

Aiming to Overthrow the State (Without Using the State)

Political Opportunities for Anarchist Movements

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Abstract

The anarchist movement utilizes non-statist and anti-statist strategies for radical social transformation, thus indicating the limits of political opportunity theory and its emphasis upon the state. Using historical narratives from present-day anarchist movement literature, we note various events and phenomena in the last two centuries and their relevance to the mobilization and demobilization of anarchist movements throughout the world (Bolivia, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Greece, Japan, Venezuela). Labor movement allies, failing state socialism, and punk sub-culture have provided conditions conducive to anarchism, while state repression and Bolshevik success in the Soviet Union constrained success. This variation suggests that future work should attend more closely to the role of national context, and the interrelationship of political and non-political factors.

Introduction

Routine social movement behaviors that petition, protest, or lobby governments to change or adopt certain laws or policies are familiar to most in modern societies. However, these now-regular patterns of movement-state interaction are premised on the assumption that movements want something from the state that states are able to give. Presumably, radical movements — anarchism being the exemplary movement we choose to focus upon in this study — have no interest in anything that states are willing to offer, nor do such movements attempt to convince states to quit and dissolve themselves through targeted lobbying efforts. What does movement activity and protest mean for such movements, under these conditions? This article answers this question from a political opportunity perspective using the case histories of country-level anarchist movement activity.

As a political tradition, anarchism dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. Influenced by the most radical currents of the Enlightenment, anarchism emerged as a revolt against the solidifying nation-state, early capitalism, and the still-present influence of religious authority. Anarchists not only critiqued the centralizing and bureaucratic qualities of these institutions, but advocated the creation of horizontal, egalitarian, and cooperative institutions in their place. Even though “anarchism” literally refers to “without rule” (Gordon 2006) — and thus an opposition to all forms of domination and control by others — it has historically been summarized as simply opposition to the state (Ehrlich 1996, Joll 1964, Ward 1996). Herein, we understand anarchism’s antagonism toward authority in the sense meaningful to anarchist movements, rather than the limited, popular understanding: as a broad challenge to all forms of domination, not just that of the state.

Anarchists have never been able to rid society of the state, although not for lack of trying. Anarchism, as a radical ideology, appears to possess a near child-like naivety towards the possibility of social change. Accordingly, resistance and change are not only possible in the darkest moments of human history, but are also potentially present in everyday life. Anarchists tend to advocate seizing the opportunities within these moments and helping to encourage others toward a more liberatory future. Thus, while acknowledging the power, influence, and limitations of existing political and social structures, anarchists also implicitly emphasize the capacity for human agency.

Politically, the anarchist movement argues that opportunities always exist to resist the present social order and to create a new world. Consequently, “Revolution now!” would be an applicable anarchist slogan. Anarchism differentiates itself from other revolutionary ideologies such as Marxism by rejecting any delay in revolution. Waiting for “the people” to be ready or to trust that the state will “wither away” eventually are not seen as appropriate excuses by anarchists for inaction. In fact, state participation in the pursuit of revolution is inherently problematic. For example, the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin wrote: “No state, however democratic — not even the reddest republic — can ever give the people what they really want, i.e., the free self-organization and administration of their own affairs from the bottom upward, without any interference or violence from above” (Dolgo 1971, p. 338).

Strategy in the anarchist movement is radical and multi-faceted. Anarchism focuses on the web of relationships between not only individuals and society, but also amongst major institutions, such as the state, capitalism, military, patriarchy, White supremacy, and heterosexism. Within each relationship, people may act to create a society less encumbered by hierarchy, domination, and authority. Thus, opportunities always exist to create egalitarian, horizontal, and cooperative relationships. This article investigates the anarchist movement within these spaces and moments, both past and present. Yet, some opportunities have been more conducive to the anarchist movement and some of these moments have been more fruitfully exploited.

This article addresses the following interrelated questions. Can the theory of political opportunities (as summarized by McAdam 1996) be used — or at least re-packaged — to understand the anarchist movement? We focus on a half-dozen country case studies to better understand the varied experiences of mobilization and decline for anarchist movements throughout the world, seen through the lens of a modified political opportunity theory. What major opportunities has anarchism recently seized upon (and sometimes unintentionally benefited from) to expand its ranks and advance its goals? Our analysis of the narratives of anarchists discovers a variety of country-specific and global opportunities that assisted in the growth and decline of movements. In particular, an authoritarian or partisan Left’s success reduced anarchist opportunities, while supportive nonanarchist milieus — such as the labor and punk movements — served as fruitful grounds for inspiration, personnel recruitment, and accelerated anarchist movement mobilization. Curiously, anarchist narratives viewed increased state repression as having divergent effects on different country’s movements.

Political Opportunities: Potentials and Problems

Political opportunities (PO) help to create options more conducive for action, thereby helping social movement organizations to achieve goals. McAdam described four central POs that past researchers have consistently deemed relevant to social movements: (1) increased access to political participation; (2) shifts in the alignments of ruling elites or cleavages amongst elites that create space for challengers; (3) the enhanced availability and accessibility of influential elite allies; and (4) a decline in the capacity or tendency for the state to repress dissent (McAdam 1996). Do anarchists benefit from or utilize such opportunities that are either available from or interact with the state or elites? Although anarchists, almost by definition, are not interested in affecting state reform, they may *indirectly* benefit from state action. For example, a decrease in repression allows for overt anarchist organizing. On the other hand, increased state repression may

have also encouraged anarchism by providing groups with the motivation to resist domination. Conversely, a nascent anarchist movement may be crushed by state persecution. This suggests a complex relationship between state action and the growth or decline of anarchism. In addition, increased accessibility to political participation in general can allow anarchists to ride the coattails of other movements; thus, during elections, anarchists can point out limitations in representative democracy and the indirectness of voting. Cleavages within ruling elites — although often making one faction look “better,” nicer, or electable — can create a weakened or unstable power structure that is more susceptible to attack and overthrow.

There is evidence of a connection between anarchists and these traditional POs. Williams and Lee (2008) demonstrated a positive and statistically significant relationship between the concentration of anarchist organizations per country listed in the Anarchist Yellow Pages (AYP) directory and various forms of rights and access, including civil liberties, political rights, press rights, and the level of democracy. Yet, rather than being a direct relationship, this positive association is likely mediated through other phenomena. Anarchists do not utilize political rights in a conventional activist fashion by lobbying the government or electing favorable candidates, although they likely do benefit from press rights and other civil liberties. But the correlative relationship makes more sense as a general measure of tolerance to the challenge of formal authority in a country; the greater the tolerance of dissent, the more likely a state’s strongest critics (e.g. anarchists) will overtly organize in public. Anarchist organizations are likely more willing to list themselves in the AYP — and to be “aboveground” generally — when they believe the risk level is acceptable. In this respect, the anarchist organizations listed in the AYP may be the result of a selection effect and the impact of political opportunities on the underground or clandestine anarchist movement remains unknown.

Even if anarchists *do* benefit from some “standard” PO’s — albeit indirectly — a number of empirical and theoretical issues prevent us from drawing any concrete conclusions about the appropriateness of a traditional PO view for the anarchist movement. First, Shantz (2003b) argued that social movement research has tended to focus on reform movements and has shied away from analysis of radical movements (such as anarchism) that seek to transform the entire foundation of social relations — especially those whose goals do not include the seizure of the state itself. In such a research milieu, it is a mistake to assume that “political opportunities” crafted to explain movements with moderate goals (e.g. policy advocacy) can adequately address the objectives of radical movements. Even radical movements like Marxism may be measured using conventional research, as the intended outcomes are clearly-articulated and are assumed to be linear. Marxism represents a mere adaptation to reform movements, as it aspires to a similar ascension to power as do other movements. But a movement such as anarchism, premised upon deliberate practices that reflect “the means are the ends” and a diffusion of power, cannot be analyzed as easily or rigidly. Thus, anarchist movements are vastly understudied and the theories available to scholars are likely to need some revision and some may not be applicable.

