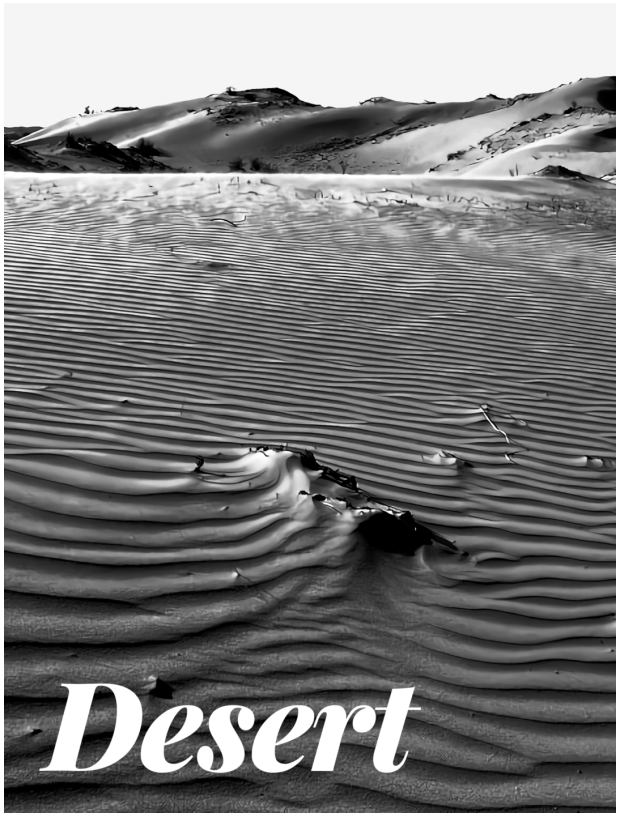
Desert

Anonymous



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10. Desert **66**

Desert[1] noun

1. A barren or desolate area, especially: **a.** A dry, often sandy region of little rainfall, extreme temperature, and sparse vegetation. **b.** A region of permanent cold that is largely or entirely devoid of life. **c.** An apparently lifeless area of water. **2.** An empty or forsaken place; a wasteland: *a cultural desert.* **3. Archaic** A wild, uncultivated, and uninhabited region.

[Middle English, from Old French, from Late Latin *desertum,* from neuter past participle of *deserere*, to desert; see **desert[2]**.]

Author's Note

I have written Desert as a nature loving anarchist primarily addressing others with similar feelings. As a result I have not always explained ideas to which I hold when they are, to some extent, givens within many anarchist and radical environmental circles. Hopefully I have written in an accessible enough manner, so even if you don't come from this background you will still find Desert readable. While the best introductions to ecology and anarchy are moments spent within undomesticated ecosystems and anarchist communities, some may also find the following books helpful — I did.

- Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 2008).
- Fredy Perlman, *Against His-story, Against Leviathan* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983).
- Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990).
- Clive Ponting, A *Green History of the World* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

Forward!

Something haunts many activists, anarchists, environmentalists, many of my friends. It haunted me. Much of our subcultures tell us it's not there, that we can't see it, hear it. Our best wishes for the world tell us not to see it. But for many, despite their best efforts — carrying on with the normal activism, the movement building, living both according to and as an expression of their ethics — despite all this, the spectre gains form. The faint image grows more solid, more unavoidable, until the ghost is staring one in the face. And like many monsters of past tales, when its gaze is met — people freeze. Become unable to move. Give up hope; become disillusioned and inactive. This malaise, freezing, not only slows 'activist workload', but I have seen it affect every facet of many of my friends' lives.

The spectre that many try not to see is a simple realisation — the world will not be 'saved'. Global anarchist revolution is not going to happen. Global climate change is now unstoppable. We are not going to see the worldwide end to civilisation/capitalism/patriarchy/authority. It's not going to happen any time soon. It's unlikely to happen ever. The world will not be 'saved'. Not by activists, not by mass movements, not by charities and not by an insurgent global proletariat. The world will not be 'saved'. This realisation hurts people. They don't want it to be true! But it probably is.

These realisations, this abandonment of illusions should not become disabling. Yet if one believes that it's all or nothing, then there is a problem. Many friends have 'dropped out' of the 'movement' whilst others have remained in old patterns but with a sadness and cynicism which signals a feeling of futility. Some hover around scenes critiquing all, but living and fighting little.

> "It's not the despair — I can handle the despair. It's the hope I can't handle."[1]

The hope of a Big Happy Ending, hurts people; sets the stage for the pain felt when they become disillusioned. Because, truly, who amongst us now really believes? How many have been burnt up by the effort needed to reconcile a fundamentally religious faith in the positive transformation of the world with the reality of life all around us? Yet to be disillusioned — with global revolution/with our capacity to stop climate change — should not alter our anarchist nature, or the love of nature we feel as anarchists. There are many possibilities for liberty and wildness still.

What are some of these possibilities and how can we live them? What could it mean to be an anarchist, an environmentalist, when global revolution and world-wide social/eco sustainability are not the aim? What objectives, what plans, what lives, what adventures are there when the illusions are set aside and we walk into the world not disabled by disillusionment but unburdened by it?

[1] No, not Derrick Jensen but John Cleese! — *Clockwise.* Film. Christopher Morahan. 1986; London, Thorn EMI Screen Entertain-ment.

1. No (Global) Future

Religious myths: progress, global capitalism, global revolution, global collapse

The idea of Progress was central to the modern Western paradigm and the presumption that the entire world was moving ever onwards to a better future was dominant. The idea of the inevitability or possibility of a global libertarian future originates from that belief.

In many ways Anarchism was/is the libertarian extreme of the European Enlightenment — against god *and* the state. In some countries such as turn of the Twentieth Century Spain it *was* the Enlightenment — its militantly pro-science anti-clericism being as much an attraction as its anti-capitalism. Yet the rubbish of history is not so easily discarded and 'progressive' revolutionary movements have often been, in essence, form and aim, the continuation of religion by other means. As an example, the belief that universal peace and beauty would be reached through apocalyptic tumults of blood and fire (revolution/the millennium/the collapse) indicates firmly that as an enlightenment ideology, Anarchism has been heavily burdened by its Euro-Christian origins. John Gray was talking about Marxism when he said it was a "…a radical version of the enlightenment belief in progress — itself a mutation of Christian hopes… [Following] Judaism and Christianity in seeing history as a moral drama, that's last act is salvation."[1] While some anarchists never fell for such bunkum, many did, and some still do.

These days Progress itself is increasingly questioned both by anarchists and across society. I have yet to meet anyone today who still believes in the *inevitability*[2] of a global anarchist future. However the idea of a global movement, confronting a global present and creating a global future has many apostles. Some of these are even libertarians and look hopefully to the *possibility* of global anarchist revolution.

The illusory triumph of capitalism following the destruction of the Berlin Wall lead to the proclamation — more utopian[3] than real — of a New World Order — a global capitalist system. The reaction of many to globalisation was to posit one from below, and this was only re-enforced by the near simultaneous public emergence of the Zapatistas and the invention of the Web. The subsequent international action days, often coinciding with summits, became the focus for the supposedly global anti-capitalist 'movement of movements'. The excitement on the streets enabled many to forestall seeing the spectre by looking in the direction of the 'global movement'.

[1] John Gray, *Al Queda and What It Means to Be Modern* (London: The New Press, 2003), p. 7.

[2] While I know no-one personally who professes this today, Anarchism as the telos of human history is still present in our propaganda. As late as 2006 in what I would say is the most accessible and by far the most visually beautiful introductory book to Anarchy it is stated: "that the general direction of human history was continually towards liberty, in spite of anything that authority imposed, and that further progress was inevitable… Society is naturally developing to secure a life of well being for all, in which collective productivity will be put to collective use — Anarchism." — Clifford Harper referring approvingly to Peter Kropotkin's 'Scientific basis for Anarchism', in, Clifford Harper, *Anarchy: A Graphic Guide* (London: Camden Press, 1987), p. 59.

[3] The idea of the millennium implicit in the 'end of history' affects the rulers as well as the ruled.

But there never was a global movement against capitalism, then[4], or ever[5], just as capitalism itself was never truly global. There are many, many places where capitalist relations are not the dominant practice, and even more where anti-capitalist (nevermind anarchist) movements simply don't exist.

Amidst the jolly unreality of this period of 'Global Resistance' some could get really carried away: "We have no interest in reforming the World Bank or the IMF; we want it abolished as part of an international anarchist revolution."[6] Such statements are understandable if written in the drunk-like exuberance one can sometimes feel on having defeated the police, but they are found more commonly. The self-description of one Anarchist Federation reads: "As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and worldwide".[7]

The illusion of a singular world capitalist present is mirrored by the illusion of a singular world anarchist future.

I love us, there's so much we can do and be, but there are limits

Anarchists are growing in number. Groups and counter-cultures are appearing in countries where there were few, or no, social movement anarchists[8] previously. Yet an honest appraisal of our strengths and prospects, and those of the communities and classes we are part of, would show clearly that we are not growing "the new society in the shell of the old"[9], that someday will liberate the world in a moment of rupture. The earth has a lot of places with a lot of people;

[4] Though the 'global' day of action that arguably kicked off this period, J18 1999, was named by Reclaim the Streets (London) as the 'Carnival against Capital', there is little evidence that most who participated elsewhere (especially outside the West) saw themselves as anti-capitalist, either then or in the subsequent period. Peoples Global Action — the main network that then linked anarchists/activist groups in the West to organisations in the Majority World — was never really that global and its scale was often exaggerated.

[5] As the absence of any global movement against capitalism is so obvious, those with a desire to believe in one have to go to impressive mental lengths. Ignoring the grand-standing of the authoritarian left, the main technique in our circles is to think of all the diffuse struggles and moments of personal and collective resistance implicit in class struggle, and then join them together by naming them: communism, the movement of movements, the multitude — take your pick. Fundamentally this is an example of magical thinking, by categorising and naming the diffuse and invisible it becomes real. The thing can then be given attributes and desires can be projected on to it — unsurprisingly often exactly the same desires the imaginer would like to see in a movement which expressed their politics. That these incidents of struggle might be being carried out by people with fundamentally different beliefs, desires and needs is unimportant, for it is the imaginary construct that matters, not its actual content.

[6] Andrew Flood, 'S26 in Ireland and the Origins of the Anti-capitalist movement', *Workers Solidarity Movement* (Ireland), 13th September 2000.

[7] UK Anarchist Federation, *Resistance,* May 2009, p. 4. These quotes are just illustrations — you could find many similar ones yourself. Don't take it as a dig if you are allied to these organisations/tendencies. Many of you I know are doing great stuff and are lovely people who I have shared laughs and struggles with.

[8] I use the phrase, 'social movement anarchists', to mean those of us who self-label as anarchists, and feel allied somewhat, to largely western originated, anarchist traditions. Many peoples and individuals have, and do, live anarchist/acephalous lives, without any link to our relatively modern social movements. I write about these other anarchists in Chapter 4 — African Roads to Anarchy

[9] Statements that refer to building or growing the new society in the shell of the old are relatively common in libertarian writing. Though the concept predates it, the origin of these phrases is thought to be the century old preamble of the constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World: "By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

a reality that can increasingly easily get lost in the web-encapsulated global (activist) village.[10] To want to rid the world of capitalist social relations, or further still civilisation, is one thing. To be capable of doing so is something else entirely. We are not everywhere — we are rare.

Actions, circles of friends, social centres, urban guerrilla cells, magazine editorial groups, eco-warriors, housing co-ops, students, refuges, arsonists, parents, squats, scientists, peasants, strikers, teachers, land based communes, musicians, tribespeople, street gangs, loving insurgents and so, so much else. Anarchists can be wonderful. We can have beauty, and self-possessed power and possibility in buckets. We cannot, however, remake the entire world; there are not enough of us, and never will be.

Some may argue that a global libertarian revolution can succeed without being made, or significantly aided, by overt anarchists so 'our' present numbers and resources are null and void. While it's a given that social crises and revolt are regular occurrences in societies based on class warfare; to put ones faith in the 'revolutionary impulse of the proletariat' is a theory approximate to saying 'It'll be alright on the night.'

> There is unfortunately little evidence from history that the working class — never mind anyone else — is intrinsically predisposed to libertarian or ecological revolution. Thousands of years of authoritarian socialisation favour the jackboot…[11]

Neither we, nor anyone else, can create a libertarian and ecological global future society by expanding social movements. Further, there is no reason to think that in the absence of such a vast expansion, a global social transformation congruent with our desires will ever happen. As anarchists we are not the seed of *the* future society in the shell of the old, but merely one of many elements from which the future is forming. That's ok; when faced with such scale and complexity, there is a value in non-servile humility — even for insurgents.

To give up hope for global anarchist revolution is not to resign oneself to anarchy remaining an eternal protest. Seaweed puts it well:

> Revolution is not everywhere or nowhere. Any bioregion can be liberated through a succession of events and strategies based on the conditions unique to it, mostly as the grip of civilisation in that area weakens through its own volition or through the efforts of its inhabitants… Civilisation didn't succeed everywhere at once, and so it's undoing might only occur to varying degrees in different places at different times.[12]

Even if an area is seemingly fully under the control of authority there are always places to go, to live in, to love in and to resist from. And we can extend those spaces. The global situation may seem beyond us, but the local never is. As anarchists we are neither entirely powerless nor potentially omnipotent, thankfully.

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[10] Sure the web connects the globe, but most of us end up hearing mainly people just like ourselves: "We end up within these filter bubbles… where we see the people we already know and the people who are similar to the people we already know. And we tend not to see the wider picture." Ethan Zucker-man, *Listening to Global Voices,* TED, (www.ted.com).

[11] Down *with Empire, Up with Spring!* (Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellington: Rebel Press, 2006), p. 74.

[12] Seaweed, *Land and Liberty: Toward an organically self-organized subsistence movement, (* 'Occupied Isles of British Columbia': Self Published, 2002). Available online: (www.anti-politics.net/distro).

From anti-globalisation to climate change

For many of us, when the turn of the century anti-globalisation surge lost its momentum,[13] the global thinking, and religious optimism went with it. However, in the last few years, an attempt to resurrect the 'global movement' appeared amongst us once again — this time around climate change.

The mobilisation at the Copenhagen UN Climate Change Conference was billed by many as the next Seattle[14] and some groups have claimed they are "building a global movement to solve the climate crisis."[15] Greenpeace, for instance, says "climate change is a global public 'bad'. To solve it requires global collective action… We have no alternative but to build a global grassroots movement, move politicians forward, and force corporations and banks to change direction."[16] I'll take it as a given that you the reader understand the naive unreality of such lobby groups but it's worth looking at those at the less institutionalised end of climate change campaigning.

There are three main tendencies, and sometimes folk wander from one to another. Firstly, there are those that have similar beliefs to Greenpeace — i.e. 'direct action' as an awareness raising/lobbying strategy. Secondly, there are those who use the discourse around climate change to aid mobilisation in local campaigns which, though unlikely to have any effect on climate change, at least have practical and sometimes achievable objectives in mind i.e. halting the destruction of an ecosystem/the worsening wellbeing[17] of a community or simply increasing self-sufficiency.[18] Thirdly, there are those nostalgic anti-capitalists who envision 'climate justice' as a metamorphosis of the imagined "alter-globalisation movement"[19] (notice it's increasingly no longer anti-globalisation). An anonymous writer described the last tendency well:

> [When activists] try to convince us that it's the 'last chance to save the earth'… it's because they're trying to build social movements… There is a growing and disturbing trend that has been lingering around radical circles over the last few years, based on the idea that blind positivity can lead to interesting and unexpected successes. Michael Hardt and Tony Negri's books have provided some of the theoretical bases for this, and it has been taken up by some who want to unite the masses under the banner of precarity, organise migrants and mobilise for summits. For many coming

[13] We started to be defeated on the streets by the police, bored by the routine, infiltrated by the left, intimidated by lengthy prison sentences, overshadowed by Islamist insurgence and Western wars of invasion, watered down by immersion in the anti-war movement and then weakened by its failure. Some key struggles were on some levels won (GM Terminator technology stalled and WTO negotiations imploded), many migrated to more advantageous (or dramatic) terrains of straggle, some battles moved beyond what was generally acceptable. Many consolidated locally and/or abandoned illusions about the mass and the spectacular. Myriad 'non-political' issues of everyday life — kids, generational shift, depression, death and employment — should also not be underestimated.

[14] Apart from being hopelessly USA-centric this was surely another example of fundamentally magical thinking. One wonders if an equation that concluded Copenhagen = Seattle would have been as popular if COP 15 had occurred near the sixth anniversary of Seattle rather than the numerically elegant ten year anniversary.

[15] The 10.10.10 day organised by 350.org saw 1600+ events in 135 countries, mostly of the ritualistic tree planting/light bulb changing variety though also appropriately with the option of 'faith work'.

[16] John Sauven — Executive Director of Greenpeace UK, 'Global collective action is the key to solving climate change', *Guardian,* 16 February 2010, p. 33.

[17] See the sadly now evicted Mainshill Solidarity Camp or the successful Climate Camp linked campaign against the expansion of Heathrow Airport.

[18] Some of the groups allied to Transition Towns would be the most obvious example, at least in the British Isles.

[19] See Tadzio Muller and Ben Trott, How *to Institutionalise a Swarm?* (www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/?p=412).

> from the left wing tradition, it has been the message of hope that they were wanting to hear, at a time when their ideologies seemed more moribund than ever.
>
> …Theoreticians who should understand capitalism well enough to know better, write that a global basic income or free movement for all is an achievable goal. They may not believe it themselves, but ostensibly want to inspire others to believe in it, claiming that the 'moments of excess' generated by such Utopian dreams will give rise to potent movements for change. Climate change… is certainly a suitable testing ground for the politics of manufactured hope, being so alienated from our actual everyday realities. But whilst the new movement politicians — facilitators not dictators — watch their movements grow, there is still a case for living in the real world.[20]

Outside the convention centres the new stars appear more and more like those within. Inside and out the message is that a global future is winnable if only we organise. However, the reality both within ecosystems generally and peoples stomachs in particular is that there is no global singular future[21] and no imaginary community, either of states or 'multitudes' (or both a la Cochabamba)[22] can stop climate change.

Given our obvious inability to re-make the entire world the way we might like it to be, some replace the myth of 'global revolution' with a belief in imminent 'global collapse' — these days usually some mix of climate change and peak oil. As we shall see later (both in the next chapters and our future years) global heating will severely challenge civilisation in some areas and probably vanquish it in others. Yet in some regions it will likely open up possibilities for the spread of civilisations rule. Some lands may remain (relatively) temperate — climatically and socially. As for civilisation, so for anarchy and anarchists — severely challenged, sometimes vanquished; possibilities for liberty and wildness opening up, possibilities for liberty and wildness closing. The unevenness of the present will be made more so. There is no global future.

[20] *You are Now Fucked,* Natterjack Press, (www. natterjackpress.co.uk/menu/downloads.php). The title refers to a Climate Camp leaflet the front cover of which was simply the text "You are Not Fucked".

