

THE CAT WAS STOLEN BUT GIVEN BACK WELL-FED

The Systems of Rank-and-File Industrial and Local Democracy in Anarchist Areas of Spain
1936 – 1939.

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Kandidaatintutkielma

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Jyväskylän Yliopisto

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the general-assemblies and technical-administrative committees in anarchist-controlled areas of Spain during the Spanish Civil War. These assemblies and committees existed in urban industry, agricultural collectives, and local governance. I shall therefore examine the assembly-committee dual-structures in the context of urban and agricultural economy, and in local governance.

The main guideline used in finding material and presenting it in this thesis, was finding direct quotations, rather than second-hand quotations. This is because the reader can then get the most accurate picture of the situation, and the text in this thesis avoids possible misrepresentation of the source material.

Findings of the thesis indicate that the general-assemblies and technical-administrative committees improved productivity of work, working conditions and public services. Argument in this thesis is that this was possible due to that structure allowing greater flow of information, courage for innovation, consultation of technical experts and freedom to assign resources more rationally. At the psychological level, argument in this thesis is that the structure reduced apathy and increased engagement, initiative, and morale of rank-and-file members of organizations.

Keywords: Workers' self-management, industrial democracy, direct democracy, participatory democracy, general assemblies, anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The ex-employer who was the secretary of the wood collective told a story in later years: he said that he had had an anaemic cat, which someone stole. The thief fattened the cat up until it was in fine condition, then returned it. He was grateful for the cat being fattened up, but he still insisted that the cat had been stolen.

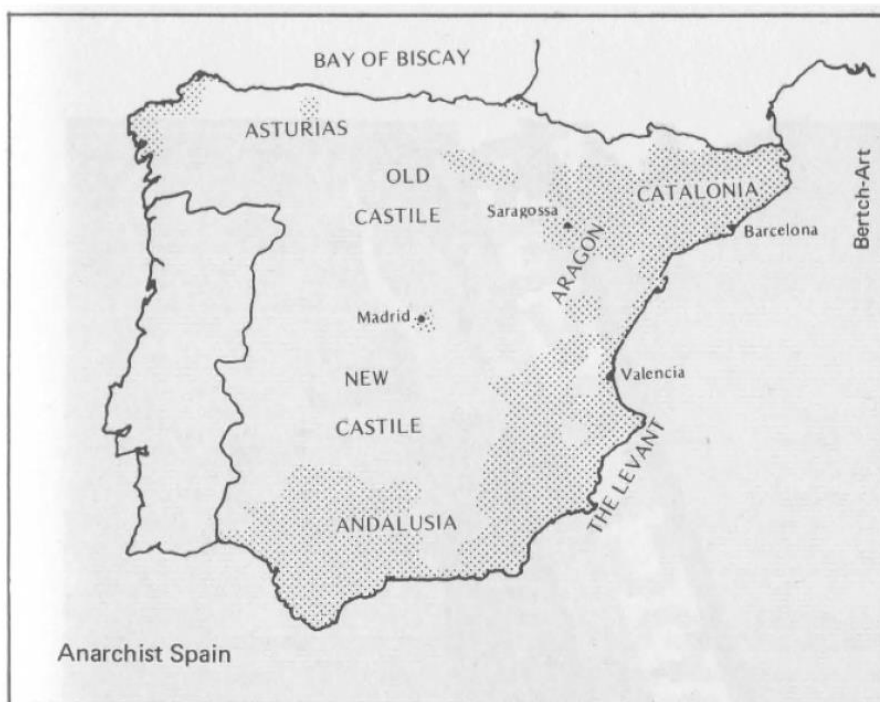
The 'cat', of course, was his firm.

- A comment by an employer on the condition of his firm after a period during which the firm was collectivized by the Spanish Anarchists (Alexander, 1999, p. 656).

The point is to have the greatest possible control over one's own work, as well as one's own life.

- Nicolas Walter summarizing the themes of this thesis (Walter, 2002 [1969], p. 71).

In this work, I argue that the most central ideas in the thinking of Spanish anarchists were the principles of *participation* and *recallability*. Additionally, in this work I argue how these principles led to a society with various *general assemblies* and *technical-administrative committees*. I will examine how these assemblies and committees functioned.



“The following map is intended to give a general picture of the areas of anarchist influence in Spain. Strongholds were in areas of Andalusia (which was early in the war conquered by the fascists), Aragon, Catalonia, and sections of the Levant. There were isolated pockets elsewhere; particularly in Castile and Asturias.”

The map above is from a collection of writings edited by Sam Dolgoff, which dealt with self-management in anarchist Spain (in the period lasting from 1936 to 1939) (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 29). This thesis tries to clarify what anarchists did in practice in Spain in the Spanish Civil War, in the areas where they had significant influence.

To understand the context of this work, I shall start with a couple quotes.

Along with the collectivization of industry and transport there was an attempt to set up the rough beginnings of a workers' government by means of local committees, workers' patrols to replace the old pro-capitalist police forces, workers' militias based on the trade unions, and so forth.

Of course, the process was not uniform, and it went further in Catalonia than elsewhere. There were areas where the institutions of local government remained almost untouched, and others where they existed side by side with revolutionary committees. In a few places independent Anarchist communes were set up, and some of them remained in being till about a year later, when they were forcibly suppressed by the Government.

In Catalonia, for the first few months, most of the actual power was in the hands of the Anarcho-syndicalists, who controlled most of the key industries. The thing that had happened in Spain was, in fact, not merely a civil war, but the beginning of a revolution.

- George Orwell describing the events after July 19, 1936 (Orwell, Homage to Catalonia, 1938 [2013], pp. 200 – 201).

During the three weeks that followed July 19 [1936], there began, then was prodigiously developed, a vast movement to take possession of the mines...quarries, workshops, factories, railroads, means of transport in general...public services...by the workers themselves... General assemblies of workers, workers councils, control committees, enterprise committees, technical-administrative commissions, local industrial committees, sectional committees, liaison committees, central directive committees, unions and industrial federations were the new organs which took charge of the branches of activity... This occurred in Barcelona as well as, for example, in Hospitalet de Llobregat, Tarrassa, Blanes, Granollers. . .”

- César Lorenzo describing the social revolution in Spain, as quoted in Robert J. Alexander’s book, “The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War” (Alexander, 1999, p. 492).

Roughly speaking, the CNT-FAI stood for: (1) Direct control over each industry by the workers engaged in each industry, e.g. transport, the textile factories, etc.; (2) Government by local committees and resistance to all forms of centralized authoritarianism; (3) Uncompromising hostility to the bourgeoisie and the Church.

- George Orwell commenting on the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organization, CNT-FAI, in his book “Homage to Catalonia” (Orwell, Homage to Catalonia, 1938 [2013], p. 211).

To specify my research question: I shall focus on investigating the first two aspects mentioned in his quotation – that is I will focus on investigating 1) *the practices of management of work* and 2) *the practices of local democracy* during the Spanish anarchist revolution.

It is worth noting that George Orwell named his book “Homage to Catalonia”, i.e.: in his view, Catalonia of all places was something worth paying homage to. Orwell was not himself an anarchist (Orwell, *Why I write*, 1946), but still commented favorably about Catalonia, which was a place in which anarchism was very influential, and institutions created by anarchists existed. In this work, I try to shed some light on some of these institutions.

However, investigating Orwell does not go far enough – *Homage to Catalonia* does not go enough into detail on the nature of the revolution and structures built. Rather, the book’s significance is more about it being an important document on left-wing infighting of that time.

In that function, Orwell’s caricature of the Republican divide is somewhat helpful in clarifying how anarchists differed from other kinds of socialists: the main difference between sides was about workers’ control: the side who were for workers’ control consisted of anarchists, the POUM¹, and a section of other socialists (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], p. 211). On the other side were the Stalinists, the liberals and right-wing socialists, whose aim was instead a centralized state (instead of local control and workers’ self-management) and a traditional military (instead of militias²) (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], p. 211).

Now we have clarified roughly what anarchists believe in, and do not believe in. But to examine this matter further, I will have to demonstrate their practices in more detail.

¹ POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) was a Spanish Trotskyist communist party.

² Incidentally, Orwell claims that the anarchist militias were highly effective, despite their indiscipline (though he does not specify what he means by indiscipline), and that for his preference, he would have rather joined the anarchist militias (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], p. 211; Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], p. 103). The POUM militia also had a similar organization that of the anarchists, and he states on this that “in practise the democratic “revolutionary” type of discipline is more reliable than might be expected...it is based on class-loyalty, whereas the discipline of a bourgeois conscript army is based ultimately on fear” (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], pp. 28 – 29). “We had all been under fire for months, and I never had the slightest difficulty in getting an order obeyed or in getting men to volunteer for a dangerous job” (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], p. 29). These remarks are interesting and might be a good point to consider for those studying military psychology, unit morale, and the rhetoric and beliefs relating to military efficiency.

2 PRACTISES OF THE ANARCHISTS

2.1 Brief history of anarchism in Spain

It is many times stated that anarchism has a lot to do with spontaneity, but this is not exactly the case (at least in Spain). The collective tradition in the villages went back to the middle-ages and influenced Spanish anarchism and the localistic beliefs of peasants (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 42 – 43). Mikhail Bakunin’s anarchism itself arrived in Spain in the early 1870’s³ (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 10 – 11, 45). Anarchism took hold especially well in Catalonia and Andalusia (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 11).

The anarcho-syndicalist trade-union CNT was founded in 1910 (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 162). The anarchist federation of the Iberian Peninsula, FAI, containing both anarcho-communists and insurrectionists, was formed in Valencia in 1927 (Gamero, 1997).

According to Murray Bookchin, before the revolution, the local CNT activists begun the habit of holding “conferences of an instructive character” every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 17). The FAI’s most important method was that the formation of affinity groups, groups of friends or like-minded people, especially for the purpose of self-education, culture and activism (Gamero, 1997). Similar kinds of affinity groups had existed already in 1880’s, and they were then called “tertulias” (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 18 – 19). The tertulias met usually in cafés to discuss ideas and plan actions (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 18). Further description of these affinity groups is given in chapter 2.5.2.

So, when the civil war and the social revolution started in 1936, *anarchism had existed for more than 60 years in Spain* (and in addition, the traditions of peasant collectivism went all the way back to the middle-ages) (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 42). As seen above, national-scale anarchist organizations had existed for years before the 1936 revolution – CNT for 26 years and the FAI for 9 years.

Other forms of socialism, like social democracy and communism, were not as popular as anarchism in Spain (which seems to be a rare instance in history) (Mintz, 2013, p. 25). Joaquín

³ Apparently, the most significant moment in bringing anarchism to Spain was the work of Italian anarchist Giuseppe Fanelli in the early 1870’s. Fanelli was a Bakuninist. Fanelli did not know much Spanish, but still held passionate speeches to small, but enthusiastic audiences in Barcelona and Madrid. Through some creative communication, he was able to convey the main principles of Bakunin, which seemed to taken hold (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 10 – 11, 45).

