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The Black Blocs Ten Years after Seattle

Anarchism, Direct Action, and Deliberative Practices

The Black Blocs made a spectacular entrance into the Movement for Global Justice on 30 November 1999 at the "Battle of Seattle," when they smashed the windows of McDonald's, Nike, Gap, and a few banks. In April 2009, almost ten years later, a Black Bloc is involved in skirmishes with police at Strasbourg during the NATO Summit. The aim of this article, which is largely based on interviews with militants, analyses of their discourses, and first-hand observations of demonstrations, is to identify how the Black Bloc tactic originated and spread, and to understand the political factors that led activists to adopt it. Three intrinsically political questions are addressed: (1) Who should determine the plan of action within a group of militants? (2) Who should determine the plan of action during a demonstration? (3) Who should determine the criteria to assess the effectiveness of the actions taken by a social movement and speak on its behalf? To answer these questions, the notion of "respect for a diversity of tactics" and the links between the Black Blocs and other militant organizations (both radical and reformist) as well as other blocs (the "Tute Bianche" or White Overalls and the Pink Blocs) are discussed.

Similar to love, a riot can sometimes take us by surprise, when we think we are not prepared, but that if one has an open disposition toward love, like riots,

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> it will allow one to seize the opportunities, and the situations. It would be in vain to say that we can prepare a riot, though we can at least prepare for riots: do what it takes to help ignite the fire.
>
> *—Two companer@s from the Calisse Brigade, "A. Anti. Anti-Capitalista!" (10 June 2007)*

A considerable portion of the activities of the Movement for Global Justice in the West involves contesting the legitimacy of the major summits of the international bodies associated with the globalization of capitalism, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the G8, and the European Union. On such occasions, various coalitions organize rallies, street carnivals, public debates, film screenings, music shows, as well as disruptive actions, with the whole series of events possibly lasting a number of days. This was the backdrop against which the Black Bloc made its spectacular entrance into the Movement for Global Justice at the "Battle of Seattle" on 30 November 1999, smashing the windows of McDonald's, Nike, Gap, and certain banks. The Black Bloc is an easily identifiable collective action carried out by individuals wearing black clothes and masks and forming a contingent—a black block—within a rally. For its many detractors and small number of supporters, the Black Bloc represents the renewal of anarchism on the political scene in general and among anticapitalist forces in particular.[1]

There is no such thing as *the* Black Bloc; there are, rather, Black Blocs, each of them arising on the occasion of a rally and dissolving when the rally is over. The size of the Black Blocs can vary from a few dozen to a few thousand individuals. In some circumstances, several Black Blocs are active simultaneously within a single protest event, as was the case during the demonstrations against the April 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. The primary objective of a Black Block is to signal the presence within a demonstration of a radical critique of the economic and political system. To help convey their message, the Black Blocs usually display banners bearing anticapitalist and anti-authoritarian slogans, and flags — black or red and black, the anarchist colors, and occasionally red, suggesting that some Black Blockers consider themselves more communist than anarchist. The Black Blocs sometimes resort to force to express their radical critique, which has made them the subject of heated polemics. Politicians, the police, the spokespeople of mainstream

reformist organizations within the social movement, and even journalists and some academics[2] are united in condemning these demonstrators and their use of force.

Severino, from the Bostonian Barricada Collective of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC), wrote an article (circa late 2001) entitled "The Black Bloc Tactic Reached The End of Its Usefulness?,"[3] and in 2003, some anarchists declared "the Black Bloc is dead"[4] to indicate that this method was no longer suited to the political environment and to the power relations prevailing in the aftermath of the Battle of Genoa in June 2001 (where an Italian police officer killed a demonstrator at point blank range) and of the attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001 (which provided grounds for higher levels of repression). The evasion tactic adopted by the elites, whereby summits are held in places inaccessible to demonstrators, has blurred the significance of direct actions and made it more difficult to mobilize activists. This said, however, Black Blocs still appear at rallies on a regular basis. Here, for example, are some events at which the Black Bloc tactic was applied:

- *Seattle, 30 November 1999, Summit of the WTO*—Far from the demonstrations, a Black Bloc about 250 strong targets capitalist symbols in the city's shopping district.
- *Washington, D.C., 16 April 2000, Meeting of the IMF and the World Bank*—The Black Bloc directs its efforts toward protecting nonviolent demonstrations against police assaults.
- *Prague, September 2000, Meeting of the IMF and the World Bank*—A Black Bloc armed with clubs, rocks, and Molotov cocktails confronts a police barrage in a vain attempt to force its way through to the convention center.
- *Buffalo, Spring 2001*—A Black Bloc enters a poor neighborhood to collect the garbage. Responding to bewildered reporters asking them what they were doing, some activists tell them, "You wrote that we would trash the town, we decided to pick up the trash!"[5]
- *Quebec City, April 2001, Summit of the Americas*—Several small Black Blocs harass the security perimeter and the police officers assigned to it, while at the same time protecting other demonstrators against police attacks.
- *Gothenburg, May 2001, Summit of the European Union*—A Black Bloc confronts the police, who fire real bullets at the crowd.

- *Genoa, June 2001, G8 Summit*—The Black Blocs and their allies strike symbols of capitalism, attack a prison, and retaliate against police officers who assaulted them. A police agent kills a demonstrator with two gunshots to the head.
- *Calgary, June 2002, G8 Summit (at Kananaskis)*—A Black Bloc of several dozen people engages in a peaceful march.
- P*rague, 21 November 2002, NATO Summit*—Sensing a provocation, a Black Bloc maneuvers to protect a police vehicle slowly making its way through a rally of some three thousand anarcho-communists.
- *Geneva/Annemasse, May 2003, G8 Summit (in Évian)*—A Black Bloc of about one hundred takes independent action in Geneva, suddenly appearing late in the evening in Geneva's downtown shopping area when everything is quiet, hurling stones and Molotov cocktails at the shop windows, only to vanish a few minutes later. Over the following days, Black Blocs together with other groups of demonstrators engage in street-blocking actions, preventing access to Summit meeting places.
- *Thessalonica, June 2003, Summit of the European Union*—Black Blocs participate in street-blocking actions and battle police officers defending the Summit. The next day they demonstrate in the city along with tens of thousands of people, and attack capitalist symbols: they set fire to a McDonald's and Vodafone store and wreck some thirty other establishments, including three banks.
- *Miami, November 2003, Summit of the Americas*—The Black Bloc takes part in the rally, endeavoring in vain to protect some giant puppets from the police, who spend about thirty minutes destroying the puppets abandoned by the routed demonstrators on Seaside Plaza.[6]
- *New York, August–September 2004, Republican Party Convention*—Members of a Black Bloc march without masks among the crowd until they arrive at the Convention site. There they don their masks and a giant puppet representing a green dragon is set alight, signalling the start of a confrontation with the police.
- *Scotland, June 2005, G8 Summit (in Auchterarder)*—A Black Bloc undertakes a Suicide March, leaving the temporary autonomous and self-governed camp before dawn to draw the attention of the police away from the many affinity groups who have independently spread out in the countryside to block the highways at sunrise. The Suicide March finally reaches a

highway and blocks it after repeatedly confronting a police barrage with clubs and stones.

- *Hillemm-Rostock, June 2007, G8 Summit*—A huge Black Bloc participates in the rallies against the G8 Summit in Germany and the next day attempts unsuccessfully to spark a riot in a gentrified neighborhood of East Berlin (an action called "Plan B").
- *Strasbourg, April 2009, NATO Summit*—A Block Bloc is involved in skirmishes with police.
- *Vancouver, February 2010*—A small Black Bloc targets corporations sponsoring the Olympic Games.[7]
- *Toronto, June 2010, G20 Summit—A* Black Bloc 150 strong (including many women) targets tens of capitalist symbols (banks, McDonald's, American Apparel, etc.), a strip club, and vehicles belonging to the media and the police.

Without claiming to exhaust the subject, the present discussion examines the Black Bloc as both political phenomenon and political actor, and investigates the hypothesis that a strong link exists between the type of collective direct action carried out by the Black Blocs and the desire of a great number of demonstrators and militants involved in the Movement for Global Justice, among others, to be politically active "in a different way." Seen in this light, the Black Bloc emerges as an epiphenomenon within the Western tradition of a broad-based anti-authoritarian movement—whether consciously anarchist or not—that experienced a resurgence in 1970 with the rise of what sociologists have named "the New Social Movements" (feminists, environmentalists, youth, homosexuals), which wanted to break with party or trade union forms of militancy and to organize instead along horizontal, egalitarian, consensual lines.[8]

This heterogeneous current proposes to radicalize the democratic experience by promoting a deliberative decision-making process that is decentralized, egalitarian, and participative, and by rejecting any reference to the myth of political representation (of the "nation," the "proletariat," "civil society," or a social movement). It is an anti-authoritarian tendency repudiating all forms of authority, hierarchy, or power, even those that proliferate within theoretically egalitarian social movements, such as the Movement for Global Justice. Consensus is a political and moral goal, because it respects the independence

and wishes of every person, unlike majority rule, which is imposed directly or through a representative, and which ultimately claims to express the general will at the expense of the silenced minority. The primacy of consensus goes hand in hand with freedom of association and decentralization; it implies the real possibility for militant associations freely established by consenting individuals to dissolve, reform, federate, or become autonomous.