[21] Unless of course climate change reaches one of the truly End Times possibilities outlined well by Mark Lynas in his description of the end-Permian wipeout. This is a possibility… Mark Lynas, *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* (London: HarperCollins, 2007), p. 243.

[22] The 2010 World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth was called for and hosted by the Bolivian Government. For a good anarchist critique see: Dariush Sokolov, 'Cochabamba: Beyond the Complex — Anarchist Pride', *Shift* Magazine No. 9, 2010. A far more pro — if still somewhat questioning — approach to the conference can be found in: Building Bridges Collective, *Space for Movement? Reflections from Bolivia on climate justice, social movements and the state* (Bristol: Self-published, 2010).

2. It's Later Than We Thought

Observed climate change is faster than expected

One recurring theme in environmentalism is that the apocalypse is always imminent but forever deferred. Every generation seems to have one last chance to save the planet. Biologist Barry Commoner said back in 1970: "We are in a period of grace, we have the time — perhaps a generation — in which to save the environment from the final effects of the violence we have already done to it."[1] Similar pronouncements can be heard today but the period of grace is probably over. Back in 1990 the editors of *The Ecologist* set out a general evaluation of the state of the earth in *5000 Days to Save the Planet:*

> Today we are told that our planet is in crisis, that we are destroying and polluting our way to a global catastrophe… We may have as little as fifteen years, perhaps as short a time as 5000 days to save the planet… One of the major concerns arising out of the Gaia theory is that we are pushing natural processes beyond their capacity to maintain an atmosphere fit for higher forms of life. Beyond a certain point, the system may flip to an entirely new state which would be extremely uncomfortable for life as we know it… once triggered, the change to the new state could occur with extreme rapidity.[2]

By 2005 the countdown envisaged in the title had reached zero and the originator of the Gaia theory, James Lovelock, was writing *The Revenge of Gaia* where he would state that he thought the living earth was probably now moving irrevocably to a hot state. Lovelock came to this conclusion primarily as a result of seeing scientific observations of climate change surpassing what most predictions said was meant to be happening. In an address to the Royal Society he stated:

> The positive feedback on heating from the melting of floating Arctic and Antarctic ice alone is causing an acceleration of system driven heating whose total will soon or already be greater than that from all of the pollution CO_2 that we have so far added. This suggests that implementing Kyoto or some super Kyoto is most unlikely to succeed… we have to understand that the Earth System is now in positive feedback and is moving ineluctably towards the stable hot state of past climates.[3]

[1] Quoted in, Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilisation* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1990), p. 25.

[2] Edward Goldsmith et al, *5000 Days to Save the Planet* (London: Hamlyn, 1990).

[3] James Lovelock, *Climate Change on the Living Earth,* Lecture at The Royal Society, 29 October 2007.

Lovelock's public advocacy of nuclear power,[4] disbelief in wind farms as a panacea and his clear statements that massive climate change is now probably inevitable has made him unpopular with many greens. He's definitely 'off-message'. It's rather inconvenient, then, that he's got such a good environmental and scientific pedigree. As a polymath in his nineties he has worked in many fields. Notably, he invented the Electron Capture Detector that made the discovery of the Ozone Hole and the writing of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*[5] possible. His initially heretical Gaia hypothesis, of a self managing living earth, is now widely accepted under the title Earth System Science. He's long argued for wild land expansion and been sympathetic to ecological defence actions. As an avid hiker he even carried out a personal bombing campaign around the right to roam way back in the 1930s! His detractors often admire his pioneering work but say (in a somewhat ageist manner) that he has now gone a bit batty. The real problem, though, is that he has made a professional career of being beholden to no-one else's ideology or pay-packet. As such he has the capacity to say what many in scientific and environmental institutions are thinking but are afraid to say so directly in public. Lovelock thinks that a range of factors have led to a consistent under-diagnosis of the extent of human effects on the earth. These factors include:

- A speed and complexity of change which research/publication schedules cannot keep up with.
- A failure to see and comprehend the living earth as a dynamic self-regulating system.
- A lack of joined up thinking due to academic compartmentalisation.
- Governmental pressures on the writing of IPCC synthesis reports.[6]
- The possibly considerable masking of present heating by global dimming.[7]

[4] His pro-nuclear stance is practical if you are pro-civilisation like he is. He does not say that nuclear power is the solution to global heating which he sees as now inevitable. He thinks nuclear fission and eventually nuclear fusion are the only technologies capable of 'keeping the lights on' as civilisation retreats. As someone who wants the lights to go out, I can see the logic of his arguments but wanting the opposite have no need to agree with his stance or reject his wider arguments because of it.

[5] Arguably the book that launched the environmental (rather than conservation) movement.

[6] Here it is less the science itself which is at question but its presentation in the policy-makers summary, the editing and wording of which does come under some level of governmental pressure. Others in the field have also called for increased independence from governments: 'IPCC: cherish it, tweak it or scrap it?', in, *Nature*, 11 February 2010.

[7] Industrial pollution has increased aerosol particles in the atmosphere which are thought to reflect sunlight back into space and seed clouds. If one could somehow turn off global industry tomorrow, this dimming effect would disappear and surface temperatures could rise significantly, almost immediately. This could push feedback mechanisms into place, with massive increases in greenhouse gases being emitted by non-human managed systems. Lovelock says for this reason he thinks we are living in a "fool's climate" — damned if we do and damned if we don't. Here I have outlined a very simple (and therefore flawed) picture of a very complex process. For a better stating of the theory, see Meinrat Andreae et al. 'Strong present-day aerosol cooling implies a hot future', in, *Nature,* 30 June 2005. For a more approachable (if simplistic and partially out of date) intro to global dimming watch BBC's 2005 'Global Dimming' documentary, (www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/dimming_trans.shtml). The masking affect is now widely accepted but its extent is still unknown. For instance in a 2008 study by the Met Office Hadley Centre models showed either a modest or severe increase in heating following a sudden removal of haze. Either way "It is very likely that present-day aerosol cooling is suppressing a major portion of current greenhouse warming." — Peter Stott et al., 'Observed climate change constrains the likelihood of extreme future global warming', in, *Tellus B,* 60: pp.

It's beyond the scope of this text to give an overall summation of Lovelock's thinking, never mind the wider science around global heating. Part of the nature of the problem is that by the time you read this the science will have moved on considerably. If you are interested have a look at the sources I have referenced and read wider yourself. However while the details may vary the inexorable direction of much of the science seems to be that we are probably heading to a considerably hotter earth, and fast. Recent observations put us further down the road than many of us thought even a few years ago. Decades later down the road. Combined with inertia around reducing carbon emissions this makes the chances of 'stopping' massive climate change probably rather slight.

While NGOs are still babbling about stopping a two degrees warming, increasingly many climate scientists are discussing a four degree warming by end of the century or even as early as 2060.[8] This is by no means a fringe worry. The 2007 IPCC report predicted a rise of between 2 and 6.4℃ this century. Bob Watson, its former chairman has warned that the "world should work on mitigation and adaptation strategies to 'prepare for 4℃ of warming.'"[9] This is bad enough but Lovelock goes further and cites a number of feedback mechanisms he thinks are already moving us to an even hotter state, of which the melting of sea ice mentioned above is the most well known. What could this new hot state look like? Some highlights:

- Hot deserts spreading over much of the global south and into southern and even some of central Europe.
- Cold deserts predominantly in the global north retracting to leave new frontier land in Siberia, Scandinavia, Canada, Greenland, Alaska and even to a certain extent in the Antarctic.
- Mass attempts at migration from arid zones to the still habitable areas.
- Mass human die-off coupled with accelerating species extinctions.

Lovelock puts it rather bluntly:

> Humans are in a pretty difficult position and I don't think they are clever enough to handle what's ahead. I think they'll survive as a species all right, but the cull during this century is going to be huge… The number remaining at the end of the century will probably be a billion or less.[10]

Of course, I don't *know* this is a true picture of present and future climate change. The true complexity of the Earth System (and human social dynamics within it) is probably beyond our comprehension (definitely beyond mine) and models should not be confused with reality. My

76–81, 2008. Among the advocates of purposeful geo-engineering the idea of increasing global dimming by dumping sulphates into the stratosphere seems to be gaining support, oh joy.. It's worth underlining that by the time you read this much of the science will have been superseded/advanced.

[8] Proceedings of the September 2009 conference — '4 Degrees and Beyond: Implications of a global change of 4 plus degrees for people, ecosystems and the earth-system', jointly sponsored by the University of Oxford, the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, and the Met Office Hadley Centre, www.eci.ox.ac.uk/4degrees

[9] Bob Watson, quoted in, 'How to Survive the Coming Century', *New Scientist,* 25 February 2009.

[10] Quoted in, 'How to Survive the Coming Century', *New Scientist, 25* February 2009.

informed hunch (that's all one has in the fool-making business of describing the future) is that the picture painted is probably a reasonable approximation. You may not think so, but I would ask that you run with me as it's a possibility worth considering. That hunch is as much informed by an anarchist critique of capitalism as it is a reading of climate science. Looking around me, it's a lovely bright day and the leaves of the trees are almost shining; but little in the society in which I live indicates to me that a problem of the scale and complexity of climate change is going to get fixed. Given that, I feel that the big question posed is not so much *if* we will reach a world somewhat resembling that outlined above but *when.*

Lovelock is seriously proposing that such a world (or to be more accurate, such worlds) will emerge by the end of this century, and that emergence trends will start to become obvious by mid century. It could take longer, but either way it may be advantageous to take such shifts into consideration when thinking about what we want to achieve in our lives.

Here, to be clear, we are not talking about a millennial apocalypse, though it may feel like that to some caught in its more horrible or exciting moments. Rather we are talking about massive accelerating change. James Hansen (NASA), comments:

> If we wish to preserve a planet similar to that in which civilization developed and to which life adapted, Palaeolithic evidence and ongoing climate change suggest that CO_2 will need to be reduced from its current 385 ppm to at most 350 ppm.[11]

Chances are it won't be. The environmental niche that civilisation (class divided agriculturally-sustained city culture) developed in is on the way out. With it will probably go many of civilisation's citizens. And there are many, many citizens.

Ghost acres feed population overshoots

Integral to the growth of industrial capitalism has been a vast increase in human population. There are now around seven billion of us compared to around 600 million at the beginning of the 18th century. That jump has happened in 13 generations[12] and in large part it was no accident. Silvia Federici has clearly laid out that a key foundation of early capitalism was the destruction of women's control over their own fertility: "…wombs became public territory, controlled by men and the state, and procreation was directly placed at the service of capitalist accumulation" (see box below). While it was capitalism that first enforced and then enabled this most recent mass expansion, in doing so it was/is singing an older anthem of civilisation[13] — this time, though, with mechanical amplification.

I was born in the mid 1970s when the human population was four billion; by the time I die (hopefully not before 2050) the UN estimates that the earth's human population will be over 9

[11] James Hansen, quoted by Bill McKibben, in, 'Civilizations Last Chance', *Los Angeles Times,* May 11 2008.

[12] In contrast, the pre-historic planetary gatherer-hunter population is estimated to have stayed under 10 million for nearly all of homo sapiens 60,000 generations. Gerald Marten, *Human Ecology* (London: Earthscan Publications, 2001), pp. 26–38.

[13] "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." — *King James Bible,* Genesis 1:28

billion.[14] This estimate, though, presumes 'business as usual'. Whether this happens or not will depend on three interdependent factors: birth control, death control and food supply.

Worldwide, despite the continued edicts of cult patriarchs such as the Pope, many are increasingly using birth control to limit family size. The continuing power struggle to enable us to do so is a key battle and one around which many anarchists — amongst others — have organised.[15] However the spread of *birth control* — and the fight for women's liberation[16] more generally — will not stop the probable doubling of human population in my lifetime. With decreasing family size already a global norm in much of the world, it is the ability of industrial medicine and hygiene measures to enact *death control* that is now key. The human population, at least in business-as-usual projections, will continue to rise until at least 2050 as long as those alive today live their expected lifespans and have the expected number of children.

However, we do not have to wait until then to overshoot the planet's human carrying capacity (its maximum permanently supported load) as we have probably done so already. Industrial civilisation has managed to push up *food supply* by both colonising ever more wild land for agriculture and developing fossil fuel reliant 'green revolution'[17] agro-technologies and transportation. Essentially, industrial agriculture relies on the harvesting of ghost acreage[18] (the fossilised photosynthetic production of ecosystems millions of years ago) to produce food at the present rate. This can be only temporary, for unless one is a believer in the cornucopian myth that resources are limitless, someday the fossil-fuel hunting will draw a blank. When this will happen no-one really knows, though many argue that we have already passed 'peak oil'. Some may counter that hydrogen fuel cells, solar power, genetic engineering, nanotechnology and green goo will somehow avert a population crash. These apostles of progress more and more resemble cargo cults in their belief that technology marshalled by either the market (if capitalist) or state planning (if socialist) will provide all that is needed. In the unlikely event that they're right, and the food supply does keep up with population growth, the highly managed nature of the provision will guarantee that the 'freedom supply' (for both humans and other animals) is increasingly scarce.

So the rapidly growing human population needs fossil fuels to stay alive. Most of us are eating oil and illness is largely controlled with high energy reliant technologies. Here is yet another reason I doubt the ability of activists, or states for that matter, to convince society to decarbonise. It sounds nice, but for millions, if not billions, it would mean shorter lives if humanity stopped importing from the past.

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[14] *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision,* Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. June 1009.

[15] The work of 'new social movement' anarchists and feminists from the '60s onwards is relatively well known but anarchist involvement in birth control struggles reaches further back. Emma Goldman, among many things a nurse and midwife, was one of its most well known advocates and for lots of the movement's nameless it was a significant part of their daily organising. This is as much an issue of class struggle as of women's liberation. As Emma Goldman proclaimed, "Large families are a millstone around the necks of working people!" The following quote refers to French anarchists of the early 20th century but could apply to many in other countries: "'Anarchism can be considered their crowning synthesis,' and 'neo-malthusianism' (family planning), education and anti-militarism were valid and necessary fields of activity for anarchists working for a total social revolution." — David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement: 1917–1945* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), p. 26.

[16] See George Bradford, 'Woman's Freedom', in, How *Deep is Deep Ecology?* (Detroit: Fifth Estate, 1989).

[17] For a decent intro to issues around the green revolution see, Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology.* (London: Zed Books 1998).

[18] William R. Catton Jr., *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 38.

On a significantly hotter globe a major human die-off could be on the cards even if one does not go along with the ideas around peak oil. As much of the majority world becomes hotter and poorer, farmers will be unable to afford the petro-chemical based imports necessary for continued production even if fossil fuels don't run out. Further, while industrial agriculture has temporarily increased land's carrying capacity, in the process much 'productive' land has been denuded and without the application of fertilisers would now be unable to produce as much food organically as it did originally. Even Southerners 'lucky' enough to still have access to fossil fuel inputs will find magic potions lose their powers when soil dries, bakes and blows away. With little nutrition or medicine disease will harvest much of the hungry.

It would be nice to imagine that those countries still able to produce considerable food quantities (in part thanks to improved growing conditions — more of that later) would gift it but I wouldn't hold your breath. A billion people on earth are hungry already.[19] Rather than the spectacular mass death of whole communities this mostly causes increased childhood mortality and decreased overall lifespan. Yet capitalism has, from the beginning, had definite 'form', (just ask the Irish) in allowing (and causing) millions to starve more dramatically. Mike Davis reminds us of an often forgotten example when he writes (in *Late Victorian Holocausts*) of the 30–60 million people in the later part of the 19th century who starved to death, "not outside the 'modern world system', but in the very process of being forcibly incorporated into its economic and political structures."[20] Similar hungers have taken their toll throughout the following century, many engineered by state socialists, those most attentive students of British Empire.

It would be hopelessly Utopian to believe that hunger could be exiled from the human condition but mostly those dying today of starvation do so whilst others in their societies keep eating. Hunger is the language of class warfare. Power has many levels and amongst much of the poorest starvation in the future is likely to be played out as gendered violence, as it is now.[21]

I will leave it to others to argue about the relative contribution of population numbers or industrial consumption patterns (as though both are not now intrinsically linked) to global heating. Today, global (and local) population growth is a barrier to any significant 'de-carbonisation'. Tomorrow, capitalism's present inability to out-engineer its addiction to fossil fuels will likely result in a massive population crash.

Climate change brings possibilities as well as closures

Global heating, population growth, peak oil and other environmental limits are probably not *the* apocalypse that will end the reign of capital and the state everywhere. *The global collapse* is probably no nearer than *the global revolution.* Nevertheless it does mean that a totalised global capitalism, enclosing all relationships within it, becomes even less likely. The Western project of cultural expansion faces its limits. As part of that, the libertarian movements which capitalism

[19] *World Hunger Hits One Billion,* BBC (www. news.bbc.co.uk/l/hi/world/europe/8109698. stm), 19 June 2009.

[20] Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 9.

[21] "This girl here, for instance, is in a feeding centre in Ethiopia. The entire centre was filled with girls like her. What's remarkable is that her brothers, in the same family, were totally fine. In India, in the first year of life, from zero to one, boy and girl babies basically survive at the same rate because they depend on the breast, and the breast shows no son preference. From one to five, girls die at a 50 percent higher mortality rate than boys, in all of India." — Sheryl WuDunn, Our *century's greatest injustice* (July 2010: www. ted.com).

has carried on its coat tails also face the real limits to the growth of Anarchism. Yet just as the establishment of a *one* world of Anarchism is foreclosed so the possibilities of many new/old worlds — some anarchies — becomes widespread. Some of these possibilities will be opened up by conflict, some will be closed by conflict.

The very nature of states is to control populations, but many of the billions will not hunger quietly. Yesterday the late Victorian holocausts triggered millenarian uprisings amongst those being swept away by the spreading flood waters of the 'world system'. Tomorrow, as the tide retracts and surplus populations are left on the (desert) sand, we seem set for yet another, if anything more brutal, century of wars and insurrections.

3. Desert Storms

The military looks to the future

Whilst politicians of both states and social movements repeat platitudes, smile at their constituents and face off against each other, some realists are looking to a climate changed future less as something that can be avoided and more as something that will need to be policed. In *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* leading thinkers and actors from the US military investigated a wide range of scenarios. Their first finding was that "projected climate change poses a serious threat to America's national security." How?

> In already weakened states, extreme weather events, drought, flooding, sea level rise, retreating glaciers, and the rapid spread of life-threatening diseases will themselves have likely effects: increased migrations, further weakened and failed states, expanded ungoverned spaces, exacerbating underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit, and increased internal conflicts. In developed countries, these conditions threaten to disrupt economic trade and introduce new security challenges, such as increased spread of infectious disease and increased immigration.[1]

As well as seeing climate change as "a new hostile and stressing factor" that will produce novel threats generally, they also saw it as exacerbating existing specific ones.