Maurín (a member of POUM) lists 13 reasons for why Spain was different than many other countries in this respect (Mintz, 2013, pp. 25 – 27).

Some of these reasons in Maurín’s list were:

- That the anarchists did a lot of work with Andalusian peasants (while other socialists did not focus that much on the conditions of the Spanish peasants).
- That the anarchists established their main base in Barcelona (the industrial heart of the country)⁴
- That the anarchists were efficient in publishing newspapers and pamphlets
- That the anarchists established schools and ateneos places for discussion, education, and culture.

(Mintz, 2013, pp. 25 – 26; Alexander, 1999, p. 69).

In addition, Gerald Brenan mentions the provincial and municipal feeling being prevalent to specific areas; and that the geopolitical features of Spain supported the development of decentralist-thinking in Catalonia⁵ (Brenan, 1960 [1943], pp. ix, xi).

It might be difficult to understand, why a seemingly demanding ideology such as anarchism took hold of many people. But it makes more sense, if Spanish anarchism is examined not as much an ideology, but *a culture with a “religious” feeling*. In *Living Utopia*, Liberto Sarrau⁶, gives quite an emotional definition for anarchism: “Anarchism is not a theory. It isn’t just a philosophy, it isn’t just a program for living. It is a way of life. *A way of life* [he repeats to emphasize his point]” (Gamero, 1997).

Gerald Brenan argues that anarchism was similar to a religious movement: people had a kind of religious feeling in them; to wish for a better future and live in accordance to a set of morals, amid a corrupt world:

“Religion had meant so much to the poor that they were left with the hunger for something to replace it. And this something could only be one of the political doctrines, anarchism or socialism, that they found waiting for them. They adopted them therefore in the same spirit, with the same crusading ardour and singleness of mind with which in previous ages they had adopted Catholicism.”

⁴ Other socialists were based in Madrid (Mintz, 2013, p. 25).

⁵ While in Castile more authoritarian ideologies could flourish, which in the case of the left, meant Marxism (Brenan, 1960 [1943], pp. x – xi).

⁶ He was member of Juventudas Libertarias, worked in an agricultural collective and later joined the Durruti Column (Heath, 2006).

- Gerald Brenan's analysis on the religious feeling in Spanish anarchism (Brenan, 1960 [1943], p. xii).

Note, that Brenan is no anarchist, as he states that Spanish anarchism cannot “be taken seriously”, as it seeks to “realize a dream of the remote future” (Brenan, 1960 [1943], p. xvii).

While anarchism does not seem to be widespread, religion certainly is. And when looked from this perspective, the demanding, enthusiastic, ascetic, and moralistic⁷ features of the Spanish anarchism are easier to understand.

Regardless of the reasons why anarchism was popular, we know of evidence that anarchism was widespread and popular (the population counts shown in the next chapter). In Spain there were two major organizations: the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) (Alexander, 1999, p. 12), and the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (Alexander, 1999, p. 19).

Orwell claims that these were combined as the CNT-FAI, in the way that the FAI as the more, purely anarchist organization, would monitor that the CNT would follow anarchist ideas (Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], p. 211). The same description of the function of FAI is given by Guérin and in *Living Utopia* (Gamero, 1997; Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory To Practise*, 1970 [1968], p. 83).

2.2 The population of Spanish anarchists and the number of their collectives

According to Deirdre Hogan, CNT had 1 500 000 members by 1936, and Rudolf Rocker evaluates that CNT-FAI had roughly 2 500 000 workers and peasants as members at the time of writing of his book (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 99; Hogan, *Industrial Collectivisation during the Spanish Revolution*, 2003). Gaston Leval evaluates that 7 – 8 million people were involved in the revolution directly, or indirectly – but Mintz is skeptical about this figure (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 83).

I think the more modern statistical estimates given by Mintz sound fairer (see figures 1 and 2 below). I think these estimates are fair because of multiple reasons:

⁷ “At Barcelona the Escuela Moderna was founded by Francisco Ferrer. At these children were brought up to believe in liberty, social equality and so on, and above everything else to hate the Church which taught false and “perverted” doctrines. There were also night schools for adults and a printing press which turned out a continuous stream of Anarchist books and pamphlets . . . Other schools were founded in Andalusia. Working men were taught to read and to abjure religion, vice and alcoholism” (Alexander, 1999, pp. 661 – 662)

1. He has adjusted these newer figures from the figures he gave earlier (in 1970), and now gives lower figures in the newer assessment⁸.
2. He uses averages from minimum and maximum estimates and does not just pick the highest figure to suit his argument.
3. He considers shifting frontlines (and thus, the changing amount of civilian population).
4. He considers the that it took time for self-management to become functional, and this affects the number of collectives that can be said to be self-managing⁹.
5. He emphasizes, that statistical figures for the number of industrial self-management collectives and their workers are hard to estimate¹⁰.

	Estimated number of collectives	Estimated amount of population in collectives	Notes
Andalusia	210	63 000	Min/max estimates for number of collectives: 120/300 Estimated population of each collective is 300.
Aragon	450	300 000	31 UGT ¹¹ collectives in the region.
Cantabria	100	13 000	–

⁸ This seems like something a complete utopian would not do.

⁹ He argues that self-management did not emerge as completely functional immediately after July 1936 events, but that it took until October 1936 for it to become functional in a wide-spread manner (Mintz, 2013, p. 137).

¹⁰ Perhaps if industrial federalism had been more widespread, the federations had collected these figures?

¹¹ Socialist/social-democratic trade-union.

Catalonia	Agrarian: 350 Industrial: ?	Agrarian workers: 70 000 Industrial workers: 560 000 Taking into account the family members living with workers: 1 020 000 ¹²	Min/max estimates for agrarian col.: 297/400 Avg. pop. In farm collectives estimated to be 200. Industrial worker count estimated to be 80 % of the total estimate of workers (700 000)
The Center Region	Agrarian: 240 Industrial: ?	Agrarian: 68 000 + UGT collectives Industrial: 30 000 Total: 176 000	–
Extremadura	30	6000	220 people estimated per collective
Levante	503	Agrarian: 130 000 Industrial: 30 000 Total 160 000	–

Fig 1: Crosstabulation of the estimates given by Mintz (Mintz, 2013, pp. 137 – 138).

He then compares the estimates of the anarchist population against the overall population of the Republican Spain (Mintz, 2013, p. 139). The amount of overall population of Republican Spain was also changing due to the changing frontlines (Mintz, 2013, p. 136).

¹² If this number is realistic, it means that the anarchists accounted for more than a third of the population of Catalonia, if compared to the population statistics from the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (1930: approx. 2 800 000 and 1940: approx. 2 900 000) (Statistical Institute of Catalonia)

	July 1936 – Mar 1937	Mar 1937 – Mar 1938	Mar 1938 – Jan 1939
Total amount of the population of collectives	1 632 000	1 725 000	1 450 000
The population of the collectives as a % of total population of Republican Spain	27.2 %	34.5%	34.5% ¹³
The total population of Republican Spain	6 000 000	5 000 000	4 200 000

Fig 2: Crosstabulation of the sum of estimates, and the estimates as a percentage of overall population of Republican Spain (Mintz, 2013, p. 139).

José Peirats gives the following figures:

Leval lists 1,700 agrarian collectives, broken down as follows: Aragon, 400 (for Aragon Souchy estimates 510); Levant, 900; Castile, 300; Estrémadura, 30; Catalonia, 40; Andalusia, unknown. For the collectivized urban industries he estimates: Catalonia, all the industries and all transportation; Levant, 70% of all the industries; Castile, part of the industries—he gives no figures. (Espagne Libertaire, p. 80)

- José Peirats on the amount of collectives, as quoted by Sam Dolgoff (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 83).

2.3 Comparison of the CNT and the FAI

	CNT	FAI
Base level forms	Local labor union section (syndicate), the work group (Alexander, 1999, p. 386; Dolgoff, 1974, p. 155; Guérin, Anarchism: From Theory To Practise, 1970 [1968], p. 83).	Grupos de afinidad (Affinity group), the work group (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 19, 155).

¹³ It seems to be a co-incidence, that the percentage of collectivists as the percentage of the total population happens to be 34.5 % in both Mar 1937 – Mar 1938, and Mar 1938 – Jan 1939 periods.

Nature	<p>Trade-union federation of anarcho-syndicalist trade-unions (Alexander, 1999, p. 73).</p> <p>Existed in both rural and urban areas, though its political philosophy was industrial and urban (Guérin, <i>Anarchism: From Theory To Practise</i>, 1970 [1968], p. 83; Alexander, 1999, p. 399).</p>	<p>Federation of anarchist affinity groups (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 19).</p> <p>The FAI loosely defined, somewhat secretive organization (Alexander, 1999, p. 19).</p> <p>FAI Existed through-out both rural and urban areas (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 14).</p> <p>“Political organ” of the CNT-FAI combination (Orwell, <i>Homage to Catalonia</i>, 1938 [2013], p. 211)</p>
Aim	<p>Link workers together into a force aiding their conditions (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 62).</p> <p>Uses syndicates as the schools of self-management for management of society after the revolution (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 62).</p> <p>General strike as the means of taking over the means of production (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 83). Establishing a system of industrial federations (to organize large-scale production) and a system of economic councils to organize consumption (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 63).</p> <p>Aims to destroy capitalism and the state and have a society of freely connecting individuals (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 1).</p> <p>Principles of this society would be a respect for autonomy, active individual participation, recallability and merit (Walter, 2002 [1969], p. 67). Opposes the principles of tradition, religion, rigid ownership,</p>	<p>Linking together anarchists grupos de afinidad (Alexander, 1999, p. 85).</p> <p>Aims to maintain the purity of anarchist ideas and oppose reformism (Guérin, <i>Anarchism: From Theory To Practise</i>, 1970 [1968], p. 83; Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 19).</p> <p>Aims to destroy capitalism and the state and have a society of freely connecting individuals (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 1). Principles of this society would be a respect for autonomy, active individual participation, recallability and merit (Walter, 2002 [1969], p. 67). Opposes the principles of tradition, religion, rigid ownership, bureaucracy, and authoritarianism (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 1).</p>

	bureaucracy, and authoritarianism (Rocker, 2004 [1938], p. 1).	
Political ideology	Anarcho-syndicalism (Guérin, <i>Anarchism: From Theory To Practise</i> , 1970 [1968], p. 60). Presumably, various anarchist economic thoughts of ownership and consumption (anarcho-communism, anarcho-collectivism, mutualism), as seen in its practices described in the chapter on remuneration.	Different thoughts of ownership and consumption, but anarcho-communism apparently most prevalent of these (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 19). Insurrectionary anarchism (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 26).
Co-operation with groups/parties of other ideologies	More willing to co-operate, more prone to compromise (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 19).	More ideologically prone to reject co-operation and compromise. (Alexander, 1999, p. 19)

There were anarcho-feminist organizations (such as the *Mujeres Libres*), and anarchist youth organizations (such as the *Juventudes Libertarias*) but investigating these is beyond the scope of this work (Alexander, 1999, p. 69).