To apprehend the Black Bloc phenomenon from the political perspective, this investigation will endeavor, first, to locate it against the historical background of its emergence and to identify the channels—already consistent with an anti-authoritarian logic—through which it spread over time and across borders. Second, the occasional use of force will be examined within the normative framework of the ethics of deliberation; thus, the analysis will bear mainly on the legitimacy of the decision-making process. It is worth pointing out that those involved in Black Blocs do not resort to force because they are anarchists. The fact is that all political and religious ideologies have articulated opportune justifications of the often lethal violence of *their* supporters, and that a good number of anarchists are *dogmatic* advocates of nonviolence, viewing even the slightest violence as *always* illegitimate.[9] References to specific events will help to clarify the emotions and political factors that lead a person to resort to force. At the same time, three political questions will be addressed: (1) Who should determine the means of action within a given group of activists? (2) Who should determine the means of actions in a demonstration? (3) Who should determine the criteria for judging the effectiveness of a social movement's actions and speak in its name?

This article is based to a large extent on over fifty interviews with anarchists, including a dozen individuals who used force during demonstrations (most of them in North America, some in France), on my first-hand observations as a participant in a number of demonstrations involving one or more Black Blocs[10] and in activist meetings,[11] and on an analysis of texts by and about the Black Blocs. My knowledge of demonstrations in Europe owes much to Clément Barette's excellent thesis, *La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute: Le cas de la violence exercée lors des contre-sommets* (2002). I, like Barette, point out that Black Bloc activists usually make up only a minority of the *casseurs* (rioters) at demonstrations. But they are the most visible. And like Barette, I insist that readers remember that any generalization concerning the Black Blocs is a fallacy. The political riot in general and the Black Bloc contingents

in particular are spaces occupied by a heterogeneous multitude. The goals of the participants, as well as their political histories, militant backgrounds, and socioprofessional, cultural, and gender identities, can vary quite widely from one rally to the next.

Origin, Dissemination, Adaptation

It was apparently the West Berlin police that coined the term "Black Bloc" (*schwarzer Block* in German) in reference to squatters who had gone into the streets in December 1980 dressed in black and equipped with helmets, shields, and a variety of clubs and projectiles to defend their dwellings in the face of eviction. The trial focused on a "criminal organization" known as "the Black Bloc"; the case collapsed.[12] Yet a call for the 1980 Mayday anarchist's mobilization in Frankfurt asked people to "Come out to the Black Block" (*schwarzer Block*).[13] The specific political history of the Black Blocs is thus directly rooted in the West German Autonomous movement (*Autonomen* in German) of the 1980s. This current was itself an extension of the Italian *Autonomia* movement of the 1960s and 70s, whose members were far-left working-class and youth activists critical of the official Communist Party. The *Autonomen* drew upon various ideological tendencies (Marxism, radical feminism, ecologism, anarchism), although ideological independence was upheld as a guarantee of freedom. In West Germany, the *Autonomen* were organized on egalitarian and libertarian bases and advocated autonomy on different levels: individual (politics practiced on one's own behalf and not though representation), gender (exclusively female feminist collectives), decisional (activist groups without higher authorities or hierarchies), and political (no ties with official institutions—the state, parties, nor unions). The *Autonomen* strived to carry out "here and now" an egalitarian and participative political practice, without leaders or representatives, in which individual autonomy and collective autonomy were complementary and of equal importance.[14]

With regard to collective actions and practices, the *Autonomen* started hundreds of squats and were involved in a number of campaigns against nuclear power, war, and racism. On several occasions they engaged in street battles with racist neo-Nazi groups and with police forces protecting nuclear

plants or attempting to drive squatters out of their dwelling places. The Black Bloc tactic was developed within this confrontational environment and then repeatedly taken up at rallies in Central Europe—for instance, in 1988 at a demonstration prefiguring those of the alter-globalization movement, on the occasion of a World Bank and IMF meeting in West Berlin.[15]

How did the Black Bloc tactic migrate from West Berlin in the 1980s to Seattle in 1999? Sociologists Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam, and Dieter Rucht have shown that, for different periods and places, there exist repertoires of collective actions deemed effective and legitimate for the defense and promotion of a cause. Such repertoires are transformed and disseminated over time and across borders in accordance with the experiences of militants and changes in the political climate.[16] The Black Bloc tactic was disseminated mainly through the network of the punk and far-left or ultra-left counterculture via fanzines, touring music groups, and the personal contacts of travelling activists. In North America, the Black Bloc tactic is believed to have been used for the first time in January 1991 during a rally in Washington, D.C., denouncing the first war against Iraq. The World Bank building was targeted and windows were smashed. Anarchist journals such as *Love & Rage* then helped to make the Black Bloc tactic known throughout the American anarchist community.[17] The tactic was also taken up in the early 1990s by members of Anti-Racist Action (ARA), an anti-authoritarian, antiracist movement in the United States and Canada focussed on direct confrontation with neo-Nazis and white supremacists.

At the Battle of Seattle, most of the demonstrators who used force were not part of the Black Bloc. They were activists with nonviolent principles or Seattle residents reacting against the brutal police repression. But the privately owned or public media devoted particular attention to the Black Bloc militants, thereby contributing to the dissemination and popularity of their methods. Many of those who would adopt the Black Bloc tactic in the wake of Seattle first saw it in action thanks to the official media. Indeed, ever since Seattle, mainstream media cameras have avidly sought out spectacular images of Black Bloc actions at rallies of the Movement for Global Justice.[18] However, it was through the alternative media—for instance, Infoshop and Indymedia—that militants were able to familiarize themselves with Black Bloc organizational and operational methods, and to keep abreast of the tactical and strategic debates regarding this type of action. In their analysis of how Black Bloc actions have affected the visibility of anarchism in general

on the Internet and in the mainstream media, Lynn Owens and L. Kendall Palmer[19] have identified a three-fold dynamic: (1) Beginning with Seattle, the mainstream media, while giving the Black Bloc a very high profile, showed it in a negative light, as the embodiment of an anarchism equivalent to chaos and violence. (2) The media attention generated a marked increase in the number of hits at anarchist Internet sites, including those (such as Infoshop) providing information or forums for discussion and debate on the Black Blocs. (3) The mainstream media subsequently showed more interest in other facets of anarchism such as anarchist soccer leagues and book fairs, while items on the Black Blocs sometimes included one or two texts (often based on anarchist Internet sites) explaining their motivations and political rationale or dealing with different topics.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Seattle, Black Blocs soon appeared in various parts of North America, Europe, Mexico, Turkey, and Brazil. The Black Bloc tactic seems to acquire specific meanings depending on the local cultural context. In Quebec, for example, it is in tune with the aesthetic and political vision of the punk movement, with the songs of bands like Bérurier Noir and films such as *La Haine*. In Mexico, the Black Bloc is especially attractive to the members of the anarcho-punk scene, in that its aesthetic coincides with those of both punk culture and the masked Zapatista rebels.[20] Yet in spite of such local particularities, and while they are neither homogeneous nor similar, the Black Blocs often include a majority of youths (though some members are over 50) and men (in many Black Blocs, women make up no more than 5 to 10 percent of the membership). Sociologist Geffery Pleyers identified both thrill-seeking youths with low levels of political awareness and highly politicized activists among Block Bloc participants.[21] This said, among those I interviewed, the majority worked on a regular basis in various community or political groups (opposed to neo-Nazis, racism, police brutality, and such); they noted, furthermore, that most members of the Black Blocs they had taken part in were also veteran activists. Moreover, many of the interviewees were or had been social science students, and some of their research dealt with the use of force in politics and in demonstrations. It bears repeating, however, that there is no uniform profile of the militants behind the black masks. A sociology student who is a fan of punk music may not participate in Black Blocs; conversely, a Black Bloc participant may dislike both punk music and college.

The Wisdom of the Use of Force

More than anything else, it is the use of force by some Black Blocs that has given rise to the heated debate centered on them. Although anarchism as a political ideology or movement cannot intrinsically be reduced to violence—especially since many anarchists are dogmatically nonviolent—anarchist discourse abounds with calls to revolt against the police, the state, and capitalism, whether in analytical texts, pamphlets, songs, or graffiti. For example, the Anarchist Youth Network of Britain and Ireland declared in 2003, "We want to destroy government and rich people's privileges . . . Capitalism must be fought in the streets."[22] In reality, anarchism remains a relatively weak social movement, which gave up the armed struggle long ago, and whose actions are immeasurably less violent than those of the state. It has been years since anarchists killed anyone in the course of their political struggle.

Nevertheless, the use of force during demonstrations—which has been limited to wrecking public or private property, tearing down security fences, and battling against the police—is embedded in the language of revolutionary, or at least insurrectional, combativeness and especially of intense anger against a nonegalitarian, unjust, murderous system. For Sian Sullivan, who was an observer-participant at demonstrations against the European Union in Thessalonica in June 2003, it is appropriate to situate the use of force and destruction of property by the Black Blocs and their allies in relation to this rage against an iniquitous and exploitative system that subjects the majority of the population to structural violence. Such an approach effectively neutralizes three critical, but collectively unsustainable and ultimately dead-end, positions with regard to the current political and economic system:

1. The position of social apathy and pathological passiveness, which can take the form of withdrawal from society and into individual experiences such as drugs, whether illicit or not. Sullivan moreover points to the considerable increase in depression and in the use of antidepressants in Western countries, noting at the same time that pharmaceutical companies have been at the vanguard of capitalist globalization.[23]

2. The therapeutic position, which consists of engaging in individual or collective psychological interventions or spiritual development regimens.