Second, PO theory generally takes for granted the assumption that the state is the target of protest. Yet, in actuality, Van Dyke et al. found that many movements *do not* just target the state. Only slightly over half of the targets in 4,654 protest events from 1968 to 1975 in the US were state targets; the remaining protests were aimed at educational institutions, “the public,” business, individuals, cultural and religious organizations, unions, and medical institutions. In fact, the government was targeted less than 50 percent of the time by the civil rights, gay and lesbian, and women’s movements (Van Dyke et al. 2004). More generally, Melucci (1996) notes that social

movements of all stripes in the contemporary era, “no longer [coincide] either with the traditional forms of organization of solidarity or with the conventional channels of political representation.” He suggests moving beyond simple dichotomies such as “state” versus “civil society,” or “public” versus “private,” as well as the “reductionism” inherent in exclusively “political” analyses, in order to more fully comprehend the interrelationships among different sectors of society (pp. 3–6). Although anarchists have most notoriously and famously targeted the state, anarchism’s broad critique of authority and domination is not limited to political actors. Anarchism’s critique is not mere protest, but radical opposition to the *very existence* of hierarchical institutions. Thus, the movement does not simply target the state, but also many other hierarchical institutions, ranging from White supremacy and patriarchy to capitalism and militarism.

Third, although activists’ agency to exploit opportunities is implicit in PO theory, anarchists themselves do not try to actively use many of these opportunities. If open windows of opportunity are not actively exploited, do they really constitute “opportunities” for anarchists? For example, unlike other movements, anarchists do not engage in standard political activity: they are not apt to engage in letter-writing campaigns against politicians, to vote for (or against) certain candidates, or even to run for office themselves. Anarchists (obviously) do not try to lobby the state or pressure for constitutional amendments that would lead to the elimination of a constitution. Could anarchists actually “utilize” progressive politicians who claim to oppose policies and practices that anarchists also do? Ostensibly, such politicians would be *elite* allies; the presence of such “allies” would not seem to ultimately benefit the anarchist movement if it is opposed to negotiating or working with these allies. In fact, a central principle to anarchism is “direct action,” where one does not request or wait for others to act on their behalf. Instead of relying on representatives, one acts directly — either individually or collectively — to immediately accomplish the desired goal, without the facilitation, approval, or agency of elected elites, officials, or bosses.

Fourth, commonly-studied POs might actually be *detrimental* to anarchist organizing and activism, as opposed to being helpful. Increased access to elites, political space, or participation might direct activists and the public towards reformism and electoral politics, not radicalism. Rifts between elites (like Democrats and Republicans, or politicians and capitalists) might appear to undermine the anarchist claim that “all elites are similar and serve the same end” — and thus maybe do not need to be overthrown. Thus, POs could either channel rebellious energy for radical change into reformist, institutional mechanisms or undercut any popular impression that radical change is necessary. Consequently, anarchist movement activity appears paradoxical within the PO framework.

On a strictly theoretical level, there is much to criticize in the standard view of POs. Of central importance is the assumption — and perhaps leap of faith — regarding the ultimate goal of social movements. As witnessed by McAdam’s (1996) overview of the literature, many scholars have tended to assume and effectively operationalize “political opportunities” as “state opportunities” useful to influence state-based policy making. As such, movements benefit from actions and conditions in which the state is the key adversary or target. Yet, this logic conflates “political” with “state” (and, more narrowly, with elections and politicians), which is the common interpretation of “politics,” generally. Anarchists strongly criticize limiting “politics” to the domain of state officials, elected or otherwise. Instead, anarchism argues that politics is the realm of public decision making and debate, of which the state is only one component, albeit the dominant one. It is en-

tirely possible to engage in “politics” without the reliance upon the state.¹ Also, to entrust the state with the ability to serve as final arbitrator for what constitutes human rights (or any other right), is to restrict the universality of such rights. Anarchists argue that rights are not guaranteed by the state, but by birth (Turner 2009). In this view, to rely upon the state to approve of and administer human rights is to reify the state as an essential institution for people’s everyday lives. However, many states actively attempt to restrict rights and succeed because states tend to be viewed by many citizens as the proper authority for the distribution of rights in a society.

Critics of PO theory have also alleged that to view characteristics like access, allies, and declining repression as part of an opportunity *structure* implies that such things are not opportunities that can come and go, but instead are quasi-permanent elements of a polity (Goodwin & Jasper 1999). Properly construed, opportunities ought to be temporal and impermanent. Opportunities should open – like windows – for a certain time, and then close, cutting off movement chances. However, certain kinds of political opportunities are permanently closed to anarchists, because of the anti-statist nature of the movement.

Additionally, “opportunities” are often measurable only in retrospect; movement actors may not actually perceive legitimate opportunities even if there is empirical evidence for them. What may be considered opportunities by social movement scholars, may have little meaning for activists. Instead, movement participants tend to continuously act for social change, regardless of whether recognizable opportunities exist – even in times of extreme repression with few political allies to be found. For example, Kurzman’s (1996) analysis of the Iranian Revolution shows that Iranians *perceived* great opportunities when, in actuality, the monarchy was very stable. Revolutionaries in Iran acted as if opportunities objectively existed and created a self-fulfilling prophecy for themselves and their followers.

This distinction between objective and subjective opportunities is particularly important for the anarchist movement. Most movements tend to have occasional victories with concrete, definable successes, while anarchism has rarely had victories and none that have lasted for any substantial length of time. Consequently, discussing useful objective opportunities for the anarchist movement is challenging because it is unclear which “opportunities” have or have not led to the few, short-lived anarchist rebellions. A more useful approach, and the one we develop in this paper, may be to consider anarchist mobilization *through the eyes of anarchists themselves* and their subjective understanding of useful opportunities. Since it is difficult to say with any certainty that a particular “opportunity” did objectively and sufficiently cause a particular outcome, we argue it is often more appropriate to consider what movement actors themselves conclude.

Most research that considers cross-national differences of protest tends to analyze the differences between countries (Kitschelt 1986), and does not look for commonalities across countries’ movements, particularly how they share common narratives that are not specific to their own society. These “common opportunities” are of major importance to internationalist-oriented movements. For example, della Porta (2008) noted the benefit that unemployed movements in *all* six of her case study countries (all European) received from labor unions and positive popular opinion. An internationalist movement like anarchism seems an ideal candidate to use such border-crossing common opportunities, particularly as it relates to resisting the “dominant logic”

¹ Communes and popular assemblies are frequently cited examples of this understanding of politics (McKay 2008).

(Melucci 1996:7) of all hierarchically organized societies, regardless of whether they constructed on capitalist, socialist, or some other economic foundation.

Regardless of an opportunity's universality, what do movements try to achieve? Meyer's overview of political opportunity research noted half a dozen different forms of movement outcomes, including policy changes, changes in the level of appropriations for established government programs, policy implementations, running candidates for office, creating alternative institutions, and changing actual practices (Meyer 2004). Creating alternative institutions comes closest to an actual anarchist goal, but the example of this outcome is Andrews' (2002) study of private segregationist schools in the US South that helped to subvert school integration for White and Black students — far from an anarchist objective. The applicability of these outcomes for anarchist movements is questionable. None of these movement outcomes includes the elimination of various hierarchical institutions, a central premise of anarchism. Even “protest,” in which anarchists are involved, is usually narrowly defined as attendance at protest events and precludes the idea of *resistance* or *rebellion*.² For these reasons, we can see some clear weaknesses to the assumptions implicit in the PO framework, at least as it has been conceived in the existing literature.