2.4 The practices of work and the management of work

At the macro scale, the main goals of the anarchists in improving the economy were threefold, according to Mintz:

1. Establish systematic statistics keeping processes (to monitor the economy).
2. Adopting new technology (to improve productivity and to reduce manual strain to workers).

3. Improve education (to enable significant degree of self-direction by the rank-and-file).

(Mintz, 2013, p. 119)

In the following chapters, I will try to go through the micro-scale elements. And later I will examine the federations, which aimed to achieve macro-scale changes.

2.4.1 General assemblies

The representatives from each of these five technical divisions constituted only one half of the administrative commission. The other half consisted of the overall Commission of Control. It is nominated by the general assembly of syndicated workers and has delegates direct from the factories so as never to lose contact with the workers. In the factories and workshops, committees are elected by an assembly of workers gathered together on the spot... We are not therefore facing an administrative dictatorship but rather a functional democracy, in all the specialized workers play their roles which have been settled after general examination by the assembly...

- Gaston Leval describing the duties of general assemblies in textile factories in Alcoy (Dolgoft, 1974, pp. 103 – 104).

Communism that goes from bottom to top, not top to bottom, that's regulated by means of general assemblies with the immediate revocation of any post if the majority it. The fact that the base is sovereign means that there's no chance of any political maneuvering.

- Fransisco Carrasquer, who experienced the revolution, gives his definition for libertarian communism, as interviewed in the documentary “Living Utopia” (Gamero, 1997).

In Cuenca, delegates of work groups could not apply sanctions for violations of work rules. Such cases were referred to the Administrative Commission, which in turn brought the case before the general assembly for final decision. Work delegates or council members who exceeded their authority or failed to carry out the instructions of the members were suspended or removed by the General Assembly...

- Jose Peirats on the practises in Cuenca (Dolgoft, 1974, p. 117).

The general assembly was in a sense the parliament of a collective, however it did not consist of representatives, but the rank-and-file members themselves. It consisted of the adult members of the collective (Dolgoft, 1974, p. 113; Alexander, 1999, p. 386). It had the right to remove and add members to technical-administrative committees (Dolgoft, 1974, p. 117). The general assembly had the highest authority in the organization (Dolgoft, 1974, pp. 113, 117, 138 – 139, 155; Alexander, 1999, p. 642). All important decisions were discussed in the general assemblies, and these assemblies were widely attended and regularly held (Alexander, 1999, p. 469; Dolgoft, 1974, pp. 115, 117).

These assemblies were held frequently in agrarian workplaces but seemed to be less frequent in urban ones. For the rural collectives, the following frequencies for meetings of general

assemblies are mentioned: weekly, bi-weekly/fortnightly, monthly, “every Sunday” and “frequent” (Alexander, 1999, pp. 327, 349, 380; Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory To Practise*, 1970 [1968], p. 90; Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 13, 44, 116, 139, 151, 155).

In urban collectives, the frequency of general assemblies is mentioned to be “every Sunday”, “at least once a week¹⁴”, “twice a month”¹⁵, “frequent”, “quarterly”, “periodical” and “at least every three months” (Alexander, 1999, pp. 476, 490, 532, 594, 641; Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 93, 103; Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 348). The urban collectives’ general assemblies might have assembled less frequently, but they definitely convened to select an administrative-technical committee (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 88, 92, 96, 103, 113, 130; Mintz, 2013, p. 282; Alexander, 1999, pp. 532, 582, 594, 675). And like in rural collectives, the assembly of urban collectives was also separately called together to be informed on important general matters, and to discuss and vote on them (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 93, 113; Mintz, 2013, p. 279; Alexander, 1999, pp. 577, 607).

In an assembly, everybody had a vote, except for standing officials (e.g., the secretary, treasurer) who were there just to take minutes and organize conversation (Alexander, 1999, p. 347; Mintz, 2013, p. 35). Sometimes, the people who were not CNT members (e.g. small-proprietors) could also have a right to attend and vote – at least in the assemblies in which was discussed whether to start collectivization in a locality after the capture of the locality by CNT troops (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 111, 113, 142). Voting is described as happening via a show-of-hand, and anyone had the right to speak (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 44; Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 216). Brennan describes witnessing an assembly in which the entire village was in attendance (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 44).

The technical-administrative committees had the duty to report on its workings to the general assembly for the assembly to assess, i.e., the administration was controlled by the general assembly. (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 138 – 139; Alexander, 1999, p. 469).

2.4.2 Technical-administrative committees

Normally, the responsibilities of elected delegates had to be discharged after working hours. Almost all the evenings of anarchist militants were occupied with meetings of one

¹⁴ It is very interesting, that in the Casa Riviera collective (consisting of three factories and an office), in the Catalan War Industry, this high frequency of assembly is claimed. Perhaps one might assume, that especially in such an industry there would be high hierarchy and a lack of rank-and-file influence to production (Alexander, 1999, p. 532). But, apparently “There they discussed matters ranging from the most important affairs to the most trivial ones” (Alexander, 1999, p. 532).

¹⁵ Please note that I am using a PDF version of Fraser’s *Blood of Spain*, and that I am marking the PDF file’s page numbers, as the version does not have the regular page numbers.

sort or another. Whether at assemblies or committees, they argued, debated, voted, and administered, and when time afforded, they read and passionately discussed “the Idea” to which they dedicated not only their leisure hours but their very lives.

- Murray Bookchin describing anarchist practises during the civil war (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 13).

You did not need “Seneca” to organize that. The workers did it. First of all, they set up the union committee, which was the most important. Then, the defence committee, the agriculture committee, the food committee, the barbers committee. It was the workers who named the delegates whom they considered to be best qualified for the job of organizing the distribution of work, the distribution of everything.

- Juan Romero on the establishment of the committees (Gamero, 1997).

I discuss the general features of technical-administrative committees here. I have separate chapters on committees in urban industry, agriculture, and local politics in chapters 2.4.4, 2.4.5 and 2.5 respectively.

The administrative-technical committees¹⁶ had different parts of the organization in question represented (Alexander, 1999, p. 468). Enterprises thus had representatives in the committees from different manufacturing sections, oﬃces, warehousing, technical matters, sales etc. (Alexander, 1999, pp. 468, 506, 583). Agricultural collectives also had different branches of production represented (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 139). The committee thus formed sub-committees for dealing with the different section, branches, and matters, as described by Juan Romero’s quote above.

The syndicates wanted to get important knowledge from former directors, accountants, engineers and technicians, and invited and hired many of those white-collar workers to recallable roles in the committees (Alexander, 1999, pp. 398, 461, 468 – 469, 478, 531 – 533, 544, 562, 574, 579 – 580, 589, 593, 596, 601, 611, 614, 637, 641, 647, 655 – 656, 658; Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 87, 92, 96, 100; Balcells, 2016, pp. 85, 89; Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 218)¹⁷.

According to Barconi, the technicians were enthusiastic participants in the collective, since they were given much more freedom of action than they had had before, and their suggestions for improvement of the operation of the enterprise were taken seriously by the worker leaders of the collective.

¹⁶ There were many words in the sources used to mean the same body. Words used include “councils”, “commissions” etc.

¹⁷ From this long list referring to many separate instances of this happening serves as good proof, that the anarchists of Spain respected merit.

- Alexander on the Barcelona Autobuses G collective, which built and operated buses (Alexander, 1999, p. 580).

There were cases in which the former owner of the plant continued to serve as manager when the workers took over. One of these was the Unión Vidriera No. 7 plant, in San Vicente del Sols, run by a man described by the CNT union ex-secretary as 'a fervent Catholic, but in spite of that a very decent man', who had treated his workers well before the War. (More than 45 years later, the man's grandsons were still running the enterprise.)

- Former owner elected as a manager of a plant in the collectivized glass industry (Alexander, 1999, p. 641)¹⁸.

The committee could also elect a director, which the committee then supervised and recalled (Alexander, 1999, p. 469). Sometimes, a member of a trade-union, who had had delegative duties in the trade-union was selected as director (Alexander, 1999, p. 469). Where relations between workers and managers had been good before the revolution, a previous manager could be selected, or some other previous white-collar worker (e.g., accountant), whom the workers respected (Alexander, 1999, p. 469). The selection of a director/manager was occasionally difficult, due to some previous administrators being considered untrustworthy, and occasionally it was probably hard to find an experienced labor leader, whose abilities as a syndicate delegate could have translated into industrial management (Alexander, 1999, p. 469).

Mintz quotes a CNT-FAI bulletin, claiming that if the technical-administrative committee was largely staffed by previous managers and white-collar workers, it represented “a highly attenuated bourgeois form of administration through monitoring activity carried out by workers’ factory committees”, instead of “a take-over” (Mintz, 2013, p. 66). The urban collectives apparently had widespread adoption of this kind of monitoring, instead of a full-take over (Mintz, 2013, p. 67).

It is a bit tricky to deduce what Mintz means by “a full take-over”: does it mean the absence of a committee with everything being decided by general assemblies? Or does it mean that the committee was vested with very minimal powers? Or does he mean that the committee was staffed entirely by workers? To my knowledge, he does not specify.

But at the same time, even the system of “attenuated bourgeois administration” was an improvement for the workers, as they now could more directly influence working conditions

¹⁸ Note that anarchists of Spain were suspicious of the Catholic Church, so this quote is an interesting to compare to the widespread anticlericalism of the Spanish anarchists.

and other matters (Alexander, 1999, pp. 544 – 545). And moreover, delegation of power (though in a recallable way) is an important anarchist principle. Therefore, to me it seems natural, that the balancing of participatory democracy with professionalism would have resulted in some sort of a “general assembly-administrative committee dualism”.

The purposes of the technical-administrative committees were for example: to supervise production, to handle day to day administrative tasks, collect statistics, call together general assemblies, order and inventory raw materials, handle correspondence, handle accounting and secretarial work, and be responsible over detailed design of tasks delegated to it by the general assembly (Dolgoft, 1974, pp. 94, 130, 139; Alexander, 1999, pp. 593 – 594).

