



‘Anarchy by the book? Forget about it!’: The role of collective memory in shaping workers’ relations to anarchism and work today*

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abstract

Anarchism is a source of inspiration for a number of social movements today. One question this raises is that of the influence of collective memory in shaping existing and new forms of organisations in relation to a value system. In the past, workers facing exclusion and job insecurity discovered and experimented with cooperative solutions. This paper uses the case of the history of the print union in France to inquire about the influence of collective memory on workers in the publishing and multimedia industry today. Observing that anarchist views on work and on standing by the collective have more or less been lost despite the current popularity of many practices anarchism introduced, it investigates the role of collective memory in framing anarchism as an open ensemble of original actions.

"If I had understood the situation a bit better I should probably have joined the Anarchists." George Orwell - Collected Essays.

"No middle class revolutionary can defend the barricades without a shower and a large capuccino". J.G.Ballard - Millenium People.

It is lunchtime on the second day of a summer university organised by a French popular education movement in the South of France. A self-managed workshop

* The author dedicates this work to Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, a dear friend and an inspiration. She is very grateful to the editors and the two reviewers for their kind vigilance and their precious help.

on action has just finished, and now participants have gathered to hear about the experience of two collectives: one opposed to shale gas exploitation and the other against the construction of a large tourism complex including extensive golf courses. Eating their ten-euro organic lunches, freshly delivered, about 100 people have just settled at large wooden tables in the dry moat outside the university, which is located within an ancient castle. As they unwrap their paper bags and take out their polystyrene boxes and plastic knives and forks, the workshop participants, women who look as if they are former demonstrators from May 1968 discuss the problems they have in acting effectively at local level: too many causes, thinly-spread action, short-termism. One of them says global problems are overwhelming whereas attempting to influence the authorities can be risky for local people with local interests. Joan is about to participate in the second *European Forum against Useless Imposed Major Projects*, taking place in Notre Dame des Landes, France (in the Loire Atlantique département, near Nantes) the following week. She has been following the opposition to the construction of a new airport since it started, about two years ago when the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) was created. 'The problem', Joan explains

is that some Tazists are looking for a fight with the police, especially the ones sitting in trees. They even undermine other opponents' plans. They wouldn't hear of us having a helicopter to headcount the human chain last May. They denounced our "collaboration" with the media. They're so aggressive, but still, they're only a minority.

At this point, someone asks who they are. Joan answers they are radical young anarchists who have clearly chosen to pull back from political action. Adda easily relates to this situation: 'I see what you mean, I know a few collectives, young squatters; all they want to do is dig the garden. They seem to have no political consciousness. They don't want to talk. They won't even read our leaflets'. As Joan and others nod, the two collectives (six men in their 50s) arrive: they are ready to talk about their action. And so the conversation ends there.

This exchange illustrates various dimensions of the present debates about anarchism in relation to organised action and values. It is characterised both by specific modes of organisation and a specific set of values. However, aligning ideas and values with everyday action is a challenge, and it is not easy to find the balance between adapting to present circumstances and resisting external influences. This also explains numerous disagreements between those who claim to be true to the ideal (radicals) and those who want to make the utopia real (pragmatists). One feature of such problems among groups is that they always seem to be happening for the first time, whilst at the same time they illustrate the traditional problem of finding a common frame. As a result one wonders if it

would change things if at least some people bore in mind the long succession of previous close encounters with 'the problem' when trying to find a solution.

This paper documents the role of collective memory as well as imagination (Graeber, 2001) in finding solutions to well-known problems at work: the changing power balance between agents resulting from technological innovation, the role of work in life and relations between individuals and groups. Such issues were important concerns for French print union members over two centuries in relation to anarchism, yet, after their profession declined in the 1970s, this action seems to have been largely forgotten by members of the creative class, publishers and developers. This paper reflects upon this situation, as anarchism recently regained its influence as a source of inspiration in the field of social action. First, it presents different views of anarchism in play at this moment in time. Then it investigates what contemporary workers have to say about anarchism. Finally it presents its findings and attempts to interpret this fieldwork.

Anarchism, action, values and the central role of collective memory in finding common ground

'Anarchism [is] the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being' (Kropotkin, in Graeber, 2004: 1). This definition seems to have remained relevant over the years. Its central feature is that it combines two dimensions: the pragmatic definition of a mode of action (referred to in the text as various territorial and professional groups, production, consumption, needs) and the allusion to an ideal of society with no superior power figure (defined in the text as principle, theory of life and conduct, society without government, harmony and civilisation). Today, we may find various illustrations of these two dimensions: the problem is how to align them in real life. Most actors look for the right way by choosing a level of analysis, either micro approaches to anarchic situations in organisations or large-scale social movements looking at events from the macro-level of history. Good solutions fit because they find the right balance between past experience and present action, avoiding both dogmatic routines and reckless improvisation.

Both views have their interest, but they are also limited. I believe such limited views of anarchism are contributed to by the distortion they introduce. Possibly

lacking personal experience or appropriate examples borrowed from real life, people tend to downplay or overestimate the specific nature of anarchism.

