1990). The answer offered was because it was in their best interest. Aggrandizers made it in their best interest through skilful manipulation of social circumstances and material resources. But another answer is that in many cases they didn't submit; aggrandizers were curtailed by overt and subversive resistance to their ends.

This point brings to the forefront one issue not fully addressed by Borake – the relationship between the theory of anarchism and the concept of egalitarianism. They are not the same thing – anarchism, with its emphasis on autonomy and decentralization, staves off centralization at a political level and maintains autonomy at a local level, but it does not necessarily maintain egalitarianism in all social contexts. Coast Salish societies of the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America had significant inequalities, yet remained politically decentralized and maintained a high degree of autonomy in decision making (Grier 2017). In short, they traded off equality for autonomy.

The empirical component of Borake's study offers a fresh look at monumental constructions in Iron Age and medieval Scandinavia (monumental in the sense of Grier and Schwadron 2017). Most critical is the notion that we should see in many of the collective, expansive and iterative construction works she considers not the heavy hand of centralized power, but the product of decentralized collective action. How such enduring works can serve to reify decentralized politics and local autonomy has been quite underappreciated. Collective action in the service of autonomy might seem incongruous, but only from starting assumptions that preclude it (see Trigger 1990).

We do get inklings of similar connections and practices from the archaeology of hunter-gatherer-fishers in the south-eastern US (e.g. Randall 2015; Wallis 2008), and similar to Borake's study of Danevirke, there is a long arc to the construction process, often covering millennia, that reiterates, reinforces and at times remakes the social order over time. Similar ideas are also emerging from the Northwest Coast of North America (Grier, Angelbeck and McLay 2017).

The archaeological question then becomes, how do we confidently recognize the products of anarchic organization in the archaeological record? Does a slow additive emergence and repeated investment in material thing sites directly imply networks, justified authority, autonomy and decentralization? That is Borake's assertion in using the term 'thing sites' to describe such places – that the materiality and sociality of these places are embedded in a recursive and persistent relationship through time, reflecting expressions of anarchism principles. This is something we should be evaluating in archaeological contexts around the world.

So I see strength in Borake's application of anarchism as both a theoretical and an analytical framework. Ultimately this approach can provide a way to rethink aspects of the material record of collective action and its relation to a core set of principles that were undoubtedly operating in many social contexts in the past. In this sense, it offers a bottom-up theoretical perspective that can allow us to – in Borake's words – 'gain a more complex and nuanced understanding of how societies operate' (p. 62; see also Furholt *et al.* 2019).

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We run tingz, tingz nah run we

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Anarchist perspectives represent a beguiling series of inversions to common, Western, modes of thought.[1] Once the principles of non-hierarchic organization have been grasped, many concepts which might have been considered self-evident have to be questioned, and much of what is

thought to be known unravels into uncertainty and new possibilities. Borake's reframing of the Late Iron Age and early medieval Scandinavian cultures is a welcome example of this process.

The development of anarchist archaeology, informed by the work of earlier generations of anthropologists, allows assumptions about the development of socially stratified, hierarchical and authoritarian polities to be rigorously examined. It is important that we do not transpose anarchist organizational principles too enthusiastically, and in many instances traditional hierarchic explanations remain more realistic frameworks. The lens to which Borake refers is an interesting and useful tool, but it often bears more of a resemblance to the warped glass of a fun-house mirror than to the precision optics of a scientific instrument. It is only sensible to regard the view through this lens with a level of scepticism, and a large amount of corroborative evidence is needed to bolster any anarchist interpretation of archaeological subjects.

Thing sites have previously held a place in the comfortable narrative of unilinear evolution of European societies, a stage in the development of increasingly large polities, leading eventually to the emergence of the modern European nation states (Earle 1997, 18–33; Pluciennik 2005; Sanmark and Semple 2008; Harrison 2013, 44–49; Ødegaard 2018, 158–60; O'Grady 2018). In Borake's interpretation, thing sites are recast as periodic meeting places for anarchist communities, functioning as active counters to the development of authoritarian rule. Borake has shown that thing meetings featured several of the crucial strategies found in both Clastres's and Barclay's models of limited leadership: the participation of all male members of the community, the selection of temporary leaders for specific purposes, and leaders being subservient to, rather than dominant over, the community (Clastres 1989, 29–47; Barclay 1990, 121–50). In this anarchist reading, thing sites would have provided locations where tensions could be rebalanced, complex communal plans developed, and group cohesion maintained, without threatening individual or community autonomy.