Despite the apparent shortcomings of PO theory, a major empirical question remains: are there political opportunities that benefit the anarchist movement? We argue that anarchist movement activity has coincided with actual and perceived periods of greater freedoms, and, in times of state repression, anarchist organizing may go underground or disappear altogether. But, we can also broaden the contextual factors that foster movement activity to include cultural and economic opportunities. Although Goodwin and Jasper (1999) warn against watering down the operationalization of political opportunities to the point where *anything* constitutes such an opportunity, the anarchist movement suggests a unique exception to the rule. Since the anarchist movement has a strong *noninterest* in greater political access (of the stereotypical, state-based variety), it is prudent to expand the concept of opportunities to other forms, including those that are cultural and economic in character and to inquire about the extent to which cultural, economic, and traditionally “political” opportunities have shaped the movement in different contexts. These realms are potentially of equal importance to anarchists based on their opposition to all forms of social domination that are perpetuated in a variety of social, economic, and political domains (such as racial, gender, and sexuality-based oppression) and to capitalism. Given this widened spectrum of investigation, what are some possible factors that have aided in the mobilization of current anarchist movements?

Case Studies

We present two loose, competing hypotheses regarding anarchist political opportunities.³ First, *country-specific opportunities* may have assisted some anarchist movements but hindered others, with local context being the decisive factor. In this case, what explains the variations in anarchist activity per country (for example, the varied concentrations of anarchist organizations listed in

² See Martin for the anarchist principles behind the anti-globalization movement's resistance and alternatives-creation (Martin 2007).

³ As we do not aim to generalize our findings, nor argue that such a goal is possible using our research design, our “hypotheses” may be better thought as general expectations given past research. We are not interested in testing or proving either, but merely expressing what we suspected to find at the outset of our research.

the Anarchist Yellow Pages)? Opportunities that have shaped a particular movement's development, success, and survival ought to be apparent in any analysis. Second, as an international movement — especially one intent on eliminating state borders and global capitalism — *common opportunities* may be larger in scale than the country-level. Opportunities may be more general than any one country and instead may be shared across national borders. This possibility suggests that country-specific opportunities are less important.

PO theory (McAdam 1996) and past studies (Williams & Lee 2008) have tended to consider objective and easily quantifiable opportunities and not the subjective opportunities that matter to participants. We argue that opportunities must be perceived as *real* to insiders in order to be a useful in the analysis of historical, subjective narratives, either in the present or in retrospect. Subjectivity is important in analyzing opportunity, especially in the case of movements that persist despite few or no major victories. Insider narratives about perceived opportunities can help to explain the actions of movement participants. Therefore, we examine country-level movement case studies that are built upon the arguments and analyses of anarchists themselves discussing opportunities that each movement encountered. Our approach is based upon a *verstehen* epistemology, and while one might assume anarchist authors would insert propagandistic claims into such histories, this is not the case — the histories appear to be realistic representations from insider perspectives.

Apart from monumental but short-lived events — like the Paris Commune (1871), Russian Revolution (February 1917), and Barcelona uprising during the Spanish Civil War (1936) — anarchism has had few concrete successes that scholars can reference as outcomes of open opportunity structures. Consequently, appreciating the narrative offered by anarchists about themselves and their movement's history will serve as an appropriate guide to understanding anarchist movement-specific mobilization and decline. While it is still difficult to determine what “success” looks like for anarchism, we can analyze the factors that participants think has helped or hurt their movement.

Information on country-specific anarchist movement histories was collected from A-Infos (www.ainfos.ca). Billing itself as “a multi-lingual news service by, for, and about anarchists,” A-Infos has provided news articles about anarchist politics, ideas, and movement events for over a decade and a half. Initially started as a print-based news source, it went online in 1995 and by 2008 the A-Infos archives boasted over sixty-thousand news items in over a dozen languages (A-Infos 2008).⁴ A-Infos is administered by people who identify with a pro-organizational, class-struggle anarchist tradition. This “capital-A anarchist” identity eschews egocentric individualist, primitivist, and arm-chair anarchisms, as well as statist anti-capitalism, liberalism, and so-called “anarcho-capitalism.”⁵ This positioning places A-Infos squarely within the major Left wing of the anarchist movement, often loosely identified as “anarcho-communist,” although that term is sometimes seen as exclusionary and inaccurate. A-Infos includes many items that address anarchist organizations and movement strategy, thus making it highly appropriate for the purposes of this study. The authors of A-Infos items are themselves anarchists, writing either on behalf of

⁴ Languages include: Chinese, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

⁵ A-Infos may not be as strict in its promotion of certain ideological presentations of anarchism as it claims to be. For example, the archives include materials that discuss (and sometimes promote) primitivism as well as purely philosophical anarchist analysis.

a particular organization or in a personal capacity.⁶ The intended audience of A-Infos news items is also anarchists who participate in anarchist movements around the world. Items focus both on matters internal to the anarchist movement, as well as wider-societal matters of interest to anarchists. Thus, the case studies included here are sampled from a universe representing what is arguably the philosophical center of the anarchist movement.

In order to discover factors contributing to the success of country-level anarchist movements, we sought anarchist-written histories indicating perceived opportunities and barriers within a given country, especially those that were longitudinal in character. Thus, we searched the A-Infos archives for English-language articles presenting analyses and histories of country-level anarchist movements. Since we were seeking mention of factors that indicated positive or negative changes, we had to discard some country-level histories that did not discuss any discernible opportunities afforded to the movements (including Argentina, Serbia, and Turkey). These countries are unlikely to be devoid of opportunities and barriers; authors merely neglected to note such qualities. Also of interest to this study was any description of conditions external to a country's anarchist movement that the author perceived as having an impact upon that movement. Specifically, "positive" opportunities are those factors that enhanced or aided the anarchist movement's mobilization, while "barriers" to opportunity are factors which stymied or prevented the anarchist movement's activities, leading to some form of decline. Opportunities were located by the grammar and context that indicated a perceived impact on the anarchist movement. For example, phrases like "success," "influence," "source of," "effect," "created," "led to" and "a real chance to" were a few of the textual indicators for mobilizing opportunities. Negative opportunities and decline were marked by phrases like "displaced," "anarchists were a rarity," "the government then retained control," or "was the end of the classical anarchist movement." More of these phrases will be presented in the examples that follow. The opportunities and barriers were categorized organically, based upon how the particular phenomena or events were described.