The committees also innovated and changed production on its own, if they saw possibilities for it:

*For instance, the former Andreu Mateu firm, collectivized exclusively by the CNT, was assigned by the ministry of defense to produce cartridges for rifles. **However, in addition, the directive-administrative committee of the collective also undertook on its own initiative to produce [MP-28 sub-machinegun]¹⁹ modified by them to prevent its overheating.** This weapon was christened the Naranjero (orange) because of its production in Valencia, famous for its oranges. That collective also produced two of Spain’s first tanks, which were sent to the Teruel front.*

- Alexander on innovation in a collectivized arms company in Valencia (Alexander, 1999, p. 545).

The members of the committee would usually assemble in the evening after their regular work – the committee work was not aimed to be a full-time, paid profession, and most times the members of the committee worked as regular members during the regular work hours (Alexander, 1999, pp. 327, 349; Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory To Practise*, 1970 [1968], p. 90; Dolgoft, 1974, p. 138). Sometimes a secretary was exempt from this, and his full-time work was the work as a secretary (Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory To Practise*, 1970 [1968], p. 90).

2.4.3 Work groups

*In all the agrarian collectives of Aragon, Catalonia, Levant, Castile, Andalusia, and Estremadura, the workers formed groups to divide the labor or the land; **usually they were assigned to definite areas. Delegates elected by the work groups met with the collective’s delegate for agriculture to plan out the work.** This typical organization arose quite spontaneously, by local initiative.*

¹⁹ Alexander, or his source, mistake the “Naranjero” to be based on the “American Thompson”, but it was actually based on the German MP-28, II (Firearms Curiosa, 2020).

- Gaston Level on the features of the agrarian collectives (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 155).
 - 1. *Work shall be carried on in groups of ten. Each group shall elect its own delegate ... The delegates shall plan the work, preserve harmony among the producers, and if necessary, apply the sanctions voted by the popular assembly. (At first the delegates met every night after work and when work was normalized, once a week.)*²⁰
 - Gaston Leval quoting the rules approved in the general assembly of the rural collective of Binefar. (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 138).
- Most of those employed in these three industries were skilled workers. So, in the trade union reorganization, the lowest hierarchical unit was a section composed of 15 or more workers of a particular skill. When no one specialty had that number of workers, two or more or less similar ones were joined to form a section. Each section elected two delegates, one a technician, the other a person designated to direct the work of the section*
- Alexander on the organization of work groups in the Barcelona electricity, gas, and water supply installations (Alexander, 1999, p. 593).

As I mentioned earlier, work group is a group of workers organized to focus on a particular aspect of production, e.g. a work group of farmers cultivating a particular area of the land of the collective (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 151; Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 589). In other words, it is where work actually happens. It is a self-governing unit, which usually elected a delegate to handle responsible duties, like planning practical matters, when the group could not do it collectively (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 155).

2.4.4 Urban self-management

In the early phase of the Catalan war industries, production was stimulated, and rationalization and innovation were encouraged, according to the wartime head of the Metal Workers' Federation of Catalonia.

He cited an instance: the fabrication of one part of a Mauser [rifle or other firearm] had taken seven operations, but the number was reduced to five by changes suggested by the workers in the plant. He added that the initiative of the workers was generally very much stimulated by the collectivization of the industry, and many workers knew their jobs and the industry well and were able to make good contributions to its improvement.

- Description of improvements made in the Catalan war industries, by the innovations of the metal workers (Alexander, 1999, p. 531).

To my understanding, the previous quote demonstrates precisely what the anarcho-syndicalists want: direct engagement and participation of the blue-collar rank-and-file workers in problem-solving relating to production processes of their work and working conditions, specifically in

²⁰ The last sentence in brackets is probably a comment by Leval or Dolgoff.

the workplaces of a complex, modern industry. I believe that this is the main things what the anarcho-syndicalists mean when they use the term “workers’ self-management”.

To understand this better, we may compare that to the kind of work, which anarcho-syndicalists opposed (note that the following description is somewhat exaggerated): The anarcho-syndicalists opposed the idea of industrial work being done by apathetic workers receiving orders and restrictions from above; and they opposed the idea that blue-collar workers have no ability for creativity and spontaneous initiative in matters of the improvement of work processes and working conditions.

In addition, the quote above conveys the idea of blue-collar dignity about one’s work, and its urban, industrial, self-made tradesman, “salt-of-the-earth” aesthetic²¹, which I believe to have been a part of the notions held by anarcho-syndicalists.

Of the initiative of the rank-and-file workers, we have another quote, this time about the glass industry:

The workers in the glass industry made many innovations during the period of collective ownership. Thus, the secretary of the sindicato, when he went back to work after the end of the fighting in Barcelona in July 1936, found that the workers in the plant in which he worked had already decided to switch from production of perfume bottles - their pre-war work - to the making of little bottles to contain drinks for the militiamen at the front. The secretary, many years later, said that this was typical of the kind of changes that the workers made.

- Innovation by the workers themselves in the CNT Glass Workers Syndicate (Alexander, 1999, p. 641).

Another quote on improvements, this time about the Valencia ship construction and repair collective:

The Unión Naval was running at considerable financial loss at the time the workers took it over. By the end of the second semester under workers’ control, it was making a small but appreciable profit. Also by the end of the first year, the collective had succeeded in replacing a number of worn out machines and other installations.

Working conditions had been considerably improved, including installations of showers and wardrobes for the workers’ use. The collective also installed a clinic, attended by two doctors, where the workers could receive a variety of treatment, including operations.

²¹ I thought about adding the word “macho” in there as well, but that would be too many adjectives. And perhaps, just a little bit too much hubris.

- Alexander on the CNT–UGT Unión Naval de Levante Collective, employing about 1400 workers (Alexander, 1999, p. 649).

Casa Riviera collective (a part of the Catalan War Industries) had a significantly anarcho-syndicalist management:

A few weeks after July 19, there was the first general assembly of the firm's workers, including both manual and office employees. It elected an enterprise committee (Comité de Empresa) to take control of the firm on a more permanent basis. That committee chose as its president the man who had been secretary of the personnel manager before the Revolution. Another white-collar worker was chosen as secretary of the Comité de Empresa, and both of these people served throughout the War.

Each of the four sections of the firm - the three factories and the office staff - held their own general assemblies at least once a week. There they discussed matters ranging from the most important affairs to the most trivial ones.

- Alexander on the system of frequent general assemblies and elected committees in Casa Riviera collective of the metal industry (Alexander, 1999, p. 532).

Also, when on three occasions it was necessary to replace a member of the Comité de Empresa, the replacement was elected by the general assembly of all the workers in the enterprise.

- System of recall in the España Industrial textile collective in Catalonia (Alexander, 1999, p. 609).

*Only three weeks after the beginning of the civil war, two weeks after the end of the general strike, it seems to run as smoothly as if nothing had happened. I visited the men at their machines. **The room looked tidy; the work was done in a regular manner.** Since socialization, **this factory had repaired two buses, finished one which had been under construction, and constructed a completely new one.** The latter wore the inscription 'constructed under workers' control'. **It had been completed, the management claimed, in five days, as against an average of seven days under the previous management...**'*

*Things could not have been made to look nice for the benefit of a visitor, had they really been in a bad muddle. Nor do I think that any preparations were made for my visit. **Still, one must certainly not generalize from this one experience.***

- Franz Borkenau (writer of the eyewitness account *The Spanish Cockpit*) depicting his visit to the Barcelona transport collective (Alexander, 1999, pp. 580 – 581).

We do not know the validity of the claims of the workers about the faster construction speed. If the construction truly was faster, we do not know if it was a temporary phenomenon due to the excitement over the revolution. It is also good for Borkenau to mention, that one should not generalize, that things were this good at all places.

But how were urban collectives formed?

Then there was a meeting at nighttime, with the CNT-UGT. The meeting was held in a house in the town. [The house] had been a kind of club where the wealthy people went.

And as they had all disappeared, we had the meeting there. They named factory committees, company advisers, and organized each job, so that we could carry on. And we agreed that we would employ everyone who was out of work. A few would go to each factory. So we did that, and no one was unemployed.

- In Living Utopia, Dolores Prat describes the beginning of urban self-management (Gamero, 1997).

From her account, it is a bit ambiguous whether she was present in person in the meeting in question.

*Although it was in the countryside where the most far-reaching anarchist socialisation took place, the revolution took place in the cities and the towns too. At that time in Spain almost 2 million out of a total population of 24 million worked in industry, **70% of which was concentrated in one area - Catalonia**. There, within hours of the fascist assault, workers had seized control of 3000 enterprises. This included all public transportation services, shipping, electric and power companies, gas and water works, engineering and automobile assembly plants, mines, cement works, textile mills and paper factories, electrical and chemical concerns, glass bottle factories and perfumeries, food processing plants and breweries.*

- Deirdre Hogan in her essay “Industrial Collectivization During the Spanish Revolution” (Hogan, Industrial Collectivisation during the Spanish Revolution, 2003).

The socialized factories were led by a management committee with between five and thirteen members, representing the various services, elected by the workers in a general assembly, with a twoyear term, half of them to be renewed every year.

The committee selected a director to whom it delegated all or part of its powers. In the key factories the selection of the director had to be approved by the regulatory body. In addition, a government inspector was placed on every management committee.

The management committee could be revoked either by the general assembly or by a general council of the branch of industry (composed of four representatives of the management committees, eight from the workers’ unions, and four technicians named by the regulatory body). This general council planned the work and determined the distribution of profits. Its decisions were legally binding.

- Daniel Guérin describing industrial self-management (Guérin, Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain, 1936 - 1937, 1984, p. 11).

The works council called bi-monthly or quarterly assemblies of all the workers in a cinema or theatre to explain the current state of production, stocks, resources etc.

- Ronald Fraser on the observation by general assemblies over the committees in Public Entertainment Collective of Barcelona (Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 348).

*He noticed one big difference in the workforce after collectivization. Prior to the war, none of the workers ‘knew how to talk’; if there was a claim to be made, he or one of his union companions had to meet the management. While the workers’ control committee functioned, the mass of the workforce still didn’t speak up. **But the moment the factory was collectivized and there were general assemblies, everyone started to talk.***

— *It was amazing, everyone turned into a parrot, everyone wanted to say what he or she thought and felt. They obviously felt themselves in charge now and with the right to speak for themselves ...*

- Ronald Fraser interviewing a CNT textile worker working in Fabra and Coats Spinning Company's factory, who spoke of a change in engagement and social psychology when a general assembly system was established (Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 341).

The urban workers in Barcelona were able to achieve production in difficult circumstances. The work processes included a division of labor with participatory processes, a combination which enabled Barcelona to have, for example, water, electricity, and gas production, while being bombarded by the nationalists (Dolgoft, 1974, p. 95).

This was possible due to, firstly, general assemblies and other meetings, which enabled the workers to inform, debate, discuss and solve problems of the work processes and working conditions (Alexander, 1999, p. 594). Previously, the bettering of the work process, productivity and working conditions was up to the managers willing to improve and to listen to criticism, and to the unions exerting pressure on the owners and management (Alexander, 1999, p. 569).