One temptation might be to hybridise anarchic and non-anarchic modes of organisation by replacing the utopia of communal individuality with short-term goals. This pragmatic approach has become more popular in recent years, possibly because of the need for alternative models of organisation in the new age of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). The problem is that its narrow focus on action leaves aside the power dimension and the issue of domination. For instance, in that approach, it would not be absurd for an ‘anarchist mode of organisation’ to be used simply to earn more profit for top management and investors to share.

The pragmatic approach to anarchy grew in parallel to another trend: the radicalisation of anarchism by agents who define its objectives as systematically opposed to current society. As such, they refuse all external power but idealise their own as being righteous in an immoral world (Invisible Committee, 2009; Bey, 2003). Just as the ambiguous use of brands such as Fred Perry (Orfali, 2003) can be seen as the symbol of a new conformism in radical groups (fascists and antifascists), the increasing media interest in social movements (Earl et al., 2004) favours radicalism by offering a permanent platform.

This idealisation of the group, with its action imprisoned in the autotelic message it feeds the crowd, appears to combine the two limits mentioned above: a narrow focus on action and the presence of an ideal power.

In fact, this desire to codify one’s engagement by signs and symbols is not so new, for instance it is well described in Dostoyevsky’s *Demons*. It illustrates the difficulty of aligning theoretical principles and values with everyday active commitment to a constructive long-term project. Besides, this opposition appears at group (meso)level, whereas (regrettably) many arguments for and against anarchy are grounded in a more micro or macro level.

At this group (meso)level, anarchism consists of a wide range of different ideas with a kind of fulcrum, which is: ‘the endless labour of achieving consensus’ (Graeber, 2004a: 26), since dealing with counter powers means doing without a durably stable social frame. However, this does not imply that action is necessarily bounded by its specific situation. Exploring the theory of value, Graeber argues in favour of imagination by people who ‘share a sense of social possibility, a feeling that people should be able to translate imaginary schemes into some sort of reality; a concomitant interest in both understanding what the full range of human possibilities might be – as well as in the nature of “reality”

itself’ (Graeber, 2001: 253). However, imagination can suggest an infinite range of different actions.

Reflexive collective action may prove central to distinguishing good ideas from speculation (Graeber, 2004b). This role of action and real-life experience is indeed a touchstone: ‘The idea, with its categories, is born of action and must return to action, at the risk of the degradation of the agent’ (Proudhon, 2002: 19). Nonetheless, using action to determine the final goal has its limits. To be understood, action should be contextualised, but then differing views on strategic action (Horowitz, 1964) may appear. People may agree on the final goal but disagree continually over strategy and tactics. Besides, even when they share the initial intention, ‘[...] energy is concentrated on immediate action’ (Ritter, 1980: 153) this tends to favour a repetitive, uncritical mode of action rooted in the present.

On the contrary, I would argue that collective memory is a good way to ground both experience and imagination in more than participative experience. It relates them to realms of values, for instance professional skills and local cultures, which agents re-enact and combine on many occasions. Far from its popular image of radicalism, as a social movement in action, it appears to be rather reformist and pluralistic (Den Hond and De Bakker, 2007). Considering the different approaches to anarchism and its broad range of practices (see table 1 below), I believe collective memory may characterise social anarchism in that it appreciates actual practices and attempts to come up with new, adaptive modes of action. As such, collective memory is experience-based, fuelled with practical obstacles and solutions. It consists in live creation; a series of arrangements combining action and imagination, the past and the present, commitment and resistance.

Various forms of anarchism (Horowitz, 1964; Nozick, 1974;	Social anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism	Isolationism	Individualism
Specific views	Unions focused on mutual aid, cooperative labour and self-management extended outside the workplace as well as within.	Separation from rest of society in small collectives.	Based on self-interest and often related to notions of ‘nature’ and personal leadership.

Common views

Consensus decisions-making, opposition to parliamentary democracy, direct action and 'propaganda of the deed', anti-authoritarian, Enlightenment values mixed with respect for local customs.

Table 1: Most political stands and collective action models are not a credo that individual anarchists would go by; nonetheless they share the criticism of existing forms of power.

According to Halbwachs (1997: 63) perceptions are anchored in collective memory. Memory is shaped by a group whose members must not only share the same initial impression but update them collectively on a regular basis so as to reconstruct the past (Halbwachs, 1994: 275). These groups constitute the intermediary (meso)level between individuals and their society. Historic memory is official, they are often written by experts. Individual memories are those that belong to us personally, outside the 'common domain' (Halbwachs, 1997: 92). Peer groups repeatedly sharing time and space make it possible to combine autobiographic and historical memories. If these types of memory are not combined continually, an 'imagined community' based on a reified past, lacking the shared interiority of collective memory between groups, might replace memory with the rigid frame of an idealised society (Anderson, 1982).

The problem of sharing collective memory while retaining a personal, engaged vision of the past and the present as the basis of one's own intentions is a 'labour of consensus' typical of the three main challenges of anarchism indicated above: the challenge of abstracting oneself from already existing frames of experience; the challenge of balancing individual and collective forces; and the challenge of aligning action and imagination. In my opinion, the current claims of anarchists that they know and practice good solutions to the problem of working and living together finds its test in their ability to find a basis in collective memory and to share this memory across generations and cultures. To realise such a test, this article takes the case of the anarchist tradition among printers as part of the print union movement over the past two centuries. After a brief description of the case, I will examine whether some collective memory of their action remains in an age when anarchism is very popular.