We acknowledge that one weakness of our study is the broad consideration of any form of success present in the narratives. Other studies using political opportunity have had to clearly define what constitutes a successful outcome acquired via a political opportunity. Meyer (2004) identifies a variety of these movement outcomes, with dependent variables ranging from policy changes to electing candidates to office, or the creation of alternative institutions and different practices. Unfortunately, it is difficult to operationalize outcomes such as "abolition of an oppressive institution" because complete abolition is rarely achieved and some movement participants focus on the use of non-hierarchical means rather than the achievement of specific ends. Historically, anarchists have almost never been able to achieve such victories on anything but a micro-scale or short-lived basis. Opportunities are still real, though, even if the ultimate goal has never been concretely reached. Consequently, our study aims to consider the more abstract, progressive gains of anarchist movements, often manifested as a growth in participating membership, campaign victories, or increased conflict with elites. Some may view this as stretching

⁶ Although there are presumably fewer A-Infos authors than readers, we believe it is fair to build an understanding of anarchist movement opportunities using these authors because: (1) they influence the perceptions of other anarchists, especially A-Infos readers, (2) they themselves are anarchists and active participants in the movement, and (3) they are likely more reflective participants in the movement and are good sources for well-read, well-reasoned reflection. Of course this is simply one data set and the narratives should not be taken to represent the consensus views of the anarchist movement as a whole, since these views are quite variable (as this paper demonstrates).

political opportunity too thinly or a still-born definition of “success”; we consider it a necessary adaptation to the nature and statuses of anarchist movements historically.

Six movement histories from A-Infos included discussion of opportunities and thus these countries — Bolivia (IBM 2002), Czech Republic (Slaealek 2002), Great Britain (Heath 2006), Greece (Fragos & Sotros 2005), Japan (WSM 2008), and Venezuela (Nachie 2006) — compose our analysis. In this paper we conduct a textual analysis based on the content of these A-Infos articles. When referencing a history published via A-Infos, we cite the author of the essay, not A-Infos itself. These histories are the principal data we analyze in this study and we use the histories to construct a picture of which factors have been perceived to help or hurt anarchist movements over time. In addition, secondary materials consisting of peer-reviewed journal articles and books (some of which are also authored by anarchist or “anarcho-friendly” authors) were used to supplement and further contextualize the country-based histories found in A-Infos.

While these countries derive from a convenience sample and should be considered non-representative of other country-level anarchist movements, they represent highly diverse political, economic, and cultural systems and therefore make excellent sites for theoretical comparison. For example, some countries have long-established parliamentary traditions (Great Britain), while others are recent dictatorships (Greece). Wealthy (Japan) and poor (Venezuela) countries are included, as well as those with a sizable indigenous population (Bolivia) and a recent history of state communism (Czech Republic). We believe that this sample of countries represents a varied range of political opportunities and anarchist movement histories. This variation will allow for fruitful comparisons and case studies.

Anarchist Movement Mobilization and Decline

As part of an internationalist movement opposed to borders, localized anarchist movements could be expected to articulate their opportunity structure in global terms. Many of the opportunities mentioned by the case study histories concerned opportunities that either happened outside of their country or events that were shared experiences across multiple countries. Consequently, we found less evidence for individual country-specific opportunities, but rather common opportunities available to many countries’ movements. This does not mean that all countries experienced these global opportunities in the same way, as we will discuss. See Table 1 for details regarding what phenomena or events were cited for each country, whether the phenomena were considered to lead to mobilization or decline for the movements, and a categorization of the phenomena as political, cultural, or economic.⁷

⁷ We coded specific opportunities that were seen as causal in a temporal sense rather than contextual/historical. For example, discussion of patterns in a country’s literature or art across centuries may have played a role in shaping the anarchist movement, but this does not represent a specific “opportunity” in the same sense that the emergence of the punk movement in music did. The Punk movement occurred at a specific point in time, which according to Heath (2006), led to an “upsurge in anarchism” in the 1980s at which point “A number of young people began to refer themselves as anarchists.” This is a specific opportunity with a defined outcome occurring at an identifiable point in time. We operationalized this example as an opportunity. In contrast, the discussion by Slaealek (2002) of “revolts against authorities” during “the Czech Middle Ages” may be important for the context in which anarchism in that country developed in the 20th century, but we did not operationalize it as an “opportunity” because such background conditions always exist and are neither necessary nor sufficient for movement growth at a particular time point.

Table 1: Mention of Political Opportunities in A-Infos Histories by Country

Opportunity	Type	Bolivia	UK	Czech	Greece	Japan	Venezuela
International interaction	C	+		+		+	+
Punk	C		+	+			+
Poverty, anti-capitalism	E	+			+		
Radicalized labor unions	E	+					
War Propaganda by the deed	P			-		+	
Bolshevism	P	+		-	-		
State repression	P			+	+	-	
Democracy	P				+	+	
Hungary 1956; disappointment with old Left	P		+				
Totals		4	2	5	3	4	2

Notes: Movement mobilization (+), Movement decline (-); Cultural (C), Economic (E), Political (P).

The A-Infos histories of many countries reflected common themes, particularly the importance of deprivation, the political Left and Bolshevism, international interaction, and punk. Repetition of these themes indicates a shared, cross-national narrative of opportunity or an actual universal character for certain anarchist movement opportunities. While each country-based movement developed in an interaction with global phenomena and local factors, most opportunities were not wholly derived from domestic conditions. Instead, modern anarchists seem to be describing global opportunities that are said to have benefited many country’s anarchist movements concurrently. This finding is particularly striking given the enormous diversity of the nations that comprised our sample.

One of the first opportunities noted in the A-Infos histories is something not often considered to be a movement “opportunity”: deprivation. As Giugni (2008) has suggested, the discursive context in which movements exist can be important for movement success. If movement actors collectively define something to be beneficial for them (even post-hoc, decades later), it may be

interpreted as having a motivational influence upon later movement activity and success.⁸ Thus, subjective opportunities can include dynamics that would not otherwise be considered “open” opportunities, such as grievances or deprivation. The A-Infos histories for Greece and Japan indicate that poor socio-economic conditions in countries were factors influencing the growth and influence of anarchism, particularly in early anarchist history. With many Left movements, poverty and social injustice is framed as a barrier for movements to overcome. But for anarchism, these ills are defined as systemic problems derived from hierarchical institutions, such as capitalism, the state, patriarchy, and the like, so that anarchist analyses frame institutions as creating deprivation, which in turn can give rise to anarchist movements. For example, Fragos and Sotros (2005) assert that “Greek anarchism first appeared during the last quarter of the 19th Century as a result of the then unfavourable economic and social conditions of poverty, distress and the dependance [sic] of the country on European capital.” What is deemed “unfavorable” for people is actually very favorable for anarchist movement formation, according to these insiders. Likewise, the deprivation affiliated with war was a major factor in fostering anarchist movement development in Japan:

The Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05 was a major event that led to the emergence of the first Japanese anarchists. At the time many Japanese people had converted from Shinto and Buddhism to Christianity, yet they supported the imperialist nature of the war as a way of integrating themselves with the state. It was those who were determined to resist both the state and the war that turned elsewhere for political inspiration, thus laying the foundations for the Japanese anarchist movement (WSM 2008).

Also of particular note in the A-Infos histories is the repeated reference to other Left movements. Anarchism was often largely indistinguishable

from the militant labor movement that thrived within industrializing economies throughout the world, but especially in Europe (Levy 2004). Anarcho-syndicalism became a vibrant tendency within organized labor and it was viewed as an alternative to union-led social democratic parties and Marxist vanguardism (Schmidt & van der Walt 2009). As such, anarchism thrived outside of the formal realms of political power, taking energy from the masses of working class laborers. Mobilization opportunities were also provided by active labor and anarchist movements outside of each country. For example, Bolivia’s anarchist movement was enhanced by cross-border interaction with neighboring countries, specifically Argentina and Brazil (Simon 1946):

The [May 1st Workers Union] probably owes itself, because of its geographic location, to the influence of the anarchist movement in Argentina. The second source of introduction of anarchist ideals in Bolivia stems from the forced emigration of more than 4,000 Bolivian workers to the salt mines in northern Chile, where a strong anarcho-syndicalist movement developed. These workers spread out from the mines into the countryside and the cities carrying newspapers, books and ideas that changed the ideological landscape at the time. This process culminated in 1927 with the appearance of the Local Workers Federation (FOL) which brought together the five most

⁸ For example, Christiansen’s (2009) study of the contemporary Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) found that members told themselves decades-old stories about the IWW and established a direct connection with anarchism that mutually stimulated growth for both the IWW and the anarchist movement.

combative, militant unions in La Paz [the Bolivian capital city] ...This experience, with many difficult ups and downs up until 1956, has a key importance in the history of syndicalism (IBM 2002).