3. The position of nonviolent civil disobedience, which involves the a priori dismissal of militant force as irrational and ineffective—as well as the infantilization of its supporters as "youths" or even "kids"[24]—thereby intending to delegitimize the movement, the implication being that nonviolence is rational and effective.

In addition to citing studies showing that activism boosts a person's sense of well-being and decreases the effects of depression, Sullivan suggests that activists should demand "the right to be angry."[25] Furthermore, in semistructured interviews with anarchists where, under the heading of affectivity, I asked them if they had ever wept for political reasons, 23 out of 25 answered yes, thereby revealing a strong emotional engagement with politics. Several interviewees stated that they had shed tears of rage in the face of injustice (poverty, racism, police brutality, and the like). Taking militant action or, indeed, resorting to militant force is thus perceived by some as a legitimate way to express anger against an infuriating system. For one Black Blocker, "Black Bloc is about taking anger and directing it toward an enemy, a rational target."[26] Similarly, in the opinion of an activist who took part in protests in Lausanne against the Évian G8 in 2003, "Capitalism kills . . . It is right to respond to overwhelming injustice with anger."[27] Finally, in comparing their previous militant experiences in Canada with their participation in a Black Bloc at demonstrations against the G8 in Germany in 2007, two members of the Calisse Brigade asked with regard to the relative coolness of North American activism, "what will it take to get angry and fight?"[28]

Militant thinking such as this clears the way for a political wisdom that does not restrict political activity to rationality, which is the theoretical outlook held by proponents of liberalism and many academics. Political action is in fact engendered by a will, which itself results from a rationale or an emotion or a blend of the two. Hence, reason and emotion are not mutually exclusive, since both can lead to a political will that in turn justifies political action. Indeed, the few sociologists and political scientists who have seriously examined the role of emotions in politics have observed that emotion and reason share in the construction of political thought and will.[29] According to political scientist George E. Marcus, for instance, citizens can be responsible and reasonable political actors only if they are emotionally

engaged with the given issue. Without an emotional investment in politics, why give it any thought? Why get involved?[30]

In the late nineteenth century, Voltairine de Cleyre explained why she was an anarchist in these terms: "Mental activity alone, however, would not be sufficient . . . The second reason, therefore, why I am an Anarchist, is because of the possession of a very large proportion of sentiment."[31] So there does exist in politics a hybridization of reason and emotion (anger, sadness, fear, joy, love) that shapes the thinking and the will of activists fighting for a society consistent with their principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, and justice. Black Blockers and their allies repeatedly emphasize the distinction that must be drawn between the illegitimate and violent nature of the state and the nature of their actions. A Black Bloc participant from Quebec City explained, "I am nonviolent, a pacifist who dreams of a world without violence . . . But the world I live in right now is violent and nonpacifist, so I believe it is legitimate for me to use force, to not let the state hold a monopoly on violence, and because pacifist civil disobedience merely creates a power relationship of victimization." His surprising conclusion was that, if "the state has no choice but to use violence, then the state leaves us no option but to also use violence against it. The state, by being what it is, created the Black Bloc" [BB2].[32] With reference to economic inequalities under capitalism, Barette shows that when Black Blockers and their allies loot a supermarket, as they did in Genoa in 2001, "for a brief moment an affluent society" exists, making it possible to experience sharing and the joy of communal solidarity.[33]

Yet, significantly, Black Blockers and their allies—with very few exceptions—do not see themselves as "revolutionaries".[34] As previously noted, theirs is a low-intensity, nonlethal violence whose aim is primarily symbolic and concerned with political communication. Indeed, sociologists have acknowledged that "rioters usually practiced much more self-restraint than is often admitted."[35] Resorting to force is identified as an "effective" means to express dissidence or criticism, disturb the public image of an official event deemed illegitimate, and exercise the traditional right and obligation to contest and resist illegitimate authority.[36] In sum, direct action lets a political actor signify here and now her or his critique of an immoral system. According to Barette, who also conducted interviews with participants in political riots, "all those surveyed asserted that their targets were chosen according to the

symbolic weight that they attributed to them. Almost all of them insisted on a certain ethical aspect of their destruction, concerning the public image of riot as well as personal, political, and social 'morals.'"[37] This process of justification is corroborated by historians and sociologists, who have noted that when demonstrators resort to force, they are generally motivated by moral and political considerations bearing on the principles of liberty, equality, and justice.[38] For anarchists, the major economic summits are perfect symbols of the state's illegitimacy and violence, its fundamentally authoritarian and hierarchical nature, and its collusion with capital. One of my interviewees stated, "I've worked in bars, on construction sites, in factories, and each time I see that my interests are different from the boss's. So there's a real social war going on. It's always my friends and relations who suffer, always the same people who are victims on a daily basis, at work, etc." And to the question, "Why carry out direct actions against symbols of capitalism?" this was his answer: "Reasons? There are millions of them. Capitalism produces nothing but reasons to rise up against it. All capitalist production causes pain . . . This world makes you puke, and the horrors you witness every day call for a response" [AD1].

On a tactical level, the Black Bloc may be used as an effective defense against police brutality. One activist who took part in the Black Bloc in Lausanne during the 2003 G8 Summit in Évian stated, "Being attacked by heavily armed riot police is terrifying. It has happened to me many times now and I think you never get over the fear. But I have come to feel more and more like fighting back and I have come to understand better the value of the Black Bloc."[39] Indeed, the Black Bloc was originally conceived by activists of the German autonomous movement precisely because the police had no qualms about savagely attacking peaceful demonstrations. A similar line of thought was behind the deployment of the Black Bloc at the Battle of Seattle, which had been preceded by a series of nonviolent civil disobedience actions carried out in the 1990s by radical ecologists on the U.S. West Coast. Even though those demonstrators had offered no resistance, the police made systematic use of pepper spray and large-scale arrests. Seeking to forestall a repetition of this scenario, the militants who would form the Black Bloc at the Battle of Seattle decided to adopt a mobile tactic that would prevent both injuries resulting from pepper spray and massive arrests. As a result, neither injuries nor arrests occurred subsequent to the Black Bloc action, whereas

the demonstrators engaging in civil disobedience around the convention center were met with volleys of pepper spray, tear gas, and rubber bullets, and arrested en masse.[40]

Yet like so many political actors, some Black Bloc participants deploy a hollow political and moral discourse to account for what they derive from the use of force: a feeling of elation, a rather macho sensation of power, or the certainty of sharing in something politically pure and radical.[41] Within the Black Blocs themselves, there is a critique of those who view the use of force in demonstrations as synonymous with political and moral distinction. One female interviewee who has taken part in several Black Blocs stated, "There is prestige attached to being on the front lines, to being involved in a skirmish, to smashing windows. I think this is a shame, because there are lots of other people doing lots of other things that are just as important" [BB3]. Others deplore the fact that demonstrations in general and the use of force in particular are regarded by some as goals in themselves. A Black Bloc participant from Quebec felt it was a mistake to think "that a rally is the ultimate political thing, or that trashing necessarily makes you radical" [BB2], an opinion shared by another Black Bloc activist: "Dogmatic pacifism bothers me, but there's also dogmatic violence, based on the view that violence is the only means of carrying on the struggle" [BB1].[42] In this connection, one long-time political activist who has participated in Black Blocs pointed out, "[A]ll the men and women I've known who have taken part in Black Blocs are militants and often veterans. They have in some sense been disillusioned because they came to the conclusion that peaceful methods are too limited and play into the hands of those in power. So they decided to resort to violence to stop being victims" [BB2].[43]

Finally, the Black Blocs' deployment of militant force can be seen as a highly efficient media marketing strategy (as demonstrated by the media analyses discussed above). One Black Blocker put it in these terms:

> As a protest tactic, the usefulness of destroying property is limited but significant. It gets newspaper reporters running to where it's taking place and sends out the message that certain apparently unassailable companies aren't really so unassailable after all. Those who take part in the protest and the others sitting at home in front of the TV can see how a small brick in the hands of a really

determined person can break down a symbolic wall. Breaking a Nike window doesn't place anybody's life in jeopardy.[44]

Who Decides within Militant Groups?

Another reason the violence of the Black Blocs is believed to be more legitimate than police or military violence is that it is carried out by egalitarian and autonomous individuals and groups, whereas employees of the state are only following orders, assaulting or killing at the request of their superiors. Moreover, whenever it inflicts violence on a part of the sovereign people, the "democratic" liberal state exposes the gap between the legitimizing abstraction of represented sovereignty and the reality of a multitude exercising its autonomy in matters of political decision making and action.[45] "For the first time, power was not something over me. It was there, in front of me."[46] These were the terms used by a French demonstrator to describe his involvement in a political riot. Black Bloc action is direct both because it is performed by the actors themselves rather than their "representatives," and because the source of injustice—the state, capitalism, or globalization—is embodied in the police officer, the window of a McDonald's, or a summit security fence, and as such it can be targeted directly.