Secondly, the processes were bettered by the introduction of quotas of technical experts to administrative committees, which helped the committee in technical matters (Dolgoft, 1974, p. 95; Alexander, 1999, p. 594):

Half these delegates were named by the general assemblies of the unions. The other half were named by the general assemblies of the technical workers. This procedure was adopted to make sure that only the most qualified technicians would be chosen. For in general meetings the members might be persuaded by clever orators and politicians to choose less capable delegates for ideological and political reasons.

- Sam Dolgoft on the committees in water, gas, and electricity production in Catalonia (Dolgoft, 1974, p. 95).

The workers elected a 12-person committee, which included two representatives of the administrative workers, two of the technicians, and the rest manual workers from various parts of the enterprise. That body chose an executive committee of four which was in charge of day-to-day operations.

- Similar idea of representation of sections and technicians was seen in Valencia in the CNT-UGT Industria Socializada Torras CM (Alexander, 1999, p. 544).

The CNT-FAI collectives in the metallurgy and chemistry industry strove to establish arms production, as arms production had not existed in Catalonia previously (Balcells, 2016, p. 79). The CNT-FAI ran public transport (streetcars, buses) (Balcells, 2016, p. 77), the public health facilities (hospitals) (Alexander, 1999, pp. 581, 589, 669), schools (Deweyite and Ferrer

Guardia-type) (Alexander, 1999, p. 679), and smaller businesses such as barbershops and restaurants (Balcells, 2016, pp. 80, 82; Mintz, 2013, pp. 241 – 242).

The few arms factories built in Spain before 1936 had been set up outside Catalonia: the employers, in fact, were afraid of the Catalonian proletariat. In the Barcelona region, therefore, it was necessary to convert factories in great haste so that they might serve the defense of the Republic. Workers and technicians competed with each other in enthusiasm and initiative, and very soon war materiel made mainly in Catalonia was arriving at the front. No less effort was put into the manufacture of chemical products essential for war purposes. Socialized industry went ahead equally fast in the field of civilian requirements; for the first time the conversion of textile fibers was undertaken in Spain, and hemp, esparto, rice straw, and cellulose were processed.

- Guérin on the Catalan war industry (Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory To Practise*, 1970 [1968], p. 94).

Frequency of meetings of the technical-administrative committee mentioned in the case of Barcelona Locksmithing and Corrugated Shutters Collective was “weekly”, and these meeting occurred after working hours (Mintz, 2013, p. 283). In a collective of the wood industry in Barcelona a committee met twice a week (Alexander, 1999, p. 628). Fraser mentions a workshop having a fortnightly and the quarterly frequency of meetings (Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 354).

In some collectives, the committee were to report weekly on the functioning of the firm to the trade-union committee (and this committee was also selected by a general assembly) (Alexander, 1999, p. 615; Mintz, 2013, p. 284).

The urban workplaces were able to improve the productivity of work by:

- Building and investing in new machinery (lathes, presses, milling machines, perforating machines etc. – especially for arms industry, which had not existed in Catalonia previously) (Dolgoft, 1974, pp. 96 – 97; Alexander, 1999, pp. 467, 533, 537 – 538, 545, 577, 580, 594, 632, 643 – 644, 645, 648; Mintz, 2013, p. 283)
- Setting up new (or refurbishing the old) factories, workshops and facilities (especially for arms and armored vehicle production (which needed facilities of metal industry, furnaces etc.)) (Alexander, 1999, pp. 467, 544 – 546, 594; Mintz, 2013, pp. 120, 280, 282)
- Pooling of available tools and machinery (Mintz, 2013, pp. 115, 242, 281; Alexander, 1999, pp. 467, 629)
- Merging collectives to one another into larger productive units (“agrupament”) (Alexander, 1999, pp. 467, 513, 593, 628 – 629, 632, 634, 647; Mintz, 2013, pp. 120, 238, 242; Dolgoft, 1974, pp. 91, 155; Caplan).

- Change of working hours (CNT-FAI did not always demand 8 hours, in fact it increased the working time, as they saw it beneficial to the war effort²²) (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 97; Alexander, 1999, pp. 539, 561, 589, 629; Mintz, 2013, pp. 67 – 68)

The urban workplaces sought to reduce the difficulties of the work process, and thus established:

- General Assemblies: Communication and problem solving in meetings (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 88, 91, 96, 103 – 104; Alexander, 1999, pp. 462, 467 – 468, 555, 576 – 577, 579, 583, 592, 596, 594, 602, 607 – 609, 634, 645, 648, 657; Fraser, 1986 [1979], pp. 215 – 216, 334, 340 – 341, 345, 350)
- Technical-administrative committees: Establishing recallable management via elected technical-administrative staff (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 88, 94, 96, 103 – 104; Alexander, 1999, pp. 461, 467 – 468, 537, 544, 577, 579, 581, 583, 596, 602, 609 – 610, 634, 645, 648; Mintz, 2013, pp. 281 – 282; Fraser, 1986 [1979], pp. 216, 334, 340, 354)
- Improving working conditions (e.g. buying machines to reduce the strain of manual labor, building new washrooms, changing rooms etc.) (Alexander, 1999, pp. 544 – 545, 580, 589, 607, 612, 643, 646, 648; Mintz, 2013, pp. 283 – 284).
- Change of system of remuneration (Family wage-system/consumer cards, or equalization of wages) (Alexander, 1999, pp. 350, 544, 578, 581, 583, 589, 646, 655; Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 33, 80 – 81, 94, 97, 100, 102, 110; Mintz, 2013, p. 68)
- Rotation of rank-and-file to duties (specifically to delegative duties in committees) (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 90).

The some of the collectives published statistics:

*From the point of view of the services rendered to its customers, and even in financial terms, the trolley-car workers' collective was successful. Solidaridad Obrera noted in March 1938 that, whereas the trolley-cars had carried 97,937,748 passengers between January 1 and July in 1936, and 85,605,516 between July 24 and December 31, for a total of 183,543,361 for the whole year, in 1937 it had carried 233,557,508, **an increase of more than 50,000,000 passengers.***

- Alexander on the Barcelona trolley-car workers' collective (Alexander, 1999, p. 578).

²² CNT demanded that hours should not be reduced due to the war effort (Alexander, 1999, p. 479; Dolgoff, 1974, p. 67). Mintz is critical toward the CNT opposition to reduction of working hours as, he sees this as authoritarianism in CNT leadership (Mintz, 2013, p. 122).

Between January and September 1937, the two plants in Urgel had produced 5,600 tons of paper. This compared with a comparable period just before the closing of the plant in 1936 when they had turned out 4,800 tons.

- Alexander on the improved production in two paper manufacturing plants in Urgel, Catalonia (Alexander, 1999, p. 630).

Previous owners were occasionally surprised by the improvements made when they returned in 1939:

During the war, the machinery, facilities, manufacturing process and physical working conditions at Riviere improved. There was a sense of responsibility, and the workers' capacity was proven despite the union rivalries. [...] The owners found themselves overseeing materials that they had not purchased and improved facilities.

- Balcells on the reaction of returning previous owners in 1939 to the changes in Riviere metallurgy company (Balcells, 2016, p. 84).

*In the case of the Sedó colony, in a 1939 survey the owners admitted that they had not found the company in poor condition **but instead the warehoused products enabled the company to cope with the post-war years with some sense of assurance.***

- Balcells on the Sedó colony (Balcells, 2016, p. 84).

However, there were problems too. Urban self-management experienced set-backs after May 1937 events, when the government began to nationalize industry, and nationalization led to what is claimed by Colonel Guarner in the case of war industries to be a “huge communistic bureaucracy” with “totally inefficient management teams” (Balcells, 2016, p. 82).

Not all failures can be attributed to outside causes. A Catalan nationalist, who worked as an assistant manager of a collective claims that:

The workers' committee and later the works council was never able to impose an efficient order of production; the original members, whose first president was a laborer - a great orator in the CNT style - weren't technically qualified to run the factory, let alone convert it to arms manufacture. Too much was left to luck, too much depended on the individual will of a few people rather than on the combined effort of the whole workforce. The majority of technicians weren't sympathetic to collectivization. . . All in all, I don't think production ever reached 50 per cent of its potential. . .

The factory, moreover, never received orders for the sort of war material it was best suited to produce - large tanks, for example. No new machine tools were brought in; the factory's existing press forge, its milling machines and lathes were not suited for producing shells, grenades and anti-submarine depth charge. . .

- Alexander on the La Maquinista-collective in the Catalan War Industries (Alexander, 1999, p. 535).

While in this case, some problems arose from the antagonism between technicians and manual workers, it seems that in general this collective was simply badly organized.

2.4.5 Agricultural self-management

At general assemblies, peasants elected a management committee of eleven members in each village. Aside from the secretary, all of the members continued to work with their hands. Labour was mandatory for all healthy men between eighteen and sixty. The peasants were divided into groups of ten or more, with a delegate at their head. Each group was assigned a zone of cultivation or a function in accordance with the age of its members and the nature of the task. Every evening the management committee received the delegates of the groups. They frequently invited the residents to a general assembly of the neighbourhood for an account of their activity.

- Daniel Guérin describing the management structure in agricultural collectives. (Guérin, *Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain, 1936 - 1937*, 1984, p. 5)

A number of technologies previously unheard of in Spain were brought into play: technologies, such as “portable bottles of pressurized gas” for vehicles, fruit driers in Levante, poultry and rabbit breeding units in many villages, not to mention forestation management and irrigation works, which were similarly boosted.

- Mintz on the new technologies used (Mintz, 2013, p. 120).

The land was united into one holding and cultivated over great expanses according to a general plan and the directives of agronomists. Small landowners integrated their plots with those of the community. Socialization demonstrated its superiority both over large absentee landholdings, which left a part of the land unplanted, and over smallholdings, cultivated with the use of rudimentary techniques, inadequate seeding, and without fertilizer.

Production increased by 30–50 percent. The amount of cultivated land increased, working methods were improved, and human, animal, and mechanical energy used more rationally.

Farming was diversified, irrigation developed, the countryside partially reforested, nurseries opened, pigsties constructed, rural technical schools created, pilot farms set up, livestock selected and increased, and auxiliary industries set in motion, etc.

- Daniel Guérin on the improvements in the agricultural processes via rationalization, investment, and the building of new facilities. (Guérin, *Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain, 1936 - 1937*, 1984, p. 8)

The latter quote by Guérin has no specific sources, and thus the claim of “production increased by 30 – 50 percent” remains unsubstantiated. Since Guérin mentions citrus farming in that text (Guérin, *Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain, 1936 - 1937*, 1984, p. 8), this might mean that he refers to the eastern coast Levante/Valencia agricultural collectives, that farmed citrus fruits (Dolgoft, 1974, p. 82)²³.