International interaction was also cited as an opportunity in pre-WWI Japan. For example, “In the [United] States, [the exiled anarchist] Kotoku was influenced by many different things, such as his new found correspondence with [the Russian anarchist] Kropotkin. He translated the [book] *Conquest of Bread* into Japanese, which was then distributed clandestinely among [Japanese] workers and students” (WSM 2008). From the 1890s through the 1910s, anarchism spread far and wide, not just throughout Western Europe and North America, but also colonies and former colonies, including Argentina, Cuba, Egypt, and South Africa (Adams 2002). More recently, the Venezuelan *El Libertario* newspaper has established international connections helping to grow its national movement (Nachie 2006).

Two major world events in the 1910s halted the further expansion of anarchism: state repression and the Bolshevik victory in Russia. In Japan, state repression all but ended anarchist activity during WWI. Mass imprisonment and even state execution drove remaining anarchists underground or to exile abroad:

Some unions opted solely for anarchism and grew in number, more journals and newspapers were established and the movement gained huge momentum. Unfortunately, the government then regained control by sentencing more than 7,000 people to life imprisonment for almost any radical involvement (WSM 2008).

Thus, state repression was experienced as a barrier to opportunity in Japan, while it was a positive opportunity for Greek and Czech anarchists, as reflected in Table 1.

The repression in Japan actually began prior to the war with the Japanese state’s discovery of an anarchist bombing campaign plan (Crump 1993). Assassination attempts or “propaganda by the deed” may be viewed as radical desperation during the end of a protest cycle (Tarrow 1998). Similarly, in 1919 and 1923 Czech anarchists attempted assassinations of prominent political figures, including the Prime Minister. Although neither attempt was successful, the movement faced intense repression, a loss of legitimacy in the public, and the first Czech fascist organization was founded in response (Slaealek 2002).⁹ An earlier assassination of two capitalists led to harsh repression in Greece (A. Gallery 1982). The repression by the state and by capitalist forces can be interpreted as a response to the increasing victories of anarchist-led labor struggles and the political elite’s need to restrict revolutionary change for the preservation of the system.¹⁰

Contrary to the standard interpretation of PO theory, state repression did not always lead to a decline in anarchism. According to Slaealek (2002), repression actually *positively* influenced the movement in the Czech Republic:

⁹ Dictators elsewhere did not require attempted assassinations to justify anarchist repression. For example, the Gomez dictatorship in Venezuela did not tolerate unions or anarchists during its 27 year reign from 1908 to 1935 (Simon 1946).

¹⁰ Sabatini (1996) argues — somewhat unconvincingly — that repression is “not very tenable as a main causal factor” in anarchist movement decline (p. 175). This “decline” occurs earlier (1900) in Sabatini’s estimation and the evidence offered earlier does not operationalize how “decline” or “repression” is measured. “Repression” is only considered in a narrow number of countries and the massive red scare of the late-1910s and early-1920s is not considered.

A considerable importance had also a movement of the nationally and socially radical youth around the magazine *Omladina* (The Youth). In February 1894, 68 of those were sentenced to a short-term prison. By that, many of them got radicalised and reassured in their anarchistic conviction.

Much later in Greece, the Athens Polytechnic School Uprising in 1973 saw increased participation by anarchists in the struggle against the Greek military junta (Fragos & Sotros 2005). The following crack-down on student protest boomeranged against the regime and led to democratic elections the next year. As a consequence of the state's brutal repression of the uprising, Greek law now prohibits any military or police presence on university property, thus opening greater opportunities for students (and others, like anarchists) to use universities as staging points for political protest and resistance.¹¹ In fact, the history of the suppressed uprising in 1973 has created a radical "meme" that replicates itself for every generation of youth who have regularly revolted in the same neighborhoods of Athens, thereby providing anarchists with annual opportunities for protest (Karamichas 2009). In this instance, the brutal use of repression by the junta backfired, thus creating opportunities for decades of anarchist mobilization.

According to PO theory, the flip-side to state repression is an expansion of political access and civil liberties. The only country where an increase in political access is noted — outside of the post-Greek junta years — was Japan. After the state repression early in the century, Japanese anarchism disappeared. According to WSM, "[i]t wasn't until after the Second World War that the anarchists found a real chance to organise. With Japan defeated, humiliated on the world stage and at the mercy of the Americans, the anarchists decided to form a federation in 1946." The fall of Imperial rule coincided with the creation of a parliament and an increase in representative democracy. Coupled with the unpopular occupation of the US army, there was both new free space and cause for increased anarchist organizing, the first such opportunity for Japanese anarchist mobilization since the suppression in the 1910s (WSM 2008). This rebirth was, however, circumscribed by the Cold War, as anarchists faced the repressive occupying Supreme Command of the Allied Powers on one side and the more popular Communist Party on the other (Tsuzuki 1970). Thus, greater political opportunities in the form of a more tolerant political climate were balanced by other disadvantageous conditions.

The 1917 October Revolution in Russia affected anarchists throughout the world. For example, Japanese anarchists in the labor movement found they had to compete with reformists and pro-Bolshevik elements. By the early-1920s, those forces had squeezed out most of the anarchist influence from Japanese unions (Crump 1993). The Socialist movement split, with anarchists (including Osugi Sakae) refusing to cooperate with Bolsheviks for multiple reasons, including anarchist unwillingness to submit to the Comintern and their own critical analysis of poor political conditions in Russia (Stanley 1978). Bolivian anarchist influence in the labor movement was likewise "displaced by the deceptive actions of the Bolshevik parties" (IBM 2002). For the Czechs, the displacement was more formalized:

In 1919, after the end of the war, a meeting [sic] of anarchists took place, where despite of [sic] the disagreement of the members, the leaders persuaded them that a [sic] it was necessary that they be united with the national socialists¹² and dismiss

¹¹ Evidence for the importance of this protection has been shown in many instances, including the late-2008 protests following the police murder of a 15-year old Greek (Karamichas 2009).

¹² "National socialism" here is not comparable to fascism, but rather refers to the country-based socialist parties.

the anarchistic organisation. And in fact, that was the end of the classical anarchist movement (Slaealek 2002).

According to Fragos and Sotros (2005), in Greece after the First World War "...anarchists were a rarity. The main reason for this was the almost complete domination of Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism within the working-class movement as a result of the Bolshevik coup in Russia and also of the successfully [sic] repressive and opportunistic policy of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE)." The Communist Party emerged strong in Greece during this period and remained dominant in the labor movement until the recent period (A. Gallery 1982). After the war and the Bolshevik Revolution, anarchism went into a period of demobilization and decline as Communism gained increased legitimacy amongst the Left as a revolutionary ideology that was perceived to be succeeding in the USSR.

