
CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIRECT ACTION FRAME: ANARCHY AND ECOLOGY CONFRONT AUTHORITY

*“The very notion of direct action ... emerges directly from the libertarian tradition. Anarchism is the heart of the movement, its soul; the source of most of what’s new and hopeful about it.”*³³⁴

1. INTRODUCTION

Direct action (DA) is often considered as a tactical approach to protest that is utilised by a variety of movements. More recently, the notion that DA forms the basis of a radical social change movement of itself, i.e. a ‘direct action movement’, has gained some currency.³³⁵ However, this is difficult to fit within the confines of social movement theory, which traditionally demands the identification of particular goals to which movements work. I will argue, rather, that DA is best understood as the basis of an orientational frame within a broader cycle of contention. It has become closely connected to a number of normative claims which are implied wherever the recognisable tactics of DA are utilised. Direct actionists have rediscovered a strong anti-authoritarian position that flows from the centring of individual freedom within the positive values of the frame. They have reinvented an attitude to decentralised, direct forms of decision making that offers a particular understanding of democracy. And they have developed new understandings of political space as a collective construction, free from systems of power domination.

Activists whose understandings are informed by the DA frame tend to be less inclined to explicitly theorise their protest activity than those informed by the other frames I identify in this thesis. Exposition of the frame will, therefore, be strongly centred on a number of periods of contentious activity in which local activists have been involved. Principally, these will include: actions against the DSEi arms exhibition in London’s Docklands; local anti-consumerist protest for ‘No Shop Day’; the creation of *Sheffield Indymedia*; and a ‘mass direct action’ at US ‘listening station’ NSA

³³⁴ Graeber, D., 2002, “The New Anarchists” in *New Left Review* 13, p. 62.

³³⁵ Doherty, B., Plows, A. & Wall, D., 2003, “The Preferred Way of Doing Things’: The British Direct Action Movement” in *Parliamentary Affairs* 56, pp. 669-686.

Menwith Hill in Yorkshire. Because the frame emphasises the prefigurative role of protest action, the modes of organisation are as important as reflective speech or writing in highlighting core political principles. Examination of consensus-based decision making (CBDM) uncovers the connection between understandings of individual freedom and democracy. It is here that we will find tensions both within the frame, and in the relationships between the DA frame and other currents in the general movement. In examining the divisions created by the precepts of the DA frame, it will become apparent that frame-specific decontestations of democracy contain the potential for contest within the current cycle of contention.

To understand how DA has come to be imbued with the political ideals I specify we must look to the traditions from which current practices have emerged. My analysis begins, therefore, by briefly tracing the history of direct action in the UK. It is a history of various applications and diffuse understandings. The roots of the practice are to be found in the movement for nuclear disarmament and have been developed through movements reacting to a number of events and trends in mainstream politics. There is a recognisable genealogy of certain facets of confrontational direct action that are based on a “rejection of a politics which appeals to governments to modify their behaviour in favour of physical intervention against state power in a form that itself prefigures an alternative.”³³⁶ Graeber only tells part of the story, however, and a more detailed examination finds further characteristics central to current DA practices. In my analysis of the latter I will offer explanations for the unmediated and prefigurative nature of DA through relating it to particular understandings of freedom and knowledge. Furthermore, I will argue that in its more positive and creative aspects, the DA frame encompasses beliefs about processes of empowerment and the creation of space that are inextricably tied to its confrontational aspect. Yet Graeber is right to claim that the idea of direct action is grown from anarchist roots and it is those to which I turn first.

2. THE LONG VIEW: ANARCHY, PEACE AND ECOLOGY

Direct Action and Anarchist Thought

Observers frequently divide anarchism into individualist and collectivist camps; the ideology may be understood as liberalism taken to its logical conclusions or as an anti-

³³⁶ Graeber, “The New Anarchists”, p. 62.

authoritarian socialism.³³⁷ This division finds its extremes, on the one hand, in Max Stirner's conception of egoism,³³⁸ and, on the other, the federal collectivism of thinkers such as Bakunin (in his opposition to Marx³³⁹) and Kropotkin's notion of *Mutual Aid*.³⁴⁰ While Freeden finds anarchism troublesome as an ideology, precisely because of its twin roots, his description of its 'thin core' is valuable. The most obvious element is a deep antagonism to power, leading to the belief in the necessity of destruction of the state. This is motivated by a longing for liberty; a society in which human agents can freely choose their action with no coercive constraint. The anarchist ideal is predicated on an assumption of the potential for harmony within human society without coercive control.³⁴¹ Colin Ward demonstrates all these points more proselytically, "Anarchists are people who make a social and political philosophy out of the natural and spontaneous tendency of humans to associate together for their mutual benefit ... it is possible and desirable for society to organise itself without government."³⁴²

The notion of direct action, as the preferred method of achieving social change, is capable of bringing together both libertarian and collectivist strands of anarchism. It has been present in anarchist thinking since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, when Voltarine de Cleyre explained,

"Every person who ever had a plan to do anything, and went and did it, or who laid his plan before others, and won their co-operation to do it with him, without going to external authorities to please do the thing for them, was a direct actionist."³⁴³

By this definition, direct action may encompass a wide range of different activities carried out by individuals or groups. It is painted in this light as constructive action, but it equally applies to action that is motivated by the desire to stop some injustice. Anarchists' have typically stressed the distinction between direct and political (or indirect) action.³⁴⁴ In taking the first path one acts for oneself. Taking the second path is any attempt to influence others to exert power on your behalf, which may take the form

³³⁷ Ward, C., 1982, *Anarchy in Action*, (Freedom Press, London), p. 4; Freeden, M., 1996, *Ideologies and Political Theory. A Conceptual Approach*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford), pp. 311; Miller, D., 1984, *Anarchism*, (Dent, London), chapter 1.

³³⁸ Festenstein, M., & Kenny, M., 2005, *Political Ideologies*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford), pp. 353-6.

³³⁹ Woodcock, G., 1963, *Anarchism*, (Pelican, Middlesex), pp. 17-9.

³⁴⁰ Kropotkin, P., 1972[1902], *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*, (Penguin, London).

³⁴¹ Freeden, M., 1996, *Ideologies...*, pp. 311-14.

³⁴² Ward, C., 1982, *Anarchy in Action*, (Freedom Press, London), p. 4.

³⁴³ De Cleyre, V., c.1912, "Direct Action", in *Spunk Library*, available at: <http://www.spunk.org/library/writers/decleyre/sp001334.html>; last accessed: 22/07/05.

³⁴⁴ de Cleyre, *Direct Action*; Weick, D., 1996, "The Habit of Direct Action" in Ehrlich, H.J., ed., *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, (AK Press, Edinburgh).

of lobbying an MP or supporting a revolutionary party; either way it highlights your dependency on another. As such, the direct action tactic is inherently anti-authoritarian, fulfilling the first element of the shared anarchist core. Second, direct action stresses the autonomy of the individual; action must be freely chosen, and groups taking direct action must be free associations which offer their members the opportunity to have a full influence on group decisions. As such, it fulfils the desire for liberty inherent in anarchism. Third, because direct action among collectives should be organised by free association with the utmost respect for liberty, it prefigures anarchic society. The notion that people are, of their own free will, choosing to take some purposive action together is a demonstration of the relationships that will compose a preferable future.

The idea of direct action as prefigurative deserves a brief digression. Anarchism is a revolutionary ideology in that all anarchists (as all revolutionary socialists) assert that:

“it is not in the least likely that states and governments, in either the rich or the poor worlds will, of their own volition, embark on the drastic change of direction which a consideration of our probable future demands... Power and privilege have never been known to abdicate. This is why anarchism is bound to be a call to revolution.”³⁴⁵

This lends anarchism an oppositional attitude that colours its proponents’ interactions with all agents of state or corporate power and with other movements for social change. However, in the UK there has also been a tendency to accept that revolutionary overthrow of the state is unlikely in the near future. It is an acceptable alternative, therefore, to seek out areas in which to create alternative societies in the here and now. Indeed, for Ward the enlargement of such spaces might be the primary meaning that revolution has. Anarchism, “far from being a speculative vision of a future society, is a description of a mode of human organisation, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society.”³⁴⁶ In this context, direct action takes on two meanings. First, it refers to oppositional, confrontational action, carried out in a particular manner that attempts to make a concrete impact on authority. Second, it is the construction of spaces in which one can live and work in free association with others, without coercion of any form. Both of these meanings are prefigurative, although the latter, with its stress on producing the essentials for life, can most obviously serve as a detailed example of the way one ‘ought’ to live. Both continue to find expression in a range of movements in the UK today.

³⁴⁵ Ward, *Anarchy in Action*, p. 142.

³⁴⁶ Ward, *Anarchy in Action*, p. 14.