Regardless, the quote gives the general outline of the agricultural improvements, and these improvements (such as the establishment of new facilities and the rationalization of the

²³ So perhaps, for the economic historian, the possible location for finding old agricultural statistics is maybe possible, and warrants further investigation?

productive processes) are described in multiple different sources, as we list below. Thus, it makes sense to believe that these kinds of improvements did exist to one extent or another.

The mentioning of a general plan, and the guidance by agronomists is also something that some might not expect from anarchists – that is to say, anarchists are not expected to plan things, be systematic and give power to experts. But Guérin’s latter quote, and other examples (the list below in this chapter) give an idea how anarchists saw planning and meritocracy at the practical level – technical experts (agrologists, engineers etc.) are consulted by a committee specialized in a particular matter (e.g. planning of agricultural production of a collective). The committee plans the matter systematically, keeps minutes of the meetings and reports to a general assembly. The general assembly then either accepts the work of the committee or recalls the committee members. Similar statements are quoted by Alexander (Alexander, 1999, p. 378).

Gaston Leval claims that in most collectives, the delegates of the various sections of production met weekly to plan work (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 145).

In a rural collective in Binefar, there were additional duties to the committees: “The committee shall report monthly on consumption and production, and supply news about other collectives and events in Spain and abroad” (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 139).

Walter L. Bernecker claims that 3 million people lived in agricultural collectives during the civil war, and that “Edward E. Malefakis estimated that about one-third of all the rural land in Republican Spain, and two-thirds of the cultivated land, was taken over by the collectives” (Alexander, 1999, pp. 325 – 326).

To summarize, anarchist peasants were able to improve the productivity of farming by:

- Experimental farming, research laboratories for studying animal husbandry (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 115, 120 – 121, 123, 132; Alexander, 1999, pp. 363, 380)
- New technologies and methods utilized (new machines acquired, investment in fertilizers, insecticides, seeds, new mechanized cultivation methods practiced etc.) (Mintz, 2013, pp. 120, 260; Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 115, 120, 131, 138; Alexander, 1999, pp. 358, 369)
- Connecting of previously disconnected farmland parcels (as previous private owners had sometimes split-up land into separate parcels surrounded by fences) – i.e.: farming in accordance to soil quality and geography instead of pre-revolution property lines. (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 113, 142; Alexander, 1999, pp. 324, 346, 442; Mintz, 2013, pp. 258, 263 – 264; Fraser, 1986 [1979], pp. 576, 590).

Note that by doing this and the collectivization at large, they reduced unemployment of day-laborers to a vast degree (Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 410). The pre-revolution land reform had been slow, caused instability in the countryside and frustration in the peasants²⁴ (Domenech & Herreros, 2017, p. 20).

- Building of new infrastructure (e.g. roads) or buildings for production, or taking unused buildings (abandoned buildings, churches) to use (establishing stores, schools, dining halls, watchtowers, building flour mills, oil presses) (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 43, 115, 120 – 121, 131, 153; Hogan, *The Freedom to Succeed: The Anarchist Collectives in the Countryside during the Spanish Civil War*, 1999; Alexander, 1999, pp. 325, 348, 380, 422, 424, 667)
- Investment in new machinery (tractors, seeders, threshers etc.), or pooling of existing machinery (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 114; Alexander, 1999, p. 346; Mintz, 2013, p. 264)
- Starting up supplementary industries/side-businesses, such as carpentry and blacksmithing (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 114, 130, 151; Gamero, 1997; Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 577).

They also wanted to reduce the diﬃculties of the work process, and therefore they established:

- General assemblies (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 13, 44, 72, 113, 115, 117, 138 – 140, 144; Alexander, 1999, p. 386; Mintz, 2013, p. 253; Fraser, 1986 [1979], pp. 464, 576, 989, 991 – 992)
- Technical-administrative-committees (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 13, 44, 113, 117, 120, 138 – 139, 144, 151; Balcells, 2016, p. 1; Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 578)
- Rotation of duties (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 151)
- Change of system of remuneration (family wage/consumption card-system or wage equalization) (Alexander, 1999, pp. 350, 363; Mintz, 2013, p. 239; Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 80 – 81).
- Prohibition of work for children under 14 (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 113, 132, 155; Fraser, 1986 [1979], p. 592)

²⁴ A study on the matter states in its conclusion: “Did the glacial pace and uneven deployment land reform cause greater levels of peasant conflict in 1930s Spain? Our answer to the question is a qualified yes.” (Domenech & Herreros, 2017, p. 20).

Federations, such as the Aragon Federation of Collectives, aimed to establish a system of financial support for the collectives, improve yield and the methods of animal husbandry, and the formation of technical schools (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 122 – 123).

Noam Chomsky also commented on agricultural self-management in his essay *Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship*. In it he brings up sources criticizing and supporting the collectives and continues by quoting sources on the communist attacks on the collectives (Chomsky, *Part II of Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship*, 2013, pp. 159 – 160).

The successes of agricultural self-management were even appreciated by the returning previous owners:

*The collectivization of the land properties of Count Romanonés in Miralcampo and Azuqueca by the Castilian Regional Peasant Federation merits special attention. **The peasants altered the topography of the district by diverting the course of the river to irrigate new land, thus tremendously increasing cultivated areas. They constructed a mill, schools, collective dining halls, and new housing for the collectivists.***

*A few days after the close of the Civil War, Count Romanonés reclaimed his domains, expecting the worst, certain that the revolutionary vandals had totally ruined his property. **He was amazed to behold the wonderful improvements made by the departed peasant collectivists.** When asked their names, the Count was told that the work was performed by the peasants in line with plans drawn up by a member of the CNT Building Workers' Union, Gomez Abril, an excellent organizer chosen by the Regional Peasant Federation. As soon as Abril finished his work, he left and the peasants continued to manage the collective.*

Learning that Gomez Abril was jailed in Guadalajara and that he was in a very precarious situation, the Count succeeded in securing his release from jail and offered to appoint him manager of all his properties. Gomez declined, explaining that a page of history had been written and his work finished.

- Gaston Leval on a specific example in agricultural collectivization (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 141).

2.5 Practices of local democracy and local government

The assemblies and administrative committees of municipal government have similar duties than the workers' assemblies and councils/administrative committees above. In fact, in the countryside, in agricultural collectives, an assembly and or a council could both be body of decision-making over production and local politics (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 132, 138 – 139). That is why it is hard to categorize which assembly or council has to do with municipal decision-making, and which has to do with internal decisions of a productive facility – sometimes they are the one and the same thing.

In addition, I argue that democratic control of workplaces was the main goal – while local democracy was not forgotten by any means, it however is not as ideologically interesting to

anarcho-syndicalists. That is why this chapter is later than the chapters on democratic control of work, and that this has less content.

The communes, which had production and local governance completely interwoven, existed primarily in the countryside (Alexander, 1999, p. 654).

2.5.1 General assemblies and administrative-technical committees of local government

As we have discussed overlapping features in previous chapters, I shall only provide couple interesting quotations:

*Every Sunday the syndicate would meet in full assembly to discuss local affairs. The whole village attended and anyone who wished to had the right to speak. Resolutions were passed and **voting took place by a show of hands**. During the rest of the week the committee enforced its will by a system of fines against which an appeal could always be made to the village assembly. What one was witnessing was really the rebirth of the municipality of the early Middle Ages. (Brenan, pp. 180, 181)*

- Sam Dolgoff quoting Gerald Brenan (Brenan wrote “The Spanish Labyrinth”, a significant work on the social and political background of the Spanish Civil War). (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 44).

*Ninety percent of all production, including exchange and distribution, was collectively owned. (The remaining 10% was produced by petty peasant land holders.) The collective’s coordinating functions were conducted by an 8-member administrative commission. This was divided into 8 departments, each headed by a highly qualified secretary, delegated for no set term of office by the rank and file membership of the two unions. Both the CNT and the UGT were equally represented on the Commission—4 for each union. **All delegates were subject to instant recall by the General Assembly. The departments were: Culture and Public Health, Statistics and Labor, Industry, Transportation and Communications...***

- Gaston Leval and Alardo Prats describe the municipal system in Graus (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 130)

2.5.2 Affinity groups (grupos de afinidada)

Affinity groups were another feature of culture of the Spanish anarchists. These groups consisted of like-minded individuals or friends (Gamero, 1997). There were multiple functions to the affinity groups. Their activity ranged from discussion of politics (Alexander, 1999, p. 82), hobbies (like vegetarianism and nudism) (Guérin, Anarchism: From Theory To Practise, 1970 [1968], p. 85) to even assassinations (Alexander, 1999, pp. 82 – 83). If several affinity groups existed in the same area, they met (when possible) in monthly assemblies (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 20).

The affinity groups were the base units of FAI, meaning they sent delegates to the congresses of FAI (Alexander, 1999, p. 85). Alexander claims that there was no hierarchical pressure

within the FAI, that the groups enjoyed a wide degree of autonomy and that there were various tendencies without the aim to unify them (Alexander, 1999, p. 19).

It must be noted though, that probably the most famous group, “Los Solidarios”, which had committed assassinations and robberies, was not a member of the FAI (Mintz, 2013, p. 185). But the matters are more complicated by the fact that the members of Los Solidarios, Durruti, Ascaso and Garcia Oliver, all spoke and wrote as if they were a part of it (Mintz, 2013, p. 185). It is uncertain why the members of Los Solidarios acted this way.

The “tertulias” were an earlier phenomenon similar to the FAI-type affinity group (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, pp. 18 – 19). The tertulias existed already in the 1880’s (Alexander, 1999, p. 82). In them, people usually met at their local cafés to discuss ideas and plans for action (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 18).

I interpret the grupos de afinidad as being casually organized, and that they usually must have started from free-time discussions among friends and acquaintances. Dolgoﬀ notes that an affinity group are similar to a work group in a self-managed workplace (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 126). I think it is fair to assume, that some affinity groups formed into work groups, when the collectivization came, as hinted at by Augustin Souchy:

The smallest unit of collectivism in Aragon is the labor group. It is composed of 5 to 10, and sometimes more members. They are formed by peasants who have friendly relations with one another; sometimes also the residents of a street.

- (Alexander, 1999, p. 374)

The next chapters on exchange and public services are included in this thesis, as they demonstrate solutions designed through, and outcomes resulting from, the process of general-assembly/technical-administrative-committee dualism.

2.6 Exchange, consumption, and trade

2.6.1 Remuneration and consumption

There were various systems of remuneration in anarchist collectives. In some places, wages were retained. In others, local currencies were made. Or a system of ration cards or a family wage. Or a system of labor vouchers. Most striking implemented alternative was the system of free distribution.

Let’s first show evidence of the traditional system of wages.

