percentage of anarchists (35%)¹⁴ and socialism has the lowest (6%). The movement with the second largest percentage of the anarchists is the anti-corporate movement theme and the third largest is Open Source/Intellectual Property Rights. Only 12% of feminists are anarchists, but 40% of anarchists are feminists (Column 4). The fourth column of Table 10 shows the percentage of the 93 anarchist activists who overlap with the other movement themes. Sixty percent of the activist anarchists also are actively involved in the anti-corporate movement theme, and 55% are anti-globalizationists. Only 11% of actively involved anarchist activists also are socialists.¹⁵

Table 10: The Percentage of Each Movement Who are Anarchists

Movement Themes	Anarchist	Total # of activists	% of which are anarchists	% of the 93 anarchists
<i>Anarchism</i>	93	93	100%	100%
<i>Autonomism</i>	33	95	35%	35%
<i>Anti-corporate</i>	56	212	26%	60%
<i>Open-Source/I.P. Rights</i>	17	76	22%	18%
<i>Anti-globalization</i>	51	233	22 %	55%
<i>Housing</i>	34	160	21%	37%
<i>Land Reform</i>	21	106	20%	23%
<i>LGBTQ</i>	31	159	19%	33%
<i>National Liberation</i>	14	75	19%	15%
<i>Indigenous</i>	22	128	17%	24%
<i>Communism</i>	14	82	17%	15%
<i>Alternative Media</i>	38	271	14%	41%

¹⁵ We originally intended to analyze autonomists along with anarchists in this paper, but we found that the word “autonomism” apparently means very different things in different contexts. In Africa it appears to be associated with national autonomy, whereas in the United States there seems to be relatively little knowledge of the autonomist movement that emerged in Italy, Germany and France. The issue of what movement themes mean in different contexts is an important one that we should keep in mind when we are discussing other social movement themes as well. The geoculture has central tendencies but the world-system remains importantly multicultural.

¹⁶ This probably reflects the bad blood generated by two centuries of competition between the Marxist and the Bakuninists within the “family of antisystemic movements.”

<i>Labor</i>	32	235	14%	34%
<i>Immigration</i>	34	264	13%	37%
<i>Anti-racism</i>	49	383	13%	53%
<i>Jobless Workers</i>	18	141	13%	19%
<i>Environment</i>	44	360	12%	47%
<i>Food Rights</i>	29	238	12%	31%
<i>Feminism</i>	37	308	12%	40%
<i>Health/HIV</i>	27	233	12%	29%
<i>Alternative Globalization</i>	31	270	11%	33%
<i>Fair Trade</i>	40	354	11%	43%
<i>Development Aid</i>	20	189	11%	22%
<i>Peace</i>	38	362	10%	41%
<i>Human Rights</i>	40	421	9%	43%
<i>Religious</i>	11	163	7%	12%
<i>Socialism</i>	10	154	6%	11%