This sketch of the connections between anarchism and direct action has been necessarily brief. However, my purpose is not to seek anarchism within the current movements on the basis of a programmatic description of the ideational elements that define an ideology. Rather, I reflect on ideological traditions as a way of understanding present interpretative frames. The picture that emerges from my local ethnographic work is that it is more often ‘direct action’ to which activists are oriented, rather than anarchism as such. In fact, the influence of self-conscious anarchism in UK political movements has always been minor. In the early twentieth century other European nations had strong anarcho-syndicalist strands within trade union movements. Especially for the syndicalist, direct action referred to industrial tactics such as go-slows and work-to-rule, with the general strike as its highest form. But syndicalist groups made few inroads in the UK’s trade union movement, and their influence dwindled to ever smaller proportions after the First World War.³⁴⁷ To some degree in the British New Left³⁴⁸, and more ostentatiously in the counter-cultural movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s³⁴⁹ anarchism has had some continuing influence. However, for those engaged in political activism anarchist ideas have come largely through practice rather than philosophy. That would certainly be in keeping with Woodcock’s imagery; anarchism characterised as “water percolating through porous ground ... disappearing from sight, and then re-emerging where the cracks in the social structure may offer it a course to run.”³⁵⁰ In examining the course of the use of direct action in the UK below, a number of anarchist themes will resurface, offering reflection on prevalent ideational elements.

Direct Action and Nuclear Disarmament

From 1956 to 1961 there was a crescendo of civil disobedience against the testing and deployment of nuclear weapons. The Direct Action Committee (DAC) had been born out of a long-running pacifist group, after an attempt to understand how Gandhian techniques of protest could be applied in the UK. It was motivated by the desire to see the emergence of a non-violent society. In bringing Gandhi’s anti-authoritarian pacifism to the UK the group also saw a coming together of means and

³⁴⁷ Marshall, P., 1993, *Demanding the Impossible. A History of Anarchism*, (Fontana, London), p. 491; it is notable that this thorough volume carries nation-study chapters for a number of Western European country, excluding Britain.

³⁴⁸ Miller, D., 1984, *Anarchism*, pp.141-150.

³⁴⁹ Marshall, P., 1992, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp. 542-546.

³⁵⁰ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p. 15.

ends of action; the methods of protest prefiguring the ideal of a non-violent society.³⁵¹ Furthermore, as the founding document of the 1957 Committee (a forerunner of DAC in both ideas and personnel) demonstrates, the critique of society was far-reaching:

"non violent resistance should be related equally to ending war and to bringing about radical social changes. These two should be regarded as inextricably interwoven... Social aims in the United Kingdom hinged around the decentralisation of the bureaucratic, managerialist and militaristic features of State Socialism and State Capitalism experienced today."³⁵²

By the end of 1957 the Direct Action Committee (DAC) had been formally created with an intention to send a small group of volunteers on a sailing boat into the waters of the British nuclear test zone in the Pacific ocean.³⁵³ Although the group failed to raise the necessary funds the vocal support they received from many quarters (including the prominent anarchists Alex Comfort and Herbert Read) led to the conception of a march to the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Aldermaston, Berkshire. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this demonstration is that it was a march *from* London *to* Aldermaston. The organisers clearly considered that the protest should be addressed not to government but to the individuals working in the industry. The march culminated in a demonstration and picket of the base and attempts to persuade facility staff to pledge not to be involved in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Previous civil disobedience had been self-consciously symbolic, but Aldermaston marked the development of a more direct kind of action.³⁵⁴ Subsequent demonstrations at UK and US airbases (many of the same ones targeted by the most recent anti-war movement) went as far as creating blockades around building equipment, prompting significant debates within the peace movement about whether obstruction was acceptable within a liberal democracy.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Taylor, R., 1988, *Against the Bomb. The British Peace movement, 1958-1956*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford), p. 117.

³⁵² Quotation from the founding document of the 1957 Committee, quoted in Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, p. 121.

³⁵³ Interestingly, it was an identical tactic successfully applied by the Vancouver-based Don't Make a Wave Committee in 1969 that was the foundation of Greenpeace; Hunter, R., 1979, *The Greenpeace Chronicle*. (Picador, London), pp. 11-19.

³⁵⁴ A minor qualification: because action is symbolic does not necessarily imply that it is not direct action. In a sense, of course, small group action must be symbolic in order to have a broader effect. However, when the creation of symbols to convince those in power of the moral validity of an argument is the sole purpose of an action it is not direct action in the anarchist sense set out above.

³⁵⁵ Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, pp. 123-130. These debates are well represented in the archives of *Peace News*.

DAC became the Committee of 100, running in parallel with the recently established CND³⁵⁶ and drawing away its more militant members (including Bertrand Russell, probably the most recognised intellectual leader). The new group represented a more diffuse set of understandings than the tightly-knit DAC. Inspired by Gandhian non-resistance protesters would sit-down wherever they met confrontation with the police, and if arrested would offer no resistance, but go limp, requiring the police to carry them away. That such tactics were disruptive and threatening is evidenced by the arrest of over 1,300 people for attending a prohibited demonstration in 1961. However, Russell saw civil disobedience as a publicity stunt, his call to ‘fill up the jails’ with peace activists was a reflection of the urgency with which government policy must be influenced.³⁵⁷ Others within the Committee of 100, had an understanding of direct action that went beyond the tactical, involving, among other elements the notion that the means one uses are the “ends in embryo” and, “the idea of the ‘parallel society’ evolving not side-by-side but over and against present society”.³⁵⁸ However, the movement dwindled and apart from momentary upsurges around major crisis points (notably the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962) it was not until the Vietnam Solidarity Committee’s more confrontational marches in 1967-8 that civil disobedience was again seen in the urban setting. These had been largely led by the far-left (see chapter three) and fed by the burgeoning youth movement, but there was little concrete understanding of the politics of the tactics being used, the leadership “did not look beyond the next demonstration, did not want to look beyond it, and strongly discouraged anyone else from doing so. The demonstration was an end in itself.”³⁵⁹

The 1956-61 period of peace activism represented a reawakening of politics outside of the normal channels. Furthermore, the social base of the movement was genuinely new, located mainly in the middle classes. The practice of disobedience necessarily instilled in the participants the notion that there could be a moral justification for law-breaking. For some, combating nuclear weapons led to a political radicalisation and full commitment “to a struggle which would not end until the system itself had changed.”³⁶⁰ However, while participants were “very keen on the notion of people controlling their own lives”, the depth of systemic critique was mitigated by the single-minded focus and

³⁵⁶ The CND story is told in a little more detail in chapter 6.

³⁵⁷ Hinton, J., 1989, *Protests and Visions. Peace Politics in 20th Century Britain*, (Hutchinson, London), p. 168.

³⁵⁸ Cadogen, P., 1972, “From Civil Disobedience to Confrontation” in Benewick, R. & Smith, T., *Direct Action and Democratic Politics*, p. 167-9.

³⁵⁹ Cadogen, “From Civil Disobedience”, p. 175.

³⁶⁰ Clark, G., 1972, “Remember your Humanity and Forget the Rest” in Benewick, R. & Smith, T., *Direct Action and Democratic Politics*, p. 183.

the political diversity of participation. Even among the most radical, the anarchist notion of direct action was considered to be beyond the non-violent civil disobedience which they practiced. April Carter, a central DAC protagonist, noted in *Peace News* that “the pure Direct Action approach is basically anarchist and anti-authoritarian - the Direct Action approach to a rocket base is ‘let’s demolish the damned thing’”. ‘Full-blooded’ direct action seemed neither compatible with non-violence, nor the openness with authorities that the groups scrupulously practiced.³⁶¹

Environmental Direct Action

From the late 1960s the focus for protest in Britain shifted to the environment. A number of books predicting an unmanageable population explosion and environmental breakdown appeared,³⁶² and the membership of traditional conservation and environmental organisations increased massively. In 1970 Friends of the Earth (FoE) was established as an autonomous organisation to the original US group. One of their first high-publicity actions was part of a campaign against Cadbury-Schweppes’ decision to move from reusable to disposable bottles. They repeatedly dumped thousands of empty bottles at central and regional offices of the company. This demonstrates clearly the development of a belief that actions by individuals and small groups could change the behaviour of large corporations. Capitalist organisations became the target of actions that sought no mediation through government channels. Within six years there were 140 local FoE groups, operating in an autonomous, decentralised structure. Throughout the 1970s FoE publications contained a systemic critique that emphasised not just the destructive capacity of capitalism, but also the role of decentralisation, democracy and regional self-sufficiency as solutions. They also promoted practical changes that every individual could make in their lifestyles through individual choice (household efficiency, recycling) and community action (food cooperatives, allotments campaigns).³⁶³

During the 1970s a string of significant ecological publications developed a radical critique of capitalist industrial society. They offered alternative systemic visions

³⁶¹ Quoted in Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, p. 185.

³⁶² Among the most famous are: Carlson, R., 1963, *Silent Spring*, (Hamish Hamilton, London); Ward, B., 1966, *Spaceship Earth*, (Columbia University Press, New York); Ehrlich, P.R., 1975[1968], *The Population Bomb* (Rivercity Press, Massachusetts); Commoner, B., 1971, *The Closing Circle: Confronting the Environmental Crisis*, (Cape, London); Ward, B., & Dubos, R., 1972, *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*, (Penguin, Middlesex); Schumacher, E.F., 1973, *Small is Beautiful: a study of economics as if people mattered*, (Blond & Briggs, London).

³⁶³ Veldman, 1994, *Fantasy, The Bomb, and the Greening of Britain. Romantic Protest, 1945-1980*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), pp. 205, 224-7.

dependent not on economic development, but on the creation of decentralised, directly democratic communities. Autonomy of groups at local and regional levels was stressed, in contrast to the perceived global nature of the problems. Murray Bookchin developed these motifs into a concept of anarchist society that was proposed specifically to answer the ecological destruction created by capitalism. At the same time, a number of authors were linking environmental destruction with global inequality.³⁶⁴ All of these themes have achieved prominence in the current cycle of contention in general, and the DA frame in particular.