After a long, multi-decade period nearly devoid of an anarchist presence, conditions gradually changed as a result of actions by the Soviet Union and its proxies throughout the world. Leftist disapproval of Marxist-Leninism, particularly following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and disappointment with the Labour Party created positive conditions for an anarchist resurgence in Great Britain (Heath 2006) and other countries. Soviet Premier Khrushchev's acknowledgement of the horrors of Stalinism disillusioned leftists worldwide, a process that would be completed (as we shall see) with the dissolution of the USSR. The rediscovery of anarchist ideas in the 1960s can be attributed to the New Left, although this movement tended to be led more by the middle-class and educated than by the working-class as during the previous anarchist movement cycle.¹³ "This marked a break with the preceding period of "apathy" used by the old Left to explain lack of movement within the working class ...A revolt, often inchoate and unarticulated, among young people against this complacency meant some were attracted to this new movement" (Heath 2006). During the period of the 1960s, the growth of anarchism ran parallel to intensified social movement struggles, including anti-colonialist movements, civil rights, and anti-war movements (especially regarding the US war against Vietnam). The British anarchist movement was rejuvenated in the early 1960s through the "ban the bomb" movement, especially the Committee of 100 (Heath 2006). This re-birth of anarchist politics surprised many observers, including esteemed anarchist historian George Woodcock (1962). While 1960s anarchism differed from classical anarchism, Lerner noted certain similarities, including an acceptance of violence, anti-majoritarianism, individual moral responsibility, radical critique of the state, and longing for a simpler life (Lerner 1970).

Perhaps the most important political opportunity enabling the dramatic mobilization of anarchism in the 1990s was created by the fall of the Soviet Union. This incredible development affected not only Russia, but former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe. Active social change organizations and movements grew as state repression declined in these countries (Ruff 1991, Tarrow 1998). This decline in repression was coupled with another important related opportunity that fueled anarchist movements globally: the possible spectrum of radical dissent re-broadened. The demonstrable failure of state-centered socialism freed the political Left from some of its historical, totalitarian baggage. Marxist vanguardism lost credibility in the eyes of people throughout the world's social movements, which allowed for other visions of socialism and leftism. For rad-

¹³ Incidentally, Breines (1982) argues that anarchists and pacifists had a substantial influence on the New Left, too, including Murray Bookchin, Paul Goodman, and C. Wright Mills. Also, for more on class differences in modern anarchism, see Williams (2009).

icals, the political and moral failure of Marxism facilitated a greater appreciation and enhanced legitimacy for anarchist ideas and practice. For example, crumbling Communism led Czech anarchists to begin publicly organizing against the army and fascists prior to the fall of the Czech regime. The Czech A-Infos history notes that “[a]fter the fall of Bolshevik in 1989 the trockists [sic] created a free platform of the autonomous and liberal activities called Lev alternative (‘The left alternative’), in which the anarchists also participated” (Slaealek 2002).

Anarchism seems to have prospered well in the general milieu of the radical working class movements, but in reverse proportion to the Left, particularly Marxism. The victory of Bolshevism led to anarchist decline, while mid-century disappointment with the USSR and other leftists – e.g. the Hungarian revolt in 1956 – increased anarchist mobilization. The record also indicates a dramatic global boom in anarchism in the wake of the USSR’s break-up in the late-1980s and early 1990s. This supports Olzak and Uhrig’s (2001) argument that similar actors in a social movement field – in this case radical Leftists – compete for scarce resources, including members and popular support. Therefore, in times of one radical tendency’s success and legitimacy, others are diminished and vice-versa in other times.

The integration of the Eastern/socialist bloc countries into the world economy intensified global economic integration (commonly called “globalization”). This economic opportunity brought (or, perhaps, forced) social movements from disparate struggles and locations together, compelling dialogue and coordination on a wider variety of issues (Smith 2004). Capitalist integration and hegemony created resistance by those who did not benefit – primarily workers and citizens, but also the indigenous and other disenfranchised minorities. Globalization spurred an increased focus upon issues and struggles worldwide about which other activists were previously unaware or unconcerned. Institutions that drove the processes of economic globalization, particularly the World Trade Organization, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Group of Eight (G8) became the target of protests in which anarchists played a central role (Epstein 2001). This globalization of local enemies drew anarchist protest at high-profile meetings and summits that were popularly represented in the media as events overrun with the most radical of critics (anarchists) who dramatically faced the state and its repressive forces (the police). For example, the 2000 World Bank and IMF meetings were held in Prague, Czech Republic and large protests took place, including multiple marches led by or consisting of anarchists (Juris 2008, Notes From Nowhere 2003). In Bolivia, as in other places, anti-capitalist traditions were merged with a growing awareness of globalized capitalism: “Juventudes Libertarias, a group of anarchist-communists base in La Paz, has risen from a strong history of resistance to capitalism in the country” (IBM 2002).

Finally, a cultural opportunity has been offered by the musical punk subculture of the West since the late 1970s and 1980s. While punk is not explicitly “anarchist,” the opportunities offered by punk as a cultural form are undeniable. Punk scenes provided a “safe space” for anti-authoritarian politics, recruiting grounds for future anarchists, and a shared culture that could unite anarchists. As such, punk is not just a music form, but a subculture grouping and practice that rejuvenated and fed into the broader anarchist movement. In Great Britain, the birthplace of punk, anarcho-punk took a front-seat within the anarchist movement:

The beginning of the 1980s saw another upsurge in anarchism. A number of young people began to refer to themselves as anarchists. This had its origins in the birth

of the punk movement in the late 70s and the influence of the Crass group (Heath 2006).

British punk dovetailed with the Stop the City protests, the confrontational Class War organization, and countless local music scenes throughout Britain (Heath 2006). This chaotic, intense, and confrontational musical form brought with it a strong anti-authoritarian impulse and DIY (“do it yourself”) ethic that mirrored the anarchist preference for “direct action.” Through these sub-cultural channels, punk rock spread anarchism throughout the world, along with references to historical anarchism, radical left-wing values, and various, relatively new concerns (such as those of the so-called “new social movements”), including anti-racism, feminism, animal liberation, environmental defense, and anti-imperialism (O’Hara 1999). Punk frequently articulated anti-authoritarian politics that were sometimes explicitly anarchist in nature. Influential anarcho-punk bands and organizations inspired punks to become active in radical politics.

Punk soon spread throughout the world, with active “scenes” found throughout Latin America, Europe, and Asia (O’Connor 2004, O’Hara 1999). With the emergence of local or national punk scenes, anarchists mobilized the energies of otherwise non-political punks. For example, punk has been so influential in Venezuela that the national anarchist movement may be separated into two groupings: that which has been fostered by anarcho-punk and that which has not. According to Nachie (2006),

[a]lthough Venezuela has no appreciable history of explicitly-anarchist direct action and the scene is certainly less militant than others in Chile or Brazil for instance, anarcho-punk, organized or unorganized, is undoubtedly the most consolidated and publicly visible source of anarchist ideas in the country.

Punk is also identified as an “important influence” on the re-birth of Czech anarchism (Slaealek 2002). The influence of anarcho-punk was particularly strong after the “Velvet Revolution” that split Slovakia from the Czech Republic, with over a hundred anarchist groups in the country, many “crystallize[d] around punk and hardrock music groups” (Konvicka & Kavan 1994: 175). The influence of punk on modern anarchism cannot be understated; punk cultural symbols and dress are widely represented amongst anarchists, almost to the point where the two sometimes appear to merge and become one. Yet, punk has not had a universal, dominant role in anarchist movements, as indicated by the fact that the narratives from Bolivia, Greece, and Japan did not mention punk.