> Climate Change acts as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world. Many governments in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East are already on edge in terms of their ability to provide basic needs: food, water, shelter and stability. Projected climate change will exacerbate the problems in these regions and add to the problems of effective governance. Unlike most conventional security threats that involve a single entity acting in specific ways at different points in time, climate change has the potential to result in multiple chronic conditions, occurring globally within the same time frame. Economic and environmental conditions will further erode as food production declines, diseases increase, clean water becomes increasingly scarce, and populations migrate in search of resources. Weakened and failing governments, with an already thin margin of survival, foster the conditions for internal conflict, extremism, and movement towards increased authoritarianism and radical ideologies…
>
> Because climate change also has the potential to create natural and humanitarian disasters on a scale far beyond those we see today, its consequences will likely foster

[1] CNA Corporation. *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* (Alexandria: CNA Corporation, 2007), Finding 1.

political instability where social demands exceed the capacity of governments to cope.[2]

Similar nightmares and fantasies are talked about by military experts elsewhere.[3] It should be remembered that armies plan for what could possibly happen, not what will definitely happen. Additionally, there is institutional self-interest in thinking the world is getting more dangerous if your job is providing enforced order. However, it is worth taking their predictions of strife seriously not least because when policy recommendations such as theirs are enacted, shadows of their dreams can become reality. Just as 'generals are always fighting the last war', so too their vision of future ones are shaped by present conflict. It should come as no surprise then that much of the military discourse around climate change is centred around hot wars, failed states and the political violence that can emanate from them. Potential cold wars, within the global north and extreme south, are given less prominence. I will follow this convention for now, though I will return to such possibilities later.

Hot wars and failed states

Looking at conflicts today there is already an obvious Equatorial Tension Belt which is expected to significantly expand. Its existence is due to a whole host of variables not least of which are the accumulated environmental impact from collapsed civilisations, the legacies of direct western colonialism, high population levels, the presence of 'resources' useful to capitalism and habitats that are on the margin of agriculture viability.[4] Given what the US generals describe above some governments in these regions will fall, whilst others, to varying degrees, will 'fail'. Some states will retract back to their (maybe shifting) capitals leaving the rest of their supposed territories in a mosaic of war and peace, others will be engulfed in civil war, revolution and interstate conflict. There will no doubt be much horror but also much potential for constructing free lives.

Unsurprisingly, there is division among military thinkers on what the great powers of today will be able to do. Some argue that they: "… may be drawn more frequently into these situations, either alone or with allies, to help provide stability before conditions worsen and are exploited by extremists." And that they "…may also be called upon to undertake stability and reconstruction efforts once a conflict has begun, to avert further disaster and reconstitute a stable environment."[5] Others predict a markedly reduced planetary policing role in an effective end to the New World

[2] *Ibid,* Finding 2.

[3] For example: "'With the effects of climate change compounding existing pressures, future operations will be more frequent and more intense than those currently underway in East Timor and the Solomon Islands.' [Air Chief Marshall Angus] Houstan said that rising sea levels caused by climate change would worsen social problems on the islands, many of which are poor and underdeveloped, with the potential for sustained economic growth low in all but a few countries. This meant that island nations would struggle to adapt to climate change, he said, while changing rainfall patterns, extreme weather and rising sea levels would threaten agriculture and fisheries on which they depended. 'From there, it is a small step to political instability and social disorder,' Houstan said." — 'Australia military head warns of Pacific climate instability', *France* 24, 3.11.2010 (www.france24.com).

[4] James R. Lee, *Climate Change and Armed Conflict: Hot and Cold Wars* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 7.

[5] *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* (Alexandria: CNA Corporation, 2007), p. 6.

Order declared by the US which, "lacking the means to help local authorities restore order, 'will likely fall back on a combination of policies that add up to quarantine.'"[6]

Social movement anarchists in these regions might want to think seriously about what practical preparations can wisely be made for self-rule, civil war, survival and the unfortunately inevitable emergence and strengthening of authoritarian forces and inter-ethnic conflict. "We must have the ability to defend ourselves, survive, and exploit crises in society including capitalist attempts to destroy us. The divided and industrial nature of today's society has already determined the instability of tomorrow."[7]

In the depths of crises with social demands "exceeding the ability of government to cope" the glory days of Anarchism may be back. "If climate change results in reduced rainfall and access to the natural capital that sustains livelihoods, poverty will become more widespread, leading to increased grievances and better recruitment opportunities for rebel movements."[8] Who knows we may even see scenes as dramatic as the anarchist armoured trains of Maria Nikiforova.[9] From the steppes of the Ukraine to the sierras of Mexico and the streets of Barcelona a huge number of those who ever identified as anarchists did so embroiled in overt war.

Unfortunately, in most places, rebel movements are more likely to be statist than anarchist. This is partly thanks to the large number of established authoritarian political gangs compared to libertarian ones, but also because in extreme situations people turn to extremist *solutions.* In some places this might be self-organisation, decentralisation and mutual aid, but in many there will be no social solution possible, just the false promises of despots and prophets. That's not to say we couldn't compete with them by spreading rival millennial hopes of a new dawn, but if we are honest with ourselves, having thrown aside religion, it would be a travesty of our ethics to pick it up again in the cause of gang recruitment and the joy of trouble.

Where visible and dramatic libertarian social forces do arise it is likely that many from other parts of the world will travel to join them. As the clouds darken, some of our family will run towards outbreaks of armed resistance — wherever they may be. This comes from a deep felt love and feelings of solidarity but also because, let's be honest, for many conflict is attractive and anti-militarists rarely get the opportunity for outright war. The nihilistic desire — amplified in an increasingly complex world — to just get out there and 'fuck shit up' is, if not a creative urge, definitely a strong one. That's not to say everyone has it, but many do. Here there is an uncomfortable symmetry between our emotional drivers and that of fighters generally.

In the ex-territory of failed and fallen states inter-ethnic conflict will become ever more common, at least until populations are cut back to a level more fitting a much hotter world.

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[6] Kurt M Campbell et al, *The Age of Consequences: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Global Climate Change* (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), quoted in, Gwynne Dyer, *Climate Wars* (Toronto: Random House, 2009), p. 19.

[7] *Down with Empire, Up with Spring!* (Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellington: Rebel Press, 2006), p. 118.

[8] R Nordas and N.P. Gleditsch, 'Climate change and conflict', Political Geography (26) 627–638 (2007), quoted in, James R. Lee, *Climate Change and Armed Conflict: Hot and Cold Wars* (London: Roudedge, 2009), p. 15.

[9] Maria Nikiforova "was the only woman commander of a large revolutionary force in Ukraine — an atamansha. The Free Combat Druzhina was equipped with two large guns and an armoured flat car. The wagons were loaded with armoured cars, tachankas, and horses as well as troops which meant that the detachment was in no means restricted to railway lines. The trains were festooned with banners reading 'The Liberation of the Workers is the Affair of the Workers Themselves', Uong Live Anarchy', 'Power Breeds Parasites', and 'Anarchy is the Mother of Order.'... With their black flags and cannons, Murusya's echelons resembled pirate ships sailing across the Ukrainian Steppe." — Malcolm Archibold, *Atamansha: The Story of Maria Nikiforova, the Anarchist Joan of Arc* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2007), pp. 21–22.

> The failed states have conflict levels so high and persistent that even baseline changes forecast by the IPCC are likely to worsen livelihood conditions. The trends suggest more of a social or tribal breakdown than wars between nations. Climate trends will ignore borders, and failed states prone to conflict will spread like a disease.[10]

Peacekeepers in the graveyard of the living

Such forces of inter-ethnic conflict will be far more widespread than groups organised around European originated political ideologies — libertarian or authoritarian. They are, after all, able to provide real solutions (if only temporarily) to people's immediate needs in areas where the basics for survival are outnumbered by thirsty mouths. This is done, of course, by wrenching resources from 'the others'. Additionally, inter-ethnic conflicts can erupt when the 'cause is hopeless' but the emotional driver is strong.

The consoling belief that individuals willingly join conflicts driven only by rational strategic considerations, family narratives or historical burdens dissolves when brought into the light of the expressed desires of many fighters themselves. For a dramatic European example one only needs to read Mattijs van de Ports's study of a community swept up in civil war. In *Gypsies, Wars and other instances of the Wild,* he presents voices of people who "in festive mood, took on the role of barbarians."

> How is *this* possible in Europe at the end of the twentieth century?' was the question that played obsessively through my mind… What the war in former Yugoslavia forced us to digest is the fact that people proved willing to make a conscious and active choice to embrace regression, barbarity, a return to the wilderness. Take the Serb fighters who dream of a return to the Serbia of the epic poems 'where there was no electricity, no computers, when the Serbs were happy and had no cities, the breeding grounds of all evil.'[11]

That some modern day militias reflect romanticist desires whilst shelling towns, massacring villages and being killed in turn, should neither surprise us I nor necessarily fully invalidate romance. It does however suggest — along with the honest expressions of joy in destruction mouthed by some soldiers in every war as well as many anarchists — that there is a coupling of some sort between a generalised urge to destroy and a disgust at complex human society.

Randolph Bourne was right when he said "war is the health of the state"[12] but this other driver is at work too, especially where the 'sides' are no longer states. French anarchist anthropologist Pierre Clastres' description of war among Amazonian tribes is not directly transferable to inter-ethnic conflicts involving non-anarchist peoples but nevertheless an echo does resonate:

> What is the function of primitive war? To assure the permanence of dispersal, of the parcelling out, of the atomization of groups. Primitive war is the work of a centrifugal logic, of a logic of separation which expresses itself from time to time in armed

[10] James R. Lee, *Climate Change and Armed Conflict: Hot and Cold Wars* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 93.

[11] Mattijs Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), pp. 15–17.

[12] Randolph Bourne, 'War is the Health of the State'. Bureau of Public Secrets (www.bopsecrets.org).

> conflict. War serves to maintain each community in its political independence… Now what is the legal power that embraces all differences in order to suppress them, which only supports itself to abolish the logic of the multiple in order to substitute for it the opposite logic of unification? What is the other name of the One that refuses in essence primitive society? It is the State.[13]

It is not all hubris and doubletalk when military spin-doctors describe statist invasions as 'peacekeeping'. Ethnic diversity and autonomy often emerge both from mutual aid in community and animosity between communities. I like to think (and our history backs this up) that self-identified anarchists will never inflict such pain as the Serb nationalist militias (an example I purposely chose for its repugnance) but we should admit that our wish to 'fuck shit up' is partly driven by the same urge to civilisational dismemberment as can found in many inter-ethnic conflicts, and in the minds of fighters more generally. As central power is weakened in some areas, possibilities for anarchy in both its happy and its horrible meanings will open up.

From (food) Riots to Insurrection

Climate wars to come may wipe out many anarchists but is unlikely to kill off Anarchism, which as a political movement has survived significant culls of its adherents in past local apocalypses.[14] Despite all the horrors of the last 200 years, Anarchism is, as the New York Times put it, "the creed that won't stay dead."[15] This is heartening, but we are not ideological machines. It does matter that anarchists themselves — i.e. you, me, our families and friends we have yet to meet — keep on living — not just 'the ideal'. It matters to me! Give or take the particularities of the local, we may have twenty years (probably more) to prepare for these ruptures, not as an alternative to other tasks at hand, but as an integral part of a long term multi-pronged strategy. For some, it will also be a matter of life or death.

While future climate wars will be an extension of the present conditions they are likely to be far bigger and more extreme. In some places peoples, anarchists among them, could transform climate wars into successful libertarian insurrections. In others the battle may simply be for survival or even death with dignity and meaning. Those in relativity stable social environments — politically and climatically — will probably be faced by an increasingly oppressive surveillance state and a 'mass' which increasingly fears 'the barbarism beyond the walls'.

What actual practical stuff needs to be done will depend largely on where and who you are. While we may have some shared aspirations, climate change reinforces the basic truth that we do not have one shared global future. While everywhere the enemy is estrangement and domes-

[13] Pierre Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1994), pp. 164–165.

[14] Either wiped out during periods of (counter) revolutionary tumult or picked off as the chosen prey of authoritarians during relative social peace — anarchists do have a tendency to get it in the neck. Our ranks have been further thinned by the many who of have felt forced to escape civilisation through suicide and drugs.

[15] Joseph Khan, 'Anarchism, the Creed that Won't Stay Dead', *New York Times*, 5 August 2000.

tication,[16] the situations in Basingstoke and Bangladesh are different in the present and will be in the future.

During his lecture at the Royal Society, Lovelock stated:

> We now face the stark choice between a return to a natural life as a small band of hunter gatherers or a much reduced high tech civilisation…[17]

Rather than a choice, there is likely to be both sorts of survivor (as there is now) — high-tech industrial citizen and low-tech gatherer-hunter anarchist. In between these two extremes will lie, buried or hungry, the "much reduced" (many from climate wars) along with those eking out a possibly freer (or not) life on the margins of agricultural/pastoral viability. Let's look then at what possibilities there may be for liberty and wildness in some of these diverging life ways.

[16] The fundamental 'nature' of all civilisations is an illusory estrangement from wilderness, deepening as we become estranged from each other, from the land, from the product of our labor and even from our own desires. Wild animals (humans included) are tamed — domesticated — by being fenced off, separated, from their natural environments and free members of their own species. Dominance is burnt into brains through violence and rationing of resources. Wilderness is tamed, both without and within. The birth of "domestication involved the initiation of production, vastly increased divisions of labor, and the completed foundations of social stratification. This amounted to an epochal mutation both in the character of human existence and its development, clouding the latter with ever more violence and work." — John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal* (C.A.L Press: Columbia, 2006), p. 77. While it is important to try and understand their origins, it would be a mistake to see estrangement and domestication as past events, rather they are a process that can be, and is, resisted. For starters, see also: Ian Hodder, *The Domestication of Europe* (Basil Blackwells: Oxford, 1990), Leopold Roc, *Industrial Domestication: Industry as the Origins of Modern Domination.* Anarchist library (www.theanarchistlibrary.org), Derrick Jensen et al., *Strangely Like war: The Global Assault on Forests* (Green Books: Dartington, 2003), Jacques Camatte, *Against Domestication* (Leeds: Re-Pressed Distro, 2006), *Beasts of Burden: Capitalism, Animals, Communism* (Antagonism Press: London, 1999).

[17] James Lovelock, *Climate Change on the Living Earth,* (The Royal Society: London, 29 October 2007).

4. African Roads to Anarchy

Anarchic elements in everyday (peasant) life

To examine future possibilities for liberty in peasant life, let's, as an example, look to the continent most often written off. These days "Africa has an image problem"[1]: war, famine, disease and charity appeals. As time goes on, this skewed view of a diverse continent will be further exaggerated by worsening climate change and the interventions of disaster capitalism.[2] In the previous sections we saw that climate change will cause and exacerbate civil wars largely through increasing the scarcity of food, water and cultivatable soil. Many envision these future conflicts as a generalisation of the image they hold of present day Africa. In doing so they are mostly mistaken.

Most of Africa's wars today are fuelled more by the presence of resources and less their scarcity.[3] Retractions in global trade should deny oxygen to some of these fires. For instance, as the oil runs out, areas such as the Niger Delta, under siege by state/corporate oil interests, are likely to become once again backwaters rather than battlegrounds. I take it as a given that we will not see an African-wide conversion to Western-originated Anarchism, so what societies evolve into will, in large part, be defined by what they are now. And here is some good non-news from Africa — in many places and on many levels its cultures have significant anarchic characteristics, with a minority being functioning anarchies. I'll hand over for a moment to Sam Mbah, a Nigerian anarcho-syndicalist:

> To a greater or lesser extent… [many] traditional African societies manifested an anarchic eloquence which, upon closer examination, leads credence to the historical truism that governments have not always existed. They are but recent phenomena and are, therefore, not inevitable in human society. While some anarchic features in traditional African society existed largely in past stages of
>
> development, some of them persist and remain pronounced to this day. What this means is that the ideals underlying Anarchism may not be so new in the African context. What is new is the concept of Anarchism as a social movement ideology. Anarchy as abstraction may indeed be [largely] unknown to Africans, but is not at all unknown as a way of life…

[1] Speech by the dishonourable Minister for Foreign Trade (Nigeria) Mr. G Yhema, Crown Plaza Hotel, The Hague, 27 April 2000.

[2] See: Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2008).

[3] Contrary to the idea that a decrease in resources is likely to result in increased conflict many surveys have shown that increased resources result in increased conflict. Conflict can be caused by a combination of greed and grievance and often greed is the motor while grievance is the justification. "This suggests that the resource curse, by exposing those in power to the temptations of great wealth, is the most powerful driver of violence and conflict." — Camilla Toulmin, *Climate Change in Africa* (London: International African Institute and Zed Books, 1999), p. 118.

> Manifestations of anarchic elements in African communities… were and to some degree still are pervasive. These include the partial or complete absence of hierarchical structures, state apparatuses, and the commodification of labor. To put this in positive terms, [some societies] were (and are) largely self managed, egalitarian and republican in nature.[4]

The extent to which Africa is viewed as a 'basket case' in 'world opinion' is in part the extent to which its societies are anarchic and not fully enclosed within capitalist relations.

Why have anarchic social relations survived in Africa to such a degree? Jim Feast, writing for the American anarchist magazine *Fifth Estate*, has some answers:

> In sub-Saharan Africa, aside from in the minority of countries with a large, white settler population and valuable resources (such as diamonds or copper), there was little penetration of capitalist agricultural forms or government into the interior. In the colonial era… the imperial powers had only limited goals. There was no desire to invest resources to ensure the state could project its authority into every corner of the new colonies… And, after independence, settler states excepted… Africans remained only marginally affected by the market. They increasingly traded in the market, but their base was still a homestead and family farm where a subsistence ethos prevailed… The salient points are these. No matter how wide the impact of world capitalism, much of sub-Saharan Africa has not been effectively shaped by state or market power. Moreover, while in … [many parts of the planet]… there is a struggle to develop an alternative economy, in the parts of Africa under discussion, a robust subsistence economy, unconcerned with profit and capital expansion continues to exist.[5]

Peoples without governments

While anarchic elements are pervasive in Africa there are also entire anarchist societies.[6] Some of these exist surrounded by more incorporated populations, while others are truly remote from external power — through luck or active avoidance. Environments which are not conducive to empire are a significant factor behind the survival of some of these cultures and their ability to defend their autonomy.

A number have remained anarchic within themselves whilst superficially accepting outside power. This should not necessarily be seen as assimilation. Governments don't like to let outright opposition go unpunished lest it encourage others. Yet they don't always have the capacity to fully internalise pre-existing or maroon societies, especially wily ones. For the community,

[4] Sam Mbah and IG Igariewy, *African Anarchism: The History of a Movement* (Tucson: See Sharp Press, 1997), pp. 27–33.

[5] The following is worth noting also: "Such limited links were in the interest of the… [bosses], who purposely created a semi-working class. Thomson states, 'Mine owners and farm managers rely on the fact that peasants [who come to work temporarily] are also producing for themselves back on their smallholdings (farmed in their absence by their families). As workers have this additional source of subsistence, wages can be kept low."' — Jim Feast, 'The African Road to Anarchism?', in, *Fifth Estate* Vol. 43 No. 2 2008.