Methodology

This study uses an extended case-method to document the case of anarchism among printers, including participant observation in an attempt to 'locate everyday life in its extra local and historical context' (Burawoy, 1998: 4). The backbone of this study is mostly participant observation (Van Maanen, 2011), which allowed the author to contrast discourses with what people actually do in

relation to their actual frames of experience. This experience led to the research question: the present transmission of anarchist work experience via collective memory among workers in the so-called 'creative industries'. I investigate whether, as intellectual workers and social agents, they actually claim and enact the inheritance of anarchist unions, which were particularly active in the publishing industry. If such is the case, I also examine what exactly this transmission consists in.

This fieldwork is a combination of two different types of experience in various organisations. I have worked in publishing houses from 1994 in a range of 13 small companies and large groups in different positions (intern, reader, author, board member) (Riot, 2012). I also carried out four years of participant observation from 2005 to 2008 (Riot, 2009) in a digital art centre linked to a software industry innovation cluster.

After defining the research question, I complemented this fieldwork material with two other sources. First, I gathered archival data related to the history of print unions and printers mostly in France from 1780 to 1980. Then I carried out a series of in-depth interviews in spring and summer 2013. These ten additional in-depth interviews used the data triangulation method (Silverman, 2010), focusing on the specific issue of 'anarchism' and print unions. The informants (printers, publishers and authors as well as developers) were already familiar with the author's research and had previously had an interest in political issues related to lifestyle and organisation at work. Finally, I attended a series of four seminars in Paris (ETAPES seminars) where anarchists described their everyday practices at work and debated their key challenges. Few were publishers or printers, but most of them were craftsmen working in the food industry and construction. Most of them were also part of the CNT (anarchist trade union) and they were looking for specific solutions in reference to past anarchist traditions.

The history of printers: Anarchism and print unions in past centuries

Although the first print shop opened in La Sorbonne (Paris) as early as 1469, the growth of the printing industry as such dates back to the 19th century (Rebérioux, 1982). The growth of the industry was accompanied by technical progress and multiple innovations in terms of labour organisation. Print workers had a special status: many of them were also writers and thinkers (Jules Michelet, Pierre Leroux and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon himself). Typographers and typesetters pioneered the writing and publishing of 'little blue books' aimed at popular instruction as well as reviews dedicated to workers. Print workers, especially Parisian print workers facing unemployment, often had a different relationship with employers and the State from that of low-skilled workers and played a key

role in most of the French revolutions, particularly those of 1830, 1848 and 1870 (this role has been described and discussed by Kautsky [1924], Gramsci [1995] and Manheim [2013]).

Most revolts and strikes were caused by periods of low economic dynamism in conjunction with the introduction of new printing technologies. The introduction of these new technologies delimits three major periods: the press in the 1820s, composition print around 1900 and finally phototypesetting (the so-called ‘Hersant press’ introduced by the newly restructured press conglomerate). This last change caused the loss of 15,000 jobs between 1973 and 1978 (Rebérioux, 1982: 66). At the time of the 1976 ‘framework agreement’, 60% of the workforce in the publishing industry worked in production.

Although they were a minority after the creation of La Gutenberg (the main print union) and the institutionalisation of the Federation (Fédération Française des Travailleurs du Livre) in 1880, anarchists agreed with socialists on key original solutions to concrete problems as they were encountered: they created production cooperatives, cooperative shops and restaurants, labour exchanges and mutual funds (Rebérioux, 1982: 49 and 71). Such mutualised goods and services also existed in other professions, which made exchange and trade easy in small circles. However, printers were highly-skilled workers and they made books. Because they were especially influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, which proscribed trade guilds and corporatism as hostile to equality between all men, anarchist printers advocated different values from those of traditional corporations (Chauvet, 1971). They introduced specific work methods so as to maintain past traditions while adapting to technological innovations.

	‘Viaticum’	‘Commandite’	Education through life
Definition	Sending emissaries all around the world to provide mutual support (network), for instance money in strikes or volunteers during the Spanish War in 1936. This was balanced with	Work brigades receive a collective wage and split it between them.	Unions were long torn between their interest in technical progress and the role of machines. However, this also challenged the specific advantage of highly skilled

	workers need for direct mutual aid (solidarity from their peers and ties to people they knew well).		workers. In their present situation, keeping control over rare know-how proved essential.
General intent (Rebérioux, 1982: 113)	Spread anarchist ideas by implementing ‘propaganda by the facts’. Promote a vision of universal solidarity (in line with the ideas of the Great Revolution) implemented in a step-by-step way (federation of local networks). Work on class issues via education (peer solidarity and workers’ university; equality of manual and intellectual labour).		

Table 2: Anarchist strategies.