Wages were also paid, and the worker had the alternative of taking his/her income in money wages, in goods, or in a combination of these.

- Alexander on the Valencia garment collective (Alexander, 1999, p. 620).

In the above quote, a new system of receiving products directly rather than money. But many other places went further. The anarchists went further in other places as they disliked the accumulation of money:

The anarchists traditional contempt for money brought radical social changes. Local coins and vouchers were created, and in some places, money was completely abolished.

- Living Utopia describes the changes in remuneration and exchange²⁵ (Gamero, 1997).

Money disappeared. They set up a store that was called "Kropotkin's". You could get food there in exchange for vouchers or with the ration card they had made.

- A description by one of the interviewed anarchists in the Living Utopia (Gamero, 1997).

The labor vouchers contained the time of work done (Alexander, 1999, pp. 37, 60). The labor vouchers differed from money in the sense, that it was not transferable from one person to another, and that the voucher was usable only until the year after the last work day (Alexander, 1999, p. 60). When a person was not able to receive labor vouchers from work, it was proposed that they received a letter of consumption from the local administrative committee (Alexander, 1999, p. 60).

Below we have a more thorough description of the family wage. Note that the women received less money than the men:

They have established the family wage. The head of the family gets 4 pesetas, 3 the wife, 3 the children of 14 to 18, from 10 to 14, 2; and 1 from the date of birth. This demonstrates how great is the interest of the collectivity to take care of the maintenance of all those beings who form part of it. Vegetables and fruits are distributed without payment, and when the cooperative has a good number of goods available, they too are distributed.

- An information bulletin about the practises in the community of Altona in the province of Lerida as quoted by Robert J. Alexander (Alexander, 1999, p. 350).

There is no explanation given to why women received less than men. One might assume, that this might have to do with men eating more and working more physically demanding professions, but such an assumption is careless, as we do not have proof for one argument or another. Another argument is that as women were less represented in committees, so this was the expected result.

²⁵ Dolgoff's collection shows a picture with several different local currencies (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 84). Living Utopia shows various pictures of the different ration cards and vouchers (Gamero, 1997).

Note that there is no reference to different schools of consumption systems of anarchism, not in the quotes here, and not in Living Utopia. I take this to mean, that at the practical level, the distribution system depended on practical considerations, rather than principles. People probably were somewhat illiterate about the different nuances of the schools of “mutualism” and “anarcho-collectivism” – or if they knew about them, they seemed not to care about them. However, Alexander notes that rural collectives usually tried to implement free distribution, while urban collectives almost always had a system of labor vouchers (Alexander, 1999, pp. 60 – 61).

Wage labor and, partially at least, money were abolished. Each worker or family received in remuneration for his labor a bond denominated in pesetas that could only be exchanged for consumer goods in communal stores, often located in churches or their outbuildings.

The unused sum was credited to the individual's reserve account. It was possible to withdraw pocket money from this sum in limited amounts. Rent, electricity, medical care, pharmaceutical products, and old age assistance were free, as was school, which was often located in a former convent and mandatory for all children below fourteen, for whom manual labor was prohibited.

- Daniel Guérin on the system of remuneration (Guérin, Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain, 1936 - 1937, 1984, p. 6)

Note above and below the use of churches. They were turned into stores or warehouses. This was partly inspired by the anti-religion of the anarchists but was also practical solution: churches were located in central places in towns and villages, and everybody knew where they were. Therefore, it made sense to establish the stores and warehouses in churches, as they were places to which travel was usually easy.

In numerous collectives food and other supplies for local consumption were located in the churches, which made ideal warehouses. The method of local distribution varied from collective to collective. In some collectives a family salary was introduced. In others, the members of the collective decided to pay each person a daily salary fixed by the collective. Payment was made on the basis of need and not on the hours worked.

Other collectives abolished state money altogether and either used their own local money or else money was replaced by "tokens" or "coupons" exchangeable for goods.

In all collectives when articles were scarce rationing was applied. "Everyone, whether able to work or not received the necessities of life as far as the collective could provide them." The working age ranged from 14 to 60. Sick days were counted as work days. Old people were taken care of and where necessary special homes were built for them.

- Deirdre Hogan on the day-to-day life (Hogan, The Freedom to Succeed: The Anarchist Collectives in the Countryside during the Spanish Civil War, 1999).

A system of rationing is mentioned above, which was implemented due to scarcity, rather than ideology. The system of free distribution however seems to have been the most ideological solution, and was probably the most radical arrangement:

Often participants of a collective could take as much of certain provisions, such as bread, vegetables, fruit and in some cases wine (Muniesa) and even tobacco (Beceite), as they needed and without restriction. The collectives operated on the basis of 'to each according to need, from each according to ability'.

- Deidre Hogan on free distribution (Hogan, *The Freedom to Succeed: The Anarchist Collectives in the Countryside during the Spanish Civil War*, 1999).

However, we find also out that free distribution led to overconsumption in many instances (Mintz, 2013, pp. 235 – 236).

One thing to note about local currencies, was that they were not usable outside the collective:

They issued their own local money in the form of vouchers, tokens, rationing booklets, certificates, coupons, etc., which carried no interest and were not negotiable outside of the issuing collective.

- Sam Dolgoff on different local exchange methods (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 80)

In the next chapter, we discuss the use of currency when leaving a collective.

2.6.2 Property, trade and barter

*Money was abolished, all land-owners would **have their property expropriated**, regardless of whether they were on the left or the right. **All machinery would be at the people's disposal. All buildings would be used for lodging** inhabitants, no matter who the owner was. Work was done collectively, and the workers were distributed in groups.*

- Miguel Celma describing what happened in Calanda in the province of Teruel (Gamero, 1997).

Machinery, tools, and raw materials were pooled for use (Gamero, 1997; Dolgoff, 1974, p. 95). The buildings were used for new purposes – one of the frequent methods was the use of Churches as warehouses, perhaps a part of the anti-religious beliefs of the anarchists (as noticed by Orwell) (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 114; Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938 [2013], p. 211)

The collectives were based on the workers self-management of their workplaces. Augustin Souchy writes: "The collectives organised during the Spanish Civil War were workers' economic associations without private property. The fact that collective plants were managed by those who worked in them did not mean that these establishments became their private property. The collective had no right to sell or rent all or any part of the collectivised factory or workshop, The rightful custodian was the CNT, the National Confederation of Workers Associations. But not even the CNT had the right to do as it pleased. Everything had to be decided and ratified by the workers themselves through conferences and congresses."

- Hogan quoting Augustin Souchy (Hogan, Industrial Collectivisation during the Spanish Revolution, 2003)

The property controlled by the collectivists was not sold or rented among them (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 77). The collectives however sometimes conducted business with other collectives using pesetas as currency (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 114), or they gave pesetas to their members for use on outside visits (Alexander, 1999, p. 400). Collectivists tried to barter as much as possible, instead of exchange via money (Alexander, 1999, pp. 380, 400, 495; Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 87). Barter tended to become the norm in exchanges between collectives (Balcells, 2016, p. 87).

Transactions between collectives were conducted without money. The Calanda collective, using the barter system, traded oil for Barcelona cloth. Adamuz (Valencia) used both barter and money exchange. At first the city merchants rejected interchange of goods. But as the prolonged war produced scarcity of necessary goods and even provisions, and inflation set in, they gladly accepted the interchange (barter system).

- Jose Peirats' account on barter (Dolgoﬀ, 1974, p. 114).

In Catalonia, in its textile industry in 1936, there was a plan for establishing a separate currency for international trade (Mintz, 2013, p. 178). This plan was probably not implemented. Foreign trade was done in regular currency, such as the peseta. Another matter in the foreign trade was that in Catalonia, foreign trade was initially chaotic, with many organizations ("Economic Council, the Supply Council and the CNT") simultaneously doing overlapping foreign trade (Alexander, 1999, p. 502). There was an effort to fix this, but not much detail is given, how successful the fixes were (Alexander, 1999, p. 502)

We have examined, how consumption happened at the consumer level, and how trade and barter occurred. Unfortunately, I do not have space in this thesis to discuss how anarchist federations organized supply committees, and standardized family wage cards – I will publish these chapters elsewhere.

2.7 Public services

Light, water, school, everything was free. You didn't have to pay for anything.

- Juan Romero in Living Utopia (Gamero, 1997).

The anarchists made efforts to give public services free. Below we discuss education, and some aspects of health-care and social-care.

2.7.1 Education

Besides, their teaching and propaganda were shot through moralistic themes. Respect for womanhood and equality of the sexes in the home and in society, love of nature and of

learning, the drive against alcohol abuse, tobacco and gambling are recurrent themes in their newspaper articles and rally speeches...

Reading was unrelenting by night in their farmsteads; by day in the ploughed fields, during (smoking) breaks the spectacle was always the same: some worker reading and the rest listening very attentively. A newspaper was the most welcomed gift that could be bestowed upon a working man who found himself at a loose end. Farm labourers carried some pamphlet or newspaper in their knapsacks along with their lunches. Any one of the trade unionist villages received hundreds of copies of the like-minded press, purchased even by those who could not read.

- Diaz Del Moral (who was republican free-mason, and not an anarchist) describes anarchist interest for education, the “culture of self-education” and the themes of self-education (Mintz, 2013, p. 24).

Anarchists valued widespread education, as they believed that ordinary individuals are supposed to be in control of the entire economic system and society at large. Therefore, education had to be given to all, as everyone was seen as a person needing information for their duty as an active, contributing member of society (Mintz, 2013, pp. 24, 26). Living Utopia describes the foundation of ateneos (ateneum), active newspaper press (e.g. Tierra y Libertad, La Novela Ideal, Generación Consciente), and the publishing of political and philosophical books (e.g. 12 proofs for the non-existence of God, anarchist classics, such as Kropotkin) (Gamero, 1997). Many libraries were set up (Mintz, 2013, p. 255; Alexander, 1999, pp. 380, 545, 609, 612, 670; Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 115, 126, 152). In Dolgoff’s collection, there are pictures of piles of different anarchist newspapers and magazines (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 48 – 49).

Ateneos were centers, in which people gathered to discuss, debate, educate themselves and exercise culture (Alexander, 1999, p. 69). They sometimes existed in connection to cafés and bars (Alexander, 1999, pp. 99 – 100). They became the places of adult education (Alexander, 1999, p. 69). Ateneos were formed from the arrival of anarchism in Spain, but their forming sped up especially during the Second Republic (1931 – 1939) (Alexander, 1999, p. 69; Gamero, 1997). Ateneos spread throughout anarchist areas of Spain (Alexander, 1999, pp. 69, 99 – 100, 205, 330; Gamero, 1997).