For the demonstrators interviewed by Barette, "autonomous action and decision-making [is] the primary condition . . . where political or violent action is concerned."[47] Yet a number of Black Blocs lack an internal structure for making collective decisions and coordinating actions. These Black Blocs, comprised of individuals who have spontaneously banded together and are impelled by that same spontaneity, may be subject to vacillation, tactical vulnerability, and disappointment.[48] However, although anyone wearing a black mask can join the black contingent at a demonstration, a Black Bloc is theoretically a convergence of several "affinity groups,"[49] a specific organizational form developed by the Spanish anarchist movement in the late nineteenth century, then revived in North America: first in the 1970s by the radical but nonviolent fringe of the pacifist antinuclear movement and later in the 1980s by ecologists, feminists, and AIDS activists (especially the organization Act Up!), before being adopted in the mid-1990s by the

alter-globalization movement in the West. The affinity group is a unit created by a half-dozen to several dozen "amilitants" who are bonded by mutual trust and common feelings about the kinds of action they wish to take. The term "amilitant"[50] is used here to signify at once the importance of friendship (*ami* is the French word for friend) and the negation (indicated by the prefix a-) of the traditional figure of the militant, whose actions and identity were largely determined by organizational patriotism. Contemporary anti-authoritarian militants, including many members of affinity groups and Black Blocs, have no stake in traditional militancy, with its heavy emphasis on loyalty to the organization—party, union, and the like—and its penchant for authoritarian structures and hierarchies based on participation and political experience.[51]

Affinity groups provide the demonstrating multitude with the conscious means to coordinate its political actions while upholding the principles of freedom and equality. The relatively small size of an affinity group allows its amilitants to determine their actions collectively through consensual deliberations. It is true that the affinity group structure does not prevent the occurrence of informal power games based on the charisma, experience, and skills of individual members, and on their cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender privileges. However, unlike the situation in hierarchical organizations, people involved in an affinity group or a Black Bloc cannot use their informal power and privileges to take over positions of vested authority from which they could wield formal as well as informal power and, thus, officially impose their will on their "subordinates." In addition, since Black Blocs are ephemeral, there are limited possibilities for an influential individual to consolidate his or her power within the group. Furthermore, some affinity groups take specific measures to minimize the disparities of informal power, such as giving priority in discussions to those asking to speak for the first time, or alternating the turns to speak between men and women.[52]

The primacy of friendship in affinity groups is conducive to the voluntary division of militant tasks within a Black Bloc. Depending on the situation and their individual dispositions, some participants may opt for offensive actions (arming themselves with clubs, slingshots, billiard balls, or even Molotov cocktails), while others will focus on defense (outfitting themselves with shields, chest protectors, gloves, shin guards, helmets gas masks, and the like). Still others may choose to carry out reconnaissance and communications

operations (on foot or bicycle and equipped with walky-talkies or mobile telephones); act as volunteer nurses (street medics), bringing relief to tear gas or pepper spray victims and administering first aid to the injured; carry banners and flags; or maintain troupe morale with percussion instruments. Those who prefer not to engage in actions on the street may form affinity groups in charge of legal support in the event of arrests, arrange media contacts, or take care of other auxiliary needs like transportation, lodging, water, and food supplies. Finally, a number of activists may simply join the Black Bloc in the street, wearing black clothes and masks, with no specific equipment or task, ready to improvize according to how the demonstration unfolds.

In keeping with the spirit of the *Autonomen* of the previous generation and with anarchist tradition, Black Blockers and their allies believe that, to be free and equal, all activists should collectively determine the form and content of their actions. The decision whether or not to resort to force during a demonstration must not be exempted from this principle of autonomy. Hence, different affinity groups wishing to set up a Black Bloc may meet to plan and coordinate their operations weeks, days, hours, or minutes before, or even in the middle of a rally. Since Black Blocs are independent, their actions vary, and they do not necessarily resort to violence during a demonstration. For example, this is how a participant in a rally where *sans-papiers* (illegal immigrants) were in danger of being confronted by the police, summed up the situation: "You can afford to spend a night in jail, but not them."[53] The demonstration of 21 November 2002 against the NATO Summit in Prague provides another illustration of the tactical and political flexibility of Black Blockers. While some three thousand anarcho-communists were marching in the highly militarized city, a police car infiltrated the demonstration, cranking the tension up a notch. Sensing a provocation, the Black Blockers calculated that the demonstrators were disadvantaged and would be at great risk in the event of a flare-up. Consequently, they protected the vehicle so as to discourage any attack, which would have handed the police a pretext for brutal repression.

The June 2003 rallies in Lausanne and Annemasse against the G8 Summit exemplify the ways in which the affinity group structure can be tactically effective and at the same time politically valorizing for the individuals involved in an action, even in complex situations, as witnessed by one of the demonstrators [GA7]:

> I found it extraordinary that we could hold delegates' meetings right in the middle of the blocking action. There were barricades, fires had been lit, the police were slinging a lot of tear gas. And still, a meeting was called, with someone yelling, "meeting in ten minutes near the road sign." The meeting took place barely a few hundred meters from where the police stood, and it allowed us to decide on our course of action. . . [E]veryone had the chance to inform the others of what the needs were: "We need reinforcements against the police," "we need help building the barricades," "we should send people out to reconnoitre . . . ," et cetera. . . So we were able to act dynamically in the midst of the action without just one person shouting, "we must do this or that!"

This account is confirmed by another participant at these same rallies: "This property damage is NOT 'random vandalism'; it is highly political and usually carefully targeted. On Sunday [during the June 2003 protest against the G8 in Evian] I saw debates between different groups (and languages!) about the politics of different targets, stones in hand. Some targets were attacked, others left intact as a result of these discussions".[54]

The first activist [GA7] drew certain conclusions about how this affected the dynamic between demonstrators and the police:

> The police officers see you as a crowd and assume you're going to act like a crowd. The affinity group model disrupts that dynamic: you don't act like a crowd anymore but like a rational being. Affinity groups help us realize our own power. The police are still surprised and baffled by affinity groups. They're thinking, "We have water cannons, tear gas, but here are these people who are supposed to run away, holding a meeting to decide what they're going to do!"

Such accounts bring to mind the thesis of sociologist Francesca Polletta, whereby direct democracy and consensus within social movements are highly valuable because they foster (self-)organization, innovation, and cohesion among activists themselves.[55]

Respect for Diversity of Tactics

The issue of political boundaries arises when the time comes to delineate the contours of the deliberative, autonomous community. Can a group of several dozen amilitants, for example, legitimately decide to resort to violence when participating in a rally that includes thousands of nonviolent demonstrators, at the risk of turning them—without their consent—into the targets of police violence? In coming to grips with this political problem, the Convergence des luttes anti-capitalistes (CLAC, Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles) of Montreal (2000–2005) put forward the principle of "respect for tactical diversity," which addresses the valorization of political autonomy while stressing the legitimate heterogeneity of forms of protest within a single movement.

The CLAC was founded in April 2000 to organize "radical" demonstrations jointly with the Comité d'accueil du Sommet des Amériques (CASA, Summit of the Americas Welcoming Committee) of Quebec City.[56] The respect for tactical diversity, together with the deliberate absence of marshals, meant that those taking part in CLAC rallies could in principle carry out actions along a very broad spectrum, ranging from street theater to strikes against symbolic targets (such as the security fence at the Quebec Summit of the Americas, banks, private or state-owned media vehicles), and skirmishes with the police. The CLAC developed the notion of tactical diversity in spatial terms as well, identifying three zones in large demonstrations: green, yellow, and red. The green zone is a sanctuary where demonstrators are in no danger of being arrested. The yellow zone involves a minor risk of being arrested. The red zone is intended for individuals and affinity groups favoring more aggressive tactics. (Note that the police do not necessarily abide by these divisions, as evidenced by the arrest of 240 people assembled in the green zone during rallies against the WTO in Montreal in July 2003.)

Tactical diversity had taken shape in the streets well before the creation of the CLAC, such as in Prague in September 2000, where specific zones had already been designated by different colors. The CLAC felt that the tactical diversity emerging on the ground should be bolstered through appropriate mobilization, organization, and discourse. The idea of "respect for the diversity of tactics" was furthermore the result of certain historical particularities of activism in Montreal. In the late 1990s many members of CLAC had worked in SalAMI, a group established to protest against the Multilateral Agreement on

Investment (MAI, or AMI in French)[57] through nonviolent civil disobedience and voluntary mass arrests. Over time, the leaders of SalAMI had become increasingly authoritarian and given to "moralizing" [F7] about nonviolence, while publically admonishing the *casseurs* (rioters) of other militant groups on several occasions. At a rally held on 15 March 2000 by the Collectif opposé à la brutalité policière (COBP, Committee Opposed to Police Brutality) in Montreal, demonstrators clashed with the police, a McDonald's and some banks were attacked, and over a hundred people arrested. The leaders of SalAMI, along with those of the Mouvement action justice (MAJ—Action Justice Movement), proceeded once again to condemn publicly the *casseurs* and blame on the demonstrators. This dogmatic and polemical approach toward nonviolence, together with the ever more authoritarian structure of the organization, led a number of militants to abandon it and join the CLAC or other militant groups, where they encouraged respect for tactical diversity.

Ultimately, then, many Black Blockers are quite comfortable with tactical diversity and pluralism with regard to the forms of collective action at demonstrations. According to one interviewee who had participated in various affinity groups within Black Blocs, "I never obliged anyone to throw anything. I'm for the *diversity of tactics*, and there are Black Bloc members who don't want to use force and who group together in affinity groups of volunteers medics, for example" [BB1, emphasis added]. The respect for tactical diversity thus relates to an ideal of autonomy centered on a radical definition of the principles of freedom and equality. Hence, one activist who had taken part in a number of affinity groups without ever resorting to force believes "that *respect for the diversity of tactics* is essential. Each person must do what she or he thinks is right. . . When it comes to violence . . . I know perfectly well that I don't have all the answers on the subject of violence/nonviolence, so I'm not going to prevent people from doing what they want to do; I don't want that sort of power" [GA7, emphasis added]. Yet, despite the abundance of references in their discourse to equality and citizens' participation, the vast majority of organizations within the Movement for Global Justice do not respect tactical diversity, nor do they welcome this sort of militant pluralism.