**Figure 1: Anarchist Ego Network, 3 Survey Dataset (27 movements—No Porto Alegre)
Cutting point >36**

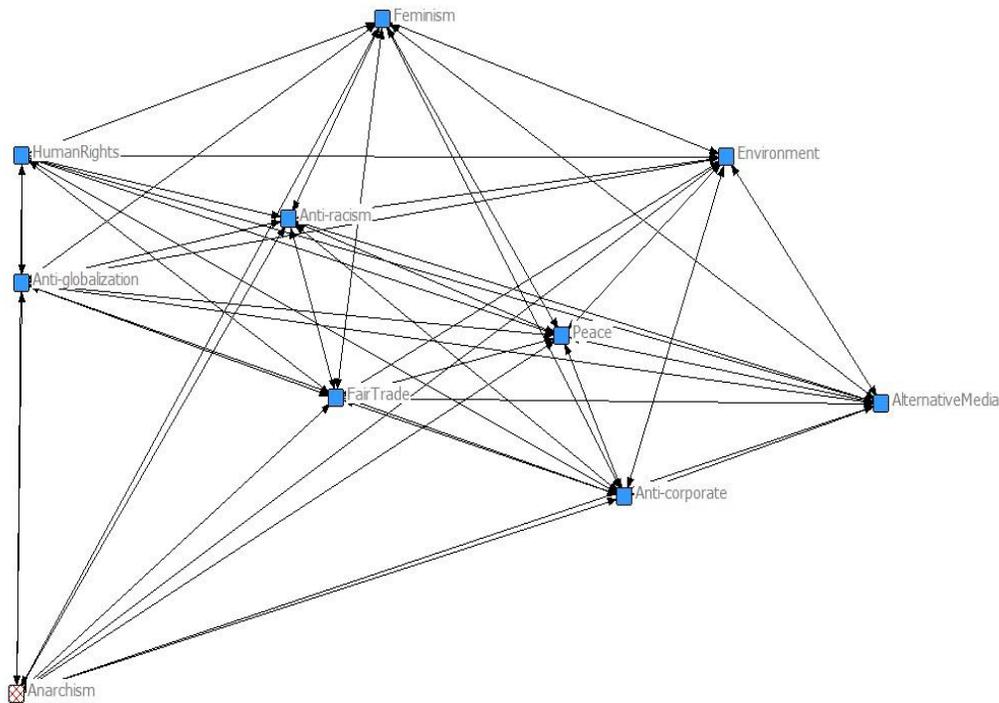


Figure 1 uses the combined data from Nairobi, Atlanta and Detroit with 27 movement themes. Production of such a figure requires dichotomization of the affiliation matrix. The cutting point we use is 1.5 standard deviations above the mean calculated as the average of the anarchist overlaps. Figure 1 shows the big overlaps discussed above as well as the links among those other movements that are well connected with anarchism. Accordingly, anti-racism is an important movement theme that connects anarchism with other social movement themes. This is interesting in light of our finding above that anarchists are more likely to be White than other movement activists. These are anti-racist whites.

Also, in Figure 1, anarchists show overlaps with the following movements: Media, Anti-corporations, Anti-globalization, Human Rights, Fair Trade, Peace, Anti-Racism, Environment, and Feminist. Despite the preponderance of male anarchists, the direct connection with the feminists seems to contradict Williams's (2016) notion that anarchist culture is hypermasculine. Anarchists show a large overlap with the anti-globalization movement, but a low overlap with the alternative globalization movement. Anarchist skepticism about alternative globalization is consistent with the findings above regarding attitudes toward existing international institutions and a focus on local communities. Anarchists were least connected with the religious activists (12%) and the socialists (11%). But even a 12% overlap with religious activists is perhaps higher than many would expect. We also found that 12% of the anarchist activists, overall, identify as being "very religious." This finding is consistent with the notion that the religious and anarchist movements share quite consonant ideologies (Christoyannopoulos 2009).

Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to investigate conditions of the current world revolution and ways in which anarchism is working within it. Anarchism as an ideology is far more important than the number of people who consider themselves to be anarchist activists. Anarchist ideas have been central elements in the emergence of the New Global Left and they are also an important feature of the larger geoculture. We have used the results of surveys conducted at Social Forum meetings to see how anarchist activists are similar to, or different from, other attendees. The Social Forum process is itself a project of the New Global Left, so we are mainly comparing anarchists with other progressive activists, not with the population of the world as a whole.

The Social Forum anarchists are younger, whiter (except in Nairobi), more likely to be male, more likely to identify as working class or lower class and more likely to be students. While Social Forum attendees in general have higher than average educational attainment, the anarchists are not significantly different from others in this regard.

We find that anarchists at these meetings tend to have more radical positions against capitalism and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, and they are more likely to favor abolishing the United Nations than are others, but they are much more sympathetic to the U.N. than the other international institutions. They also are not drawn to the idea of a democratic world government. When it comes to solving contemporary problems, anarchists tend to prefer more local levels such as communities while, concurrently, viewing themselves to be part of a global social movement.

Almost all anarchists consider themselves to be part of a global social movement. However, the majority of anarchists at all four meetings also consider the community to be the best arena to solve most global problems. This apparent contradiction between anarchists' inclination toward localism and their global presence might explain why the anarchist movement remains in the periphery in the larger structure of transnational social movements. That is, the anarchist movement's focus on localism may constrain its ability to transcend localist politics and emerge as a central movement at the global level (Sharzer 2012). Albeit, anarchist ideals still remain influential in the larger structure of movements.

Regarding the links that anarchists have with other social movement themes as indicated by overlaps in which individuals claim active involvement with other movements, we find that anarchists are strongly connected with autonomists, anti-corporatists and anti-racism. As a movement theme, anarchism is peripheral in the entire structure of the WSF meetings. But actively involved anarchists also are actively involved in nine other movements: human rights, anti-globalization, anti-racism, fair trade, feminism, peace, anti-corporate, environment, and alternative media. These nine movement themes are the most central movements in the larger network, which suggests that anarchists—and anarchist ideals—maintain a significant influence within the New Global Left.