Despite the theoretical connections between ecology and anarchism, the environmental movement has, since the 1960s used a wide variety of modes of action tending towards the more institutional forms of action. FoE and Greenpeace have both increasingly sought influence within policy networks, while the Green Party has made small gains. Having made its name with direct action, Greenpeace in particular has become a highly professionalized NGO. Fearful of damaging the reputation among policy makers it is highly centralised and direct action is often purely symbolic and certainly part of a much broader tactical repertoire that as a whole is directed at government.

During the early 1990s a more radical interpretation of direct action emerged with the development of the anti-roads camps. At this time Earth First! in the US had been established for about a decade, focused primarily on the defence of wilderness areas through direct action. 'Monkey-wrenching' tactics, i.e. sabotage of logging and mining equipment, had become common, along with more institutionally focused legal challenges.³⁶⁵ The first UK Earth First! (EF!) group was established in 1991, but it was in contesting the development of new roads and bypasses (most of which resulting from a major road-building programme initiated in 1992) that the inspiration of US EF! became apparent. In 1992 protests at Twyford Down demonstrated the possibility of massively delaying road building work through the direct tactic of occupying the land, and the trees, in areas due for new roads. Over a number of actions the protesters developed a sophisticated repertoire of contention including the building of complex, interconnected tree-houses, tunnelling and monkey-wrenching. Protest camps sprung up at nearly a dozen other road building projects across the country, and similar tactics

³⁶⁴ Goldsmith, E. & Allen, R., 1972, *Blueprint for Survival*, first published as a special issue of *The Ecologist* 2(1); Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb...*, pp. 233-4; Meadows, D.H., et al., 1972, *The limits to growth, a report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, (Earth Island, London); Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p. 610; Ward, C., 1982, *Anarchy in Action*, (Freedom Press, London), p. 136.

³⁶⁵ Davis, J., ed., 1991, *The Earth First! Reader. Ten Years of Radical Environmentalism*, (Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City).

were used (and still are being used) for other forms of ecological defence. Throughout the period the anti-roads movement encompassed two wings. The more conventional wing had been involved in the legal channels of opposition for years. However, perhaps through the frustrations of failure in these efforts, many individuals supported the counter-cultural eco-protesters.³⁶⁶

Particularly within the direct action anti-roads movement there are no obvious markers of ideology: no published political programmes and no national organisations in which central political decisions could be made. While this mitigates against making any very specific claims about the political beliefs informing the participants, this very fact demonstrates “the oppositional character of the direct action eco-protesters. Their ideology is anarchistic, but they reject as irrelevant the doctrinal debates which have characterised many anarchist groups. They are hostile to politicians and believe that non-hierarchical ways of working empower individuals to take political responsibility themselves.”³⁶⁷ The very fact of their decision to completely reject the instruments of the state, and their willingness to take action themselves, are indications of a libertarian philosophy. Furthermore, the car has served as a potent symbol of capitalism and the logic of road-building connected with the logic of growth. Phil McLeish writes, “In the rejection of mobility for its own sake there is implied a rejection of the whole restlessness of capitalist modernity... the anti-roads movement has managed to pounce on transport ... as a particularly potent symbol of capitalist development/destruction. But it is not just a symbol, the economy actually does depend massively on cars and road building.”³⁶⁸ The target has a dual purpose – both a symbol and a legitimate, direct target. I will refer to this form of symbolism as the use of a synecdoche: a central part of a system used to represent the whole. It is only when the symbol is conceived as a fundamental part of a wider system that action against it can be understood as direct in the fullest sense. That is, individuals taking it upon themselves to fight an element of the system they oppose in the hope of having a real, economically measurable effect on the opponent.

While the anti-roads campaigns were all clearly defensive, in the sense that they were attempts to block government policies being enacted, there were more positive, forward-looking elements to the direct action culture. This is most obviously evinced by the creation of Reclaim the Streets in 1995 out of the protest occupations against an

³⁶⁶ Doherty, B., 1999, “Paving the Way: the Rise of Direct Action against Road-building and the Changing Character of British Environmentalism” in *Political Studies* 48, pp. 276-7.

³⁶⁷ Doherty, B., 1998, “Opposition to Road-Building” in *Parliamentary Affairs* 51(3), p. 378.

³⁶⁸ Welsh, I. & McLeish, P., 1996, “The European Road to Nowhere: Anarchism and Direct Action against the UK Roads Programme” in *Anarchist Studies* 4, p. 36.

extension to the M11 through Wanstead, London. The M11 campaign was notably different from the previous anti-roads direct action manifestations for two reasons. First, it was an urban rather than rural setting; the occupations were primarily of buildings scheduled for demolition rather than trees and its location in the capital increased the potential for direct interaction with potential adherents. Second, it intertwined with a new current of contention. The Criminal Justice Act (CJA) had been proposed by a conservative government apparently keen to give the police extra powers against a range of youth subcultures. This suddenly brought a new group of potential allies into contention: ravers, new age travellers and gay rights campaigners were among those offended by the legislation. Furthermore, “Many of those criminalised by the CJA share a rejection of dominant social values. In place of conspicuous consumption and the achievement ethic they prioritise non-material values such as autonomy, community and self-expression... the state has so far only succeeded in politicising them.”³⁶⁹ The result was a highly creative, committed group who were willing to put themselves in risky, confrontational situations and determined to enjoy the experience. Combining these elements, their most successful action involved a staged car crash, closing a section of motorway in London, which was then used for a party of up to 8,000 people.³⁷⁰

The idea caught hold across the UK and groups organising RTS parties emerged, ‘spontaneously’ defying the Criminal Justice Act. Thus, RTS quickly became synonymous not with one particular protest organisation but instead an action idea, and a style of ‘disorganisation’. RTS had both taken aim against car culture, and against the encroachment of the state onto private space. Those involved were willing to concretely specify their claims for direct action:

“the alternative message that RTS was pushing was one of empowerment - for people to participate in direct action, not only in the political arena but in all aspects of their lives. It was an attempt to dissuade people from the belief that we can change things by working within the system, when it is the system itself that we must destroy if we are to have any meaningful and lasting change.”³⁷¹

Local activists frequently describe both the concept of RTS and the particular London based group as inspiring and informative. It is through RTS that see the most self-reflective assertions of the anti-authoritarian ideological content of direct action that goes beyond the strategic: “Direct action is not just a tactic, it is individuals asserting their ability to control their own lives and to participate in social life without the need

³⁶⁹ Welsh, & McLeish, “The European Road...”, pp. 29-30, 37.

³⁷⁰ Doherty, “Opposition”, p. 380.

³⁷¹ Quoted from an EF! publication in Doherty, “Paving the Way...”, p. 289.

for mediation or control by bureaucrats or professional politicians.” In a lengthy definition they highlight: the primacy of moral commitments over legal rules; the possibility of positive, creative DA as well as confrontational DA; the empowering nature of DA; its potential for self-realisation in terms of both the individual and the collective; and the necessity of involving all participants directly in decision making. Further, it contains prefiguration in, “the idea that people can develop the ability for self rule only through practice”.³⁷² Within RTS, therefore, we find a particularly clear statement of the anarchistic principles that inform the practice of DA in the contemporary movement context.

Finally, further supporting the notion of prefiguration, is the practice of defining an alternative space that flows from the particular methods of the anti-roads movement. Occupation necessarily involves the creation and defence of a physical space in opposition to authority. Those occupying Claremont Road against the extension of the M11, in connection with the other groups targeted by the CJA, were particularly conscious of it, “the common denominator of the movement is a demand for free space. Claremont powerfully symbolised just such a space. The sculptures; the colour; the breakdown of the boundary between indoors and outdoors, public and private; the absence of cars; the communal kitchens and the sky bound towers, making a mockery of every planning permission guideline ever thought up.”³⁷³ RTS similarly claim, “for the city, the streets are the commons” and the “street, at best, is a living place of human movement and social intercourse, of freedom and spontaneity. The car system steals the street from under us.”³⁷⁴

The practice of direct action can be found in connection with practically every significant wave of protest in the UK since the 1950s. Notable mobilisations include: the anti-apartheid movement, (and in particular the campaign against the Springbok Tour of 1970);³⁷⁵ the disruption of nuclear power sites in the late 1970s;³⁷⁶ the women’s and peace movements, particularly at Greenham in the 1980s;³⁷⁷ and the movement

³⁷² Reclaim the Streets, undated, *Propaganda*, available at: <http://rts.gn.apc.org/prop01.htm>; last accessed 05/05/03

³⁷³ Welsh & McLeish, “The European Road...”, p. 38.

³⁷⁴ RTS, *Propoganda*.

³⁷⁵ Hain, P., 1972, “Direct Action and the Springbok Tours” in Benewick, R. & Smith, T., *Direct Action and Democratic Politics*, (Allen & Unwin, London), pp. 192-203.

³⁷⁶ Welsh, I., 2000, *Mobilising Modernity: the Nuclear Movement*, Routledge, London; Welsh, I., 2001, “Anti-Nuclear Movements: Failed Projects or Heralds of a Direct Action Milieu?” published as *Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Working Paper Series 11*.