Anarchy Under Scrutiny

The fact is, however, that certain anti-authoritarian or anarchist organizations do not respect tactical diversity either. Cases in point are the Direct Action Network (DAN) in Seattle and the Convergence des luttes anti-autoritaires et anti-capitalistes contre le G8 (CLAAACG8, Convergence of Anti-Authoritarian and Anti-Capitalist Struggles Against the G8) in France. Prior to the rallies of 30 November 1999 in Seattle, the affinity groups allied under the banner of the DAN had publically announced their planned nonviolent actions. A number of participants were shocked by the action of the Black Bloc, feeling that it was the "rioters'" duty to comply with the consensus on nonviolence and to defer their use of force until the following day. The Black Blockers argued in return that they were not bound by the DAN consensus since their actions were carried out independently of the coalition and in another part of the city. In the case of the DAN, tactical diversity was condemned on grounds of morality (many members of the coalition were dogmatic defenders of nonviolence), tactics (many wrongly claimed that the violent police repression had been provoked by the actions of the Black Blocs), strategy (many correctly noted that the Black Blocs had attracted media attention quite out of proportion with their numbers), and politics (many considered the DAN to be the pivotal political community and therefore authorized to define which actions were acceptable on 30 November).

In the case of the CLAAACG8, the factors are more systemic. Unlike the Montreal CLAC, which was comprised of autonomous individuals and affinity groups, the CLAAACG8 was an umbrella organization made up of various French and European anarchist groups.[58] It had been founded ahead of the Évian G8 Summit to allow these groups to organize and take part in the grand "unitary" march. The CLAAACG8's aim was for the red and black contingent to exceed the size of the other organizations participating in the unitary march (green and communist parties, unions, and others). This political objective implied that the anarchist demonstrators had to be held in check by the organizers, who were concerned that their media strategy would be undermined if things got out of hand. While paying lip service to tactical diversity, the CLAAACG8 created its own corps of marshals to prevent the red and black contingent from being used, in the words of an organizer, as an "aircraft carrier," that is, a base that those wanting to carry out autonomous actions could set out from

or pull back to. This strategic decision was denounced by many autonomous groups and individuals (as well as some members of the groups involved in the CLAAACG8, speaking on their own behalf), who were disappointed that anarchist organizations would rate the success of *their* rally by comparing themselves to other political organizations and in light of the assessments of the official media, whether private or state owned. During the demonstration as such, a handful of anarchists from Strasbourg and elsewhere formed a small contingent calling itself the "reluctant CLAAAC," which marched behind the anarchist marshals shouting caustic slogans about the "libertarian police." The supporters of the CLAAACG8's strategic approach were nevertheless very pleased at having reached their objective: the red and black contingent was five to six thousand strong, making it the largest anarchist contingent in the history of France as well as the largest contingent of the unitary march, as noted by newspapers like *Le Monde*. Nevertheless, Black Blocs did go into action on an autonomous basis at the anti-G8 mobilization in Évian, and at other times and places, such as in Geneva or during the street-blocking actions in Lausanne and Annemasse.

Other Blocs

The Movement for Global Justice encompasses three other types of "blocs" intended for those who favor confrontation but who do not feel in tune with the Black Blocs. The White Blocs, also known as Tute Bianche (White Overalls), originated in the Italian social centers (political squats) and are very close to the Communist Youth organizations, unemployed workers' movements, and the Zapatistas of Chiapas. As is true of the Black Blocs, their uniforms provide them with anonymity. Although nonviolent, their offensive attitude distinguishes their approach from that of Ghandi or King. They wear makeshift armor (foam rubber pads, helmets, gloves, masks, leg protectors) and advance with their arms linked, using the collective mass of their bodies to crash through police lines, occasionally throwing inner tubes as well. The Tute Bianche first went into action in Prague in September 2000, but their most important battle took place in Genoa on the occasion of the G8 Summit of July 2001. There they succeeded in mobilizing some fifteen thousand people to march on the security fence, massed behind protective

plexiglas panels mounted on wheels. Soon after its departure from the Carlini Stadium, the contingent was viciously attacked by the police and broke up into different groups, some of which chose to disperse while others preferred to stand and fight. Similar groups have been created in Australia, Spain, Finland, and Great Britain, where they are known as WOMBLES.[59]

The Pink Blocs, otherwise known as the Pink & Silver Blocs or Carnival Blocs, bring together militants in zany, carnivalesque costumes whose goal is to meld politics, art, and pleasure in a single action.[60] Various tasks are divided among different affinity groups: construction of barricades, street theater and giant puppet shows, samba band performances, provision of first aid, among others. The origins of the Pink Blocs go back to Reclaim the Streets, a British group known for its anticapitalist carnivals, and Rhythms of Resistance, a troupe of militant percussionists whose more mobile, offensive approach has brought them into direct contact with police lines. The Pink Bloc first drew public attention in Prague in September 2000, when they managed to skirt around the police and move close enough to the convention center to oblige organizers to evacuate the site and cancel the closing session of the meeting.

Relationships among the blocs at large demonstrations have not always been smooth, but over the years they seem to have improved through negotiation, which has strengthened the solidarity among militants and increased their tactical effectiveness. During the period 1999–2001, cohesion and solidarity among the blocs was sapped primarily by the violence vs. nonviolence debate. In the 1990s, the expression "fluffy vs. spiky" was often used to summarize this debate, with "fluffy" signifying exemplary, responsible, nonviolent behavior, and "spiky" referring to confrontation and the use of force.[61] At first glance, the Black Bloc would be assumed to represent the spikiest tactic, and the Pink & Silver Blocs, the fluffiest. But already in 2000, at the rallies in Prague, a member of Tactical Frivolity, a group which took part in the Pink & Silver Bloc and was comprised of women disguised as giant fairies, declared:

> I was quite glad we avoided having a general "fluffy" versus "spiky" debate . . . [W]e didn't have interminable, divisive, and slightly pointless discussions about violence versus nonviolence, man, and what is violence anyway when the State is like killing people every day, man? And the people in the World Bank eat Third World babies for breakfast, so if they get bricked, then hey, that's their fault.[62]

The notion of respect for tactical diversity put forward by the CLAC and the experiences of activists generally fostered greater cooperation, which over the years as made the boundaries between blocs more permeable and led to hybrid experiences. The following are examples of this development. At the G8 Summit in Évian in 2003, a 1,500-strong Pink Bloc carried out blocking actions in Lausanne, in coordination with a Black Bloc of 500 activists.[63] During this action, the Pink & Silver Bloc, which was the initial target of the police, maneuvered to position itself behind the Black Bloc, which defended it. In Scotland in 2005, the Black Bloc set out from the eco-village of Stirling (a temporary self-governed camp) on a "suicide march" to draw the attention of the police away from a battalion of clowns who were endeavoring to block the highways. A few hours later, the clowns surrounded the police, who had surrounded the Black Bloc; the clowns mocked and distracted the police while showing their solidarity with the trapped militants.[64] Finally, at Cancun during the rallies against the WTO in 2003, the Black Bloc waited for the green light from the Latin-American *campesinos* (farm workers) who were heading the march, before working their way up to the front to stand alongside them, at which point they all attacked the security fence together.[65]

The Black Blocs and the Leaders of the Movement for Global Justice

The Black Bloc tactic also allows, explicitly or implicitly, anarchist militants to contest, both symbolically and in practice, the nongovernmental organizations' pretensions to leadership of the Movement for Global Justice. The stakes are considerable: Who directs and represents the movement? Who speaks on its behalf? The statements of Susan George, vice president of the French organization ATTAC,[66] provide revealing examples of an approach whereby, in discrediting the Black Blocs and their allies, self-proclaimed "leaders" or "representatives" seek to shape a vast movement according to their own goals and interests. Susan George claims to discuss militant violence from a political perspective "beyond any moral considerations"[67] and condemns "this violence for political, practical, and tactical reasons".[68] She opposes breaking windows or confronting the police at demonstrations because "the violence diverts the media, hence public opinion, away from the message of 99% of the participants in the movement".[69]At the Gothenburg Summit of

the European Union in June 2001, for instance, George deplores that events in the street drew public attention away from the televised debate featuring European politicians and seven representatives of the movement, including herself! (Yet a study has shown that the riots in Gothenburg are what made possible ATTAC's "meteoric rise on the Swedish political scene"[70]). And Fabien Lefrançois of the French group Agir Ici, has admitted that " the violent actions of the Black Bloc served *our* purposes at one point. . . But they threaten to do *us* a disservice in the long run".[71]

Such declarations raise the whole question of the effectiveness and representativeness of social movements in general and of collective forms of action, both violent and nonviolent, in particular. Unfortunately, sociology offers no clear response to this question. Analyses of this issue are rare and their results are inconsistent.[72] In each case, the effectiveness of a militant action or a social movement must always be quantified. What is at issue: the capacity to mobilize? media exposure? achieving a favorable power relationship vis-à-vis the "enemies"? recruiting allies or gaining ascendancy over them? showing an example to the constituencies one claims to represent? obtaining public funding? having an impact on electoral politics? The effectiveness of a social movement or a demonstration must, in addition, factor in the heterogeneity of the actors; "effectiveness" would no doubt be defined one way by a newcomer to the movement, and another way by a veteran activist or a person hoping to build a career in a political party or a militant who has been given an official title (e.g., "president," "treasurer," "media spokesperson") by his or her organization, and so on. Academics and leaders of social movements, for their part, tend to conceive of effectiveness in terms of systemic gains: electoral success, greater representation within official institutions, a larger share of collective resources.[73]