So, the first aspect of anarchist education was the active culture of reading, discussion and culture described above – organized in practice in ateneos. The second aspect of anarchist policy toward education was to help the education of children: establishing free public schools and ending child labor (Gamero, 1997; Dolgoff, 1974, p. 113). Schools were founded all around, some of them inspired by rationalism of Guardia Ferrer (Alexander, 1999, pp. 349, 363, 378, 612, 663, 666, 678; Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 115, 121, 126, 132 – 133, 148, 152, 156).

Francisco Guardia Ferrer was a significant anarchist educationalist, who laid foundations for the anarchist ideas about education in Spain (Gamero, 1997; Alexander, 1999, p. 72). He advocated free public rationalist and humanist schooling: schooling, that gave dignity to students and appreciated their individuality, and was aimed toward reason (Gamero, 1997; Mintz, 2013, p. 42). He founded the “Modern School” in 1902, which was inspired by Cartesian thought and rationalism, and which aimed to combat Catholic obscurantism (Gamero, 1997; Alexander, 1999, p. 72). Ferrer was executed by firing squad in 1909, when accused to be part of the mutinies by army recruits in Barcelona against their deployment to Morocco (Gamero, 1997; Mintz, 2013, p. 42; Dolgoff, 1974, p. 142).

Several technical schools were established and planned (Dolgoff, 1974, pp. 115, 121; Alexander, 1999, pp. 362 – 363). For example, the “University of Moncada”, which was under the usage of Spanish National Federation of Peasants (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 121). “The university gave courses in animal husbandry, poultry raising, animal breeding, agriculture, tree science, etc..” (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 121).

Rationalist schooling was not always liked. It has been claimed to agitate the communist party:

Hence the further vandalism and attacks of the Communist Party on the rationalist schools as happened in the case of the 82nd Mountain Brigade, which banned the 115-child school of the collective in Ademuz.

- Mintz quotes a claim on the attack against the rationalist schools by the Communist Party²⁶ (Mintz, 2013, p. 121).

2.7.2 Health care and social care

Those who were in charge on the various levels of the system were elected by the appropriate general assemblies of workers. Once a week, the central committee of the sindicato met with delegates from the nine primary subdivisions of the system, to coordinate activities.

- Alexander on the CNT Sindicato de la Salud, which organized the health services throughout Catalonia (Alexander, 1999, p. 675).

One distinctive accomplishment of the Monzón comarcal federation was the establishment and maintenance, in Binefar, of a hospital, the Casa de Salud Durruti. A veteran of the comarca described how the hospital was established: ‘After refurbishing an old farmhouse, various pavilions were installed thanks to the collective effort and to two doctors who collaborated disinterestedly and indefatigably on behalf of the ill. To obtain the necessary material, a Catalan surgeon and a member of the comarcal Committee of Collectives went to Barcelona. They bought the best surgical material available in that

²⁶ The quote is quite specific about locations and who the involved people where: this claim may warrant further study on the event.

time of war, for obstetrics, traumatology, an ultraviolet x-ray apparatus, as well as sufficient material for an analytic laboratory.'

By April 1937 they had 40 beds in the hospital, in sections for general medicine, prophylaxis and treatment of venereal diseases, and gynaecology. Until July 1937, the hospital sent a midwife to the homes of women about to give birth, but thereafter, such cases were brought into the hospital. About 25 outpatients per day were handled. The hospital was open to anyone in the 32 villages of the comarca

- Alexander on the organization of a hospital in Binefar (Alexander, 1999, pp. 366 – 367).

CNT National Industrial Federation of Railway Workers arranged health-care for the workers and the dependents of the workers, which is said to have included “adequate medical service, home nursing, operation of clinics, etc.” (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 93). Jose Peirats claims that the “Amposta [located in southern Catalonia] built 14 new schools, a sanitarium, a hospital, and purified the supply of drinking water” (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 115). In Albalate de Cinca, a doctor (who was a liberal, and not an anarchist) interviewed states that he was given as much money as he needed by the collective to buy medical supplies and new medical books (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 128).

There are varying accounts of the care for the elderly. Alexander states that in Lerida, people retired at the age of 60 (Alexander, 1999, p. 350). Mintz claims however, that in Lerida, “there was no retirement”, and the elderly continued to work in less straining work, for example, in picking olives (Mintz, 2013, p. 255).

It is stated, that in Graus, pre-natal care for pregnant women was improved, and that children under the age of 14 are prohibited from working (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 132). In Binefar, this age was 15 (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 139). The schooling for children is described in the chapter concerning education. Child-care was only occasionally provided by the collectives, states Hogan (Hogan, Industrial Collectivisation during the Spanish Revolution, 2003).

In Graus, it was stated that the family wage was given to the sick and disabled (Dolgoff, 1974, p. 132).

Birth-control education was given along-side Ferrer Guardia-style schooling (Mintz, 2013, p. 120). Living Utopia shows that the anarchists published a newspaper “Generacion Consciente/Estudios”, which dealt with the topics of health and sexuality, and women and men could write to the publishers of that paper asking questions on to those topics (Gamero, 1997).

3 ANALYSIS

As we have seen, the anarchists want in theory, a system of individual participation and recallability. They have proposed systems of general assemblies and recallable committees. In practice, in the case of Spain, they partly implemented such a system. In part they failed: there are examples of forced collectivization and unrecallable committees. However, in other areas collectivization was voluntary and successful due to a high degree of democracy and engagement.

Through such a system, the Spanish workers and peasants were able to improve productivity, invest in machinery, improve the means of production, and improve working conditions. They were able to improve education and healthcare. They published vast amounts of newspapers and pamphlets. They established trade-union federations up to the national scale and established both agricultural and area federations up to the regional scale. The agricultural federations helped the establishment of facilities for the study and improvement of agriculture.

They however failed their principles in some significant parts: they took part in government (of both the Republican government, and the Catalan Generalitat), they did not consult the rank-and-file in all cases, they did not always follow their proposed principle of recallability and were not able to establish a large system of industrial federalism.

They occasionally forced collectivization, in some events used violence, did not achieve significant female representation in their committees, their attempts at free distribution of products resulted many times in overconsumption, they did not always achieve good standardization of production, and they did not always achieve a system of retirement for the elderly.

The CNT also did not seem to provide significant, organized technical training for the technical aspects of management, but this did not always matter, as there are many cited instances of not only agrarian but urban collectives employing technical experts and in general being technically capable and efficient.

Some of the failures of the economy were the result of the lack of raw materials, the naval blockade prohibiting export and import, the fanaticism of some parts of the movement, the lack of government co-operation with the anarchists (e.g. in the giving of credit), and the anti-collectivist and anti-localist actions toward anarchists and their collectives – the latter primarily caused by the Communist Party of Spain.

The successes the anarchists had cannot all be attributed to the CNT-FAI, as the UGT was also with them in some collectives; and that the collectivists were not necessarily even literate about anarchist principles, but acted on the basis of pragmatism and general opposition to unjust conditions of industrial and agricultural life; and that the CNT-FAI sometimes failed to be connected with its rank-and-file, meaning that the rank-and file acted independently of its intentions (Mintz, 2013, p. 124). However, the latter might be argued to be in accordance with anarchist principles, even though it was not in accordance with the CNT-FAI.

The general assembly/committee-structures themselves did not seem to be themselves the causes of the failures listed above.

Why were general assemblies useful? In the general assemblies, a lot of information about problems and solutions from different workers and sections were gathered in one place: *It makes sense that functional organizations efficiently gather information about the problems faced by the organization and gather also proposals for improvement. Any successful organization must have a good system of gathering information from the populace, and a good process in which the populace interacts in co-operation with technical experts.*

In the information and popular engagement aspects, the anarchists, based on the evidence given, were very successful. In the technical aspects, the anarchists were moderately successful, taking into their collectives previous owners and technicians as consultants and committee members – while occasionally antagonisms existed between the (white-collar) workers and (blue-collar) anarchists.

All in all, the anarchists had a culture of frequent participation already in the pre-war period, extending to the 1800's. They also had a partly functional system of recallability. Chomsky remarks in *Government in the Future*, that their system of representation proposed by anarchists is “obviously very different than our system of representation” (Chomsky, *Government in the Future*, 1970, p. 13). In addition, we can say, that the system of participation proposed is obviously very different.

Errico Malatesta remarks that the “metaphysical tendency” to “accept the abstraction for the real being” “is a disease of the mind” (Malatesta, 2009 [1891], p. 15). Meaning that there is a vast problem in rhetoric when we assume that the institutions follow the abstract principles proposed, while the institutions fail to follow those principles in practice. The Spanish example contains good examples of both functioning local democracy and self-management, but also

contains violence, fanaticism and forced collectivization. History does not care for the human need to have a simple generalization of events.

The anarchist proposes that local politics, trade-union and workplace decision-making, and the mandating and control of representatives ought all be participatory processes, meaning that the rank-and-file can take part (and the most active ones do take part) in frequent meetings. Examples give frequencies that are e.g., “weekly”, “bi-weekly” or “monthly”.

Whether such a system makes sense, is up to the reader to figure out. But the point here is a descriptive one: that this is what has been proposed, and this was the system that was trying to be established. Based on the evidence above, the answer to the question: *What is the main goal of anarchism?* the answer is *general assemblies and recallable committees*. When anarchists used violence, we have given examples of other anarchists condemning that violence. Violence was not a universal doctrine, and I claim, not the main point.

But can we trust these sources, based on which the argument is made? The most detailed sources on Spanish anarchism seem to have come from anarchists themselves. So, can we consider these sources trustworthy?

Firstly, it seems, that in addition to detailing successes, the same sources can bring out flaws as well.

As for the massive study by Alexander, it must be pointed out, that Alexander was not an anarchist, but an anti-Stalinist leftist. His analysis might be biased in attributing flaws to the Stalinists, but he does not write from the standpoint of fundamentally justifying anarchism. Neither Orwell, Fraser, Bolloren and Brennan were anarchists.

In addition, the anarchist sources, that were made after the war, have an unusual advantage: They are not hindered by governmental censorship, like so many sources in history. The anarchists do not have an anarchist government to restrict their expression. Anarchism is by nature politically incorrect, and thus, they are not restricted to keep retelling what most of society wants to hear. So, while individual anarchists might lie²⁷ or have false memories, they are not forced as much to say acceptable things.

²⁷ For perhaps, out of ideological conviction, self-justification, or fanaticism.

One might examine in this light the validity of claims made by anarchists especially in the documentary, *Living Utopia*.

4 CONCLUSION

From the argumentation above, we can conclude that the sources are quite trustworthy.

Therefore, based on the evidence given, and on the basis of the evaluation that the evidence is usable, we can conclude that:

- 1) Anarchist areas of Spain had a significant number of general assemblies and committees.
- 2) This structure brought improvements to productivity of work and the conditions of the peasants, workers, and their families.
- 3) The system had a significant amount of participation at the rank-and-file and grassroots level.

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