If the Scandinavian thing sites were used by anarchist societies then their operation at local, regional and over-regional scales may identify them as nodes in some form of anarcho-federalist network (Barclay 1990, 16–17; Marshall 2008). The anarchist nature of this type of network was neatly surmised by Ward (1996, 53): 'human activity should begin from what is local and immediate, should link in a network with no center and no directing agency'. Anarcho-federalist networks counteract the tendency for power to accumulate hierarchically by limiting the range of topics that the successively higher levels in the network can claim authority over. The local meeting place would be where a large range of local matters were considered and, when necessary, where delegates would be selected and authorized to represent the interests of the local community at regional meetings. The regional meetings would concern themselves with important regional-level matters but would have limited scope to influence local matters. The same process is repeated for the over-regional scale, which would have limited influence over regional matters and no involvement with local matters. Any attempt by a regional or over-regional level to overextend the duration or scope of authority lent to it by the lower levels would be fiercely resisted. Intra- and intercommunity violence provides the balancing mechanism which would stop any transition to authoritarianism (Clastres 1989, 189–218; Barclay 1990, 72–76).

Projecting an anarcho-federalist social pattern onto the archaeological record is a reasonably simple task. It is far more difficult to make such a strong argument that anarcho-federalist explanations would find wide acceptance at the expense of traditional hierarchic explanations. For the late prehistoric and early historic Scandinavian world such a proposition should be supported by a wide body of evidence drawn from archaeology, mythology, proto-history and history.

If these Scandinavian societies really were organized as anarchist federations, we should be able to identify periods of peace interspersed with small-scale conflicts between neighbouring groups and larger conflicts with more distant groups (Clastres 2010, 272–77). Leadership would be fluid, transferring between federalized groups seemingly at random, and should a strong leader come to prominence, their dominance or the dominance of their descendants would end rapidly either through a break in succession or through a period of internal conflict (Barclay 1990, 133–43;

Clastres 2010, 311–14). Over time there would be a noticeable 'failure' to develop kingship belonging to a specific lineage from a single community. Rephrased in anarchist terms, this pattern would be read as a noticeable 'success' in efforts to prevent any single lineage group rising to a position of permanent authority (Clastres 1989, 199). Wealth would be held both privately and communally and there should be evidence for a nuanced system for the redistribution and/or destruction of wealth, as the prolonged accumulation of wealth by any one individual or lineage is not compatible with this type of system (Clastres 2010, 259–60; Angelbeck and Grier 2012, 555–56).

The second idea I find particularly compelling in Borake's article is the notion that the Scandinavian diaspora was not the result of some form of Malthusian population pressure driving colonists out from their homelands to find new areas to exploit (Sawyer 2001; Manco 2013). Borake suggests instead that we look at the diaspora as an escape from increasing levels of authoritarianism. Clastres argued that anarchist organizational principles were stable over time, and that mechanisms to prevent the development of authoritarian rule were not easily overcome. Vulnerability came from outside the local system, when neighbouring areas transferred to authoritarian rule and began to influence and destabilize the delicately balanced anarchist social structures (Clastres 1989, 199–205; Barclay 1990, 140).[2] The Scandinavian world in this period would have come under exactly this form of external pressure, derived from neighbouring authoritarian societies in Central and Eastern Europe. Borake identifies the Danevirke defensive earthworks as one response to this threat and the diaspora as another.

The Scandinavian community which migrated to Iceland in the late 9th century is particularly important to this discussion. It has long been recognized that existing social orders were not successfully re-established in Iceland. The colonists lived in small, isolated and largely autonomous communities, paying only lip service to those who claimed to hold authority. This has been framed as a result of the harsh environment, which in various ways precluded regular contact between different parts of the colony, and the isolated communities therefore had little to gain from accepting the authority of any remote groups claiming their fealty (Byock 2001). If the motivation for the migration had been to escape a change to more authoritarian rule in the homelands, then the Icelandic migration would have to be regarded as being far more successful than has previously been acknowledged. The system began to change in the 12th and early 13th centuries when six prominent families began to act as regional-scale rulers. In the 1260s the communities collectively chose to submit to the Norwegian king. They regained much of their former autonomy by their submission to a distant authority, who responded by limiting the role of the local rulers (ibid.). This negotiated rebalancing of power seems to highlight how much the colonists had valued their personal autonomy.