In point of fact, the state has erected an entire normalizing apparatus and exercises control over the official political arena through government policy, official communications channels, grants, and criteria for exclusion. In the Movement for Global Justice, the Peoples' Summits and Social Forums are partially state financed, NGOs receive state subsidies, NGO representatives are invited to informal discussions at G8 summits and to debates at the World Economic Forum in Davos, and some of them are even recruited by the World Bank. Moreover, the official political elite has publically voiced its wish to see the leaders of the movement discipline the demonstrators and

repudiate the "rioters." Thus, subsequent to the disturbances that occurred in parallel with the G8 Summit in Genoa in July 2001, Guy Verhofstadt, the Belgian Prime Minister and President of the European Union, made the following demand: "I want to hear those in charge of all the movements and democratic parties, throughout the world, distance themselves from the rioters."[74] Not surprisingly, then, Juan Tortosa, coordinator of the Forum Social Lémanique (convened in parallel with the G8 in Évian in June 2003) drew a clear boundary between the alter-globalization movement and the "rioters": "We firmly condemn this kind of violent action, which is *completely foreign* to the Movement for Global Justice."[75] Similarly, Christophe Aguiton, "international relations officer" of ATTAC, while supposedly more radical than Susan George, denounced the police violence in Genoa but asserted in the same breath that the Social Forum "was *legitimated*, in Italy and well beyond, *through its ability to detach itself from the violence* committed by certain groups of demonstrators."[76]

It is therefore advantageous for the social movement "leaders" to turn their back very explicitly on the "violent" elements, even as they claim to control the movement. Hence, in an interview on the France 2 network, José Bové, member of the Confédération paysanne and without doubt the best-known spokesperson of the Movement for Global Justice in France, denounced "a number of *uncontrolled* groups who attempted to destabilize" the demonstrations against the G8 Summit in Genoa.[77] Susan George, meanwhile, states that it is necessary "to *totally impose* non-violence in our ranks" to achieve a "*disciplined* activism."[78] For those identifying themselves as the leaders of the movement, what is at stake is the control and homogenization of the rank and file, even if this requires denigration and exclusion. Regarding the Black Blocs in particular, George writes that they amount to "a handful of individuals who, effectively, propose nothing at all,"[79] adding, with reference to the anti-G8 rallies in Évian, that the "rioters" were part of a "minority subculture . . . the 'black-leather heavy-metal spike-hair' unwashed of Zurich, whose only goal in life is apparently to riot. Only a qualified psychologist or anthropologist could say whether they have the slightest interest in politics."[80] The condemnation of and contempt for the Black Blocs and their allies expressed in this discourse, implicitly or explicitly legitimates, and thus smoothes the way for, their repression and criminalization.[81]

The case of Lori Wallach, American lobbyist and director of Global Trade

Watch, is emblematic in this connection. She explained in an interview that on the eve of the direct actions of 30 November in Seattle, some "anarchists" wanted to smash windows during an event where José Bové was distributing Roquefort cheese in front of a McDonald's. Wallach asked several workers who were accompanying her to grab one of the anarchists and take him to the police, and then asked the police to arrest him. She was upset, however, that the police did not make this particular arrest, because, in her opinion, this would have prevented the turmoil of the following day.[82]

Thus, there is a clash between two visions of democracy within the movement. The concept of representative democracy is defended by the self-proclaimed representatives of the movement. And to represent a community—whether a social movement or a nation—one must assert that it is a homogeneous political entity that speaks with one voice, that is, the voice of its representative. Specifically addressing the issue of "tactical diversity," Susan George affirms that this approach is unworkable because "there would be *no unity* within the demonstration and *no clear message* would be transmitted to the outside world."[83] What George is suggesting here is that, having excluded the deviants, she can represent the entire movement.

For anarchists, on the other hand, it is not a matter of representing the movement, nor, of course, of sending representatives to the media or the negotiating tables of official summits.[84] In the words of Murray Bookchin, then an anarchist, "the slogan 'Power to the people' can only be put into practice when the power exercised by social elites is dissolved into the people . . . If 'Power to the people' means nothing more than power to the 'leaders' of the people, then the people remain an undifferentiated, manipulable mass."[85] From this anarchist perspective, therefore, riots and autonomous direct actions can be usefully associated with the "plebeian experience" as conceptualized by Martin Breaugh, that is, as an insurrectional moment fuelled by a strong desire—a passion—for freedom that fractures the social and political order of domination. According to Breaugh, "[I]nsurrectionary practice shares in . . . a particular conception of democracy as the unmediated exercise of political sovereignty" by the plebe, that is without political representation of the people's sovereignty and power.[86]

The Black Blockers and their allies see the Movement for Global Justice as a heterogeneous multitude, a "movement of movements," that cannot be represented without the general will being necessarily oversimplified by

the representatives. Moreover, representatives invariably develop personal interests separate from the "common good" of those they wish to represent. Feeling betrayed, Black Blockers and their allies sometimes deliberately disrupt speeches by "leaders" of the movement, as illustrated by a French activist who took part in many demonstrations, including a rally against the European Union in Nice in December 2000:

> There were about two hundred of us sleeping in the basement of a garage. I experienced the desolation of an itinerant sleeping on a piece of cardboard, with the cold burning into my back. I was there because we could talk about violence. We had walked out of the auditorium, where people like Susan George and Alain Krivine[87] were making speeches. That was the first time I thought we could disrupt people. Usually, they're the ones—on issues like illegal immigrants, et cetera—who bypass us or coopt us, who take over movements by sending their younger militants to our general meetings, but this time we jeered at them and heckled them. [V10]

Conclusion

The analysis presented here is an invitation to reflect and debate, and does not profess to thoroughly explain the Black Blocs, whose use of force raises numerous questions: Does it foster repression or not?[88] Does it project a poor image of the movement to the media?[89] Does it effectively exclude individuals from the movement in general?[90] Does it represent a step in the direction of armed struggle or "terrorism"?[91] Furthermore, the preceding portrait of the Black Blocs may create the impression that they are always well organized, which is obviously not the case. Certain Black Blocs are not even structured on the basis of affinity groups, thereby reducing the ability of their members to take part in an egalitarian decision-making process and to act in a coordinated way.

In spite of such complexities, a full-fledged simplistic mythology has grown up around the image of the Black Blocs, with the attendant risk for activists of making misguided choices. For example, certain militants' enthusiasm has led them to form Black Blocs in very small demonstrations, where they were in no position to keep the police from rounding them up before the rally had

even gotten underway (although they had not broken any law).[92] In addition, although the Black Bloc tactic took many people by surprise in Seattle in 1999, today the police anticipate it and have even borrowed its aesthetic to infiltrate and manipulate rallies. This is precisely what took place in Geneva during the demonstrations against the G8 Summit in Évian in June 2003, when about fifteen police officers disguised as Block Blockers managed to slip through the activists' security net and into L'Usine, the community hall where the convergence center and alternative media offices were located, and proceeded to make a number of violent arrests. This sort of incident led me to conclude somewhat hastily in an earlier version of this article (published in France in 2004) that the Black Bloc tactic was probably outdated. But since then, Black Blocs intervened effectively in rallies against the G8 in Scotland in 2005, against the G8 in Germany in 2007, and against NATO in Strasbourg in 2009, and against the G20 in Toronto in 2010.

In an article on the Black Bloc tactic, Daniel Dylan Young writes:

> Whether the Black Bloc continues as a tactic or is abandoned, it certainly has served its purpose. In certain places and times the Black Bloc effectively empowered people to take action in collective solidarity against the violence of state and capitalism. It is important that we neither cling to it nostalgically as an outdated ritual or tradition, nor reject it wholesale because it sometimes seems inappropriate. Rather we should continue working pragmatically to fulfill our individual needs and desires through various tactics and objectives, as they are appropriate at the specific moment. Masking up in Black Bloc has its time and place, as do other tactics which conflict with it.[93]

As already explained, the use of force by the Black Bloc belongs to the anarchist tradition, but for many participants, it also results from an assessment of the tactical and strategic context and a political appraisal of personal experiences with nonviolent actions, which they later come to see as insufficient or, worse, ineffective.[94] In any case, those who take part in Black Blocs view the force that they occasionally deploy as qualitatively superior, in political and moral terms,[95] to the violence of their enemies: first, because it is far less destructive (contrary to state or capitalist violence, Black Bloc violence has never been lethal[96]); second, because it targets symbols of capitalist and state injustice; and third, because they are the ones who decide—or not—to resort

to force through a participative, deliberative decision-making process whereby those who make the decisions are also those who execute them. The amilitants who in their deliberations are considering using the Black Bloc tactic, with or without the use of militant force, should try as much as possible to take into account the context, the mobilizing potential of the militant coalitions, the symbolic value of their targets, the feelings of the other demonstrators, the police forces, and other pertinent factors. Needless to say, even when the members of a Black Bloc set up a deliberative organization framework, they risk making bad decisions. But at least those decisions will be their own.

INFORMATION ON THE INTERVIEWEES

AD1: Male, age 27. Took part in direct actions against the G8 Summit (Genoa), the European Summit (Brussels), and with Kurds against the arrest of Ochalla (Rome). Erected barricades, controlled streets, tagged, launched strikes against buildings (luxury hotel, temporary employment agency, supermarket). Interview conducted in Strasbourg, 23 June 2003.