[6] For a good overview of some lived, rather than imagined, anarchies both in Africa and elsewhere see: Harold Barclay, *People Without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchy* (London: Kahn SrAverill, 1990).

the "state power and the alien political culture… are so different and so powerful that… direct resistance soon proves to be unaffordable; passive accommodation is impossible as well. The most acceptable possibility is some kind of collaboration that allows things to continue almost as before, with the idea that 'we were here before them and we will be here after them'"[7] In some situations this is as simple as unspoken contracts approximate to 'We'll pretend you're governing us, you pretend to believe it'. In other situations 'outwitting the state' may involve a complex set of tactics including providing key functions, retraditionalisation, regular movement and manipulating the balance of competing external powers.

Some may object that these anarchies are not those 'we' would design if 'we' were to sit down and plan the 'ideal' society for them[8] — but they are anarchies none the less. Though far more egalitarian than surrounding societies, they usually have some level of sex and age stratified power relations, a division of labour and sometimes rely on animal slavery. I don't view any of these things as good but it should be remembered that to differing extents these are aspects of all civilised societies. At least these cultures don't have class warfare or the state! In this sense they are anarchies even if they don't conform to all the aspirations of 'our' western originated Anarchisms. They should not be idealised (any more than present day Chiapas or 1936 Barcelona) and you don't have to 'support them'. But these are existing anarchies, the active social creation of millions of people through time resisting the concentration of power. Any overview of possibilities for liberty would be foolish to ignore them. Those of us who are freeing ourselves from authority can find insights, inspiration and warnings from their examples.[9]

Commons resurgent as global trade retracts

For those in Africa, the fact that anarchies exist and some anarchic tendencies remain widespread beyond them leaves routes of escape and survival open which can be utilised as authorities collapse, retract or are destroyed. It should be noted that many commons-based societies within Africa are fall-back positions turned to after complex kingdoms collapsed or were dismantled by invading empires (both Western and African). While colonial elites often policed through local traditional authorities, they came to blows with them too. Dominant classes act in their own interest, not in that of an abstract system of hierarchical power. The attack on local authority by outside elites opened up possibilities for anarchy in the past and this pattern continues. Jim Feast once again:

> Here's an irony of history. In the last 15 years, in [some parts of] the industrially undeveloped world, the state has withered away, not because of its supercession, but due to the extension of global capitalism. Talk of state collapse on capital's periphery doesn't mean governments have completely vanished, but that many states have diminished from being the totalized agencies of control we experience in Northern tier countries…
>
> Since independence, most sub-Saharan African countries have been one-party states, headed by corrupt strong men who rule by combining military coercion with the dis-

[7] P Skalnik, *Outwitting the State,* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), p. 13.

[8] A personally abhorrent and definitely authoritarian exercise which some anarchists still seem to enjoy…

[9] Though obviously not at the expense of looking at the class relations, balances of power, struggles and joys where we live. Too many activists know the intricacies of struggles, abroad yet little of the social war all around them.

> tribution of favours to well-placed followers… The intelligent strong man sees that not only his immediate cronies (who staff the state) but regional and tribal leaders of every significant stripe must be cultivated by financing infrastructural projects (that offer prime opportunities for graft) in their bailiwicks… But with structural adjustment policies forced upon these nations, this form of government has [often] ceased to exist because funds to sustain the patronage networks are no longer there… In a movement to shore up elite rule, there has been a widespread morphing into multi-party democracies. From 1988 to 1999 the number of states in sub-Saharan Africa featuring multi-party elections went from 9 to 45. This temporarily and cynically solves two problems for state rule… It restores a patina of legitimacy to a system that can no longer provide either patronage or welfare services to its citizens, and reinvigorates it by dividing clients among the competing parties, so each political grouping has need to siphon fewer funds since it serves a smaller client base[10] …
>
> Another loss of state power is the inability of it to provide minimal welfare to the citizenry, such as education and medical care, which structural adjustment programs eliminate as too costly. While some of these services are taken over by international relief organizations, most that are continued are done so by groups from the distressed society itself. In other words, as Thomson puts it, 'Declining state capacity required civil society to increase its self sufficiency.' The once-repressed women's groups, trade unions, farmers associations, and other grassroots networks are assuming greater responsibility in social and economic life…
>
> [So maybe here we are seeing an African road to Anarchism] 'whereby the money economy and the state, which are in a condition of partial collapse or withdrawal, cede more and more functions to non-monetarized, non-statist village communities that are organized on the basis of mutual aid?'[11]

This is already happening in some areas in a non-newsworthy manner without overt conflict. In others this revitalization of the commons is *one* of the forces filling the power vacuum left by the warring fragmentation of 'failed states.' The structural adjustment mentioned is of course time specific. There is an ebb and flow of projects of power, as the expansion of China into Africa shows, but nevertheless the process observed is a pointer to what may happen in many places as global trade retracts in a resource poor, climate changed world.

Outwitting the state

As well as those we could mischievously label lifestyle anarchists,[12] Africa has a growing, though still small, number of groups organising under the banner of Anarchism. These are unlikely to change the face/s of the entire continent but may play significant roles in emergent

[10] While I agree with the author here, I would say 'the client issue' is a factor behind the spread of multi-party systems but by no means the only one. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc, social democratic mobilization within Africa and the demands — both financially and ideological — of the West, are some factors amongst others. It will be interesting to see how the expansion of Chinese power in Africa affects this.

[11] Jim Feast, 'The African Road to Anarchism?', in, Fifth Estate Vol. 43, No. 2, 2008.

[12] A cheap joke at the expense of Murray Bookchin's ridiculous, 'Social Anarchism vs Lifestyle Anarchism', dichotomy.

movements and struggles. To repeat the earlier quote from Seaweed: "Any bioregion can be liberated through a succession of events and strategies based on the conditions unique to it." Even if we accept the foreclosure of any possibility of global anarchist revolution, there is no reason to say a regional anarchist insurrection somewhere in Africa (or elsewhere) is not on the cards and this is made more likely by the factors we have discussed already. In probably overly optimistic terms Sam Mbah states:

> The process of anarchist transformation in Africa might prove comparatively easy, given that Africa lacks a strong capitalist foundation, well-developed class formations and relations of production, and a stable, entrenched state system.[13]

While a surprising number of African dirt roads lead to anarchy[14] much of what we have touched on here relates to many rural areas across the planet to differing degrees. For instance, in his excellent, *The Art of Not Being Governed,*[15] James C. Scott recounts numerous examples of lived anarchies in upland Southeast Asia. Even outside of anarchies, peasant communities whose self-sufficiency have not been entirely vanquished, still often retain high levels of autonomy — Land is Liberty![16] Sadly in many places communal traditions have been eradicated, the 'commons' (or 'wilderness') enclosed and farmers forcefully transformed into wage labourers. In others however, they have not, for a diverse set of reasons, not least of which is resistance. States do not always get their own way.

The tide of Western authority will recede from much, though by no means all of the planet. A writhing mess of social flotsam and jetsam will be left in its wake. Some patches of lived anarchy, some horrible conflicts, some empires, some freedoms, and of course, unimaginable weirdness. As states recede and 'fail' — through entropy, stupidity, revolution, internal conflict, climate stress — people will continue to dig, sow, herd and live — most, admittedly, in vastly more challenging climates, and few with the guarantee of a peaceful life. In many places commodified land will be reclaimed as commons and new communities will be formed by refugees from the collapsed economies. Anarchic societies — old and new — will need to defend their liberty and lives, through avoidance, arms, flight and 'outwitting the state'.

We have glimpsed some of the possibilities opened up (and closed) by both future climate wars and the retraction of state governance from rural communities — but what about liberty at the shifting outer borders of civilisation? And what of liberty beyond those borders — in the wild?

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[13] Sam Mbah and IG Igariewy, *African Anarchism: The* History *of a Movement* (Tucson: See Sharp Press, 1997), p. 108.

[14] "Improvement makes straight roads; but the crooked roads without improvement are roads of genius." — William Blake, quoted in, Lawrence Millman, *Last* Places: A Journey *in the North* (London: Sphere Books, 1992).

[15] James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South-East Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[16] If you doubt this why not try a pleasurable experiment and get a taste of freedom by eating food not bought with sold time but grown with one's own hands. I suspect the experience will convince you that land is liberty and make you desire more of both. For those who like book references as well as soil under their fingernails see: The Ecologist, *Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons* (London: Earthscan, 1993)

5. Civilisation Retreats, Wildness Persists

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert… Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

— *Ozymandias,* Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1817

Empires spread deserts which they cannot survive

Read it in the ruins of Ur and Mu Us, the desertified fields of Wadi Faynan[1] and the Techuacan Valley.[2] *Empires spread deserts which they cannot survive.* Raids, insurrections and desertion often mark the fall of civilisations but the real ground work for their destruction has always been done by their own leaders, workers and zeks. We are all working towards the destruction of our civilisations.[3]

> "Civilised man has marched across the face of the earth and left a desert in his footprints."[4]

The extent to which global heating will cause the expansion of hot deserts is unknown but that they will do so — and drastically — is a pretty safe bet. The interaction of soil, climate and civil power will continue to be a dominant factor determining both history and the opening up

[1] Graeme Barker, 'A Tale of Two Deserts: Contrasting Desertification Histories on Rome's Desert Frontier', in, *World* Archaeology, vol 33, No.3, 2002, pp. 488–507.

[2] Helmut Geist, The Causes *and Progression of Desertification* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), pp. 4–7.

[3] Those who doubt this could do with reading. Clive Ponting, A *Green* History *of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilisations.* (London: Penguin Books, 1991). On a side note, before becoming an academic Ponting narrowly avoided jail (thanks to an unexpected jury acquittal) for leaking the truth behind the Belgrano Affair (the British sinking of a Argentine navy warship as it sped away from the Falklands conflict) whilst he was a senior MoD civil servant.

[4] Vernon G. Carter and Tom Dale, *Topsoil and Civilization* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974).

of territory for freer lives. That agricultural systems will fail as the arid worlds spread means that, once again, civilisations will have to retreat from much of their previously conquered lands. In some places this will be total, in others a matter of degrees.

In my mother tongue deserts are uninhabitable, abandoned, *deserted* ; but by whom? Not by the coyotes or the cactus wrens. Not by the harvester ants or the rattlesnakes. Not by the namib quicksteps, the meercats, the acacias, the tahrs, the sandgrouse and the red kangaroos. Deserts and arid environments generally are often biologically diverse, though by their nature, the life is sparser than in other biomes. While some desert areas are lifeless, in most communities of animals, birds, insects, bacteria and plants run, fly, crawl, spread and grow in lives unordered, undomesticated by civilisation. Wildness is in us and all around us. The battle to contain and control it is the constant labour of civilisation. When that battle is lost and the fields are deserted, wildness persists.

> Behind the dust, meanwhile, under the vulture-haunted sky, the desert waits — mesas, butte, canyon, reef, sink, escarpment, pinnacle, maze, dry lake, sand dune and Barren Mountain.[5]

Nomadic freedoms and the collapse of agriculture

I remember sitting crouched in the red, under the hot sun, the wind low, the silence of the desert was absolute… or it would have been if it wasn't, of course, for all the gossiping. There are people here, not all deserts are unliveable, but for states a surplus is barely possible. The sparseness of life favours nomadism — whether by herders, foragers, travellers or traders.

> No one can live this life and emerge unchanged. They will carry, however faint, the imprint of the desert, the brand which marks the nomad.[6]

While the concentration of power can arise in any society with some level of domestication, overall the more nomadic a people the more independent they are likely to be. Governments know this as can be witnessed by the widespread attempts to *settle* their desert nomad problems. Whether it is the obstinate survival of Aboriginal life ways in Australia,[7] the uncompromising resistance of the Apache led by Victorio or the recent Tuareg insurrection in the Sahara, nomads are often adept at fight and/or flight.

Helene Claudot-Hawad says in a discussion of Tuareg conflict with modern states that: "State boundaries have by definition a fixed, immovable and intangible line, and are purposefully made not to be transgressed. They separate what are meant to be mutually opposing entities."[8] That the resistant independence of nomads is often mixed with a practical disbelief in borders makes them threatening to the very ideological basis of governments.

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[5] Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), pp. 303–305.

[6] Wilfred Theiseger, Arabian Sands (London: Penguin, 1959). I took the cheeky, though I think worthwhile, step of gender neutralising this quote i.e 'One' was originally 'Man' and 'they' was originally 'he'.

[7] See for example: Christobel Mattingley ed, Survival *In Our Own Land:* Aboriginal *experiences in 'South Australia* ' since 1936 (Sydney: Hodder &r Stoughton, 1988).

[8] For a good background on the situation of die Tuareg see: Helene Claudot-Hawad, A Nomadic Fight Against Immobility: the Tuareg in the Modern State', in, Chatty, Dawn ed. *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and* North *Africa: Entering the* 21st century. (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006).

Global heating will stimulate transformations in human land uses. As noted in the previous chapter, in some places peasant self-sufficiency will likely replace export orientated monoculture, while in others withered crops may be replaced by animal husbandry. In the expanding arid zones a good proportion of those who successfully adapt may do so by embracing nomadic freedoms and transhumant pastoral subsistence.[9] In others still, nomadic pastoralists and agriculturalists may revert to hunter-gathering.

For most of our species' existence, all were foragers and wilderness was our home. Hunter-gatherer societies include the most egalitarian on earth[10] and where such cultures have survived to modern times they have done so in areas remote from centralised power and often unsuitable for agriculture. For example the Spinfex people of the Great Victoria Desert have been able to continue their traditional lives despite the advent of 'Australia', as their homelands are so barren that it is not even suitable for pastoralism.[11] The !Kung too, managed to live well and free as gather-hunters in a very harsh environment — the Kalahari.[12]

When agriculturalists face extreme food stress or external violence, foraging is an adaptive strategy that has been turned to many times. For some this may be temporary, for others permanent. Thus, with spreading desertification we could see, in some places, a spreading desertion from civilisation to something resembling our original anarchist wild-life. Whole new bands of foragers may evolve following collapses of agricultural viability and the retraction of exuberant, energy rich state powers. Given the present condition of many arid zone pastoralists and foragers it is more likely that in most cases we will see hybridity — an increase in autonomous nomadic populations relying both on animal herding and foraging.

Sandgrouse and creosote

On a more general level, many of those with a longing for wildness and a need for freedom from authority have gravitated towards the frontiers often hot deserts and semi-arid regions.

[9] "Given the likely rise in temperatures and shifts in rainfall many farmers will face yet more challenging growing conditions. Livestock production may do somewhat better than crops, especially as herders move away from cattle, which are less heat tolerant and towards goats, sheep and camels, which are better able to cope in drier, hotter conditions." (p. 12.) "Overall, however, the livestock sector is likely to be more resilient than corporate agriculture, since the mixed herds kept by smallholders are better able to cope with erratic rainfall. Transhumant systems in which animals are moved according to seasons, are also better placed than those where animals are kept in large commercial beef and dairy farms. In those areas likely to get hotter and drier, herd composition will change from cattle towards a greater number of small stock or camels. If this means ewer oxen can be kept, this will have knock-on effect on capacity to farm land. (p. 60.; CamillaToulmin, Climate Change *in Africa* (London: International African Institute and Zed Books, 2009).

[10] Richard B Lee & Richard Daly, eds The Cambridge *Encyclopaedia of Hunters and Gatherers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[11] Though to the British military this just made it ideal for nuclear weapons testing.

[12] Nisa a woman of the !Kung San: "I remember another time when I had been walking with my friends in the bush. Our families were moving from one camp to another and my friends and I were walking ahead of the adults, riding on top of each other, making believe we were donkeys. That's when my friend Besa saw a wildebeest lying dead on the ground; then we saw another and then another; they had all been recently killed by lions. We ran back on our tracks, crying out, "We saw three dead wildebeest killed by lions!' The adults said 'Ho, ho, our children… our wonderful children… our wonderful, wonderful children!'" — Marjorie Shostak, Nis *a: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (London: Earthscan,1990), p. 101.

> As I wander out in the gentle spring,
> I hear a keen call of your roads, O Desert!
> I shall leave my home in the dreary hills
> How sad are other lands compared to you, O Desert!
>
> — Seidi, a 19th century Turkman poet

Such possibilities are present — and will be more so — in many regions, Even for those within the walls of the supposed global powers, there will be an expanding outside. In the already water stressed areas of southern Europe, deserted farms and villages have been re-inhabited by anarchists, hippies, cults and others wishing to flee the direct gaze of authority and desert the prison of wage labour. Similar 'drop out' situations are present in the drying heart of Australia and the western deserts of North America. Here, importantly, aboriginal communities persist or are re-establishing. The long indigenous strategy of survival — "we were here before and will be after" — may bear desert fruit. As numerous contemporary struggles illustrate, anarchists and native peoples can make good allies.

Some of the oldest communities live in deserts. In the Mojave is a Creosote bush clonal colony whose slowly widening circle is estimated at 11,700 years old. Recent genetic testing has indicated that the Bushmen of the Kalahari are probably the oldest continuous population of humans on Earth.[13] These communities — both plant and human — are inspiring examples of resilience, but having survived millennia in the hot deserts they may not survive the still spreading cultural one. The ancient Creosote bush ring is quite low to the ground and grows on US Bureau of Land Management land "designated for recreational all-terrain vehicle use."[14] The Botswana government has forcefully relocated many Kalahari Bushmen from their homelands into squalid re-settlement camps, seemingly to enable diamond mining.[15] For free peoples and wild-life the harshness of our cultural desert is a most threatening of environments.

Overall, then, as the planet hots up we should remember the nomadic freedoms of the herders and foragers, the refugia of aboriginal peoples and renegade drop-outs, the widening habitats of desert flora and fauna. That arid zones will expand brings positive possibilities as well as sadness for the diminished, often previously vibrant, ecosystems.[16] There can still be a beautiful flowering in the desert. I have mentioned the possibilities opened up by the spread of hot deserts, but course there are many closures too. Even some relatively anarchic cultures on or beyond the desert frontiers will become unviable. Species will become extinct. While there will be survivors in the expanding desert lands many will choose to flee the heat. Some of these migrations — to some extent already happening — will be intranational but many will be international.

> In the hot arid world survivors gather for the journey to the arctic centres of civilisation; I see them in the desert as the dawn breaks and the sun throws its piercing gaze across the horizon at the camp. The cool fresh night air lingers for a while and then, like smoke, dissipates as the heat takes charge…[17]

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[13] Steve Conner, 'Worlds Most Ancient Race traced in DNA Study', *The Independent* (London), 1 May 2009.
[14] Rachel Sussman, *The World's Oldest Living Things,* TED 2010, (www.ted.com).
[15] Survival International, (www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/bushmen).
[16] And yes, that includes people.
[17] James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 159.

These are some of the last words in Lovelock's *Revenge of Gaia.* As civilisation and much of humanity flees and/or dies as the hot deserts expand what of the cold deserts — what of the new "arctic centres of civilisation"?