Most of these solutions, however, were controversial among workers. Possibly the most important dimension of all (especially when considered in relation to collective memory, as we discuss below) is education. Through education, anarchist groups among printers were trying to solve one of their main contradictions, that of their wish to spread their ideas (free thinking) and their desire to limit the transmission of their technical knowledge through an apprenticeship structure. The spread of knowledge to other workers, such as accepting women in the work force (Burr, 1993) and the number of apprentices per worker (Rebérioux, 1982) were hotly debated issues. Despite the economic growth in the industry (the union had 60,000 members in 1937 [Rebérioux, 1982: 69]), the complex issue of the defence of highly-skilled workers against machines and a low-skilled work force as documented in Britain (Hobsbawm, 1984; Thompson, 1980) was also central in France. This possibly explains the growth of a highly centralised, reformist union keen on creating alliances with state institutions and the decline of the profession following the development of large media groups, new technologies (Rebérioux, 1986) and deregulation.

Anarchists seem to have been influential along with socialists and they were especially interested in complex situations such as those related to freedom of thought and censorship as well as the relationship between urban and rural life. Professions with a long tradition that are regularly faced with technical advances, such as printers and typographers, seem to be especially well-placed to deal with such issues. Although they held certain positions in common with radicals and socialists, such as solidarism (Audier, 2012; Touraine et al., 1987), they were always faced with the difficult problem of their position as a minority: their

distance from both the socialist and capitalist systems might explain the specific organisational choices made by anarchists who begged to differ, but at the risk of isolating themselves. For instance, two of the most original initiatives by anarchist printers were the consumer and work cooperatives of Charles Gide in Nîmes and the Godin Institute in Amiens (both under the influence of Rochdale), and the Freinet School where the children's comprehensive education included the use of a press for their own newspaper. These pioneering enterprises always remained a source of inspiration for modest local initiatives (combining craftwork, subsistence crops, a school and a press), which may explain their influence on other sectors of society (Maitron, 1975). Today, as we shall see, the anarcho-syndicalist positions of highly-skilled workers such as printers have little influence on contemporary agents. This profession is in decline due to the replacement of craftsmen by machinery and print by multimedia. However, we may have expected it to remain influential in highly-skilled, intellectual professions, given the close relations of publishers, authors and developers in producing and selling books. Yet as we shall presently see, the collective memory of anarchism still remains. At present, it looks like two transformed versions of the original, the first one a response to professional situation, the second a libertarian perspective on society.

Collective memory of past print unions in the French publishing industry today

Few printers and typographers are still active today in France: they mainly remain in the National Print House (Imprimerie Nationale) and in small provincial printers, generally old family firms, highly specialised in upmarket production (art books, brochures and pictures, small series). This grim picture of the industry contrasts with two centuries of unprecedented growth and the rise in power of the Print Union. The decline of the union was already clear in the 1970s due to technological innovation and the replacement of workers by machinery. Consequently, most of the anarchist legacy of this professional group is to be found in other subgroups in the publishing industry.

Large media conglomerates generally consider the more productive parts of the value chain as nonstrategic, as can be observed by the growing importance of sales and communication (Riot, 2012). Major publishers benefit from their central position, controlling publication and distribution systems. They strengthen this position by building Chinese walls between the various contributors to the object, the 'book' (author, designer and illustrator, proof-reader, printer, bookstore owner). The frequent use of part-time labour, subcontracting (Barley and Kunda, 2004) and outsourcing contributes to the

precarious living conditions of the creative work force where talent is the dominant value and competition is intense between individuals and publishing houses. An author comments:

I could very well say people like me are anarchists by necessity, because we receive no support from the State whatsoever and because we are isolated. This situation made me think more about these ideas and look back at some attempts to make things different.

In large groups, a few publishers are aware of printers and their craft. They want to keep these firms alive because of their tradition and their role in industry. All insist on the importance of printing in the meaning of the publisher's project and they refer to Mame, a very old printing house. Boulaire (2012) documented the case of this Catholic printer, reflecting on the quality of its craft and peculiar organisational methods. To this day, the combined influence of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church and of left-wing collectives is still very present in agents' representations of the print industry. More precisely, this influence seems to counter-balance the family-business, 'corporatist' orientation structuring the industry. To carry on the practices of important figures such as Pierre Seghers (Doucey, 2011) and François Maspero (Maspero, 1982), anarchists who worked closely with printers and devoted their life to discovering poetry and social science from all over the world. Two informants mention a specific work system similar to that of anarchist printers in the past, but they never identify it as such even though they are aware of it. Instead, the relationship is essential, especially under dire economic circumstances both parties describe:

The reason why I keep going is the fact that I work with SW [the publisher]. The books are beautiful; we talk about them with her on a regular basis. (Printer)

Working with P [the printer] is essential to my project; it has been ever since I created my publishing house. The specific nature of my books, as unique objects, the fact that P works the stock so we have no waste counterbalances my choice of large group distribution. I negotiate where I can how to make my books different. (Publisher)

Independent publishers are a very heterogeneous group (Noël, 2012). Some of them are 'militants', generally small houses working in close networks. They attend political events such as summer universities, congresses and the popular 'Fête de l'Huma' (a large left-wing festival organised every September). At the same time, they attempt to attract public support (mostly at local level but also from the Ministry of Culture and the National Centre for Books [CNL]). Their attitude can sometimes be opportunistic, an author comments:

[Small local publishing houses] benefit from State, regional, local funding, because they are a regional minority with a rare language. They are part of local economic

development but their cooperatives don't work so well. They are not open to everyone. What makes them anarchists are their slogans and what they write in their books against the State; not in French, mind you, so not everyone can read it. I call it biting the hand that feeds you.