³⁷⁷ Roseneil, S., 1995, *Disarming Patriarchy*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

against genetically modified crops from the mid 1990s.³⁷⁸ By detailing the nuclear disarmament movement I have demonstrated that the direct action tactic has always come with some ideological baggage; that at least some practitioners saw in it a mode of organising that may be relevant to a future, preferable way of life. Through the combination of ecology with anti-authoritarianism the anti-roads movement demonstrates the development of the explicitly anti-capitalist credentials of the DA frame. This contributed to the blossoming of protest in multiple, seemingly disparate sites that Doherty and colleagues describe as Britain's direct action movement.³⁷⁹ More importantly, for the present purposes, it is through these developments that direct activists in the UK became rapidly embroiled in the current cycle of contention.

Undoubtedly, across all of these movements debates have developed and lessons learned. Connections are not, of course, limited to the transferral of ideas but of individuals and groups active across decades.³⁸⁰ Latent networks carry friendships and ideas through periods of reduced activity, containing the potential for new instantiations. Furthermore, the development of understanding is neither universal nor evenly spread. While some activists embraced broadened critiques, and more militant expressions of confrontation, others will have shied away from such mobilisations. Still others continue to utilise direct action as a repertoire of contention that has more in common with the uses it was put to by CND than the DAC or more in common with the Donga tribe of the Newbury bypass protests than RTS. These comments indicate the distance between the real anthropology of protest and the reified images of social movements so often present in the literature. That is, they represent the Meluccian challenge described in chapter two.

It is for this reason that throughout this thesis I have largely eschewed the attempt to define particular social movements around either issue areas or tactics. I have preferred, instead, to retain the heterogeneity of politics and practices in a cycle of contention whose origins are traceable to the late-1980s. The preceding discussion demonstrates that many of the ideational elements present in that cycle have a longer history. Rather than debating the birth of a direct action movement, therefore, I have described some of the key developments among those who have used direct action since

³⁷⁸ The latter overlapped very largely with the anti-roads camps through the various Earth First! groups.

³⁷⁹ Doherty, Plows, & Wall, "The Preferred Way...", p. 671.

³⁸⁰ For instance, Welsh demonstrates important continuities between the anti-nuclear movements of the 1970s and the women of the Greenham camps. He thus describes them as the 'heralds of a direct action milieu'. Welsh, I., 2000, *Mobilising Modernity: the Nuclear Movement*, Routledge, London; Welsh, I., 2001, "Anti-Nuclear Movements: Failed Projects or Heralds of a Direct Action Milieu?" published as *Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Working Paper Series 11*.

the 1950s. Furthermore, it should be noted that the ‘reality gap’ is more obvious in relation to the DA frame than the others identified in this thesis. Particularly when set aside the RS frame, with its focus on building a permanent organisation that transmits a doctrine valued for its purity, the development of the DA frame seems somewhat abstruse.

The uneven spread of ideas and networks within contemporary movements potentially poses a problem for understanding local instantiations of an apparently national dynamic. I will briefly, therefore, suggest a few connections between the direct action milieu in Sheffield and some of the trends just outlined, before offering a detailed ethnographic presentation. That the ecological critique has been influential on Sheffield activists’ choice of action is evinced by the (intermittent) existence of Sheffield Environmental Action. Their focus has been avowedly ecological, for example through support for the long-running Nine Ladies anti-quarry protest camp in Derbyshire, through organising critical mass cycle protests and through their protests at the extension of a waste incinerator in central Sheffield. One of the connections with the anti-roads movement developed (somewhat surprisingly) out of the fact that Sheffield has a large, skilled climbing community. This drew the attention of the police in the mid-1990s who recruited amateur and semi-professional climbers to remove protesters from trees, particularly in the battles at Newbury in 1995-6. This divided the climbing community, which contained a large number of environmentalists, some of whom were then motivated to join the Newbury protesters.³⁸¹ While this had a radicalising effect on some, there had already been a network in existence connecting Sheffield activists to others in the anti-roads-anti-CJA nexus. Several more experienced activists have told me about a two-day meeting about the CJA that took place in 1994. In a squatted school in Sheffield, the meeting involved a large number of activists who went on to be centrally involved in direct action around the UK. One participant even claimed, “with hindsight, that was the genesis of the anti-capitalist movement in Britain”.³⁸² Partly as a result, Sheffield held its own RTS party in 1997, at which perhaps 5,00-1,000 people were in attendance. Those involved cemented connections with others around the UK by travelling to other cities to share their experiences and skills. The activists who came together around that event formed a loose network that has been noticeable in a range of mobilisations ever since; confirming Melucci’s notion of the continuity of submerged networks.³⁸³

³⁸¹ ‘Isadore’, interview, May 2003.

³⁸² ‘Darrell’, field notes, informal setting, April 2004.

³⁸³ Melucci, A., 1989, *Nomads of the Present. Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, (Century Hutchinson, Victoria), p. 60.

3. THE DIRECT ACTION FRAME: PROCESS AND PRACTICE

It is clear from the preceding discussion that some ideational elements contained in the direct action tactic have retained importance today. These are: the attempt to have an effect on one's opponent directly, without mediation; the notion that the practice of the action must prefigure the modes of action acceptable in some ideal future society; and the high regard for individual freedom. Equally, it is clear that there have been a number of changes in the way that direct actions have been carried out and understood. These have been in the direction of a more militant expression of direct action, to a broader set of purposes, with a stronger understanding of the ideal which direct action ought to prefigure. For many in the 1950s nuclear disarmament movements direct action was clearly a last resort, whereas by the late 1990s RTS had described it as the 'preferred way of doing things'. This suggests an increased value on the anarchist core as it has become less acceptable to proponents to attempt to work through the system. Militancy is evident in the fact that the strictures on non-violence have been relaxed so that damage to property and physical self-defence against authorities have become (conditionally) acceptable for a large number of direct activists.

I divide the exposition below into, firstly, an analysis of the critique of capitalist society offered within the DA frame, and second, an analysis of the positive prescriptions for social change that exist within the frame. In each case I begin with the practical aspects, utilising ethnographic data covering a number of contentious strips of activity, before moving onto the more philosophical aspects of the frame.

Engaging Opposition

Directness of action has been understood in a variety of different ways. It can, counter-intuitively, be applied to lobbying work. Asked whether there was ever any point lobbying councillors or MPs, 'Kelvin' responded,

"Yeah, well I do it sometimes, I call it arsehole wastage time. Most of it is just ... the time they spend dealing with you, ... it makes it harder for them to push through what they want to do. You can sometimes get an MP to ask a good question or something, but the amount of work you have to put in to make them do it, compared with what you actually get out at the end - its hardly ever worth it."³⁸⁴

'Kelvin' claims libertarian anarchist views. As such, he argues against any form of state power. But his engagement in concrete political issues makes him willing to engage the state. As this quote makes clear, he understands this work as (partially) direct action. Where the state are identified as an opponent, using the conventional legal channels

³⁸⁴ 'Kelvin', field notes, informal setting, December 2004.

becomes subversive, because they are identified as a way of wasting the resources of the opposition. Similar attitudes are commonly taken towards the police. For instance, in April 2003 the Gloucester Weapons Inspectors, at RAF Fairford carried out a 'sponsored stop and search' during the war on Iraq. They were, in part, protesting at what they saw as misuse of Section 44 of the Terrorism Act which had led to police repeatedly searching the same people protesting at the base. Seeing this as intimidation, the protesters set up a competition, and collected sponsorship for charity for the number of times they got searched.³⁸⁵ There were also prizes available for the 'most unusual' items that were carried around the base for the police to find. The intention was clearly to embarrass and confuse the police, while wasting their time and potentially acting as a decoy for more direct actions.³⁸⁶

Confrontational direct action, based on affinity groups, and using tactics such as locking-on and blockading are the more 'classic' expressions of the DA frame. This is the model of action that took place on 19th June 1999 at the 'Carnival against Capital' discussed in chapter two. Within the period of my research it is the protests against the Defence Systems Equipment International (DSEi) arms fair in September 2003 that most resemble those events. Taking place biannually in London's Docklands, the arms fair had already attracted protesters from a range of political perspectives in 2001. The London based group Disarm DSEi called for autonomously organised protests in 2003 and the call was answered publicly by over 60 different activist groups.³⁸⁷ The most spectacular direct action was carried out by several groups who sailed dinghies into the Thames where individuals chained themselves to a set of lock gates at Gallions Reach Lock. This successfully disrupted the passage of a convoy of naval vessels due to be exhibited alongside the ExCel exhibition centre. Throughout two days of protests, activists repeatedly halted the Docklands Light Railway by locking the train doors open, or locking themselves to the front of the train. Other groups blockaded the roads leading to the centre. One group erected large tripods made from scaffold poles in the middle of a service road, with activists roped to the top.³⁸⁸ The lock-on and tripod tactics are examples of the 'manufactured vulnerabilities' developed in the anti-roads protests, whereby activists put themselves in a dangerous position on the expectation

³⁸⁵ *Reclaim the Bases*, available at: <http://reclaimthebases.gzzzt.net/history.html>; last accessed 01/08/05; 'Unfairford' in *Schnews* 399, 04/04/03.

³⁸⁶ Anon., field notes, discussion at Gatecrasher's Ball protest Menwith Hill, July 2003.

³⁸⁷ Allison, R., "London police braced for violent protests at Europe's biggest arms fair" in *The Guardian*, 6th September 2003.