BB1: Male, early 20s. Participated in Black Blocs against the G20 (Montreal, November 2000) and the Summit of the Americas (Quebec City, April 2001). Interview conducted in Montreal, September 2000.

BB2: Male, age 20. Took part in numerous affinity groups within Black Blocs against the G20 (in Montreal, November 2000) and the Summit of the Americas (Quebec City, April 2001). Was also at the World Social Forum (Porto Alegre, 2003). Interview conducted in Montreal, October 2002.

BB3: Female, age 23. Participated in three Black Blocs: Rally against the G20 (Montreal, November 2000), demonstration held by the Collectif opposé à la brutalité policière (Montreal, 15 March 2001), demonstrations against the Summit of the Americas (Quebec City, April 2001). Interview conducted in Montreal, December 2002.

F7: Female, age 23. Activist in student organizations and in SalAMI, and later in anarchist and/or feminist groups: the CLAC, les Sorcières, Rebelles sans frontières. Interview conducted in Montreal, 25 April 2004.

GA7: Female, age 24. Boston resident. Took part in her first affinity group in 2001 during the occupation of Harvard administration offices to demand better working conditions for the superintendents. Participated in other groups during rallies against the World Economic Forum (New York, Winter 2002), against the war in Iraq (Boston, 2003), and against the G8 in France (June, 2003). Interview conducted in Paris, June 2003.

V10: Male, age 24. Carried out direct actions—destruction of property, looting—in Nice (December 2000), Genoa (July 2001), Annemasse (June 2003), and took part in the VAAAG. Interview conducted in Paris, 11 December 2003.

NOTES

Professor of Political Science at the Université du Québec à Montéal (UQAM). This text is an updated and edited version of an article published in French under the title "Penser l'action directe des Black Blocs" in the journal *Politix* in 2004. The first version was written while the author was an associate researcher at the Department of Political Science of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The author would like to thank John Clark and Olivier Fillieule for their comments, Lazer Lederhendler for the English translation, and the FQRSC for its funding. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are ours.

1. Dave Morland, "Anti-Capitalism and Postructuralist Anarchism," in *Changing Anarchism: Anarchist Theory and Practice in a Global Age*, eds. J. Purkis and J. Bowen, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004), 32–34.
2. Jérôme Montes, "Mouvements anti-mondialisation: La crise de la démocratie representative," *Études internationales*, 33, 4 (2001); Tim Dunne, "Anarchistes et Al-Qaeda," *La Presse* (Montréal), 8 July, 2005.
3. NEFAC, *http://www.nefac.net/node/123*.
4. CrimethInc., "Black Bloc: a Primer," *Profane Existence*, 43, 10, 2003.
5. Quoted by the Wu Ming Collective, *Stop The Encirclement of the Black Bloc* (2002), *http://www.cut-up.com/news/detail.php?sid=187*.
6. David Graeber, *Possibilites: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire* (Edinburg,Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 390.
7. "Anthology to the Present, Vancouver, British Columbia, " *http://berthoalain.wordpress.com/2010/02/14/emeute-a-vancouver-fevrier-2010/* (accessed May 2010).
8. Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, "Social Movements and Organizational Form," in *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), ch. 6; Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting* (New York: Columbia University Press 2003); Geoffrey Pleyers, "Des *black blocks* aux alter-activistes: Pôles et formes d'engagement des jeunes altermondialistes," *Lien social et politiques* 51 (2004): 127; Tim Jordan, *Activism!: Direct Action, Hacktivism and the Future of Society* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002).

9. Many texts have been published on the subject of anarchism and violence. Among the most pertinent are Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover Publications 1972), 173–81; April Carter, "Anarchism and Violence," *Nomos: Anarchism* 19 (1978): 324–25; Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 625–38. For a fascinating historical incident concerning a debate within a nonviolent anti-authoritarian social movement on the use of a pair of cutters to open the fence around a nuclear reactor, see Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 58–91.
10. Against elected officials of the French National Front (Montréal, September 1993), the Summit of the Americas in Québec City (April 2001), the IMF and the WB (Ottawa, November 2001), the World Economic Forum (New York, January 2002), the G8 (Calgary, July 2002), the G8 in Annemasse (June 2003), the WTO (Montréal, July 2003), and the G20 in Toronto (June 2010).
11. Primarily of the Convergence de luttes anti-capitalistes (CLAC), Montréal, in 2001–2002, and the Paris committee of the Village alternatif anti-capitaliste et anti-guerre (VAAAG), Paris, in March–June 2003.
12. Sina Rahmani, "Macht kaputt was euch kaputt macht: On the history and the meaning of the Black Block," *Politics and Culture* 4 (November 9, 2009), *http://www.politicsandculture.org/2009/11/09/macht-kaputt-was-euch-kaputt-macht-on-the-history-and-the-meaning-of-the-black-block/* (accessed May 2010).
13. Rahmani, "Macht kaputt was euch kaputt macht."
14. George Katsiaficas, "The Necessity of Autonomy," *New Political Science* 23, 4 (2001): 547–53.
15. This overview of the origins of the Black Bloc is largely based on George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1997); on visuals documents in A. G. Grauwacke, *Autonome in Bewegung: Aus Den Ersten 23 Jahren* (Berlin: Assoziation A, 2003); and on an interview conducted in Montréal on 26 November 2003 by the author with a 42-year-old man from Amsterdam who in the 1980s had participated in Black Blocs connected with the squat movements in Germany and the Netherlands.
16. Charles Tilly, "Les origines du répertoire d'action collective contemporaine en France et en Grande-Bretagne," *Vingtième siècle* 4 (1984): 89–108; Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht, "The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 528 (1993): 56–74.
17. Ickibob, "On the Black Bloc," in *A New World in Our Hearts: Eight Years of Writings from the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation*, ed. R. San Filippo (Oakland,

CA: AK Press, 2003), 39–40. Originally published in *Love & Rage* (July-August 1992).

18. Having acted as analyst and commentator for the public television network Radio-Canada at a number of alter-globalization demonstrations, I can personally attest to the mainstream media's fascination with the Black Blocs. During planning sessions, producers, researchers, and reporters asked me to predict where the "trashing" (*la casse*) would happen, so they could place their cameras in readiness at strategic spots. When no "trashing" occurred, the demonstration would be described by the team as a media "non-event."
19. Lynn Owens and L. Kendall Palmer, "Making the News: Anarchist Counter-Public Relations on the World Wide Web," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20, 4 (2003): 335–61.
20. Alan O'Connor, "Punk Subculture in Mexico and the Anti-Globalization Movement: A Report from the Front," *New Political Science* 25, 1 (2003): 43–53.
21. Geoffrey Pleyers, "Des *black blocks* aux alter-activistes," 125–26.
22. Sian Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!': Engaging with Violence and the (Anti) Globalisation Movement(s)," *CSGR Working Paper* 123/03 (2003): 16, *http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/research/workingpapers/2004/wp13304.pdf* (accessed May 2010).
23. Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!'," 24–26.
24. Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!'," 30; Francis Dupuis-Déri, "Broyer du noir: Manifestations et répression policière au Québec," *Les ateliers de l'éthique* 1, 1 (2006).
25. Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!'," 26.
26. In Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!'," 30.
27. WOMBLES, *G8 Black Bloc: Report from an activist in Lausanne*, 6 June 2003, *http://www.wombles.org.uk/article200610209.php* (accessed May 2010).
28. Two companer@s from the Calisse Brigade, "A. Anti. Anti-Capitalista!," June 10, 2007, *http://hatetheg8.blogspot.com/*.
29. George Katsiaficas uses the expression "emotional rationality"; see "The Eros Effect," paper presented at the 1989 American Sociological Association National Meetings in San Francisco, *https://www.eroseffect.com/articles/eroseffectpaper.PDF* (accessed May 2010). See also James Jasper, "L'art de la protestation collective," in *Les formes de l'action collective*, ed. Daniel Cefaï (Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2001), 135–59; Philippe Braud, *L'émotion en politique* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1996).
30. George E. Marcus, *The Sentimental Citizen Emotion in Democratic Politics* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002).
31. Voltairine de Cleyre, *Exquisite Rebel: The Essays of Voltairine de Cleyre—Anarchist, Feminist, Genius*, eds. S. Presley and C. Sartwell (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 54.
32. All interviews are anonymous, but information about the interviewees can be found in

"Information about the Interviewees."

33. Clément Barette, "La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute: Le cas de la violence exercée lors des contre-sommets" (master thesis, Université Paris I–Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2002), 80.
34. With regard to contemporary anarchists' view on "revolution," see Andy Chan, "Anarchists, Violence and Social Change: Perspectives from Today's Grassroots," *Anarchist Studies* 12, 1 (1995): 11–28; Francis Dupuis-Déri, "En deuil de revolutions?" *Réfractions* 13 (2004).
35. Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), 174.
36. Herbert Marcuse, *La fin de l'utopie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968); Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (San Diego: Harvest Books, 1970); Mario Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001).
37. Barette, "La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute," 97.
38. Roger Dupuy, *La politique du peuple: Racines, permanences et ambiguïtés du populisme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002); Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
39. WOMBLES, *G8 Black Bloc*.
40. Thanks to David Graeber for this historical analysis. It is worth noting here that the film *Battle in Seattle* (2008) glosses over part of the history of radical activism in the United States by presenting a protagonist who saw his brother killed by the police during a nonviolent ecological action in the forest. Yet the hero is a dogmatically nonviolent activist. In one scene we see him arguing with an arrogant Black Blocker.
41. On the other hand, the nonviolent option, often perceived as more "rational" and morally superior, can also be traced back to emotions such as a fear of turmoil or of the police, an aesthetic preference for order, a psychological inclination toward obedience (to the police, the law, and such), a wish to conform with nonviolent models, and so forth.
42. See also Barette, "La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute."
43. The same conclusion was reached by activists in France; Barette, "La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute ," 93.
44. Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements*, 174.
45. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978 [1923]), 279; Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
46. In Barette, "La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute," 53.
47. Barette, "La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute," 29.
48. Ickibob, "On the Black Bloc," 39–40.