More generally, small firms, depending on volunteer work and family support are in no real position to align their ideas with their practice. In fact, the overproduction of books and the creation of many small publishing houses was facilitated by the introduction of offset printing technology in the 1970s and free trade between European firms in the 1990s. This may explain the lack of interest in printers and their work conditions. An author remembers:

For [this founder of his publishing house], anarchism meant not paying anyone, authors or printers. You can call it a credo. In the end, a printer took him to court and won. After a while, L created a new publishing house along the same lines. And again. And again. On the other hand, Edmond Thomas was a well-known anarchist. He published poems by workers, poets he liked. To survive, he combined printing and publishing activities. He was always honest; it was not for profit, but you were always paid on time (Author).

Recently, such projects as writers' cooperatives have appeared. Author François Bon¹, who is familiar with anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist thinking, as well as being trained in typography, is an important influence on one of them, Remue.net, through training activities. For him (Bon, 2011), using websites increases publishing opportunities and at the same time defends the role of authors in society and the originality of the French system of authors' rights (as opposed to copyright). In his recent "autobiography of objects", Bon also pays tribute to the machines of the past, and to work places that insisted on socio-materiality as a source of inspiration for what he refused to call 'our virtual age'. The limit to the internet-based system is that its work organisation and its sharing system are based on voluntary contributions only, and most people only dialogue via the Internet.

It seems that collective memory about printers' and their organisations is more or less lost among people working in the publishing industry. It is more present among agents who were in contact with printers themselves, but it is seldom identified as such. What matters most are the craft traditions and a form of corporatism (Ingram and Simons, 2000; Maitron, 1975). Anarchism is an inspiration for many, but it is not really connected to from unionised anarchists' collective memory. Instead it is associated with either nostalgia or more radical forms of political engagement – the social memory of the official history of anarchism – 1870 and 1936 contrasting with a disappointing present age where

1 <http://remue.net>; <http://www.tierslivre.net>; <http://publie.net>.

agents feel trapped (Scott, 2012). As we shall presently see, very different reactions to anarchism can be found in software developers. They seem to be in the present, yet eager to find alternatives and utopias.

Collective memory of past print unions among software developers and multimedia workers today

Most software developers and multimedia workers began working when most printers had already disappeared, and they did not have a chance to witness the transition. They belong to a different world, also quite small. Most of them have postgraduate degrees from engineering schools, business schools and art schools. In line with their position and skills, most new technology professionals look at anarchism as a relief on norms unrelated to technological expertise. In the past, many highly-skilled printers would have the same position, promoting their work organisation and trade union as the most legitimate ground for society as a whole. Barley and Kunda (2004) have shown how this position tends to jeopardise developers' work conditions by conditioning solidarity to careers and skills.

Moreover, software developers in large corporations often identify anarchism with the skills of the founding fathers of dominant corporations such as Apple. They feel attracted to the freedom California represents, as opposed to the French suburbs where they work. One of them expresses this attraction as a feeling of inferiority:

All the creativity is out there in the open. They play Cowboys and Indians, free style. We are just a bunch of 'me-toos', we abide by the hierarchical rules in our little box. No wonder we never earned their respect. (Developer)

Many developers associate high tech and innovation with American libertarian culture, referring to Palo Alto and Steve Jobs as icons of this counterculture. As independent workers, who often call themselves 'entrepreneurs', they are often highly-skilled, proud of their superior craft and their independence. Although they identify with Silicon Valley tycoons because of their prowess, they have mixed feelings because of the use of what was initially counter culture to make money. They do not realise that their paradoxical love-hate relationship with innovative technology correspond to an old tradition among printers. They too alternated pioneering mechanics and inventions and Luddite actions (Jones, 2013) in defence of their jobs.

Other types of workers are no more capable of dealing with the contradictory nature of their position. They work in former state-owned companies and belong

to trade unions. They conform to the rules of oppositional activism and deplore the individualism of the profession (Roy, 2010). This last trait they associate with the 'anarchism of the market' as opposed to the powerful organisation of trade unions in national Telecom firms that impose stable, methodical rules.