6. Terror-Nullius Returns

Civilisation expands as the cold deserts thaw
Genocide and ecocide in the 'empty' lands
Lives of liberty/slavery on the new frontiers

Altogether elsewhere, vast
Herds of reindeer move across
Miles and miles of golden moss,
Silently and very fast.

— from *The Fall of Rome,* W.H. Auden[1]

Civilisation expands as the cold deserts thaw

As we evolved in Africa, cold deserts have always been quite hostile to human endeavour and thus, while increasingly affected by civilisation, they have remained largely undomesticated. This will not last. Reports from climatologists, indigenous peoples, sailors, seasonal site workers and ecologists all confirm that the effects of global climate change are magnified in the far north. In Greenland Sten Pederson leans down to harvest cabbages,[2] something unthinkable a few decades ago. Through the newly ice freed arctic waves survey ships push forward in search of oil, gas and riches.[3] In much of the far north (with the exception of those areas scarred by the legacy of Stalin's gulags and new cities) the intrusions of civilisation are sparse or temporary but they are increasing, and many think we are on the brink of a new cold rush. Buried treasure becomes reachable and previously frozen territory becomes more hospitable to settlement and agriculture. Civilisation will expand as the cold deserts thaw.

It's a dirty secret that many Northern governments are actively looking forward to the effects of climate change on the lands they occupy, at the moment often only symbolically. There will be some winners in the (increasingly) water rich, thawing Far North just as there will be many, many losers in the water-stressed hot regions. Climate doesn't believe injustice. "Some… regions of the world… may experience gains from global warming in the next 20 to 30 years, such as more favourable farming conditions in some parts of Russia and Canada."[4] "The northern quarter of our planet's latitudes will undergo tremendous transformation over the course of this century,

[1] W. H. Auden, 'The Fall of Rome', in, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004).

[2] Tim Folger, 'Viking Weather: The Changing Face of Greenland', *National Geographic* Vol 217 No 6, June 2010, p. 49.

[3] James Melic, James and Duncan Bartlett, *Melting Ice Opens Up Potential for Arctic Exploitation.* BBC World Service — Business Daily: 22 September 2010, (www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11381971).

[4] Camilla Toulmin, *Climate Change in Africa* (London: International African Institute and Zed Books, 1999), pp. 15–16.

making them a place of increased human activity, higher strategic value, and greater economic importance than today."[5]

This transformation will be fuelled by the climatic effect of fossil fuel burning and the opening up of new reserves. "The region could be home to 90 billion barrels of oil — worth a whopping $7 trillion at the current oil price — and 30 percent of the planet's untapped gas reserves, according to the US Geological Survey."[6]

Earlier, we looked at climate conflicts and focused on hot wars, but cold wars over the control of newly accessible hydrocarbon, mineral and land 'resources' are also possible, though they would have a fundamentally different character. "Cold areas are generally economically developed countries and hot areas are generally developing countries… Conflict among developed countries might lead to concentrated fatalities, while those in developing countries might lead to conflict that is more diffuse." "Where the Hot War is characterised by the breakdown of state functions and internal strife, the Cold War exemplifies conditions of expanding state control and external conflict."[7]

The emergence of a new Cold War — once again primarily between East and West centres of power, though this time solidly about the Far North — is on the cards.[8] For now the probability of full-on war in the new Polar Tension Belt is far less than that in the hot areas of the planet, not least as many of the countries in question are nuclear powers. Fracas resembling the UK-Icelandic Cod Wars combined with diplomatic grandstanding, such as the recent planting of the Russian flag on the seabed of the north pole,[9] will no doubt increase. The only' thing that will categorically prevent conflict in the region is if it's found there is nothing worth scrapping about. This is unfortunately unlikely — the opening — up of the very sea itself brings new possibilities for trade and movement even if little is found below it.

There is a forgotten continent in this story. "Antarctica will see enormous changes due to terra-forming that will create opportunities for economic exploitation. With many sovereignty claims in the region, there is a chance that conflict will be the outcome."[10] There is a lot of ice on Antarctica and significant disputes are unlikely to hit until mid-century if not much, much later, but that does not mean states are not laying foundations. It is a cruel irony that much of the science that has enabled awareness of climate change and allowed glimpses of past climates has come through the sterling efforts of scientists working in state institutions — the British Antarctic Survey for example, whose presence in Antarctica is in large part funded to underline imperial claims over a continent true conquest and domestication can only come through massive climate change In the meantime the seas of the Far South — especially around the disputed Falkland Islands — are increasingly party to oil prospecting.

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[5] Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 6.

[6] 'Global Warming Poses Threats and Opportunities to Arctic Region', *Manila Bulletin, 6* December 2009.

[7] James R. Lee, *Climate Change and Armed Conflict: Hot and Cold Wars* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 167 and p. 17.

[8] For example the Russian National Security Strategy, adopted in spring 2009, referred to the possibility of using armed force in conflict over Hydrocarbon reserves. 'Climate Change, the Arctic and Russia's National Security', *Pravda,* 25 March 2010 (www english.pravda.ru).

[9] Vladimir Putin has publicly stated that he thinks there is an urgent need for Russia to secure its "strategic, economic, scientific and defence interests" in the Arctic. *Russia Plants Flag Under N Pole,* BBC News website, 2 August 2007 (www.news.bbc.co.uk/l/hi/world/europe/6927395.stm).

[10] James R Lee, *Climate Change and Armed Conflict: Hot and Cold Wars* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 102.

Ecocide and genocide in the 'empty' lands.

When the British state declared Australia 'terra nullius' it was defining the land as empty. The peoples, the wildness, were to be made invisible, unbearable. If perceived at all, they were seen, correctly, as obstacles to progress. In the Far North, as in colonies generally, much of the land is already peopled and from a wider perspective, animaled. There are wonders in the tundra that civilisation must lay to waste in the cause of emptying and occupation. In his beautiful exploration of the Arctic, naturalist Barry Lopez describes lands he loves.

> The Arctic, overall, has the classic lines of a desert landscape: spare, balanced, extended, and quiet… The apparent monotony of the land is relieved, however, by the weather systems moving through, and by the activities of animals, particularly of birds and caribou. And because so much of the country stands revealed, and because sunlight passing through the dustless air renders its edges with such unusual sharpness, animals linger before the eye. And their presence is vivid.
>
> Like other landscapes that initially appear barren, arctic tundra can open suddenly, like the corolla of a flower, when any intimacy with it is sought. One begins to notice spots of brilliant red, orange, and green, for example, among the monotonic browns of a tundra tussock.
>
> A wolf spider lunges at a glistening beetle. A shred of musk ox wool lies inert in the lavender blooms of saxifrage… The wealth of biological detail on the tundra dispels any feeling that the land is empty; and its likeness to a stage suggests impending events. On a summer's walk, the wind -washed air proves deathlessly clear. Time and again you come upon the isolated and succinct evidence of life — animal tracks, the undigested remains of a ptarmigan in an owl's casting, a patch of barren-ground willow nibbled nearly leafless by arctic hares. You are afforded the companionship of birds, which follow after you. (They know you are an animal; sooner or later you will turn up something to eat.) Sandpipers scatter before you, screaming tuituek, an Eskimo name for them. Coming awkwardly down a scree slope of frost-riven limestone you make a glass-tinkling clatter — and at a distance a tundra grizzly rises on its hind legs to study you; the dish-shaped paws of its front legs deathly still… [But already, even in uninhabited lands], one cannot miss the evidence of upheaval, nor avoid being wrenched by it. The depression it engenders, because so much of it seems a heedless imposition on the land and on the people, a rude invasion, can lead one to despair.[11]

The present scale of industrial invasion is merely a portent of the coming ecocide engendered, as the high latitudes warm, by the peppering of the Far North with more cities, roads, installations, fields and factories. This process will also be one of attempted genocide. Herders such as some of the Sami[12] of Lapland and indigenous of Siberia will likely find their homelands increasingly fragmented and polluted whilst those communities living on resource rich land will face

[11] Barry Lopez, *Arctic-Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (New York: The Harvill Press, 1999), p. xxiii — xxvii.

[12] The divisive existence of nation states is already a problem for the inherently trans-boundary Sami and could prove fatal in their attempts to adapt to climate change, even without considering civilisational expansion. See: Erik Reinert et al, 'Adapting to climate change in Sami reindeer herding: the nation-state as problem and solution', in,

eradication — either by simple dispossession or by assimilation into the industrial culture.[13] In a few places such as Greenland where much of the indigenous majority may gain some material benefit from the denudation of their thawing lands this process may be partly indigenous driven. In most, however, where aboriginal communities are minorities there will be familiar patterns of repression and resistance.

This future story of a clash between old cold worlds and new ones warmed by 'the white heat of the technological revolution' is already past and present. Tales of dispossession and destruction are many, yet so is resistance. For example, despite few resources, some of the Siberian tribes have fervently opposed the expansion of gas and oil infrastructure on their traditional lands. In one action a hundred Nivkh, Evenk and Ulita blocked roads with their reindeer for three days against new oil and gas pipelines.[14] In Canada especially, the government and corporations are faced with indigenous warrior societies with a strong land ethic and a growing fighting spirit.

While there have been — and will be — victories in the battle to stop the northern spread of empire and its infrastructure, even the most resolute peoples cannot halt climate change itself. Indigenous peoples report that lives, and the survivability of life-ways, are already being affected. As Violet Ford, an Inuit, says: "We can't predict the weather anymore, so it's very difficult to plan our hunting. It puts a lot of stress and fear into our communities."[15] Similar reports come from the 'Russian' Arctic as well, where changes in ice and snow melting is causing culture change and endangering the reindeer herding lifestyle of the Nenet herders on the Yamal Peninsular.[16]

On a bright day on a storm tossed cape I walked with a friend surrounded by forest, waves, osprey, and orcas. Far from any road or village, the place felt pristine, but amongst the trees were the rotting remains of a school. Rusting farm implements littered the undergrowth and former fields were now the hunting grounds of cougar. Remoteness from markets, the illogic of politics, and land unsuited to colonisation by an imported model had led to the evacuation of this coast. It reminded me that despite the wishes of those who plan worlds, settlement sometimes fails and the wild wins. This will continue to be true.[17]

W Neil Adger et al, *Adapting to Climate Change: Thresholds, Values, Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 417–431. For a good background also see: Hugh Beach, *The Saami of Lapland* (London: Minority Rights Group. 1988).

[13] When an indigenous people ceases to exist and becomes instead part of the wider culture is a question I will leave to the peoples themselves. That such assimilation is deeply painful can be seen both in the staggeringly high suicide rates amongst many newly settled communities and in the self harm and suicide rates more generally as children worldwide are formed into adult cogs and microprocessors.

[14] Survival International. *Siberian Peoples Protest Against Oil and Gas Pipelines,* 26 August 2005, (www.survivalinternational.org/news/985).

[15] Geoffrey York, 'Indigenous People Describe Real Perils of Global Warming', in, *The Globe and Mail,* 14 December 2007.

[16] Luke Harding, 'Climate Change in Russia's Arctic Tundra', *Guardian, 20* September 2010.

[17] For civilisation, the great thawing of the Far North will probably form obstacles as well as bridges. Lawrence C Smith argues that in many places thanks to decreased winter road access and ground disruptions from thawing permafrost there will be "diminishing access by land, but rising access by sea. For many remote interior landscapes, the perhaps surprising prospects I see is reduced human presence and their return to a wilder state." — Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 170.

Lives of liberty/slavery on the new frontiers

Possibilities will emerge as the cold deserts retreat for those who wish to settle/invade/resist/work. Who will populate these new lands? Physical landscapes and the social terrains of struggle frame what we think is possible and thus what we do. In Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century North America, Individualist Anarchism (especially that influenced by Henry David Thoreau) was framed directly by the idea and existence of frontiers and thus the real ability to build some level of autonomy and self-sufficiency — admittedly on stolen land! In crowded Europe at the same time there was less 'outside' available, and so despite strong currents with an ecological and anti-civilisation perspective, many individualist anarchists turned to bank robbing, insurrection, assassination and art. We can expect the opening up of new lands within Europe and North America to have a significant impact on both those who wish to desert civilisation as well as those who wish to expand it. There will be many possibilities for lives of liberty on the expanding frontiers, though drop-outs and renegades may themselves lay the foundations for a wider 'gentrification' of the wilderness.

It would be lovely to think that a thousand anarchist log huts will bloom but more prevalent are likely to be workcamps and farmlands resembling something between Dubai's modern gulags and the new Chinese farming and logging colonies of Siberia. In the UAE desert migrant workers live in horrific conditions and are bussed in and out of Dubai daily to build the new super city. They have no rights of citizenship, no rights to stay beyond a fixed term contract, almost no spouses (or right to marry or co-habit), families rarely exist, no official unionisation. Frightened by an 'Indian Demographic Time-Bomb' Dubai's rulers have initiated a complex immigration quota system where migrants are brought in from diverse countries to keep workers socially divided. In Siberia 600,000 Chinese workers cross the border in seasonal migration every summer to work the new fields.[18]

So there will be lives of slavery as well as liberty on the new frontiers and with worsening prospects in much of the warming world and the promise of hard currency many will choose them. Readers with anarcho-syndicalist leanings may notice the striking similarity of such situations with that of the logging and mining camps that were the battlegrounds of the Wobblies. The IWW was the only workers organisation that had any successes in uniting 'lumpen' migrant workers of diverse nationalities in early 20th century America. Culturally divided and without recourse to legal unions and other organs of social democracy, militant informal syndicalism could arise in the New North, possibly even informed by Anarchism.

Parallels between old and new frontiers are laid out well by climatologist Lawrence C. Smith.

> [An] envisioning of the New North today might be something like America in 1803, just after the Louisiana Purchase from France. It, too, possessed major cities fuelled by foreign immigration, with a vast, inhospitable frontier distant from the major urban cores. Its deserts, like Arctic tundra, were harsh, dangerous, and ecologically fragile. It, too, had rich resource endowments of metals and hydrocarbons. It, too, was not really an empty frontier but already occupied by aboriginal peoples who had been living there for millennia.[19]

[18] *Parag Khanna Maps the Future of Countries,* TED, July 2009, (www.ted.com).

[19] Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 258.

While the extent of civilisational expansion in the ‘New North’ is, like so much in climate change related futurology, presently unknowable; the trend itself seems a given. In some places it can be resisted, and successfully. In others the hubris of settlement will simply fail. In many places its very expansion brings possibilities for those who would live in new openings or in old, but warmer, worlds of the gyrfalcon.

7. Convergence and the New Urban Majorities

Life expectancy and expectations of 'modern life'

In 2008 humanity passed a significant milestone — more of our species now live in cities than outside of them. I won't even attempt to guess where exactly — other than ecological denudation[1] — the growth of cities is leading. It could be the glimmering glass domes of sci-fi fantasy, the putrid waters of contemporary Makoko[2] or the jungle-immersed abandoned avenues of Mayan cities. In all likelihood it leads in the direction of all three, and others. One suspects no one knows what the present situation is, never mind where it is headed. As Mike Davis puts it;

> Very large cities — those with a global, not just regional, environmental footprint — are thus the most dramatic end-product, in more than one sense, of human cultural evolution in the Holocene. Presumably they should be the subject of the most urgent and encompassing scientific inquiry. They are not. We know more about rainforest ecology than urban ecology.[3]

The rate of change is staggering. For illustration take mega-cities, those with more than 10 million citizens. While there were none in 1900, by the mid 1970s there were three mega-cities, and between then and 2007 the number grew to nineteen, with the total expected to rise to twenty seven by 2025. That's 3–27 in around 50 years. Overall, since the beginning of the 1990s, cities in the (rapidly) 'developing world' have expanded by three million people a week.[4] That's roughly equivalent to a new city the size of Bristol, Bratislava or Oakland *every single* day.[5] For now, the urban majorities look set to continue expanding as people are subject to forces that push and pull them away from agriculture and towards the freedoms and slaveries of the metropoles.

While the distance between the globes' financially richest and poorest continues to widen, UN statistics nevertheless show incredible changes for much of the world's populations; lifestyle shifts that often are not reflected in any comparable paradigm shift amongst activists in the 'developed' world. As Hans Roeleing has pointed out, the planet is often seen as divided between:

[1] The tendency emerging, to see cities as nature's salvation, is cargoist nonsense, backed up by carbon counting techniques that ignore the inter-related nature of industrialism. A good recent example of such flawed thinking is: Shanta Barley, 'Escape to the City', in, *New Scientist* 6.11.2010, pp. 32–34. I note the editors flagged it up on the cover as the lead article with the title 'Urban Utopia', which says it all really!

[2] Lagos in Nigeria shelters an estimated 20 million people and is one of the world's fastest growing megacities. Once a small fishing village, Makoko has grown into a slum housing around 100,000 people largely in stilt houses on Lagos's lagoon. Like many slums the area is largely governed by local gangs rather than state ones.

[3] Mike Davis, *Dead Cities and Other Tales* (New York: The New Press, 2002), p. 363.

[4] United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *State of the World's Cities 2008/2009* (London: Earthscan, 2008), quoted in Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 32.

[5] Population figures taken from state censuses. Bristol: 433,100 (UK 2001). Bratislava: 429,000 (Slovakia 2006). Oakland: 446,901 (USA 2010).

> … we and 'them' and 'we' is the Western World and 'them' is the Third World. 'And what do you mean with Western World?' I said. 'Well, that's long life and small family, and Third World is short life and large family.'[6]

Such a simplistic picture always obscured class, cultural and regional differences but there was some truth to it. Not anymore. The changes in life expectancy and family size world-wide, are just the most obvious changes. Alongside them are huge transformations in general health (both good and bad),[7] child programming and the increasing degree of the commodification of social relations. Yet even on a planet where road traffic accidents now kill similar numbers of people as malaria, the old picture still persists.[8]

In the growing cities especially, tangible social revolutions (such as the increase in life expectancy) can combine with media propelled myths of the (non)American dream to produce unrealistic expectations of 'modern life'. Such expectations encourage attempts at assimilation and submission to power, even as inevitable clashes of class interests and the inability of 'the system' to come up with the promised goods give rise to furies. On the positive side, many people will at least have longer lives to experience the possibility of love as well as inevitable social dislocation and widening class inequality.

Divergent worlds

Those that see these transformations as magically leading the species towards a convergence based on where these trends led the West[9] would be deluded, even without the real limits now set by climate change, resource scarcity etc. For a start, some estimate that even if one takes these trends as a given there will still remain a rural population approaching three billion at mid century.[10] Many of these farmers as well as many of those in the cities will likely be living in stagnant economies similar to the countries of the 'bottom billion' today. Additionally, many of these least converging populations are likely to be in those countries commonly described as failed states. These countries are unlikely to 'grow', not least thanks to the additional barriers provided by the rise (or more accurately return) of the global powerhouses of China and India.[11] As noted earlier[12] the presence of these "large islands of chaos"[13] (Paul Collier, ex-World Bank)

[6] Hans Rosling, *Hans Rosling shows the best stats you've ever seen.* TED, February 2006, (www.ted.com).

[7] See: Christine McMurray and Roy Smith, *Diseases of Globalization: Socioeconomic Transitions and Health* (London: Earthscan, 2001).