³⁸⁸ BBC, 2003, "Protests Begin at Arms Fair" on *BBC News* 05/09/03, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3084090.stm; last accessed, 01/10/03. Also, field notes, DSEi protests, September 2003.

that police or security services will have to spend a great deal of time and effort to remove them safely.³⁸⁹ The massive transport delays these actions caused resulted in many DSEi delegates walking to the centre where they encountered various street demonstrations, held by less confrontational organisations such as Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) or the SWP front group Globalise Resistance.

The majority of direct actions aimed to disrupt the exhibition itself, on the grounds that, “the longer we keep them outside, the less time they’ve got to buy and sell weapons of mass destruction”.³⁹⁰ Many protesters saw the potential for economic disruption; there had already been complaints in the press about how much the policing operation would cost the taxpayer.³⁹¹ It was considered that with high costs, and enough disruption the exhibition would have to find another location.

In addition, in the weeks leading up to the event there were a number of actions carried out against companies that were either exhibiting at DSEi, or were involved in running the event. In Sheffield a company called Fluent - who develop computational fluid dynamics software (CFD) - was identified as a participant at DSEi and about 20 protesters blockaded the entrance for several hours, including two locking on to doors with bicycle locks, and a banner was hung that read ‘Fluent Deal in Death’.³⁹² The action had failed in its intention of stopping business for the day, as workers used a fire-door to enter and exit. But the action was also intended as “a powerful symbolic protest” it ended after 2-3 hours, “but not before local press and TV had visited”. Banners advertised the forthcoming actions at DSEi itself and the action was understood partly as a ‘warm up’.

Criticisms of the Fluent action, posted on the *Sheffield Indymedia* website claimed that the company only manufactured fluid mechanics software and asked, “What are you going to do next: picket a spanner manufacturer because they happen to sell some spanners to Lockheed [Martin, US arms manufacturer]?” The responses to that criticism are illuminating. Several respondents claimed simply that they were a viable target because they were exhibiting at DSEi, and therefore their clients would be arms buyers and manufacturers. One respondent noted the complex interrelationships within the arms industry:

³⁸⁹ Doherty, “Paving the Way...”

³⁹⁰ Anon., field notes, DSEi Protests, September 2003.

³⁹¹ Thomas, M., 2003, “It Creates Jobs? So Does Burglary” in *New Statesman* 08/09/03.

³⁹² “Fluent anti-DSEi action in Sheffield” on *Sheffield Indymedia*, 2nd September 2003; available at: <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/sheffield/2003/09/276382.html>; last accessed: 30/09/05.

“Every weapon and delivery system is just a collection of components put together. And every manufacturer of components has to take the blame for the end product. Nobody forces this company to sell their products to the defence industry do they?”

Another respondent said:

“CFD has lots of beneficial applications, as you mention. If it were being exhibited at, say, a medical exhibition I'd be happy. But that doesn't mean we should remain silent when it's being promoted as a military tool at an arms fair!”³⁹³

Both of these quotations evidence an attitude to industry that insists on individuals and companies making moral choices about their business actions. Because both comments were written to defend a confrontational action it implies that it is morally acceptable for a small number of people to attempt to hold a business to account for its moral decisions. While participants may have hoped to stop work at the office for the day, thus having a direct economic impact on the corporation, they also willingly accepted that their actions might intimidate workers and ‘ruin their day’. To a degree, therefore, it demonstrates the individual culpability for a business’s actions. The first quotation also displays an understanding of the arms industry that is shared by the organisers of DSEi itself. UK Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, enthused, “So much of the defence industry is now involved in collaborative and Joint Venture projects - and DSEi recognises that trend.”³⁹⁴ While the respondent quoted above recognises the complexity of the economic relationships involved, they nevertheless insists on the complicity of those even tangentially involved.

In sum, the majority of actions were planned to be directly effective against identified targets both corporate and individual. Delegates were sought on the public transport system, on the streets or in their hotels.³⁹⁵ Companies were sought at their own offices with the hope of delaying their work and publicly identifying them with the arms trade. Furthermore, small groups planned their own actions with the absolute minimum of coordination and maximum of group and individual autonomy.

Multiple Targets and General Critiques

The suggestion that an identifiable orientational frame exists focused on ‘direct action’ implies the primacy of action over theorising. Indeed, as one activist admits:

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Quotation from the welcome message by Geoff Hoon, published in the *DSEi Pocket Preview Guide* available to registered participants; scanned image available at *Indymedia UK*; <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2003/09/276432.html>; last accessed: 01/08/05.

³⁹⁵ The Samba bands had made a point of making noisy, early morning visits to the hotels at which delegates were staying; ‘Adrian’, field notes, DSEi Protests, September 2003.

“action is more important than the philosophy behind it, which is possibly one of the weaknesses of the movement - things aren't necessarily as well thought out as they should be... but its one of the strengths of the movement as well, because things tend to happen.”³⁹⁶

For this reason it is examining the targets of action through which we may understand the critique of the activists using the DA frame. The DSEi actions described above were claims that any involvement in the arms trade was unjustifiable. Coming after a massive anti-war movement the claims for peace rather than war hardly needed to be stated. Some involved were pacifists, but more commonly an almost absolute distrust of the motives of those working within political institutions was portrayed. The relationship between corporations and states had been criticised and DSEi displayed the both institutions ‘at their worst’.

Ecological arguments were also used against DSEi, but are more obviously apparent in relation to direct action in its anti-consumerism. I will briefly describe some local instantiations of these broader trends as they offer additional perspectives to the ones already outlined with respect to DSEi. The main ecological claims relate to resource use: those in the rich world are consuming a disproportionate quantity of limited resources too quickly. This becomes a cultural anti-consumerism, the positive aspects of which are evident in the lifestyle choices made by many direct activists: second hand clothing and the bicycle are among the everyday symbols which aid mutual recognition. Anti-consumerism reaches its zenith in relation to Christmas. One Sheffield activist’s anti-Christmas website declares that “Christmas is the ideal time to spread the anti-Christmas, anti-consumerist message to the world.” The further claim that, “For anyone fighting capitalism, Christmas must be seen as a major target” demonstrates the implicit relation of ecology and economics.³⁹⁷ In the sense outlined in section one above, Christmas serves as a synecdoche for the whole of capitalism.

In this vein, local activists took up the ‘No Shop Day’ idea, first developed in the US around thanksgiving. In 2002 a group of about twenty activists went to the large out of town shopping centre (Meadowhall) during the busy Christmas shopping period aiming to make customers reconsider their consumption. The cultural critique was evident in the stickers placed on goods in a range of shops stating simply, ‘This product will not make you happy’. Targets were often connected with sweatshop labour conditions imposed in the production of goods in the global south. Gap was identified as a target, with leaflets describing the abuse of rights represented by sweatshop labour hidden in the pockets of their clothing in the hope that once they had bought the item customers

³⁹⁶ 'Scott', interview, May 2003.

³⁹⁷ *The Anti-Christmas Zone*, available at: <http://www.stevethepro.ukf.net/xmas/index.htm>; last accessed: 25/07/05.

would find the leaflet and consider returning it. Similarly, ‘invisible theatre’ actions whereby a number of activists posed as everyday customers in sports shops, laden with goods from Nike and Reebok. Other activists came in to engage these ‘shoppers’ in a debate about the use of sweatshops. The hope was that because the planted ‘shoppers’ were willing to get involved in a debate, it might break down the boundaries that exist when activists with recognisably different lifestyles attempted to discuss issues with non-activists in a public setting. The action failed in that regard; in the busy shop, “we could have run in naked and screaming ‘sweatshops kill babies’ and still no one would have stopped staring at the till, thinking about nothing but what they were going to buy next”.³⁹⁸ One further theme was evident in the many actions carried out in the shopping centre. Meadowhall was understood as public space, but restricted by security guards imposing the rules and regulations intended to ensure the focus on consumption. The design of seating areas was criticised for positively discouraging people from sitting and chatting and Meadowhall as a whole criticised for taking life away from the city itself. As a result, some of the activists focused on trying to reclaim some space for non-consumerist activities. They had brought along food which they gave away for free, and sat as at a picnic, playing games and chatting. As expected, the security guards asked them to move on. Eventually most of the activists, after mass leafleting and an attempt to hang a large banner over the central food hall, were escorted out of the building.³⁹⁹

No Shop Day presented an anti-consumerist message through a number of different themes: some wanted emphasise the environmental cost of mass consumption, others the international inequality inherent in the manufacture of certain goods, and still others the takeover of public space for corporate-led consumerism. The events were organised in a wholly decentralised way: informal affinity groups had planned their own action with no communication with others, to the extent that nobody knew who would turn up on the day or what they would be doing. As such, there was never any sustained debate about why the action was taking place. Although this is clearly a case of action over theory, it is not because of a lack of theory. Rather, it signals a wide pluralism within particular parameters; participants trusted that the points that others were making in their autonomous actions were largely in line with their own views. In fact, the coming together of these different themes offered a spontaneous and lively way of presenting a varied critique of consumer culture, utilising the understanding of a range of individuals. Reading a little deeper, it suggests a view of knowledge that accepts that everyone has some part of the truth, while nobody is in a position to

³⁹⁸ ‘Leanne’, field notes, November 2002.