As a final point I want to offer my only real criticism of Borake's paper: the identification of acts of resistance to authority as inherently anarchist. The revolutionary urge is far from an anarchist prerogative. The historical record provides an abundance of examples of reactionary movements that sought only to reform authority, or to replace it in kind, not to abolish it altogether. Borake repeatedly mentions Robin Hood's campaign of resistance (to the authority of both the local sheriff and the king of England), but fails to mention that in the popular version of the story the Merry Men are keen supporters of King Richard.[3] The anthropological record provides plentiful examples of traditional societies operating anarchically, but history provides only a limited number of examples of hierarchic societies attempting to establish or revert to anarchism. Bakunin's hypothetical hominids may well have been natural-born agitators, but it would be wise not to simply assume that they, or any other troublemakers throughout history, were anarchists (Bakunin 1871, 1). One of the central points of anarchist archaeology is that established explanations have insisted on the existence of hierarchical organization, and lack awareness of viable alternatives. Archaeologists engaging with anarchism must be careful not to mirror that mistake by raising the black flag over every act of resistance, reform or regicide.

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Notes

[1] The title of this piece is a Jamaican proverb.

[2] Clastres did not resolve how authoritarian rule in neighbouring communities could have originated beyond invoking influence from a further external group, and so on, leaving a 'chicken-and-egg'-style 'mystery' of the origin of political authority for future researchers to grapple with (Clastres 1989, 205). Barclay (1990, 136) identified the 'big-man' style of leadership as being most vulnerable to internal authoritarian takeover.

[3] There is serious doubt whether there ever was a historical Robin Hood, and even if we were to accept that the medieval stories did derive from an actual person, their actions and motivations are entirely obscured by time (Knight 2006; Baldwin 2010).

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Applying an anarchist lens to the archaeological record. On Borake's 'anarchistic actions' in Scandinavian culture history

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Trine Louise Borake argues here that anarchism can open up new interpretive terrain in our archaeological analyses. For many archaeologists, our cultural habitus, resulting from state-centred lives, can lead to default positions and/or ethnocentric biases that can obscure as much as they may reveal about the archaeological record of non-state societies. I agree with Borake that anarchism as an interpretive framework is especially important for cases concerning societies that blur boundaries between the egalitarian and the hierarchical. In my own research I have been involved in some assessments of the Iron Age (Angelbeck in press), but this period is not my primary area of specialization. I welcome Borake's assessments in these cases from the Scandinavian Iron Age and Middle Ages, but I will constrain my commentary primarily to the theoretical approach presented here.

Borake offers that anarchism can provide an alternative approach to the archaeological record. I agree that, too often, archaeologists can emphasize the centralized aspects of societies, highlighting the elite households, administrative centres, or the inner sanctum of temple priests. In so doing, the interpretive histories can omit the livelihoods of the majority of people. Borake provides a perspective that does not view the record from the top of the mound, as it were, or the archaeological history of 'great men', but instead allows for more of a 'people's archaeology'. When a historical reconstruction focuses on the aristocratic or upper class, the elites are framed as active agents, with the implication that other classes are merely passive observers of historical changes generated and created by the elites. Anarchism helps to counter such portrayals. As Borake phrases it, anarchist approaches help us to view intentionality in individuals and local groups as well, such that social organizations of whatever formation – including egalitarian or decentralized societies – are viewed as actively maintained social formations by all who form them, not just as structures led or formed by elites. Rather, the networked organization of thing sites of Late Iron Age Scandinavia, the communally constructed defences of Danevirke, or the nomadic mobility or migration of multiple peoples to avoid centralized concentrations of power, I concur, are examples of anarchistic impulses of peoples.

Borake argues for a 'third way' of applying anarchist analyses, meaning not restricting its analysis to non-state societies (first) or applying it critically to current archaeological practices (second). Her third approach is to apply an anarchist approach to any type of society in the past,