Table 10 also shows which other movements the anarchists are connected to, showing the percentage of anarchists that make up a given movement. Note how anarchists make up a considerable proportion (20-25%) of other movements such as the anti-corporate and anti-globalization struggles. This suggests that anarchism plays an important role in these movements. Also note that, while anarchists are connected to the peace and human rights movements in the

egocentric network, they only make up a small proportion of those movements. This paradox is explained by the great relative size of the peace and human rights movements, which dominate the overall network in terms of both numbers and network centrality.

The connections between the anarchist movement and feminism and anti-racism are marked by the proportionately large degree of overlaps between these movements. These suggest a potential counternarrative to the common criticisms of anarchists as being “hypermasculine” and predominately white (Williams 2016). While our findings suggest that anarchists are mostly male, their active involvement in the feminist movement implies that anarchists are sensitive to feminist issues. Thus, the narrative of hypermasculinity among anarchists may be on the downturn. This finding is consistent with some who have posited an inherent connection between the anarchist and feminist movements (e.g. Kornegger 1975). Moreover, despite the lack of people of color who self-identity as anarchists (aside from Nairobi), anarchists still maintain a strong active involvement in the anti-racism movement. This follows a long, historical trend of anarchist opposition to racism. Combined, actively involved anarchists seem to widely accept intersectional issues regarding race and gender as their own.

Conclusion

Our study provides supporting evidence for some of the widely held views about anarchists but contradicts others. Anarchist ideas are important beyond the numbers of consciously committed anarchists in the New Global Left. The attacks on individualism mounted by socialists and communists in the world revolution of 1917 were largely misplaced. A more humane, egalitarian and democratic world society is quite compatible with individualism, and the eventual emergence of global governance institutions will be enhanced and legitimated by great attention to the rights of individuals. Again, we recognize that the meanings of individualism will vary, but the significance of our findings about self-identified and actively-involved anarchists suggests some constancy across anarchist traditions. That said, the great skepticism that anarchists have toward formal organization, which has been widespread in the New Global Left since 1968, and their inclination toward localism, are both hindrances to the ability of egalitarian social movements to have important effects on world politics.

The solution to the oligarchical tendencies of social movement organizations as proposed by Roberto Michels is not to abjure organization, but rather to pressure social movement organizations to do more than fight for their own survival and to start new organizations when the old ones have become moribund. The anarchists are right to be critical of sclerosis, but party-networks can be democratic and responsive to grassroots constituencies, and when they are not, they can be replaced. Moreover, anarchists must contend with the limitations of localism in a capitalist world-system. Following, Sharzer (2012; 2017), we believe that anarchists must seek *both* economic and political power through co-operative political action to better promote transitional politics as opposed to localism. The transnational social movements of the Left badly need broad-spectrum organizational instruments that can coordinate action on a global scale in order to move world society toward an egalitarian, sustainable and democratic global commonwealth.

About the Authors: Christopher Chase-Dunn is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director of the Institute for Research on World-Systems at the University of California, Riverside, USA. He is the author of *The Spiral of Capitalism and Socialism* (with Terry Boswell), *Rise and Demise: Comparing World-Systems* (with Thomas D. Hall), and *Social Change: Globalization from the Stone Age to the Present* (with Bruce Lerro). He is the founder and former editor of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*. Joel S. Herrera is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles. He has published in *Latin American Politics and Society* and in the *Journal of Labor and Society*. Herrera is currently studying state building and illicit markets in twentieth century Mexico. John Aldecoa is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of California, Riverside and Graduate Student Researcher at the Center for Social Innovation. John specializes in sociological theory and social psychology and his research spans an array of fields, including self and identity, morality, religion, and social movements. His most recent research at the Center of Social Innovation explores the current and potential impacts of AI automation on the nature of work. Ian Breckenridge-Jackson is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Ethnic Studies at Los Angeles Valley College. His work has been featured in peer-reviewed journals such as *Politics, Groups, and Identities* and *Policy Matters*, and edited volumes including *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism* and *The Routledge International Handbook of World Systems Analysis*. Breckenridge-Jackson is a co-founder of the Lower Ninth Ward Living Museum in New Orleans, an entirely free and volunteer-run neighborhood museum and oral history project.

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