Discussion

Our analysis of anarchist movements in six countries indicates a number of common themes. Additional evidence from other non-activist histories (i.e. outside of the A-Infos data) reinforces the major claims. There are two questions that can immediately be raised by this analysis. First, we are interested in confirming these general patterns in major anarchist histories — especially those histories focused on countries with large, vibrant movements such as Russia and Spain — as well as countries that have been the target of substantial research, like the US. Are the opportunity themes we discovered with Bolivia, Britain, the Czech Republic, Greece, Japan, and Venezuela consistent with those found in more well-known sites of the anarchist movement?

Second, are there opportunity themes that we were surprised to find no mention of in the A-Infos data? In other words, are there “objective” opportunities that anarchist movements could have or likely took advantage of that are missing within the activist narratives we studied here?

State repression is a common theme throughout the activist and scholarly literatures on anarchism. For example, state response to anarchist opposition to the First World War was extreme. Anarchists were (with a few notable exceptions, e.g. Peter Kropotkin) vocal opponents of the war, viewing it as a conflict among capitalists and their state agents. Public opposition to the war coincided with a crackdown on radicals throughout the world. The Palmer Raids in the US are an illustrative example: foreign- and native-born anarchists and labor leaders were rounded-up, put on trial, and often deported (Renshaw 1968). The anarchist Union of Russian Workers was a target of particular interest, although there was scant evidence of their actual participation in illegality (Coben 1963). Individual US states also passed “criminal anarchy laws” that not only aimed to stop the overthrow of government, but also any criticism of representative government or politicians (Levin 1971).

The social revolution that seemed imminent to the radical movements of the early 1900s before the First World War did eventually break out. While Marxism predicted revolution would occur in a parliamentary capitalist society, it instead happened in feudal and agrarian Russia. The popular revolution in February 1917 and the subsequent rise to power by the Bolsheviks in October 1917 inspired radicals throughout the world. Many anarchists and other radicals were initially drawn towards this successful anti-capitalist revolution, and even if they did not end up converting to communism, they often provided material and propagandistic support for the Bolsheviks (Zimmer 2009). The Soviet Union formed a Third Internationalism which co-opted the radicalism that had grown in opposition to World War I (Levy 2004). Initially, Lenin employed key anarchist concepts in his speeches, thereby supporting the very causes Russian anarchists had pioneered and advocated, including the soviets and worker self-management. However, once in power, the Bolsheviks imprisoned anarchist critics, took control of the worker soviets, attacked and then dissolved the anarchist Mahknovist army in the Ukraine, and laid siege to disgruntled anarchist sailors during the Kronstadt Uprising (Avrich 1967). It took years (decades in some cases) for anarchists outside of Russia to conclude that the true aims of Lenin and the Bolsheviks were non-anarchist and “counter-revolutionary” at heart. As Joll (1964, p. 192) writes:

The Marxists, by their success in Russia, now appeared to be a far more effective revolutionary force than the anarchists; and it was thus even harder for the anarchists to win and retain the support which would enable them to put into practice their own ideas of what the revolution should be.

The impact of Bolshevism seems nearly universal, not just within the A-Infos countries and in Russia, but throughout the world. The secondary literature verifies the narratives told within A-Infos. The major exception to the movement abeyance that began during the interwar years was in Spain. Anarcho-syndicalism had been widely adopted by large sectors of the Spanish working classes and unlike anarchists in other countries, the movement was large and ideologically-driven enough – under the organization of the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) anarcho-syndicalist union and the Federacion Anarquista Iberica – to retain its anarchist character until after Bolshevik repression began in Russia and peaked with the Kronstadt Uprising in 1921 (Bookchin 1998). Anarchists also played a prominent role in facilitating the defense against the

attempted, and eventually successful, fascist coup by Franco during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). During this period, the CNT aligned itself with the socialist Republic forces fighting against the fascist army. Having this elite ally (the socialist Republican government) undoubtedly created pockets of freedom for anarchists to pursue their goals in land and factory collectivization. However, the Spanish Left remained divided and was repressed by the Stalinist forces, who were ostensibly aiding the Spanish Republic in its struggle against Franco. After the Communist suppression of the POUM (non-Stalinist Marxists) and the anarchist militias (predominantly organized by the CNT), Franco easily conquered the remaining outposts of Communist resistance, thus leading to a decades-long dictatorship. Anarchism, while not dead, then went into a period of dormancy, kept together by scattered newspapers and authors, waiting for a new resurgence. Spanish anarchists who escaped prison or death went underground or into exile abroad (Beevor 2006).

Anarchism's mid-20th Century reappearance would look radically different from early 20th Century anarchism that died in Spain. Consequently, the activity of anarchist movements around the world has been bi-modal. First, the "golden age" of anarchism was heavily involved in the labor movement and died away in the early decades of the 20th Century. Second, a re-birth — largely not directly connected to the first wave — mobilized in the 1960s New Left and counter-culture that diffused into many popular movements. The barriers to opportunities noted in Table 1 indicate demobilization associated with the repression around the time of the First World War and the positive opportunities in the 1960s indicate a new mobilization period, although our data indicate that the specific triggers of anarchist organizing varied by country during this period of generally increased mobilization.

Although the New Left was "post-Old Left" — particularly unaffiliated to the Communist Party — this does not mean it was able to completely break free of the Old Left. For example, the major New Left organization in the US was Students for a Democratic Society, which by the late-1960s splintered into a smattering of various Leftist, non-anarchist sects (Balsler 1997, Bookchin 2004, Sale 1973). However, the anti-authoritarian impulse of the New Left remained and found a place within other burgeoning movements outside the student movement, especially the feminist, anti-nuclear, and environmental movements, such as the organized called Movement for a New Society (Cornell 2011, Epstein 1991).

The continued evolution of the New Left throughout the 1960s provided opportunities for anarchism to re-emerge. In fact, the current wave of anarchism can be traced back to the New Left's insistence upon "participatory democracy," as opposed to "democratic centralism" (as offered by the Soviet bloc) or "representative democracy" (in the West). The New Left's eventual rejection of formal leadership was not an immediate one, but emerged most clearly with the rise of the anti-nuclear and radical feminist movements (Epstein 1991). Here, the tactical emphasis upon cooperation, consensus decision making, and direct action are key anarchist contributions. Within this radical milieu emerged many of the key ideas and structures that would come to represent the anarchist movement of the 1990s, namely grassroots, community-based direct action, through the use of direct democracy and affinity groups (Polletta 2002).

We expected the A-Infos narratives to identify the advent of the Internet as a recent, technological opportunity for mobilization, but none mentioned the Internet in this fashion. This is a particularly noteworthy absence, given that our data source is itself the Internet; we expected anarchists to be reflective of the new chances for organizing being offered by the Internet. Although unremarked upon, the increasingly widespread use of the Internet as a popular tool for

communication (the online version of A-Infos being a prime example) seems to have created an incredible set of cultural opportunities. Demands for free speech rights and information exchange have spread throughout the world. The Internet facilitated collaboration and networking between movement allies, even if separated by large geographic distances. The ease in coordinating protests also amplified activist voices and allowed for the wider dissemination of demands, as seen by the anti-capitalist protests organized by the decentralized network of Peoples' Global Action. It is difficult to miss the uniquely anarchistic nature of the Internet, which functions as a decentralized network of information channels, that allow for easy voluntary association, and the relatively inexpensive ability to provide mutual aid, such as in setting-up websites, email accounts, and mailing listserves (Wall 2007). Anarchists were not only early adopters of the world-wide-web for propaganda purposes, but they have also created their own organizational infrastructure to avoid the influence of corporations and the state. Thus, autonomous collectives have spread throughout the world to provide the aforementioned Internet services to anarchists and other activists (Shantz 2003a). Although the case studies did not provide evidence for the self-described utility of the Internet to the movement, this does not discount the possibility that it was truly beneficial in an objective sense.