³⁹⁹ Field notes, November 2002.

prescribe a particular understanding to others in the movement. This will be emphasised in discussion of decision making and democracy below and is sharply divergent with the epistemological foundations of the RS frame presented in chapter three. To the extent that consumer culture stands in for capitalism in general, such actions display a systemic critique. This can also be seen in relation to the prior use of Reclaim the Streets, and the continuing use of Critical Mass.⁴⁰⁰

These local instantiations, and the development of anti-capitalist critique inherent in them, are broadly inline with the general movements. During the late 1990s in Britain, the targets of direct action became much broader. The Birmingham meeting of the G8 in 1998 was met with a number of direct actions, while the ‘Carnival Against Capital’ in the City of London on 18th June 1999 was timed to coincide with the beginning of a G8 meeting in Germany. The latter was, for some, *the* event which demonstrated the birth of a new direct action movement against capitalism. The ‘call to action’ that led to the J18 protests described the target as: “the heart of the global economy: the financial centres, banking districts and multinational corporation power bases”. It went on to offer a broad strategy and a definition of the collectives who might be involved:

“Each event would be organised autonomously and co-ordinated in each city or financial district by a variety of movements and groups. It is hoped that a whole range... everyone who recognises that the global capitalist system, based on the exploitation of people and the planet for the profit of a few, is at the root of our social and ecological troubles.”⁴⁰¹

That this event was an important moment in the development of beliefs is evidenced by activists who, like ‘Scott’, admit,

“For me it was a couple of years or so before I got the whole picture, 1999 was very important, people started to link all the arms of capitalism, something RTS had been doing. You need a quite developed political and philosophical analysis to see all these connections and people started to get that all the environmental and social problems are like a many-headed monster, you can keep hacking away at the heads but you’ve got to go to heart, which is capitalism itself.”⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Critical Mass is a form of demonstration that developed out of cycle campaigns for practical improvements in cycle provision. It involves anything between twenty and one thousand cyclists deliberately slowing traffic during rush hour. It often has a carnival atmosphere, and has developed ideas around the reclamation of space not dissimilar to those of RTS. Particularly in the UK, it has been utilised for a range of different messages; Anon., 2002, “Critical Mass London Style” in Carlsson, C., ed., *Critical Mass. Bicycling’s Defiant Celebration*, (AK Press, Edinburgh), pp. 68-70.

⁴⁰¹ “Action Proposal for June 18th”, widely circulated and available at: http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/global/j18call_en.htm; last accessed: 02/08/05.

⁴⁰² ‘Scott’, interview, May 2003.

It is at this point, therefore, that for many activists the ecological critique was brought together with an anarchistic critique. Capitalism became understood as the root cause of major social problems because it is based on exploitation, and therefore contains inherent social inequality and environmental destruction. What we see in the mobilisations against consumerism, against DSEi, and against the Afghan and Iraq wars (see chapter seven) can all be understood as targeting what protagonists believe are, at the time, the most destructive elements of capitalism. However, the anarchist outlook is required within the DA frame to explain why capitalism continues to be so destructive. Much like the RS frame, the DA frame contains a belief that those in power will act to reinforce their power. However, for the DA frame, this is reinforced by a more general belief that ‘power corrupts’. Kropotkin’s contention that, “any group of people entrusted with deciding a certain set of activities often of an organisations quality *always* strives to broaden the range of these activities and its own power in these activities”⁴⁰³ expresses an idea that continues to have currency. The individualism within the DA frame is predicated on the idea that people will be capable of living virtuous lives if left to their own devices, so there is a need to explain why it is that so many people are apparently not capable of acting on moral principles of justice. Those in power are seen as corrupted individuals, no longer capable of virtuous action. Conversely, the majority of ‘ordinary’ people are understood as disempowered; they do not believe the fundamental DA frame contention that they can make a difference acting on their own, or as part of a small group.

The precise nature of the critique offered by those who work within the DA frame will vary depending on the particular target. The typical arguments that we have seen evidenced thus far highlight the specific actions of specific actors rather than generalise to capitalism as a whole. Nevertheless, there is an overriding tendency to understand the actions of targets as structured by a capitalist system that enables those with power to increase their power. The frame does not seem to carry a sharp distinction between the state and corporations; the two are understood as acting ‘in cahoots’ and often conflated as ‘the elite’, ‘the powerful’ or simply ‘them’.

Organising Action and Space

Direct action need not be purely confrontational. The same ideational elements may be found in some positive actions, of which the setting up of *Sheffield Indymedia* is an example. There are fourteen local Independent Media Collectives (IMCs or

⁴⁰³ Kropotkin, P., quoted in Morland, D., 1997, *Demanding the Impossible? Human Nature and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Social Anarchism*, (Cassell, London), p. 150.

Indymedias) in the UK, and each subscribes to the organisational principles of the UK Indymedia Collective. These are,

“the Indymedia UK collective works on a non-hierarchical basis;
we reject all systems of domination and discrimination;
we acknowledge that the struggle for a better world takes many forms. The focus of the Indymedia UK collective is on grassroots politics, actions and campaigns;
the Indymedia UK collective does not have any ties with political parties or larger NGO's;
we understand that by lobbying there will be no radical change. As a collective our attitude is assertive, and where necessary confrontational.”⁴⁰⁴

In their own organisation, therefore, the IMCs reflect the core aspects of the DA frame. These are reflected in the composition of the websites themselves. News stories are published by users, directly and without moderation. Features, which are typically longer and do not necessarily relate directly to current events may be published and are sent to an open-membership email discussion list. Ten days are then allowed for discussion before the feature is automatically made publicly available, assuming that a collective decision is not made to hide the item. The site administrators, through public e-mail discussion may choose to hide any story that breaks basic editorial guidelines concerning harassment and discrimination. Such decisions are very rare and offending articles remain available on a separate section of the site for those who wish to see how the editorial guidelines have been used in practice.

The confrontational attitude of the IMCs is evident in their practical support for mobilisations. Many durable IMCs have been created initially as a temporary space created at sites of major international mobilisations (first in Seattle, then at every major protest against the G8, WTO and so on). This has often involved setting up physical spaces where activists could get free internet access, and many computers are available for the instant uploading of news stories, pictures and audio reports to the main internet sites. This was carried out at DSEi. Locally, *Sheffield Indymedia* set up a 'lab' consisting of about eight networked computers at the launch of the Sheffield Social Forum⁴⁰⁵ (see chapter eight). Most recently they set up another 'hacklab' in a squatted building that was made available as a convergence centre during a meeting of the G8

⁴⁰⁴ IMC UK, “IMC UK Mission Statement” available at: <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/static/mission.html>; last accessed: 24/07/05.

⁴⁰⁵ “Indymedia lab at the SSF launch” on *Sheffield Indymedia*, 25th March 2004; <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/sheffield/2004/03/287904.html>; last accessed: 08/08/05. The quotation within the text is from the London based direct action group the Wombles.

justice and interior ministers in central Sheffield.⁴⁰⁶ At the time of writing the convergence centre is being used as a more permanent social centre, with a continuing hacklab. A *Sheffield Indymedia* contributor, defined a hacklab as:

“a DIY, self-sufficient spaces based on the horizontal model of decision-making, they are ‘autonomous technology zones, spaces for learning, for making your own media, for the sharing and developing of free and not-for-commercial-use technologies and software, for battling surveillance and alienation, for ongoing projects and for using new forms of communication in direct action.’”⁴⁰⁷

In the mainstream media perception ‘hacking’ is a form of vandalism inflicted on networked data systems. Among those involved in Indymedia and the free software movement⁴⁰⁸ it carries a different meaning. Hacking refers to:

“computers and giving away free software, teaching people how to use it, playing with it ... hacklabs are self-organised and don’t get funding from anyone so they don’t have to do things in certain ways. Ironically ... this has meant that one of the hacklabs has started running [Microsoft] Windows on some of its computers.”⁴⁰⁹

The production and use of free software is a substantive attempt to move away from capitalist production structures and the jibe at Windows in this quotation indicates that Microsoft is a primary target. The software is criticised on technical grounds and because of the firm’s aggressive stance towards other software developers and its maintenance of monopoly. Interestingly, free software proponents often use ecological metaphors, explaining the incidence and destructive potential of computer viruses as a result of the spreading ‘monoculture’ of Microsoft products. While ecology places value on biodiversity, and within the DA frame value is placed on social diversity, so too among those who promote Indymedia and free software value is placed on technological diversity.

As far as possible, therefore, IMCs attempt to ensure principles of individual autonomy by facilitating individual self expression. They attempt to enhance the inspirational elements of direct action by allowing those involved to report them to

⁴⁰⁶ “Hack Sheffield!” on *Sheffield Indymedia*, 13th July 2005; <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/sheffield/2005/07/318190.html>; last accessed: 08/08/05.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Indymedia is based on software written by a large group of volunteers in a coordinated but radically decentralised way. The free software movement has created a range of software applications, including operating systems, word processing packages, graphics manipulation packages, and internet browsers. It has a commitment to autonomy and a sophisticated critique of copyright and patents. It has come up with a standard ‘General Public User Licence’ that gives users the right to distribute it in any way they wish, for free or for payment, provided the same licence is provided. In so doing it “uses copyright law to enforce sharing, and creates a commons of free infrastructure”; ‘Larry’, interview, July 2004.

⁴⁰⁹ ‘Larry’, interview, July 2004.

others and they encourage critique of the status quo through their independence from corporate or government funding. Further, they provide a space in which activists can come to understand their history and relationships and discuss issues of politics and tactics, as evidenced by the quotations presented in relation to the Fluent-DSEi action above.