[8] 1.20 million and 1.27 million respectively in 2002. Tim Halliday and Basiro Davey, *Water and Health in an Overcrowded World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 39.

[9] As though 'we' are' finished'…

[10] Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 35.

[11] "…the bottom billion will have to wait a long time until development in Asia creates a wage gap with the bottom billion similar to the massive gap that prevailed between Asia and the rich world around 1980. This does not mean that development in the bottom billion is impossible, but it does make it much harder. The same automatic processes that drove Asian development will impede the development of the bottom billion." — Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 86. Whether one sees the process above as 'automatic' as Collier describes or sees it as an expression of class interests (or both), the basic tone of his conclusion is persuasive.

[12] See Chapters 3, Desert Storms, and 4, African Roads to Anarchy.

[13] Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 3.

brings positive as well as negative possibilities — at least from my anarchist perspective. It seems likely, then, that rather than a global convergence we will see the continued emergence of radically divergent worlds — both between nations and within them.

Additionally, sudden trend reversals, in health for example, can surprise. Just look at the unpredicated AIDS epidemic in Africa or the dramatically increased Russian male death rates in the 1990s. Within medicine and amongst elite planners there is a widespread, and not groundless, fear that today's mega-cities and food production systems are becoming perfect incubators for pandemics of possibly unparalleled ferocity.

A useable (though simplistic and therefore false) summation might be that many people in the long-industrialised countries tend to still hold to a vision of a single Third World that is far less industrialised than much of it is, whilst many in the emerging economies of the global south view their futures as far more rosy and pre-determined than they probably are; and finally, those populations that (from a standard economic perspective) lie at the bottom, will in the medium future look much like they do now, but will probably be living in less hospitable environments. The best one can say is that uneven convergence trends in many of the developing worlds will (for now) continue (but not universally); that there are no destinations given and the rides may be bumpy indeed, not least due to inter-power rivalry. The trends I have mentioned are simultaneously bringing much — but by no means all — of humanity together whilst breeding limitless division. In the ever jolly-words of the US National Intelligence Agency, as well as creating convergence, "…today's trends appear to be heading towards a potentially more fragmented and conflicted world."[14]

Survival in the slums

While different places are, by nature, different, one near constant across the burgeoning metropoli are the slums. At least one billion people already live in them, a figure expected to rise to two billion within two decades and three billion people by mid-century. This means one in three people[15] on earth could be living in non-formalised urban terrains, in shacks, tents, corrugated iron, tenement and rubbish. Already in many countries slum dwellers make up the majority of urbanites. 99.4% in Ethiopia and Chad, 98.5% in Afghanistan and 92% in Nepal. Bombay is the global slum capital with 10–12 million squatters and tenement dwellers followed by Mexico City and Dhaka with 9–10 million each, then Lagos, Cairo, Kinshasa-Brazzaville, Sao Paulo, Shanghai and Delhi all with 6–8 million.[16]

The first night I slept in a Third World squatter neighbourhood I felt surprisingly at home, as I am sure anyone who has lived in squats (especially occupations) in the global north would do. The bodged electrics, the air of cameraderie, the dirt, the dogs everywhere. If the bright yellow M arches signpost the presence of corporate globalisation then shelters constructed from fading blue plastic tarps and pallets also act as global signposts — this time that you are entering squatter worlds. Waking up with chickens in your face gives the game away somewhat that you have probably woken in the Third World, but having said that, it's also happened to me on-site in

[14] *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington: US National Intelligence Council, 2008), p.99, quoted in, Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 43.

[15] Robert Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities:* A *Billion Squatters, a New Urban World.* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[16] United Nations statistics quoted in: Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 23.

South London… The family I was staying with were lovely and there was so much energy and creativity and resilience crammed into the shack alleys all around, I truly *felt* like I was in a Temporary Autonomous Zone.

A lot of what I experienced in that community made me strangely proud to be human but those of us who see solutions as arising from autonomy, informality, self help and class struggle can fall into the trap of seeing what we want to see in the slums. Don't get me wrong — all those engines are present, but so too to differing degrees are all the predictable intra-class divisions as well as deepening class oppressions. For instance, just because it's a slum — even a squatter settlement — doesn't mean it doesn't have landlords. This often starts at the lowest level with subdivisions, roofs and rooms rented out by established inhabitants to newer arrivals. As Mike Davis points out (in his characteristically amazing and frankly harrowing book *Planet of Slums),* "It is the principle way in which urban poor people can monetise their equity (formal or informal), but often in an exploitative relationship to even poorer people."[17] Others, from gangsters to big developers, politicians, juntas and the middle class also get in on the act. In the slums of Nairobi for example, many of those who fall behind on rent, even for a day, face the terror of the landlord and his henchmen turning up to confiscate their meagre possessions, evict them and worse. Such landlords are referred to by Kenyans simply as 'Wabenzi' — those with enough money to buy a Mercedes-Benz.[18]

If we have said where much of the burgeoning urban majorities live, what about what they do, where they work, and where they are going? The answers are, obviously, hugely diverse and I won't pretend to be able to tell you. What I will say, is that many slum inhabitants could be seen and see themselves as in transition. Transition from country to urban. From refugee to worker. From dispossessed to propertied. From slum dweller to somewhere else.

This narrative is as old as capitalism. Peasants/agricultural workers are dispossessed and end up in city slums. In the West, horrors upon horrors followed, eventually manufacturing the industrial worker[19] but not before the near century of revolutions born in France in 1848 and dying in Spain in 1938. These insurrections were largely fought by transitional classes somewhat similar to those today, who in the process of being proletarianised lived in, "neither industrial nor village society but in the tense, almost electrifying force field of both."[20] While this grand tale of class evolution in early capitalism is true(ish), the stories playing out today are unscripted and they should not be presumed to share the same 'ending'.

While many in the slums either already work in the world of wage slavery or will end up doing so, many, many others survive in the so-called 'informal' economy, a sector that in some cities is far larger (in terms of human captives) than the formal economy. Here we have a potentially explosive emergence of classes, vast in number, who are *not going anywhere* and seem to be surplus to capitalism's requirements. "A proletariat without factories; workshops, and work, and without bosses, in the muddle of the odd jobs, drowning in survival and leading an existence like a path through embers."[21]

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[17] Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 42.

[18] Robert Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[19] Leopold Roc, *Industrial Domestication: Industry as the Origins of Modern Domination.* Anarchist Library (www.theanarchistlibrary.org).

[20] Murray Bookchin, quoted during a description of historical and present transitional classes in: Down *with Empire, Up with Spring!* (Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellington: Rebel Press, 2006), p. 150.

[21] Patrick Chamoiseau, quoted in Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 174.

Thanks to lack of sanitation, water supply and drainage; water shortages and the spread of disease are some of the greatest problems presently facing many slum dwellers. Even without massive climate change kicking in, the number of major disasters in urban areas has been increasing rapidly and most of this growth is from storms and floods.[22] Without storm drains, the future washing away of many squatter settlements seems inevitable, sited as they often are in areas most at risk from flooding. The recuperative power of such communities is incredible, but we can presume the great floods to come are likely to exacerbate social crisis and instability.

Old gods and new heavens

By far the least pleasant experience I had in the squatter neighbourhood I mentioned earlier was attending a Sunday church service. I had managed to dodge others, but this time there was no escape. The church itself was the biggest building in the neighbourhood and it too was largely built from salvage. I found it truly upsetting to see so many of the people I had spent time with venting religious irrationality, enacting inane rituals and submitting to the authority of preachers, god and scripture. The church had received some hymn tapes from a Pentecostal denomination in the USA and thus I sat listening to hundreds of squatters who, though English was not their first language, sang out American hymns in psuedo-American accents. In fact, in the country I was in, not a single bookshop in the capital, (all of which were owned by churches), sold anything mentioning evolution, nevermind anarchist revolution. It's easy for those of us from societies with high percentages of atheism to underestimate the level of religiosity that is mixed in with industrialism in the global south, where, amongst the poor at least, they are often jointly reenforcing.

Much of radical politics is religion by other means, but in the slums, and amongst the dispossessed generally, the old gods are growing in stature. While sects may differ in their degree of quietism or militancy, they share an unreality that is unlikely to aid the map-reading ability of the downtrodden in truly confusing times. The wider case against religion has been argued well elsewhere[23] so I won't bother, but it is worth noting that while western anarchists' most organised intra-class 'competitors' are political groupings, in many third worlds, anarchists are faced by the strengthening ranks of theocracy. That's of course in those places where anarchists do exist, which — though growing — are still not many. In contrast, religious authoritarians seem to be gaining converts everywhere, and, generally, the more social dislocation, the better the recruitment.[24] In chapter 4 (African Roads to Anarchy) we looked at the expansion of non-state social provision as governments retract from previous commitments — in part due to structural adjustment and the like. Amongst the obvious pain this creates, I pointed to the possibilities

[22] Camilla Toulmin, *Climate Change in Africa.* (London: International African Institute and Zed Books, 2009), pp. 70–118.

[23] "The idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, in theory and practise… if god really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him." — Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003). See also: Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2007).

[24] It would be too simplistic to blame this all on industrialism but clear relationships can be seen — for example, that demonstrated by Vandana Shiva between the spread of the green revolution and the growth of fundamentalist communalist movements in India. If anything, the coltan fuelled war in Congo and the subsequent spread of charismatic native/Pentecostal cults bent on solving their problems through expelling tens of thousands of 'child witches' is an even more spooky sign of the marriage of the modem and the magical.

this opens up for libertarian social forces. Unfortunately, in slums from Kinshasa to Gaza, it is religious authoritarians that are most often taking advantage of this potential to build dual (or multi)power through the provision of heath and general care, and this is often done alongside the build-up of armed capacity. The terrible inheritance of leftist failures and success has only left the field open for the growth of millenarian theocratic authorities amongst the slums and "large islands of chaos."

If much of the poor are living in hellish conditions, and putting their trust in the millennium or the afterlife, the elites and middle classes are increasingly living in guarded heavens modelled on the gated suburbs of the USA. Here, Mike Davis argues, they are constructing (or more accurately having constructed for them) Blade Runner style 'Off-worlds' away from the disordered and dangerous worlds of the dispossessed. Whilst some such 'off-worlds' are so 'off' the poor are far, far away, most are potentially within reach. Like Apartheid South Africa (or South Africa today for that point) these heavens still need workers — cleaners, gardeners, van drivers and security guards — many of which live in the surrounding hells. As the poisoned oligarchs of Haiti[25] could tell you, this, despite the CCTV, is not as safe as it looks.

With such divided worlds — and such divided cities — uprisings and generalised conflicts are always on the cards. Military strategists have for decades been predicting uprisings and guerrilla war in the swelling cities, and to a certain extent we are already seeing them a la the battles in Revolution/Sadr City and the like. The combination of unparalleled income disparity, deprivation, crowding and the spread of criminal gangs and millenarian groups is a heady mix. As a US Army think tank report puts it:

> Distinctive features of the largest or so called 'world cities'… include marked economic and social polarisation and intense spatial segregation. We also find what is probably an effect of these conditions; the large array of anti-state actors. Anarchists, criminals, the dispossessed, foreign meddlers, cynical opportunists, lunatics, revolutionaries, labor leaders, ethnic nationals… and others can all form alliances of convenience. They can also commit acts of violence and handle ideas that provoke others… Analyses that focus on a single strand of the fabric of violence — that isolate on ethnic rivalry, mafias, or revolutionary cadre — can underestimate the disruptive power that those phenomena gain when they coincide. Troubles will not come as single soldiers; they will come in battalions.[26]

[25] Writhing in agony, his arm lost to a sugar mill, slave Francois Makandal had a millenarian vision of glorious free black Haitian cities. "Immediately after his maiming, Makandal affected the role of a prophet and built a considerable following in Northern Limbe. By 1740, Makandal had fled to the Maroons and used their secret networks to build a force of thousands across Haiti, infiltrating every home and plantation and bringing poison to each, adapted from West African lore to local circumstances. Dependent on their servants, the plantocracy was helpless as one day their livestock died, the next their domestic animals, finally themselves and their families. 6,000 were killed before Makandal was through." — John Connor, *Children of Guinea: Voodoo, The 1793 Haitian Revolution and After* (London: Green Anarchist Books, 2003), p. 11.

[26] Geoffrey Demarest (US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth), 'Geopolitics and Urban Armed Conflict in Latin America', in, *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* Vol.6, No.l (London: Routledge, 1995). This article is a bit outdated (fax machines as network threat!) but is definitely worth reading not least as a good illustration of the circularity of thought on insurrectionary possibility. I read it as Mike Davis (who is a revolutionary socialist) references this study in his 2006 book *Planet of Slums,* but it's noticeable that a large part of its thesis is from Davis's earlier book (which it quotes) *City of Quartz…*

So the militaries (and militarised police forces) are both fighting and preparing for conflict in the new, unmapped, urban jungles. Of course, if cities were simply a negative for governments they wouldn't have spent thousands of years ordering their construction. There are reasons why states often like to concentrate their subjects. The "most famous attempt of modern militarised urbanisation was that carried out by the US army in Vietnam. Their defeat should not mask the logic of their attempt to 'drain the sea' and thus leave the Vietcong exposed. Wider examples of how the slums deter insurgency abound. As Charles Onyango-Obbo says:

> In Kenya's case, slums — all their risks notwithstanding — are actually a stabilising force. The pressures created by the great land dispossession in Kenya by the colonialists, which continued after independence, were partly soaked up by Nairobi's slums… Without them, perhaps there would have been a second Mau Mau uprising.[27]

Vagabond plants in urban ecosystems

Despite being tools of domestication there are feral possibilities in the cities as almost everywhere. Their place as the exclusive terrain of power is a generalised delusion, even if it is backed up by violent facts. Nowhere is fully civilised. For a start, as the US Army theorist quoted above says,"… the urban environment offers individual anonymity, a factor that can be of great use to the anarchist."[28] The last two decades have seen an emergence of a 'third wave' of anarchists in many of the World Towns: Manila, Jakarta, Mexico City, Lagos, Seoul, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Delhi and many others, with a truly remarkable growth in Latin America especially. Here we seem to have the beginning of a return to the flowering of diverse transnational Anarchisms that characterised us a century ago.[29] That this is happening *as part* of globalisation, and the growth of cities is not surprising given that the seeds of *social movement* Anarchism are largely carried around the planet on the coat tails of capitalism and often grow best, like weeds, on disturbed ground. As Richard Mabey has put it, civilisation divides life into:

> … two conceptually different camps: those organisms contained, managed and bred for the benefit of humans, and those which are 'wild', continuing to live in their own territories on, more or less. their own terms. Weeds occur when this tidy compartmentalisation breaks down. The wild gatecrashes our civilised domains and the domesticated escapes and runs riot.[30]

Earlier we looked at some continuing, if besieged, anarchies which continue to live "in their own territories on, more or less their own terms." Even though from birth most of us in the cities have been "contained, managed and bred" for others' benefit, possibilities for escape are often present. There are cracks in the pavement and our growth can lever them wider. In most places, by doing so we are unlikely to destroy the concrete utterly but we can open up more spaces in which to grow together.

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[27] Charles Onyango-Obbo, 'Kibera. It's rich city folks who need slums most', *Daily Nation,* op/ed 8 July 2009.

[28] Geoffrey Demarest (US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth), 'Geopolitics and Urban Armed Conflict in Latin America', in, *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* Vol.6, No.l (London: Routledge Spring 1995).

[29] Jason Adams, *Non-Western Anarchisms: Rethinking the Global Context* (Johannesburg: Zabalaza Books, 2003).

[30] Richard Mabey, *Weeds: How Vagabond Plants Gatecrashed Civilisation and Changed the Way We Think About Nature* (London: Profile Books, 2010), p. 21.

In some senses vagabond plants are, 'on the other side'; they are living in opposition to the city, yet they are simultaneously part of the overarching urban ecosystem. To see them in isolation without implicitly seeing their links and interactions within the wider community would be foolish. The same can be said of those of us with feral ambitions — as urban anarchists we are both consciously 'other' whilst intricately within the wider ecosystems — both human and beyond. Anarchists all over the urban worlds are growing their own counter cultures *whilst* actively fighting in wider social and ecological struggles, within and alongside striking workers, indigenous peoples, women's organisations, migrants, slum communities and countless others. However, one only needs to look at the recent repression faced by anarchists in Chile and elsewhere to remember that being 'grass between the cracks' is dangerous — the weed killer is always on the way. Practical international solidarity is sometimes helpful, but it will be the vigour of the plants themselves and how suitable their environment is that will primarily determine whether they take hold. If, as many theorists of elite power fear, the fast expanding, largely unplanned cities of the global south are fertile ground for the growth of anarchy, the age of the mega-cities will be interesting indeed. What rebellions await? What ideologies will be concocted? How will humanities feel and see themselves following this massive disconnection from the land? Will all these cities remain at the end of the century or are they a transitory bloom?

"Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet."[31] We have briefly looked at the expanding urban mono-cultures, but what of their opposite, the besieged bio-diverse wildernesses? How will climate change, conflict, civilisational expansion and contraction affect them? What can we, the weeds, do to defend the wilderness?

[31] Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Inversnaid', in, *Poems and Prose* (London. Penguin Classic, 2008), p. 50.

8. Conservation Amidst Change

Apocalypses now

As long as class society exists, the war on the wild will continue — they are one and the same. The ideal answer to the question posed at the end of the previous chapter, "what can we, the weeds, do to defend the wilderness?" would be: re-wild where we are (and ourselves) to the extent that civilisations' false divisions are overgrown. I say *ideal*, because for all the reasons outlined already and more, in most places we are unlikely to see an ecological transcendence.

But if the millennium is a myth, apocalypses feel more and more like unfolding realities. Many understandably fear that rainforests could die-off in the future thanks to climate change induced drought,[1] but the fact is that today much of them are already being cleared and burnt to make way for agriculture — still the number one driver of tropical deforestation. Farming has already replaced wilderness on an estimated 40% of the earth's land surface[2] so for the animals, insects, peoples and plants it replaced, the apocalypse has already come. Add the overall hijacking of ecosystem services and the continued pillaging of wildlands for animal bodies, tree trunks, water, minerals and anything else that can be turned into a 'natural resource', and industrial civilisation is effectively attempting a sustained, blind and hugely damaging take-over of the Earth System. As part of this process anthropogenic climate change is likely to be a force magnifier.

> "Habitat destruction includes habitat fragmentation, a particularly problematic factor under climate change. And the problem of alien and invasive species, so favoured by non-natural disturbance, is only greater when climate change is added… The impact of climate change in this heavily fragmented world may be immense."[3]

How immense? No one really knows, though plenty are trying to work it out.[4] While there is a lot of uncertainty on the details, most conservation biologists would probably agree that unless "action [is] rapidly taken, the sixth great extinction event on Earth will be ensured by increasingly

[1] As with so much in climate change, narratives about what affects future global heating may have on tropical forests, range from the positive to the apocalyptic. For a good overview see the excellent: Simon L. Lewis, 'Tropical forests and the changing earth system', in, *Philosophical Transaction of the Royal Society B* (2006) 361, 195–210.