Conclusions

This article has affirmed established claims that opportunities are a consistent quality necessary for movement success and anarchism is no exception. However, the conventional view of “political opportunities” makes less sense for an avowedly anti-state movement, since such opportunities are typically oriented towards engaging *with* the state, not disengaging *from* it — to say nothing of dismantling and abolishing it. Nonetheless, opportunities have been seized by the anarchist movement, as demonstrated by a review of the histories of a sample of country's movements. Moreover, anarchists in different countries have perceived the importance of certain *common* opportunities and a few consistent patterns are discernible. We found evidence of both country-specific and common opportunities in the subjective narratives in our sample, as well as the broader literature, with the common opportunities perhaps being the most decisive in shaping the anarchist movement around the world. One key pattern shows the antagonistic, yet symbiotic, relationship of anarchism to Marxism. Bolshevism all but silenced anarchism in the late-1910s, draining it of political appeal. Still, each loss of face for the Soviet Union enhanced the anarchist movements. The New Left in mid-century benefited from disillusionment with Stalinism, and then the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union gave rise to even more anarchist organizing in the 1990s. This pattern clearly illustrates the importance of non-state-based, but still political, opportunities (in this case, the nature of global Marxist regimes or domestic Left movements) in affecting the chances of anarchist movement mobilization.

Another observed pattern is anarchism's parallel development with other anti-mainstream movements, particularly labor during the classical period and punk in recent years. A fruitful cultural synergy developed between anarchism and both of these movements. These other movements seemed to be sources of new members and inspirational frames for the anarchist movement, and should not just be considered mere “allies” to anarchism. Such patterns were common opportunities in many countries, not just one or two.

These shared narratives indicate a number of possible conclusions, which point in divergent directions. First, there have been real empirical opportunities that have facilitated anarchist movement growth and an equally real closing of opportunities that have stymied the movement. In other words, anarchist movements have experienced opportunities that are structurally comparable to other movements, albeit more anti- and nonstate in character.

Second, modern anarchists have generalized specific anarchist “opportunities” to many of their local contexts based upon universal narratives that are widely exchanged within the global movement. Thus, present day anarchists may be articulating claims about opportunities that circulate within the intellectual milieu of anarchist culture, and claims may be an inaccurate or inappropriate extrapolation of opportunities from one societal context to another. Activist interpretations may also be derived from scholarly sources, thus indicating a perceptual-feedback loop.

Or, some third option may best explain our findings. A combination of substantial and objective opportunities have likely shaped anarchist movement success over time, while modern anarchists may also be selectively framing their analysis as to generalize those histories and unite disparate local factions of the movement in a common, internationalist narrative.

Our findings appear to be reliable, in light of other secondary evidence. The anarchist movement narratives from A-Infos were overwhelmingly supported by additional anarchist history sources, not just from the same case study countries under investigation, but also for prominent countries that fell outside of our data sample. This congruency confirms the strength of the movement narrative as reflective of external scholarly opinion. It also indicates that the opportunities noticed in the A-Infos histories were in-fact major opportunities broadly shared globally — but not universally by all countries — and that the authors were astute observers of that history.

With these general patterns in mind, we advance the following expectations based on our subjective data that should be tested in future research. This work should advance both our understanding of the anarchist movement and political opportunity theory. First — contrary to our main finding about the generalized importance of political opportunities — anarchism in some countries (e.g., Venezuela) has not directly benefited from political opportunities at all, but is rather the result of cultural forces. In other countries, factors related to economics (Greece), culture (Britain, Czech Republic, Japan) — or both (Bolivia) — combined with the “political” to shape the movement. So we expect the relative importance of political opportunities to vary across countries, even though they are also shaped by common opportunities that transcend state boundaries. “Objective” research could further explore and refine these findings from our subjective accounts. Second, extreme state repression has historically limited anarchist mobilization, so some minimal level of political freedom is required for the movement to exist. But once this minimal threshold is reached, state repression may advance rather than hinder the movement (as with Greece and the Czech Republic). Further research should explore the conditions that transform state repression into a positive political opportunity beyond the tentative data we have presented here. Finally, anarchist mobilization has been reduced by the existence of other strong, Left political movements (e.g., Bolshevism), as well as declines in distrust of the state that are associated with increased freedom and rights. These ironies, at least for anarchism, of ostensibly positive social change should be more fully explored.

As hinted in the methods section above, our findings raise cautions about how to measure and evaluate the usage of POs. Not all movements take advantage of opportunities in the ways typically expected. Anarchism possesses extra-legislative goals that aim to achieve the overthrow of major social institutions like the state, capitalism, patriarchy, and others. Consequently, there

have been no pure, explicit victories for the anarchist movement (perhaps with the exception of the short-lived Spanish Revolution, 1936–1939). Our case study narratives instead had to focus upon the perception of movement “growth” or “decline” as opposed to legislative victories. Measuring movement activity in this fashion is out of sync with not only most other movements, but also prevailing theoretical assumptions about how movements operate. Some movements do not seek to influence or alter the state, but to abolish it altogether — as well as other hierarchical institutions.

This study calls into sharp question the unchallenged assumption that the state is a strategic location for opportunities from the perspective of radical, anti-state movements. The applicability of existing theoretical tools is limited because anarchism has been studiously avoided in social movement analyses. Movement theories have largely been constructed via analyses on reform-oriented movements that lobby government in some fashion or request other elites modify their practices, and revolutionary movements that seek to merely substitute current ruling elites with themselves. However, this research oversight does not mean that existing movement theories are of no use; instead, they require a serious re-working and reflexivity to appreciate the radical, anti-state character of movements like anarchism. Although anarchism has not enjoyed the same level of “success” that other comparable radical movements — such as Bolshevism and Maoism — have enjoyed, there have clearly been periods of increased anarchist activity, mobilization, and short-term goal achievement. Obviously, ultimate anarchist goals — the dissolution of all forms of economic, political, and social hierarchies — would be difficult to achieve, and the state would be an unlikely partner in such a mission. Consequently, the notion of “opportunity” is still important to the study of anarchist movements, but it needs to be re-operationalized in order to remain relevant. This re-operationalization would seem to require a focus on the subjective opportunities perceived and sought by movement participants themselves, a de-emphasis upon strictly political (and especially state-based) opportunities, and a broadened appreciation of other forms of opportunity (such as economic and cultural) that may assist in the social revolution anarchist movements aim to inspire.

Due to certain methodological limitations — a small number of countries and only one central narrative per country — our study is not necessarily a definitive analysis on anarchism. Instead, we consider the study to be an important step towards a new approach in considering opportunities, especially amongst anti-state movements. Future attempts to consider supposedly “political” opportunities should be sure to distinguish what sorts of opportunities movements seize upon, even though the typical understanding of such opportunities rely upon the state for fulfillment. The radical character of the anarchist movement illustrates the need to consider non-state-based opportunities and, potentially, opportunities that are more economic or cultural. Additionally, as other research has shown, movements may have multiple, non-state targets. For anarchism, these targets of critique and attack are many, including all forms of domination and authority. How these claims find resonance with different audiences is poorly understood. Where do anarchist movements make their demands: to the polity, the state, specific groups of disadvantaged persons, or society at large? Each is likely to have different levels of appreciation for anarchist critiques and goals. The lack of movement success could be partially due to the strong social control mechanisms and self-interest operating in each aforementioned audience, which in turn circumscribe potential opportunities.

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