The IMC example demonstrates that the DA frame has applications beyond confrontation into the creation of durable public spaces in which the positive principles within the DA frame guide action. There is a potential articulation with the various cooperative and squatters movements that have emerged in Britain, primarily since the late 1960s. Here protagonists attempt to withdraw from capitalist relations into a space governed by alternative principles.⁴¹⁰ Within the DA frame, the emphasis on individual moral culpability together with a realism about the durability of capitalism can lead to attempts to withdraw from the capitalist system.

“You're not going to pour sand into the engine of capitalism overnight, it's a social relationship, people have to withdraw themselves from it ... So in my life I'm trying to build the alternatives, like the housing co-operative I live in ... taking things away from normal corporate or money-making control, trying to encourage workers coops on an equal level”⁴¹¹

At the same time, however, a tension emerges from the confrontational attitude that is appended to the core of the DA frame.

“cities are where the people are, and where ideas are born, its where culture changes ... Its no good all the people who disagree with the system withdrawing entirely from that and letting all the other elements define what that culture's gonna be and how its gonna change and things. It needs those people to be in there and influencing things.”⁴¹²

Another activist suggested that, “the problem is that people build these lives for themselves and drop out of the movement culture, they forget the buzz of protest and there's no longer any confrontation.”⁴¹³ The creation of alternative spaces takes place in very temporary ways at demonstrations, and in slightly more durable ways when strategies of occupation are applied. However, that the DA frame contains self-conscious space creation is most obvious in its meeting with the cooperative movement. The alternative spaces exhibit the features of individual autonomy, non-hierarchical organisation and consensus decision making that are at the centre of the frame and are

⁴¹⁰ Stevens, S.M., 2005, “Intentional Communities as Prefigurative Politics: New Social Movements and The Maturation of Utopia”, paper presented at the *Tenth International Conference on Alternative Futures and Popular Protest*, (Manchester Metropolitan University, March 2005).

⁴¹¹ 'Scott', interview, May 2003.

⁴¹² 'Scott', interview, May 2003.

⁴¹³ Anon., field notes, May 2003.

therefore prefigurative in a strong sense. But for the adherent to the frame, on this reading, any non-confrontational space is a distant adjunct to the central principles. The problems identified with the capitalist system, once recognised, cannot be ignored.⁴¹⁴

The frames I identify in this thesis all contain a rationale for acting; as explained in chapter one this is a common finding of frame analysis throughout the social movement literature. In the DA frame empowerment fulfils a similar function to that of class consciousness in the RS frame. One activist declared the aim of his work as “empowering people to take control of their own lives, change their own lives, become part of strong communities that can provide support, secure housing, secure work.”⁴¹⁵ This quotation refers to action that is in the positive, constructive mode. It is also seen within the context of confrontational action. With reference to blockades at DSEi, one local activist claimed, “Being able to stop military vehicles entering the arms fair is empowering. You as an ordinary citizen can stand up and make a difference. If more people tried it there would be no arms fair.”⁴¹⁶ Empowerment is thus conceived as a requirement for collective action, and a positive outcome justifying action.

Empowerment carries different meanings in different contexts, and we will see an alternative version within the RL frame. Katherine Ainger argues against the conception used within development policy networks, where “empowerment suggests that someone – usually the development agency – is giving power to the oppressed or powerless.” In contrast, she notes, “power cannot be given – it can only be taken. ‘Power to’ is the ability to act for oneself, the ability to create rather than to coerce. It is social power, experienced in relationship with others.”⁴¹⁷ So, empowerment is the willingness to take action on the basis of moral claims for oneself or for others.

Furthermore, empowerment can connect the individual to the collective. In a somewhat critical tone ‘Orson’ points out that, “its an empowering thing to be in a movement and say I am this, I am stop the war, I am the social forum or whatever, its an empowering thing to put this badge on yourself and say I’m a member, wear your

⁴¹⁴ Interestingly, during July 2004 there was a prolonged debate on whether Sheffield Indymedia should be primarily concerned with covering protest, or whether it should in fact reach out to community building events. This period can be understood as a momentary conflict between the DA frame and the RL frame, and is explained in chapter six.

⁴¹⁵ ‘Zack’, field notes, December 2003.

⁴¹⁶ ‘Tom’ in a comment to “DSEi Arms Fair Venue Blockaded”, on *UK Indymedia*, 2nd September 2003, available at: <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2003/09/276341.html>; last accessed, 12/12/03.

⁴¹⁷ Ainger, K., 2003, “Against the Misery of Power, the Politics of Happiness” in *New Internationalist* 360.

gang colours as it were.”⁴¹⁸ The collective is an arena in which people can become empowered.⁴¹⁹

The collective, or affinity group, as a mode of organisation is typical of the DA frame. Affinity group organising depends on trust, and is based on the maintenance of the group’s autonomy with respect to other affinity groups. We saw in relation to DSEi that the affinity group is understood as an effective mode of organising protest. The latter are seen as the most efficacious means of organising for particular protest actions, with between five and twenty individuals who already know and trust each other organising with a particular goal in mind. Generally, different individuals temporarily take on different roles depending on particular skills and their willingness to take on risk. For example, one or more members of the group will typically act as legal support. This involves taking up a position safe from arrest, and being available to pick up others from police stations, call solicitors and so on. If a group is intended to exist beyond one particular action all roles are rotated.⁴²⁰

The anti-hierarchical nature of the affinity group is valued in part because centralisation is seen as a high risk strategy in relation to the possibility of arrests of key individuals, or the seizure of key resources. Primarily, however, the justification is more ideological. Murray Bookchin developed the concept out of the anarchist organising of the Spanish Revolution in 1936. He explains,

"The affinity group could easily be regarded as a new type of extended family, in which kinship ties are replaced by the deeply empathetic human relationships - relationships nourished by common revolutionary ideas and practice... Each affinity group is deliberately kept small to allow for the greatest degree of intimacy between those who compose it. Autonomous, communal and directly democratic, the group combines revolutionary theory with revolutionary lifestyle in its everyday behaviour. It creates a free space in which revolutionaries can remake themselves individually, and also as social beings."⁴²¹

Again, we see the connection between the individual and the society, the prefiguration of alternatives and the creation of space that are major themes within the DA frame.

⁴¹⁸ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁴¹⁹ Interestingly, social psychological work has come to similar conclusions. Drury and Reicher define empowerment as “social-psychological state of confidence in one’s ability to challenge existing relations of domination.” They argue that empowerment results from collective actions wherein relevant aspects of social identity (for instance, desire to protect green spaces) is reinforced through some symbolic action. This process is aided by an antagonistic relationship with an intractable out-group such as the police. Drury, J. & Reicher, S., 2005, “Explaining Enduring Empowerment: A Comparative Study of Collective Action and Psychological Outcomes” in *European Journal of Social Psychology* 35, p. 35-52.

⁴²⁰ Direct action training meeting, field notes, October 2002.

⁴²¹ Bookchin, M., 1986, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, (Black Rose Books, Montréal), p. 243.

The affinity group is a space in which, through the practice of free and equal relations, the individual can become empowered.

Freedom, Consensus and Democracy

Prefiguration can be understood as a response to the lack of utopian imagery within the DA frame. Activists may argue clearly against the use of utopia, “I suppose I've got a vague idea of how I would like the world to be. But I think to try and impose that is a really dangerous thing to do ... you start planting the seeds for tyrannies when you start getting into that sort of thing”⁴²² Rather, a better society may potentially emerge from the current practices of those who create free space within capitalism. The affinity group or the collective must, therefore, base their practice on the positive principles within the frame:

“The aim of the direct action I do is to help along the new society I crave, built on the principles of equality of access to resources, mutual freedom and respect for people and the environment, social and political solidarity, and the development of the individual through social progress.”⁴²³

Logically, we might expect some tension between the desire to bring about radical social change and insistence on not pushing a particular utopia. Nevertheless, activists do hold both aspects simultaneously.

“It's believing that we don't need a state to administer for us, we don't need police forces, we should organise in small local based groups on whatever's appropriate for where we live, that we should find the right way of organising for our locality, that there isn't a blueprint to be imposed on everyone. Everyone has their blueprint, whether it's McDonalds or the SWP. My idea would be find your own way within a group, and there will be different ways”⁴²⁴

What this demonstrates is the importance of freedom within the DA frame. ‘Freedom’ assumes the role of a meta-value; a free society is one in which people can choose the values by which they live. Freedom is conceived both negatively (freedom from the state and the police) and positively (equality of access to resources). Nevertheless, freedom adheres to the empowered individual rather than the group and therefore creates a problem for practical organising: how can individuals act in the interests of a group and retain their freedom?

It is the practice of consensus-based decision making (CBDM) that offers a solution to the problem of individual freedom within the collective. CBDM has been used with

⁴²² ‘Isadore’, interview, May 2003.

⁴²³ Solidarity Federation, “Dare to Dream...”