Because they have no real memory to refer to, independent workers and large ex-public group employees share an ambivalent relationship with anarchism. They both identify anarchism with a radical 'no more rule' solution, one that does not really suit them because of their won love-hate relationship with technology and rules. In fact, anarchist ideas have been dealing with this paradox of working with machines (Orr, 1996) and the problem of finding a common ground to benefit collectively from advances in science and technology. The nature of the benefits and the question of property rights is also an issue. For lack of collective memory, workers also identify anarchism with the end of private property. Small entrepreneurs somehow focus on the defence of their property rights, and this may explain their hostility to 'anarchist ideas'. Open source developers are more engaged in defending hackers and pirates, although some of them argue that this is more of a 'style' than real commitment. One of them explains:

I am just a gamer; that's what I enjoy; of course, I know about pirates, hackers, they're cool, but to me it's like... Tolkien, I like because my friends like him too, so it's something we share. Let's put it this way, I don't share the rest, politics, fine art, and big stuff. (Developer)

Most multimedia workers refer to successful entrepreneurs and art movements such as Fluxus or Situationists (Careri, 2013) – especially artists working in collectives – but they fail to identify problems related to work systems (previously explored by anarchist unions) when they claim to have invented alternative ways of organising projects.

I tell you we built an online platform. To me this is more a sort of common ground to deal with anarchy than an anarchic solution. What would an anarchic solution be? (Entrepreneur)

They define these choices more readily in relation to constraints imposed by contracting and the necessity to be more flexible. The same is true for their international experience:

Now I prefer to work in India. Developers there work for cheap; there are no rules to prevent us from doing this and that. There is more space to invent new things. Call it what you like, international, libertarian; I have no time to read. So to me, anarchy by the book, forget about it! (Artist)

However, an artist-developer explains his anti-system position a little further:

Yes I defend open source technology, yes I am an outsider to all systems, and yes I claim anarchism as an inspiration but... I have two children; I live in Ivry (where there used to be many printers, I knew some of them, you know). I pay tribute to them here, as I try to earn money so I can travel around the world with my family. I'm more or less looking for escape. I wish I had more money. So where exactly do you draw the line of my engagement? (Another Artist)

When asked, agents often confide that, outside a close circle of family and friends, they do not have many opportunities to share more than goods and services in simple, short-term transactions. Although they regret it, they say this is because they don't have time and also because they get few opportunities to do so. They also mention dystopian views of the world (Ballard, 2003) in reference to anarchism as if they were bracing for the worst in the near future when using these ideas (Biagini, 2012). Still, in my opinion, most of their discourses display the influence of individual anarchism and libertarian ideas that sound both anti-system (Bookchin, 2003) and like those of the 'San Francisco boys'.

Finally, a possible evolution is taking place with the creation of fab labs (Gershenfeld, 2008); in the case of France (Bottolier-Despois, 2012), the makerspace model is associated with the renewed interest for the influence of Northern Europe successes such as the Fabriken in Sweden on production and design (Koskinen et al., 2011). It is an attempt to use technological progress for the benefit of the majority in production organisation, and participants are clearly aware of this. Participation and collectivism, the sharing of project tasks, are perhaps only possible because this is only a small part of most participants' activities, but the model can also prove more central and benefit from the international network which is currently expanding.

To conclude, in both cases, that of publishers and that of multimedia workers, actors adopt a wide range of attitudes when they refer to anarchism, few of them relate to the print union and printers as a source of inspiration for their present work and everyday life. However, people who work in the publishing industry are in general better informed than software developers and technicians, who have more or less replaced printers after the introduction of offset printing, computers and the Internet. This suggests the importance of collective memory and work experience in perpetuating the legacy of past ages: because publishers worked with printers for many years, they display a keen knowledge of their traditions whereas developers and software designers would sooner mention Luddites who made a lasting impression on post-enclosure history. This is in line with Halbwachs (1997) who describes collective memory as made up of encounters within the spatial framework of physical surroundings, whereas historical memory is more abstract and mostly shared by historians and intellectuals. All the professionals I interviewed tend to perceive anarchism as a radical and

ideological stand rather than a set of practical solutions. "Anarchy by the book? Forget about it." one respondent (an Artist and free-lance Web-designer) said, adopting a Libertarian stand on life because, she argued: "People today are selfish because they perceive their bourgeois, middle-class values might be under-threat." However, I also observe that in both professional groups, renewed interest in productive activities related to arts, crafts and specific skills, as well as in social organisations (cooperatives, disintermediation, short circuits, fair trade) has resulted in a wide range of independent projects, which are seldom related to the legacy of past anarchist workers. When listening to people and looking at what they were doing, I found they were not only rediscovering solutions and practices but actually building new frameworks, interesting and viable alternatives to more traditional work systems and ways of life. It may also point at a specific problem of anarchism: its more interesting dimensions, as a social force, are hidden behind an image of radicalism and disruptive tactics.

In line with recent transformation, a more cultural approach of the various strands of social movements (Polletta and Jasper, 2001) reveals a reformist stand aiming at practical solutions and pluralist alliances to deal with local problems. Although this micro-activism may fall under the radar of social movement analysts (Soule, 2012; Soule and King, 2008) because of its scope, it also shapes the strategic action field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). It contributes to the life and diversity of arenas of interaction (de Bakker et al., 2013) by challenging the ways issues are framed and by contributing a large choice of tactics in complement to the more identified ones of large NGOs (den Hond and de Bakker, 2007). Anarchist influence may be exerted in a more pervasive than radical way and it may be important to explain why it is so low-key in a loud, media age. We shall now examine the three reasons why anarchist collective memories and work traditions have been forgotten for a while. This phenomenon is related to actual practices and anarchists' preference for 'propaganda by fact' rather than discourse. However, rediscovering this rich material, sparrred from instrumental appropriations, might prove essential to transform life at work.