49. For a detailed discussion of affinity groups and anarchism, see Francis Dupuis-Déri, "Anarchism and the Politics of Affinity Groups," *Anarchist Studies* 18, 1 (2010): 40–61.
50. Dupuis-Déri, "Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups."
51. John Clark, "The Microecology of Community," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 15, 4 (2004): 69–79.
52. The impossibility of preventing the emergence of informal power is no doubt the most widespread criticism levelled against anarchism. But anarchists and other anti-authoritarian groups—including radical feminists from 1970 onward—have given the issue careful consideration and proposed various solutions. See, for instance, Per Herngren, *Path of Resistance: The Practice of Civil Desobedience* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1993), 149–92.
53. In Barette, "La pratique de la violence politique par l'émeute," 103, 105.
54. WOMBLES, *G8 Black Bloc*.
55. Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*.
56. For an account of the events, see Cindy Milsten, "Something Did Start in Quebec City: North America's Revolutionary Anticapitalist Movement," in *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches From a Global Movement*, eds. Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose, and George Katsiaficas (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004), 126–33; David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Edinburg, Oakland: AK Press, 2009). In the wake of the CLAC-CASA rallies against the Summit of the Americas, a number of anticapitalist convergences (ACC) appeared in New York, Washington, Chicago, Seattle, Calgary, and elsewhere, adopting the principles of the CLAC (posted on its website) —including "respect for tactical diversity." The CASA disbanded in August 2001.
57. *Sale* is the French word for "dirty"; hence SalAMI means "dirty friend." With regard to Prague (2000), see Graeme Chesters & Ian Welsh, "Rebel Colours: 'Framing' in Global Social Movement," *Sociological Review,* 52, 3 (2004): 314–335.
58. Alternative libertaire, Confédération nationale du travail, Fédération anarchiste, Federazione anarchisti italiani, Organisation communiste libertaire, Organisation socialiste libertaire, Red libertaria, Réseau No Passaran, among others.
59. WOMBLES is an acronym for White Overall Movement Building Liberation through Effective Struggle.
60. Rhythms of Resistance, *www.rhythmsofresistance.co.uk* (accessed May 2010).
61. Kate Evans, "It's Got to be Silver and Pink: On the Road with Tactical Frivolity," in *We are Everywhere*, ed. Notes from nowhere (London, New York: Verso, 2003), 293; Amory Starr, *Global Revolt: A Guide to the Movements Against Globalization* (London, New York: Zed Books, 2005), 241; George McKay, *DIY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain*

(London: Verso, 1998), 15.

62. Evans, "It's Got to be Silver and Pink," 293.
63. See "Lausanne: Des blacks & pinks témoignent et revendiquent," at *www.paris.indymedia.org*.
64. Kolonel Klepto and Major up Evil, "The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army Goes to Scotland via a Few Pther Places,." in *Shut Them Down!: The G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements* (Leeds, Brooklyn: Dissent!/Automedia, 2005).
65. Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!'," 34.
66. Marcos Ancelovici, "Organizing against Globalization: The Case of ATTAC in France," *Politics & Society* 30, 3 (2002): 427–63.
67. Susan George and Martin Wolf, *La Mondialisation libérale* (Paris: Bernard Grasset-Les Échos, 2002), 166.
68. Susan George, *Un autre monde est possible si . . .*, 255.
69. George, *Un autre monde est possible si . . .* , 255.
70. T. Muller, *What's Really Under Those Cobblestones? Ritos as Political Tools, and the Case of Gothenburg 2001* (unpublished manuscript), in Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!'," 36.
71. Christian Losson and Paul Quinio, *Génération Seattle: Les rebelles de la mondialisation* (Paris: Grasset, 2002), 156, emphasis added.
72. For a recent overview of the partial state of this knowledge, see Marco Giugni, "Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 371–93; Steven E. Barkan and Lynne L. Snowden, *Collective Violence* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001).
73. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "Normalizing Collective Protest," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1992), 301–24. For some conclusions resulting from this sort of analytical and political outlook, see the section "Un impact politique limité" in Pleyers, "Des *black blocks* aux alter-activistes," 130.
74. Christian Spillmann, "Gênes: Violences, discorde, les dirigeants du G8 n'ont pas de quoi pavoiser," *Agence France Presse*, 22 July 2001.
75. Éric Budry, "Choc et strategie—Les altermondialistes refusent le piège des groupuscules violents," *Tribune de Genève*, 2 June 2003, emphasis added.
76. Christophe Aguiton, *Gênes 19-20-21 juillet 2001: Multitudes en marche contre l'Empire* (Paris: Éditions Reflex, 2002), 265, emphasis added.
77. Emphasis added.
78. George, *Un autre monde est possible si . . .* , 270, emphasis added.

79. George, *Un autre monde est possible si . . .* , 262.
80. George's terms are similar to those used in a Swiss police report expressing dismay over "a destructive, apparently groundless, madness" and "acts of vandalism devoid of political or ideological motivations." Office fédéral de la police, Département fédéral de Justice et Police, Service d'analyse et de prevention, *Le potentiel de violence résidant dans le mouvement antimondialisation*, Berne, July 2001. Thanks to O. Fillieule for this reference.
81. Dupuis-Déri, "Broyer du noir."
82. Moises Noim, "Lori's War," *Foreign Policy*, Spring (2000): 28. For another example of a reformist leader's dream of seeing the police arrest anarchists, see Timothy Egan, "Talks and Turmoil: The Violence," *New York Times*, 2 December 1999, Sec. A.
83. George, *Un autre monde est possible si . . .*, 267, emphasis added.
84. To quote a statement by members of a Black Bloc, "We don't want to take part in discussions among the masters of the world; we want there to be no more masters of the world." Press release quoted in Francis Dupuis-Déri, *Les Black Blocs: Quand la liberté et l'égalité se manifestent* (Montréal: Lux, 2003), 178.
85. Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 20.
86. Martin Breaugh, *L'Expérience plébéienne: Une histoire discontinue de la liberté politique* (Paris: Payot, 2007), 211.
87. Founder and leader of the Trotskyist party, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (France).
88. In Seattle, the police violence began several hours before the Black Blocs entered the fray and was directed against demonstrators practicing nonviolent civil disobedience.
89. The relationship between social movements and the media has been the subject of a number of studies in the social sciences suggesting that demonstrators who resort to violence attract greater media attention in comparison with nonviolent demonstrators; however, there is no consensus about the qualitative effects of the use of force. See Richard Cluttbuck, *The Media and Political Violence*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan Press 1983); P. Hocke, "Determining the Selection Bias in Local and National Newspaper Reports on Protests Events," in *Acts of Dissent*, eds. D. Rucht, R. Koopmans, and F. Neidhardt (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); S. Hug and D. Wisler, "Correcting for the Selection Bias in Social Movement Research," *Mobilization* 3, 2 (1998): 141–61; Harvey Molotch, "Media and Movements," in *The Dynamics of Social Movement*, eds. Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, 1979); Gadi Wolfsfed, "Media, Protest, and Political Violence: A Transactional Analysis," *Journalism Monographs* 127 (1991). It is also noteworthy that the Black Blocs and their allies have actually garnered some support, even among certain members of the middle class. See Alexander Cockburn, Jeffery St.

Clair, and Alan Sekula, *5 Days that Shook the World: Seattle and Beyond* (London: Verso, 2000), 69.

90. Some feminist militants accuse the Black Blocs of discouraging women from joining. However, certain Black Blocs include affinity groups comprised only of women.
91. What I know of the Black Bloc phenomenon suggests that there is little chance of it leading to terrorism: "If this movement progresses in terms of escalating violence alone then we will lose, because they have guns and we do not." Sullivan, "'We are heartbroken and furious!'," 39.
92. As was the case at the demonstrations in Ottawa against the IMF and the World Bank in the fall of 2001.
93. Daniel Dylan Young, "Autonomia and the Origin of Black Bloc" (10 June 2001), *http://www.ainfos.ca/01/jun/ainfos00170.html* (accessed May 2010).
94. The same process of appraisal was behind the decision of European squatters to move on to more aggressive methods, as explained in Anders Corr's "Movement Use of Violence," *No Trespassing: Squatting, Rent Strikes, and Land Struggles Worldwide* (Boston: South End Press, 1999), ch. 5.
95. I base this assertion on Carter, "Anarchism and Violence."
96. Interviewee BB2 elaborated further on this point: "[T]rue violence resides in state and capitalist oppression, and this oppression is always visible. Every day, we go by a McDo, reminding us that exploitation exists. Some people are constantly harassed by the police. At those times the power relationship is not in our favour. These situations of oppression and exploitation engender feelings of frustration, so we look for an outlet, which trashing provides us with." See also the Black Bloc media releases "Pourquoi nous étions à Gênes," in Dupuis-Déri, *Les Black Blocs*, 181; and ACME Collective, "N30 Black Bloc Communique about Seattle US" (1999), *www.ainfos.ca*.