⁴²⁴ ‘Scott’, interview, May 2003.

very large groups,⁴²⁵ and is regularly practiced within Quaker groups. In the present movement context it is usually confined to smaller collectives and affinity groups. The aim is never to take a collective decision where any group member objects. By so doing, the process aims to create solutions that everyone can accept through the avoidance of polarised debate between a few propositions. Those committed to CBDM indicate that, “all persons have some part of the truth ... in them, and we will reach a better decision by putting all of the pieces of the truth together.”⁴²⁶ A large range of techniques have been developed for dealing with conflict and these have been distilled into various handbooks and training courses.⁴²⁷ The most common set of rules for meetings is that if they become irrevocably stuck with one or two individuals objecting to a proposition, those individuals must choose how to continue. They may choose to ‘stand aside’, meaning they register their objection to the decision and are not held responsible for its consequences, but allow it to go ahead. Or, if convinced that the decision would be harmful to the group’s objectives, they may block the decision with a veto. Both of these are considered serious breakdowns of the process and are only to be used occasionally. Guides to CBDM usually suggest that if one or two members frequently object to decisions that the rest of the group want to take they should consider leaving the group, or could be asked to leave.⁴²⁸

CBDM defines democracy within the DA frame. Liberal representative democracy is strongly criticised:

“When people vote for an executive they also hand over their power to make decisions and to effect change. This goes hand in hand with creating a majority and a minority, with the minority often feeling deeply unhappy with the outcome... People in a majority rule system don’t need to listen to the dissenting minority, or take their opinion seriously because they can simply outvote them... This creates a situation where there are winners and losers and promotes an aggressive culture and conflict ... the minority [are] expected to accept and carry out the decision, even if it is against their most deeply held convictions and principles.”⁴²⁹

This fits precisely with the anarchist critique pithily surmised by Wilde’s description of democracy as “the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people.”⁴³⁰ CBDM is

⁴²⁵ Caroline Estes reports consensus decisions in groups of 5,000 in the Berkeley free speech movement; Estes, C., 1996, “Consensus” in Ehrlich, *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, pp. 368-375.

⁴²⁶ Estes, “Consensus”, p. 369.

⁴²⁷ Seeds for Change offered training in both consensus based decision making and planning direct action at the launch of the Sheffield Social Forum; field notes, March 2004.

⁴²⁸ Estes, 1996, “Consensus”, p.373; Seeds for Change, undated, “Consensus Decision Making”, p. 5; available at: <http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/consensus.pdf>; last accessed: 08/08/05.

⁴²⁹ Seeds for Change, “Consensus Decision Making”.

⁴³⁰ Wilde, 1891, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, quoted in Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p. 426.

understood to lead to more creative decisions which are inherently more just because the minority can block decisions that go against their interests. Because every individual has at least had the opportunity to have their voice heard in the decision making process they are expected to be more committed to the outcome. For this reason CBDM is seen as particularly important when a group takes high risk action.

CBDM can be enlarged through delegation. However, in that context individuals must concede some of their power over decision making to someone else. This is only deemed acceptable when the agenda is known in advance, and the smaller group has had a chance to come to consensus on the positions it feels are of import. Any other form of delegation is unacceptable. For instance, when the Sheffield Social Forum attempted to send delegates to a national meeting one participant strongly argued that without an agenda in advance no one could take part in decisions on behalf of the group. "You might be a smashing bloke, everyone in the room might think you're a smashing bloke, but you can't possibly represent me because you don't know what I think about [a decision issue] unless we've already talked about it."⁴³¹ Perhaps the most celebrated aspect of the protests at Seattle in 1999 was the 'hubs and spokes' model of making decisions on the streets. This was a delegative form of CBDM, where spokes-councils would bring together individual members from autonomous affinity groups. 'Spokes' would be delegated with a strictly limited mandate, and where some further decisions came up they would return to their own groups with the range of possibilities. The operation of these groups led to the much copied chant, "This is what democracy looks like."

Given the confrontational attitude within DA, however, there is a potential tension with upholding democracy. Doherty and colleagues rightly note, "Direct action is ... coercive. Its practitioners assert their moral claims, irrespective of the legality of their protest, by using their bodies to occupy a space or to harm people or damage property." Again, "direct action is often intended to do more than simply represent concern, it is intended to resist what its practitioners regard as injustices and ... has not always been peaceful in tone."⁴³² Wherever direct action takes place, a minority actively and consciously impinges on the lives of others on the basis of the urgency of the issues they have identified. Within the DA frame, activists are critical of the liberal version of democracy whose codes such actions break. But we must ask how it fits with alternative form of democracy indicated by the principles of CBDM.

⁴³¹ Anon., field notes, December 2002.

⁴³² Doherty, Plows & Wall, "The Preferred Way...", pp. 670, 685.

Democracy is understood as free (i.e. un-coerced) participation by relevant individuals or groups in the decisions that effect them. This is the basis of the call for decentralisation we have seen throughout. Decentralisation may be argued for in terms of the rights of people to take part in the decisions that affect their lives and the consequent necessity to reclaim power from those who currently make such decisions. But, of course, the views of employees of a corporation are barely considered in the planning of an action against their bosses. Yet in general, were the action to have maximum impact, they may well become unemployed as a result. Claims to a right to participation in decisions that affect you cannot, therefore, logically be made within the DA frame. Justifications of CBDM tend rather to be made on the basis of the effectiveness of decision making. Efficacy demands a common outlook and objective and is therefore incompatible with full inclusion. Similar claims may coherently be transferred to decentralisation, provided one also argues that the local community is capable of discovering its shared needs and working fairly and imaginatively to achieve them - a conception close the anarchist understanding of human nature.

The suggestion that those who regularly object to the flow of a group's decision making should leave the group reinforces the exclusive nature of affinity group work. Furthermore, the requirement on physical presence in decision making situations, and the fact that these may require demanding levels of concentration and focus makes it difficult to include some individuals, particularly those who work long hours or are physically or mentally vulnerable. By denying the utility of either representation or aggregation the DA frame contains a particularly demanding vision of democracy that may be unrealisable in relation to the disempowered. We will see this argument mirrored in relation to the carrying out of action in the critique of DA as elitist in chapter seven.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter began by demonstrating protagonists using direct action have always been split between those see it as one tactical repertoire among many, and those who attach a set of deeper meaning to it. It is from the latter group that has developed the identifiable orientational frame prevalent within the current cycle of contention. I have described a historical process through which the tenets of anarchism and ecology have become enmeshed with a growing tactical repertoire, deepening and solidifying the content of the frame.

Ethnographic exploration of current practices of DA encourages the view that there is an identifiable core of interconnected understandings. We can best understand the

DA frame as containing six key precepts; these are beliefs and values that the majority of direct activists within the current cycle of contention can be expected to hold. First, we find a very high value placed on individual freedom expressed as a desire for liberty to do as one wishes and as an affirmation of the validity of one's own moral judgement. There is a concomitant stress on moral responsibility which is often used to justify particular actions. Second is a distrust of any structures of authority seen as self-serving for those in power, and as having negative impacts on the individual's freedom and capacity for moral responsibility. The third, and most obvious element is the value placed on unmediated and confrontational collective action. This kind of action is understood as most likely to have an impact on identified targets and a positive, empowering impact on participants. Fourth, we find a value on the creation of spaces of political interaction that should be completely open for anyone to participate, and governed by respect for individual freedom. Fifth, the developing critique of capitalism that has put the DA frame firmly within the current cycle of contention understands political economy as the root of social and ecological problems that effect people across the globe. Synecdochical action understands its targets as symbols of a wider system, while considering an unmediated impact on the particular target as valuable in its own right. Sixth, the frame contains an understanding of democracy as requiring in-depth participation in decision making spaces that are free from domination or control through any form of structural power. CBDM is the most concrete expression of the attempt to create the appropriate decision making arena.

The justification of this 'thick core' lies in the implication of these ideas in many forms of action and the understandings offered by activists both in the midst of action and in reflection. Nevertheless, the identification of frames remains an interpretative endeavour. The frame itself remains an analytical construct. As such, there is no *necessary* reason for activists to hold all of these ideas together, or to make the connections that have been described in the foregoing analysis. There are undoubtedly activists who cross the boundaries of the various frames I identify, of whom we will see more in the case studies in Part III. My claim is rather that through the historical processes that have created the current cycle of contention - through the discussions, networks and media of protest - these ideas have come to be densely connected. As such there is a marked tendency for the ideas to hang together in activist discourse and action. The enunciation of particular ideas, therefore, to signal the other values inherent in the frame.

Finally, this frame has been defined as related, first and foremost, to a particular mode of action rather than a particular critique of the world or a prognosis for change. This may appear somewhat counter-intuitive as the social movement literature has

tended to emphasise particular critiques and defined social movement themselves around them. In exploration of this frame we find confirmation of two arguments made in Part I of this thesis. First, I argued that the tendency to reify social movements is only compounded by the tendency to structure research around particular issue foci. While a number of movements that have developed since the 1950s may be accurately portrayed in this way I have, second, argued that it is inappropriate for the current cycle of contention. In sum, I have avoided primarily focusing on the critique of capitalism within this frame. The purpose of frame analysis is to highlight the modes of thought applied by activists. I have attempted to identify the cognitive constructions that help a range of activists interpret new information and make decisions about the appropriate way of acting. In the terminology of Snow and Benford,⁴³³ it is the ‘call to action’, rather than the diagnosis or even the prognosis, that is most central here. It has become obvious that these kinds of ideas are, however, interconnected so that those who have more general critiques and systemic alternatives tend also to be more committed to the definitional features of direct action. That is direct action as acting against a synecdoche of a broader target, and acting in a way that prefigures an alternative. It is here that the frame is at its most logically coherent, bringing in both ecological and anarchist philosophies. And it is this version of the frame that is prominent within the current movements against global capitalism.

⁴³³ Snow, D. & Benford, R., 1988. “Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization”, in Klandermans, Kriesi & Tarrow, *From Structure to Action: Comparing social Movement, Research Across Cultures.*, (JAI Press), p. 199.