Findings about the specific role of collective memory in present understanding of anarchism

As illustrated by the case of printers and their successors, the situated nature of their approach to the anarchic tradition makes it very difficult to share widely. The idea that this decline is to be explained by the disappearance of industrial labour, and that what succeeded it was the 'knowledge age' of capitalism, weakens the argument: printers and typographers were always 'knowledge

workers', 'intellectual producers' who had long been an ideal for many left-wing thinkers such as Walter Benjamin (1986). The declining collective memory of anarchism in specific professions and work systems is therefore a complex issue.

One reason is that, for centuries, anarchists attempted to limit the influence of myths and rites, superstitions and ideologies, so as to promote freethinking, practical skills and solidarity. Connecting to even the most glorious past by 'the manufacturing of tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2012) is a problem, mostly because it excludes all those who are ignorant of this 'Great History'. The second reason is related to anarchists' interest for all local cultures; it takes pride in its local adaptability. It is of a discrete nature because of its dislike of dogma. Together, cultural values should always make up an open ensemble of original solutions. However, many of these memories and traditions prove to be incompatible. The third reason is related to the very nature of collective memory. My argument so far has been that collective memory of past experience proves more important to fuel the imagination (which is dear to Graeber), than social history (theories and traditions that can be found in books). However, collective memory cannot be shared by many: it is a small group preserve. When it spreads, it is often associated with radical alternativeness and isolationist tendencies. Its nature changes, and because it is no longer based on shared live experiences but on historical memories (Halbwachs, 1997), it comes to resemble tales many can share. I believe the three reasons for the difficulties to maintain collective memories in anarchism imply a very rich culture, which explains its influence in the social field and its importance in social movements. Consequently, the main challenge for anarchists now might be to prove that they can go beyond their criticism of the present state of society and fully engage in it even though their modes of action rely on small-group solidarity.

Anarchy: Looking for ways around the tall tale of skilled labour forces

Anarchists always seem to represent a side model, as a complement to the dominant frame of experience, combining different dimensions of life and simplifying the model (fewer beliefs, less expert knowledge, entrenchment of role models). However, after 1968, the broadening of social rights issues (such as minority issues) took place at the same time as anarcho-syndicalist traditions such as that of printers and typographers weakened. As Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) point out, the paradoxical appropriation by capitalism of certain anarchist ideas (mostly individualism and libertarianism) has weakened its most anti-capitalist dimensions by dismantling the coherence between rights and duties, individual and collective frames. One of the results of this evolution is that alternative work systems and self-help practices (as existed among anarcho-

syndicalists in general and printers in particular) have been more or less forgotten or misunderstood. They seem to correspond to specific practices and professional groups, which more or less belong to the past. To prevent these practices being transformed into ideas and limited to another written tradition (the dogmas of social history, according to Halbwachs), the pragmatic anarchistic method of dealing with power and knowledge at work needs to be remembered. This includes the way anarchistic printers challenged dominant streams in their unions and certain forms of organisation based on non-monetary trade as Graeber (2001) reminds us. Whereas he deliberately favours such foreign examples as Wampum among American Indians (shells that were used for trade and for peace treaties supporting a complex system of exchanges among tribes), the present research stresses the role of more familiar examples in the recent history of labour in the West (Lash and Urry, 1987).

A very important action in relation to collective memory was anarchists' interest in education as a way of fighting against domination and discrimination and promoting solidarity. Low skilled workers were not forever proletarian and they did not need to wait for the *Grand Soir*² either. Even so, our distance from the reality of these everyday practices helps to make them more appealing and arises today's imagination. Many workers were not so keen on sharing their knowledge and skills at the time. Still, I observed that actors who are or have been familiar with printers and their organisation are more capable of accounting for their choices. For instance, they argue that discrepancies between skilled and unskilled workers are a real problem for anarchistic organisations and training may be a (slow) preferable solution to simply going back to job specialisation. Learning is a collective process, but, as one member of an anarchist bakery pointed out, it is very difficult to support unskilled or unreliable workers in a tight economy, since their mistakes affect others also. However, rather than just firing them, collective memories of past arrangements and ideas can provide original solutions. Consequently, I would argue that what characterises anarchism is an ensemble of ideas and cases rather than a doctrine, its propensity to draw its inspiration for action from other sources, which it does non-dialectically in the sense that it is not trying to structure a problem in reference to a limited series of terms.

2 In English 'the Great Night', this French expression is used by Marxists and Anarchists who refer to a disruptive moment changing all power and all the rules of the social game in society. The birth of this new society is mentioned, for instance, in the International, the song written by Eugène Pottier en 1871.

Anarchism: Dealing with many kinds of traditions and memories

As illustrated by the different positions of actors with regard to the anarchistic past in highly qualified work groups, there are different ways of relating to that past by appropriating different ideas and methods. Although this particular professional group has greatly declined due to changes in the value chain and the introduction of different production methods, it should be pointed out that it still exists (demonstrating an alternative to books as short-term consumer goods) and that the printer specific working organisation is still influential in defining the difference between productive labour (technicians) and intellectual professions.