[2] Garry Peterson, 'Ecological limits of adaptation to climate change', in, W Neil Adger et al *Adapting to Climate Change: Thresholds, Values, Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 31.

[3] T. E. Lovejoy, 'Conservation with a Changing Climate', in, *Climate Change and Biodiversity* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2006), pp. 325–326.

[4] We can look at tropical forests — those great reservoirs of diversity — in particular. "Projections to 2050 estimate 10% extinction (i.e. species committed to extinction) of all tropical rain forest species based on habitat loss alone, but a far greater extinction of 24% under projected mid-range climate change scenarios." — 'Biodiversity in a changing world', in, Jaboury Ghazoul and Douglas Sheil eds., *Tropical Rain Forest Ecology, Diversity, and Conservation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 356. Worse emission scenarios push that horrendous figure to 37% in one model. — Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 138.

fragmented habitat combined with the biological dynamics resulting from climate change."[5] Some voices go further. As Stephen M. Meyer points out in *The End of the Wild,* extinction rates — long before significant climate change kicks in — are already in the order of 3,000 species a year and rapidly accelerating. The situation is truly dire.

> Over the next 100 years or so as many as half of the Earth's species, representing a quarter of the planet's genetic stock, will functionally if not completely disappear… Nothing — not national or international laws, global bio-reserves, local sustainability schemes, or even 'wildlands' fantasies — can change the current course. The broad path for biological evolution is now set for the next several million years. And in this sense the extinction crisis — the race to save the composition, structure, and organisation of biodiversity as it exists today — is over, and we have lost.[6]

I don't know about you, but when I read that last sentence for the first time it was a shock, and it is worth reading more than once. "The extinction crisis — the race to save the composition, structure, and organisation of biodiversity as it exists today — is over, and we have lost." Meyer's general position is that in the anthroposcene, *undomesticated* species are effectively divided into either Weedy Species or Relics, with many of the Relic Species rapidly becoming, at best, Ghosts.

Weedy Species "thrive in continually disturbed, human dominated environments", whilst Relic species live "on the margins in ever-decreasing numbers and contracting spatial distribution… Relic Species do not thrive in human-dominated environments — which now nearly cover the planet." Meyers argues that, "to survive outside of zoos, relics will require our permanent and direct management." Those relics that don't get such conservation attention, and even many that do, will, if not immediately become extinct, enter the ranks of the Ghost Species. These species are "organisms that will not survive on a planet with billions of people, because of their abilities and our choices. They are ghosts because while they seem plentiful today and may in fact persist for decades, their extinction is certain, apart from a few specimens in zoos or laboratory-archived DNA samples."[7]

A great many of the plants and animals we perceive as healthy and plentiful today are in fact relics or ghosts. This seeming contradiction is explained by the fact that species loss is not a simple linear process. Many decades can pass between the start of the decline and the observable collapse of a population structure, especially where moderate-to-long-lived life forms are involved. Conservation Biologists use the term "extinction debt" to describe this gap between appearance and reality. In the past century we have accumulated a vast extinction debt that will be paid in the century ahead. The number of plants and animals will spiral as the extinction debt comes due.[8]

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[5] 'Greenhouse Gas Levels and Biodiversity', in, Thomas E. Lovejoy and Lee Hannah, eds., *Climate Change and Biodiversity* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2006), p. 395.

[6] Stephen M. Meyer, *The End of the Wild* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006), p. 4.

[7] Stephen M. Meyer, *The End of the Wild* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006), pp. 9–14.

[8] Stephen M. Meyer, *The End of the Wild* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006), p. 16.

"Conservation is our government"

So what strategies are conservationists coming up with to protect biodiversity, wildness and ecosystem services amidst climate change? The main proposed answer still seems to be protected areas,[9] but with a greater protection for their surrounding matrix and with an eye to flux and increased interventionist management. Of course, putting a park sign on a habitat doesn't automatically result in preservation; in an increasingly crowded world, it's almost a form of advertising. As Meyer puts it, "bio reserves have become the preferred hunting grounds for poachers and bush meat traders: it is, after all, where the animals are."[10] While the predation is largely humans eating the wild, it's got to the point where the inter-species conflict also flips the other way. "In Mumbai, slum dwellers have penetrated so far into the Sanjay Gandhi National Park that some are being routinely eaten by leopards (ten in June 2004 alone): one angry cat even attacked a city bus."[11]

Attempts to overcome such intrinsic 'civilised human vs. wild nature' divisions with conservation-as-development projects, eco-tourism community income generation schemes and the like have had some success, but not much. Often as not, they have simply monetised existing relationships with the land, bred resentment and instilled another layer of bureaucracy over the heads of local people with marginal conservation gains.[12] More successful, horrible though it is to admit, has been the wide scale fencing off — including sometimes eviction[13] — of peoples from landscapes, and their continued policing by park rangers. But putting one's ethics aside for the moment, this 'Yellowstone model' seems increasingly unworkable without significant injections of resources, increased militarisation and an expansion of land coverage. None of which seem particularly likely on much of the planet.

Both of conservation's big ideas — parks and conservation-as-development projects — are effectively forms of government over people which presume a static ecology threatened by a human population in flux. On a climate change modified earth, where ecosystems are themselves in flux (they always were, but not so rapidly); the obvious answer from a mainstream conservation perspective is expanding out to encompass management/government over human systems in the landscape matrix *around* reserves and management/government of the ecosystems *within*

[9] "Protected areas are the most important and most effective component of current conservation strategies… There is strong reason to believe that they will continue to be central in conservation strategies designed for climate change… Area under protection is expanding, while remaining undisturbed habitat is declining, so that by the time climate change impacts are pronounced, protected areas may represent most of the remaining natural areas of the planet. Protected areas provide the least disturbed natural habitat, and therefore the best hope for natural response (e.g., range shifts) to changing climate. Consequently, protected areas will play a dominant role in efforts to conserve biodiversity in the future, as they do now." — Lee Hannah and Rod Salm, 'Protected Areas Management in a Changing Climate', in, Thomas E. Lovejoy and Lee Hannah, eds., *Climate Change and Biodiversity* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2006), p. 363.

[10] Stephen M. Meyer, *The End of the Wild* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006), p. 49.

[11] Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 136.

[12] For an insightful anthropological critique of a conservation-as-development project see: Paige West, *Conservation is Our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea* (Durham: Duke University Press 2006).

[13] For a good (if anthropocentric) look at state engagement by conservation organisations and the resultant clashes with indigenous people, especially through the creation of National Parks, see: Marcus Colchester, *Salvaging Nature: Indigenous Peoples, Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development with World Rainforest Movement, 1994).

reserves. Overall "management strategies are likely to have to be more innovative and more interventionist."[14]

We already know some of what this will begin to look like — just look at the incredibly interventionist nature of most of British conservation. The bioregion where I live is, in the context of temperate Europe, bio-diverse but it is heavily managed, in part by conservationists. Given the fragmentation of existing habitat it would probably be disastrous if such management stopped.[15] Effectively, in my bioregion it is a ridiculous choice between wild (i.e. self-willed) land and biodiversity. From a radical environmental perspective (not to mention one with an eye to island biogeography) the solution would be rolling back human *management* of habitat over a large enough area that the ecosystems could function effectively. Realistically it now looks more probable that much of the world's wildernesses will increasingly resemble my bioregion than my bioregion resemble the world's wildernesses.

There is likely to be plenty of work for those conservation managers with a stomach for the needed endless interfering, but it's not the kind of conservation Aldo Leopold would recognise. Even if such massive expansion of governance by conservationists over humanity and protected areas is carried out (doubtful), unless there is a significant slowing of climate change (which I suspect will not happen any time soon) biodiversity will be affected "in ways that will eventually become impossible to manage."[16]

A few years back an old friend and comrade told me, with obvious sadness in his eyes, that the earth will need active management for the next 1,000 years. In some senses he's probably right; the trick of government has always been that it creates problems to which only it can be the solution. While doubting its efficacy, I for one will not condemn those who — motivated by biocentric passion — take this path. However, for those unwilling to step away from their core ethics around liberty/wildness/anarchy, other options remain, narrowing though they are.

Damage control

> Action, action of any kind. Let our action set the finer points of our philosophy… Out of this planet, out of the earth has emerged a society of warriors, women and men who are planting their spears in the ground and are taking a stand… Our job is damage control.
>
> — Dave Foreman[17]

There are still places and peoples that civilisation has not yet conquered and in these places lines can be drawn and battles joined. Ecological resistance scattered across the planet has been inspiring and often effective.

[14] Lee Hannah and Rod Salm, 'Protected Areas Management in a Changing Climate', in, Thomas E. Lovejoy and Lee Hannah, eds., *Climate Change and Biodiversity* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2006), p. 370.

[15] That's not to say it all makes sense. Much of UK conservation is simply baggage from previous management regimes or is skewed towards particular favourites (woodland flowers as an example) rather than orientated to a whole system approach. For an old but unfortunately still relevant critique see: Clive Hambler and Martin R Speight, 'Biodiversity Conservation in Britain: Science Replacing Tradition', in, *British Wildlife, 6* (3) pp. 137–148.

[16] 'Global Greenhouse Gas Levels and the Future of Biodiversity', in, Thomas E. Lovejoy and Lee Hannah, eds., *Climate Change and Biodiversity* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2006), p. 390.

[17] Dave Foremen, speaking on the film, *Earth First: The Politics of Radical Environmentalism*, produced by Christopher Manes, 1987.

Different people use different priority-setting systems to choose where to plant their spears, with the commonest being the simplest — where can I reach and where do I love? For many, the answers to the questions of how *and where* to defend the wild will be obvious, the local agents of destruction clear, communities roused, places to be occupied available, stuff to be destroyed visible. The thing then is simply to act.

However, many wild ecosystems (and the non-civilised peoples that are part of them) have few (if any) allies and many potential warriors live in places with little wildness to defend, or with little chance of victory. Given the scale of the attack on the Earth System/Gaia/Mother Earth, some priority setting systems call for increased focus in particular areas.[18] Additionally, strong personal desires to respond to the call of the wild by seeking adventure, escape, struggling communities and conflict also drive people to seek other terrains. With the objective of aiding such choices, let's map out some advantages that become clear when we accept that the situation is as bad as it probably is. Given we are in a pretty shitty situation it seems helpful to transform disadvantages into advantages.

Advantage — We are small in number but the problems are great.

The first disadvantage that can be turned around is the simple fact that not that many people are willing to commit to defending the wild, few are libertarians and fewer still are able to travel far from home, or put time and resources into solidarity action or fundraising. When this is coupled with the scale of the global problem, and the number and diversity of battles, an obvious *advantage* appears. The problems vastly outnumber those of us wishing to engage them from our perspective and, thus, we should be able to concentrate on only those battles which most reflect our ethics. We can leave the majority of those messier situations, which abound in conservation, to when the struggles that don't raise significant contradictions for us are 'dealt with'. This is likely to be never.

Advantage — Civilisation is genocidal as well as ecocidal.

Some indigenous peoples, driven by deeply held land ethics, willingly defend the bio-diverse wildland communities they are part of from development. Others are forced to do so as, rightly or wrongly, states often view them as impediments to progress, or simply want to destroy their habitat to enclose human subjects, other 'natural resources' and territory. Either way, the genocidal nature of civilisation ensures that the resistance of minority indigenous communities from the mountains of Orissa to the forests of the Amazon is often an ecosystem's best defence. Solidarity

[18] As has been argued widely there is a need for increased ecological defence in both the 'biodiversity hotspots' (34 regions with high biological diversity under imminent threat) and the last great tropical wildernesses (Amazon, New Guinea, Congo) as well as at Sea. The scale of the present crisis and the likelihood of future massive climate change may now add weight to the argument calling for a 'long war' focus on the last big wildernesses, but it's probably not yet time to give up on the hotspots all together. It's also perfectly conceivable that if the Earth System is moving to a hot state then even the 'long war' strategy is rather out the window.

Ho hum. For an up-to-date summation of Hotspots — *www.biodiversityhotspots* .org. For a critique see: Peter Kereiva and Michelle Marvier, 'Conserving Biodiversity Coldspots', in, *American Scientist,* Volume 91 (2003), pp. 344–351. In the end, number crunching only gets one so far; irrelevant of an ecosystems relative global 'importance', it is our desire to be part of it and become its defence that pushes us to action, whether it's a rainforest on the other side of the planet or a rewilding vacant lot down the road.

and joint struggle with such peoples is often the most successful strategy for wilderness defence and one that usually involves few compromises and contradictions for biocentric libertarians.

Advantage — Conservation budgets in much of the world are tiny.

It's not entirely atypical that in just over 25 years the purchasing power of a forest officer's salary (a graduate post) in the Ugandan Forest service fell by 99.6%.[19] Such situations enable small amounts of outside money to have a significant impact if carefully targeted. Sea Shepherd has managed to gain influence and strengthen conservation in the Galapagos Islands by providing funds, equipment and technical support to the Park Service — who had previously suffered from both inadvertent neglect and purposeful underfunding to hamstring their chance of interfering with politician-backed mafia style industrial fishing.[20] Rangers in some of the planet's most important reserves are often badly armed and suffering significant casualties with little outside support. For instance, 158 Congolese rangers have been killed over 10 years defending mountain gorilla habitats, and small amounts of money — not least to support bereaved families — is making a real difference to the sustainability of projects and communities.[21]

Advantage — A lot of people are racist

Many outside of the 'west' believe *all* those from it — especially (but not only) those with white skin privilege — possess political/economic powers they do not have. This illusion (unfortunate as it is from an anti-imperialist perspective) can be of great use. For instance, a prison visit to forest conservationist Raul Zapatos by a handful of eco-anarchists from the British Isles on a solidarity trip in the Philippines, combined with a small amount of 'international pressure' from similar circles, was probably a significant factor leading to his release.[22] Numerous similar examples of successful solidarity in ecologically important areas come to mind. Peoples who have found refuge in wild areas — and wish to defend them — can use and construct ethnicity and aboriginality myths[23] to both carve out protective land rights, mobilise romantic support from outside and present a self-protective image whether of 'peaceful sages' or 'violent savages' depending on utility.

Advantage — Non-state forces are also causing ecological destruction

Much destruction and attacks are carried out by forces that, though in no way libertarian, are nevertheless outside or adversarial to the particular state that controls the terrain *on paper.*

[19] 'Requiem or revival', in, Jaboury Ghazoul and Douglas Sheil eds., *Tropical Rain Forest Ecology, Diversity, and Conservation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 400.

[20] Sea Shepherd Conservation Society — www.seashepherd.org/galapagos/

[21] The Thin Green Line Foundation — www.thingreenline.info

[22] For more info on the Zapatos case see Solidarity South Pacific — www.eco-action.org/ssp/prisoners.html For an excellent, informative and refreshingly honest overview of the solidarity trip in question and overview of the ecological/indigenous struggles in the Philippines see: *From Mactan to the MiningAct: Everyday stories of devastation and resistance among the indigenous people of the Philippines* (Leeds: Repressed Distro, 2003).

[23] This is not to say that there are not aboriginal groups, merely to point to the probability that many of those so labelled or who claim such 'status' are instead maroon communities who have fled to remote areas to avoid incorporation into civilisation. See: James *C. Scott,* The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South-East Asia *(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).*

Conservationists from the uniformly governed West often presume governments control 'their' territory and are floored if they are not able or willing to act. Rather than strengthening the state (as conservationists have often done) in some such situations, those who wish to support local communities in militantly defending their ecologies may be able to do so directly, 'legally' and relatively openly. As the recent experience of (Earth First! co-founder) Bruce Hayse's abortive 'green army' in the Central African Republic attests, there can be many pitfalls and problems, but possibilities remain. Even more directly, Sea Shepherd has successfully branded itself as enforcing conservation in international — i.e largely ungoverned — waters, enabling it to carry out eco-defence which elsewhere (and with less clever branding) would be judged sabotage, theft, harassment and obstruction.

Advantage — Globalisation is spreading.

As part of globalisation, an increasing amount of urban social movement anarchists are cropping up in lands claimed by such states such as Indonesia, Chile, the Philippines and Russia. Many of these are well placed to engage in ecological resistance and solidarity with indigenous peoples and channel those from elsewhere to support such struggles.

Advantage — Habitat fragments may be unable to preserve biodiversity

It's generally accepted that — "with climate change, even the best designed protected area system cannot aspire to conserve biological diversity if it consists mostly of isolated units."[24] Meyers states above that wildland fantasies are unlikely to halt biological meltdown; while this is probably true, the fact that many want to believe they might is, in some places, opening the door to large scale rewilding[25] somewhat resembling the wilderness regeneration advocated by radical environmentalists for decades. Smaller ecological restoration[26] projects seem to be also on the increase.

Advantage — The situation is dire

One can't really make the situation much worse, and one's actions could help make a real difference in struggles to defend wildness and liberty.

An obvious criticism of damage control is that it could be seen as treating the symptoms and not the root cause. Diagnosis of the malady is clear but it would be deluded to believe one had (or more ominously was) the cure. Whatever the prognosis, the spread of the disease is surely still worth resisting and if anything climate change only underlines this. Slowing the destruction of wilderness (what Lovelock describes as "the vanishing face of Gaia"[27]) may enable the Earth

[24] Thomas E. Lovejoy, 'Conservation with a Changing Climate', in, Thomas H. Lovejoy and Lee Hannah, eds., *Climate Change and Biodiversity* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2006), p. 326.

[25] For a good intro to the ideas of conservation rewilding — Dave Foreman, *Rewilding North America: A Vision for Conservation in the 21st Century* (Washington: Island Press, 2004). Already rewilding is a bit of a buzz word which is not only framing new style conservation projects but also being used to sex up projects with less 'legitimate claim'. Either way for an easily accessible — if propagandist overview of current projects worldwide *Caroline Fraser,* Rewilding the World: Dispatches from the Conservation Revolution *(New York: Henry Holt, 2010).*

[26] For some thoughts on ecological restoration from a British radical environmental perspective see: 'Take a Sad Song and Make it Better?: Ecological Restoration in the UIC, in, *Do or Die,* No. 8, 1998, pp. 159–173.

[27] James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia:* A *Final Warning* (London: Penguin, 2009).

System to better deal with continuing anthropogenic releases of carbon dioxide, a significant percentage of which it's worth remembering, arise at the moment from deforestation. This is not to say that habitat defence can 'stop climate change'. Like it or not climate change is probably now the context in which ecological struggles are fought, not a subject against which one can struggle.