In the age of creative industries, professionals take up many different positions, and this has always been the case since Gutenberg's time. I observed that referring to the anarchist tradition is often a way for actors to claim a different approach to individual and collective relations. To them, it implies it is not just about business. Far from preventing them from taking part in work groups and action, this may on the contrary encourage interesting organisational methods and original approaches to specific problems. Although collaboration and beliefs need not be necessarily aligned (Shantz, 2009), anarchists who have good experience of creating chains of cooperation are free to take part in local action with people who face urgent problems (for instance the marginalisation of the unskilled workforce in Western countries).

This participation would be a problem only for purists who claim ownership of the anarchist label and want to follow tradition by the book, which is itself quite contrary to anarchism. However, if anarchists want to work on a common basis, collective memory is not enough. This is, first, because they may not be shared by all, depending on when they join and at what stage of their life (Neill, 1960), and second because sharing collective memory (in relation to common experiences) is not the way to deal with strong professional and cultural traditions if one does not believe in insurrection (Hernon, 2006), which would provide a complete and radical change. When adopting the transformation approach, one needs to find arrangements and rely on improvisation. Yet as Scott (2012) points out, such modest solutions work well in a middle class world where people share the same way of life. It is more difficult to find common ground when cultures are really different. One example given by an anarchist union member working in construction was the difficulties his union faced with immigrants who were tied to their families in the village back home and would still follow their traditions, myths and rites as well as religious dogmas. When they are shared between different groups, collective memories often conflict and contradict one another. Consequently, anarchists who take pride in refuting any supremacy of

dogmas or value hierarchies still need to work out solutions to deal with these conflicts and find common ground.

The role of collective memory in going beyond union parochialism to include society at large

As was already mentioned, anarchism is often identified with the absence of rule and with alternative time and space. Rather than referring to founding fathers and historical dates in an age of intense tradition manufacturing (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992), collective memory refers to collective experience shared within a group on various occasions and adapted to present circumstances. In that regard, the memory of anarchists' unions at work may not be shared by many, but it possibly takes on all its meaning in the present. According to most informants, possibly the best argument in favour of this alternative model is the admission that something needs to change in their life. This should be related to their desire to restrict their commitment to a certain form of society where professions and corporations are central (Whyte, 1956), and look for viable alternatives. Referring to the anarchist ideal of the commune is a way of describing the problem: organisations are at present taking the commitment that should be devoted to the commune because there is no commune that would balance their intrusive spread in workers' life. As a form of prefiguration, people like to mention their various initiatives and everyday inventions to co-create this free space.

Collective memory supports such everyday life invention because it relates not so much to past traditions and actions – preserved in books and bibles (Goody, 2000) – but to practical ways of dealing with everyday life. Some choices made by anarchists support this claim. For instance, unlike the modernism of some revolutionaries in Spain, anarchists were interested in pre-capitalist collectivist modes of organisations to deal with, for example, the scarcity of resources in villages (Dolgoft, 1974). Anarchists did not so much reform these modes of organisations as favoured broader cooperative action between units based on their common approach to work and public property. These long-term modes of organisation seem to suggest a complementary dimension to what printers' unions can teach us today. One could argue that such traditional methods indicate a certain form of archaism and interdependence between family and community, which is precisely the reason why modern state-welfare structures are often considered less constraining. This objection is quite strong, yet there is no reason why politics and power issues should be set apart from the family, as long as they are not limited to this. In fact, looking at so-called 'archaic arrangements' maybe a good way to understand the relationship between what is

individual and what is collective, what is a small group sharing collective memory and what is society at large (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013) outside state laws and market trading. A member of a cooperative restaurant pointed at this problem by saying that they struggled to keep in touch with their (poor) neighbourhood because, although their meals were cheap, they were organic. It appealed to the educated middle class who would come on purpose (as a sign of commitment to the ideas), but it repelled the 'locals' who would go to MacDonald's on the other side of the street. So it required a lot of time and effort to go beyond the limits of the close circle of aficionados and be part of the city streets. It also involved displaying great determination in sharing the burden of society with everyone and everything, while remaining different.

Just as Graeber observes the problematic origin of anthropology (as the corollary of Western domination), the key difficulty in anarchism should be pointed out: its attempts to invent forms that combine individual freedom and collective peace often failed, and resulted in the rejection of the past by new generations. It is also true that, contrary to Marxists (Crehan, 2002), failing to spread their ideas and modes of organisation may not be a failure in itself since anarchist approaches are often satisfied with limited influence and melanges. However, the ability to share their views and practices via collective memory seems essential. Otherwise they become part of the official history and are transformed or completely disappear. Pointing at the conformism of the children of the 1968 Generation, Doug Mc Adam claims that: 'Their lives now serve as a general account of the contemporary biographies of yesterday's activists' (1989: 747). Fortunately, as this article attempts to show, in line with Graeber's idea, there can be many other ways to live in the present and relate to the past than family stories and anarchism by the book.

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