Nature bats last

In Eastern Europe an amazing wilderness throngs with elk and wolves. Above the woods and pastures of Wormwood Forest eagle owls fly whilst beavers build dams in the rivers and swamps. In what has become effectively one of Europe's largest nature reserves creepers climb buildings, lynx run in abandoned fields and pines have long since broken through much of the tarmac. Welcome to the Chernobyl exclusion zone. Following the 1986 nuclear disaster over 120,000 people were evacuated from the area — most never to return. In the heart of the zone, the previously 50,000 strong city of Pripyat is now deserted — bar a small number of squatters — but is by no means a ghost town. "Pripyat began returning to nature as soon as the people left, and there was no one to trim and prune and weed."[28]

Nature's incredible power to re-grow and flourish following disasters is evident both from previous mass extinctions and from its ability to heal many lands scarred by civilisation. Its true power is rarely considered within the sealed, anthropocentric thinking of those that would profit from the present or attempt to plan the future. Yet the functioning of the Earth System is destructive as well as bountiful and it is not a conscious god with an interest in preserving us or its present arrangement — something we may find out if the Earth is now moving to a new much hotter state. With us or without us, "while the class war is vicious — there can be only one winner, the wild."[29] In a sense there is solace in this, but we should not look to such 'victory' as Christian Fundamentalists look to their 'rapture', for those species that have been pushed to oblivion will not rise from the dead and neither shall we. Nevertheless, nature bats last.

[28] Mary Mycio, *Wormwood Forest: A Natural History of Chernobyl* (Washington: Joseph Henry Press, 2005), p. 6. Elements in the Ukranian state are presently (2010) pushing to re-domesticate much of the deserted land for agricultural production.

[29] *Down with Empire, Up with Spring!* (Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellington: Rebel Press, 2006), p. 159.

9. Anarchists Behind the Walls

Social war in temperate climates

James Lovelock says that in the "predicted climate catastrophe… what is at risk is civilisation."[1] I am unfortunately less optimistic — civilisation in some form or other will persist, at least in many regions. It is no accident that the first civilisation to spread globally originates in temperate Europe. Many other civilisations raised up empires only to destroy their environments and collapse. The oceanic temperate climate gave Western European civilisation a wider margin of error, enabling civilisation to escape its own regional locality and devour much of the earth. As with other civilisations, it leaves deserts in its footprints — but being global in reach but temperate in origin the physical deserts are largely elsewhere. Thus some of the key countries historically responsible for global heating will be the least dramatically affected by it — at least directly.

While those large capitalist core countries that span multiple climate zones (Australia, USA, Russia) may see considerable direct disruption,[2] under most models those living in temperate zones — especially oceanic and mountainous lands — can expect a heated, yet *relatively* calm, climate punctuated by extreme events.[3] To a very large degree the forecast for social war[4] is likely to be similar to that of the climate forecast: heated, yet *relatively* calm, while punctuated by extreme events. Relative, that is, to situations elsewhere on a rapidly heating and conflicted planet, NOT relative to social and climatic situations today. Mediterranean lands will probably get far hotter — in both senses — and this may favour the growth of anarchists in a spreading version of what Europol has referred to as the "Mediterranean triangle of anarchistic violence".[5] Generally speaking landlocked temperate countries in the middle of continents are likely to see their summers get considerably hotter, with some such as Lovelock even predicting the functional collapse of existing agricultural forms.

[1] James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 10. Some have questioned if he genuinely thinks this, implying he is exaggerating for effect or to encourage action. I asked him this personally and he said he does genuinely think this is probably the case.

[2] For example some models predict that "the drought conditions associated with the brief American Dustbowl could conceivably become the [American Southwest] regions new climate." — Laurence C. Smith, *The World* in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future *(New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 108.*

[3] "The climate war could kill nearly all of us and leave the few survivors living a stone age existence. But in several places in the world, including the UK, we have a chance of surviving and even of living well." — James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia:* A *Final Warning* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 22. For an interesting perspective on a future Britain Isles see: Marek Kohn, *Turned Out Nice: How the British Isles will Change as the World Heats Up* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010).

[4] "Social War: The narrative of 'class struggle' developed beyond class to include the complexities and multiplicities of … conflict within all hierarchical social relations." — Liam Sionnach, 'Earth First Means Social War: Becoming an Anti-Capitalist Ecological Social Force', in, *Earth First! Journal,* Lughnasadh 2008, Vol. 28, No. 5.

[5] Europol, Terrorist Activity in the European Union: Situations and Trends Report (Europol: The Hague, 2003).

In the film *Children of Men* countries world-wide seem to be engulfed in famine, insurrection, civil war, epidemics and 'natural' disasters. Meanwhile Britain "soldiers on" with a banal authoritarian system that sees most people continuing in their assigned class roles and travelling daily to work as much of the planet seemingly implodes around them. Polyglot refugees in vast numbers are imprisoned in a seaside ghetto town. Such a picture could be an image from the future climate for not just the Britain Isles but many temperate countries, especially those states with oceanic borders (which both moderate climatic extremes and enable easier border control) such as New Zealand, Tasmania etc. While conformity and social copying will, I suspect, remain the norm, increasingly authoritarian conditions and the economic effect of global dislocations, will occasionally ferment spectacular episodes of class anger and the wider formation of dissident cultures — however 'marginal.' Gord Hill of the Kwakwaka'wakw nation may have it about right:

> The convergence of war, economic decline and ecological crisis will lead to greater overall social conflict within the imperialist nations in the years to come. It is this growing conflict that will create changes in the present social conditions [with] greater opportunities for organised resistance. The rulers are well aware of this, and it is for this reason that state repression is now being established as a primary means of social control (i.e greatly expanded police-military forces, new terror laws etc)… We are now in a period that can be described as the 'calm before the storm'.[6]

Mirroring Gord Hill, but from a statist perspective, the UK chief scientist has warned of a "perfect storm" in 2030 due to potential shortages of water, food and energy that could result in "major destabilisation, an increase in rioting and potentially significant problems with international migration, as people move out to avoid food and water shortages."[7] Though this storm may initially break elsewhere, those states (and their captives) that rely heavily on international trade will be hit.

Such a picture of social conflict should not give the false impression that the coming 'troubles' will result in some kind of libertarian social transcendence. To suspect that the future will see an increase in trouble and that some of those troubles will be 'us', does not presume any form of overall 'victory'. Rather, social crises are inevitable in societies based on class warfare, and will only be exaggerated by the emerging conditions. Additionally, it would be unwise to ignore the pacifying effect of everywhere else being perceived as 'worse'. In Chapter 3 (Desert Storms) we looked at how lands such as America and the British Isles etc. may "fall back on a combination of policies that add up to quarantine" and it would be naive to think this would be a policy favoured by states only; indeed we can expect stronger calls for More Borders to come from across classes.[8] In contrast Lovelock has, some may be surprised to find, an optimistic view:

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[6] Zig-Zag, *Colonization and Decolonization: A Manual for Indigenous Liberation in the 21st Century* (Victoria: Warrior Publications, 2006), p. 28.

[7] John Beddington, quoted in, World faces 'Perfect storm' of problems by 2030, chief scientist to warn', *The Guardian,* 18.3.2009.

[8] UK immigration control was actually a 'victory' (sic) first brought in following a huge mobilisation by the Left against Jewish migrants. Noticeably pretty much the only section of the Left that agitated against it was the only groups that did not accept borders at all — the anarchists. See: Steve Cohen, *That's Funny, You Don't Look Anti-Semitic: Anti-racist Analysis of Left Anti-Semitism* (London: Beyond the Pale Press, 1984).

> Scandinavia and the oceanic parts of northern Europe such as the British Isles may be spared the worst of heat and drought that global heating brings. This puts a special responsibility upon us to … give refuge to the unimaginably large influx of climate refugees.[9]

Legal immigration today is class (and to a certain extent race) selective and this is likely to become only more the case. Overall struggles are extremely unlikely to change this, though when focused on individuals will no doubt continue to have some great successes.

While those of us living 'behind the walls' may be shielded from some of the more overt and large scale conflicts — and opportunities — that are likely to characterise this century, the social war is all around us. The lack of overt civil war is merely a sign of the depth of our domestication, as in most places, the policing needs only be sporadic. Pecking orders are almost everywhere, and from the boredom, pain and indignity of wage labour to our exclusion from the land community, we live in (and are) occupied territory. If we disregard the illogic of private property and take food or shelter when needed we risk facing security guards, bailiffs, police and prisons. Though largely absent from the spectacle the class casualties mount up — in my country the richest live on average 10 years longer than the poorest[10] and one of the greatest single predictors of fatal heart disease — thanks to social stress — is how low one is in a hierarchy.[11] Just as worldwide more people kill themselves than get killed in wars and through interpersonal violence,[12] in Britain suicide remains the highest single cause of death for both males and females aged 15–34.[13] Assimilation is painful and trauma, self-harm, abuse and addiction are rife. As Raoul Vaneigem said, for many, "the greatest kept state secret is the misery of everyday life."[14]

Our lives can be better, freer, and wilder than this and as anarchists we do our utmost to make them so, not in the ever-after of post-revolutionary heaven, but now. Nevertheless despite being anarchists many of us find ourselves in relatively temperate social climates far from overt conflict on the scale likely to be seen beyond the walls. This brings both advantages and disadvantages.

Surveillance states & security cultures

The Fortress faces inwards as well as out. Increasingly new technologies of control are brought in under the justification of fear of the barbarians — whether of terrorists or migrants. Somewhat evocative of sci-fi dystopias (not to mention the Gaza Strip) covert surveillance drones are already flying British skies introduced initially for maritime border control, a public justification which the police themselves admit is largely a ruse.[15] In many countries, cameras, some now with

[9] James Lovelock, *Climate Change on the Living Earth,* The Royal Society, 29 October 2007.

[10] 'Poor in UK dying 10 years earlier than the rich, despite years of government action', *Guardian,* 2.7.2010.

[11] Richard Wilkinson, *Mind the Gap: Hierarchies, Health and Human Evolution* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000).

[12] James Phillips, *Trauma, Repair and Recovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5.

[13] This statistic involves an ordering of data which splits both cancers and accidents. See: Clare Griffiths et al., *Leading causes of death in England and Wales — How should we group causes?* (London: National Office of Statistics, 2005), p. 11.

[14] Raoul Vaneigem, *The* Revolution *of Everyday Life* (London: Rebel Press, 1983).

[15] "Police in the UK are planning to use unmanned spy drones, controversially deployed in Afghanistan, for the 'routine' monitoring of antisocial motorists, protesters, agricultural thieves and fly-tippers… Previously, Kent police has said the drone scheme was intended for use over the English channel to monitor shipping and detect immigrants

microphones, proliferate to the point of being practically invisible — not because they are covert but because they have been normalised. Pervasive technologies of control, many even paid for *by ourselves* and adopted *voluntarily,* such as mobiles, computers, bank cards and road cameras (with number plate recognition) map social networks, changing affiliations and physical movements.

New communication technologies = New ways of making us talk.

When these new technologies are combined with old fashioned 'human intelligence' gathered by informers and infiltrators operating within resistant communities, states and corporations can gain a level of oversight that would have been unthought-of even a few decades ago. Whether or not control technologies converge to create an intelligence state that understands everyone rather than merely gathers data on them is yet to be seen; but against those pre-existing cultures of opposition the lenses are very much already focused. Sadly, much of the focusing is done by us.

> The fact that our tyrannical enemy no longer draws its power from its ability to shut people up, but from its aptitude to make them talk — i.e, from the fact that it has moved its centre of gravity from its mastery of the world itself to its seizure of the world's mode of disclosure requires that a few tactical adjustments be made.
>
> — "Silence and Beyond", Tiqqun 1

A limited response would be (along with abandoning any dialogue with power and spectacle) relinquishing the use of new near universal communication technologies. Though this may have wider lifestyle benefits, it may also increasingly make oneself stand out. According to a UK military mid-term future projection: "By the end of the period [2036] it is likely that the majority of the global population will find it difficult to 'turn the outside world off.' ICT [information and communication technology] is likely to be so pervasive that people are permanently connected to a network or two-way data stream with inherent challenges to civil liberties; being disconnected could be considered suspicious."[16] We are moving to such a future fast. When the French anti-terrorist police invaded the land community in Tarnac in 2008 one of the public justifications they gave for suspecting that a terrorist cell was forming was that few on the land had mobiles![17]

The agreed convention is that the first step for those who, having planned the future, now wish to bring it about is to make oneself known, make one's voice heard — speak truth to power. Yet "the listener imposes the terms, not the talker."[18] Much of the low-level contestation that characterises activism, and the limited social spaces that make up counter-cultures, actively mark out areas, and people, in need of potential policing. That's not to say that all resistance is futile (if meaningful, achievable objectives are kept in mind, and tactics not transformed into aims),

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crossing from France. However, the documents suggest the maritime focus was, at least in part, a public relations strategy designed to minimise civil liberty concerns. 'There is potential for these [maritime] uses to be projected as a 'good news' story to the public rather than more 'big brother" a minute from one of the earliest meetings, in July 2007, states." — 'CCTV in the Sky: police plan to use military-style spy drones', Guardian, 23.1.2010. More recently ACPO confirmed that three forces are already using drones and a national scheme is out for tender, 'Unmanned drones may be used in police surveillance', *Guardian,* 24.9.2010.

[16] Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, *Global Strategic Trends Programme 2007–2036* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2006). 'A source document for the development of UK defence policy' quoted in, Gwynne Dyer, *Climate Wars* (Toronto: Random House, 2009), p. 5.

[17] *'Rural idyll or terrorist hub?',* Guardian, 3.1.2009.

[18] 'Silence and Beyond', in, *Tiqqun* 1, (Paris: Tiqqun,1999).

nor that we should desist from growing communities in which to live and love; rather that we would be wise to understand that many 'subversive' actions — and social relations — increasingly serve the needs of power as well as liberty. The balance of advantage should always be taken into consideration. We need to always ask ourselves the question: To what extent is the planned action or method of social relationship likely to haemorrhage data on potentially resistive identities? With increasingly powerful surveillance states and storms approaching, our responsibility to each other, especially to those as yet unimplicated, grows.

Yet, despite this contradiction, if we don't believe in a global revolutionary future, we must live (as we in fact always had to) in the present. Shelves overflow with histories of past struggles and hallucinations of the post-revolutionary future whilst surprisingly little has been written about anarchist life under, not after, capitalism.[19] Yet that is where most of us in temperate regions are, and where most of us are likely to remain.

> The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.
>
> — Gustav Landauer[20]

In many places we are "behaving differently" by spreading love and co-operation AND resisting and/or avoiding those who would be our masters. One of the strengths of anarchist currents has always been the desire, and attempt, to live our ethics now. One does not need to believe, as many have, that counter-cultures are pre-figurative to see their value. After all, whilst in most temperate places anarchist subcultures are not "new worlds for the future" they still remain "barracks and sanctuaries for today."[21]

This is nothing new, even if it does seem (in its own small way) to once again be becoming more widespread. The classical anarchist period was propelled forward primarily by peasant insurgencies (think Zapata and the Machnovicha) and essentially bohemian, mostly urban, anarchist "counter-societies" (to use Murray Bookchin's term for the worlds created by Spanish anarchists before the fascist counter-revolution).[22] From Spain pre-1936, to the Jewish anarchists in North America, the illegalists of France and the Italian anarcho-syndicalists of Argentina; the inhabitants of anarchist counter-societies were always, by definition, active minorities. The minorities may have got larger in insurrectionary moments, but they remained minorities always. The same can be said for libertarian subcultures ever since. For the foreseeable future libertarians in temperate regions will remain minorities, even as possibilities for widespread anarchy arise beyond the walls. There are many things we can do, but we cannot change the fact that we will not be joined voluntarily and actively by most citizens. We will always be within and against, and this may become increasingly dangerous for *all* involved.

I live in an area with a sizeable anarchist subculture. I like living amongst people who make my life lovelier in a society not of my choosing, and with whom I can continue to engage in

[19] See: Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), *The Call* (London: Short Fuse Press, 2010), Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 1988), 'Growing Counter Cultures', in, *Down with Empire, Up with Spring!* (Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellington: Rebel Press, 2006), pp. 61–79, Crimethinc, *Dropping out: A Revolutionary Vindication of Refusal, Margitiality, and Subculture* (London: Active Distribution, 2010).

[20] Gustav Landauer, *Revolution and other Writings* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010).

[21] Down *with Empire, Up with Spring!* (Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellingtcn: Rebel Press, 2006), p. 77.

[22] Murray Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years 1868–1936*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 1988).

resistance. Such clustering is unfortunately almost designed to attract unwanted attention. We should hold no illusions about our ability to be simultaneously open to the world yet closed to the state, but 'security culture' measures can minimise the damage. In the end though, our security rests primarily on the wider society, not simply the practices of the subcultures we create. Governments would no doubt lock far more of us away than they do, but for now, in many countries at least, there is some protection in the state's fear that increased repression risks widening resistance and more generally breaking the spell of illusory social peace.

Counter-cultures need embedded security to survive, but our main security lies hidden in the wider culture.

When we choose which interventions/campaigns/struggles to fight, and which locations to live in, we should select them, where we can, partly on their potential for social contagion. For the presence of factors that link us, and our desires, ethics and needs, to those of the surrounding society. Doing so is self-protective. Beyond our own security, choosing battles based on where people already are, and linking the anarchies we are growing with existing ecologies, social relations and gains from previous struggles, has the significant advantage of making anarchy more translatable. As Colin Ward said:

> Many years of attempting to be an anarchist propagandist have convinced me that we win over our fellow citizens to anarchist ideas, precisely through drawing upon the common experience of the informal, transient, self-organising networks of relationships that in fact make the human community possible, rather than through the rejecting of existing society as a whole in favour of some future society where some different kind of humanity will live in perfect harmony.[23]

Seeking out other elements, other allies, wider compatible .social relations, enables us to learn from them, aid them — and be aided in return. That's not to say we should dilute ourselves. We are anarchists. What strengths we have arise from our desires, and active decisions, to live freer and wilder, as communities, as individuals; false unity with authoritarian social forces only weakens us. In our own small ways, where we exist, libertarian communities of resistance are gathering resources and growing connections of mutual aid in the cities, re-inhabiting and defending the land, and trying to grow a fighting spirit. We can do far better, but we have started.

Subcultures are part of the encompassing society and thus one of their characters is that their practises can seep out into the surrounding culture, often in a deformed way but not always entirely washed clean of their ethics and healthiness (or otherwise, as the case may be). Horrific as the situation today is, it would be worse still if it was not for resistance and the unforeseen effects of people trying to live well. Just as we cannot 'save the world', we will not 'reclaim the future'; nevertheless we will be part of it.

We are not 'the seed of the future society in the shell of the old' but one of many elements from which the future is forming.

Resist much, obey little

When resistance and desertion significantly threaten those in power, repression/counter-revolution is inevitable. One answer to how to make counter-cultures less of a threat to those

[23] Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 1992), p. 5.

within them would be to drain them of antagonism; make them obviously unthreatening to power. This counsel of evasion and non-resistance has long been articulated in the lived experience of anarchies both outside civilisation, and within. Today though, putting aside the ethical issues involved,[24] the fact is that while you can try and ignore the state, if you're within its controlled territory the chances are that the state won't ignore you. Those communities with a land base capable of some level of self-sufficiency will still face intervention, whilst those immersed in capitalism will often have little option but to labour, and lacking resistance, for worsening hours and wages.

Another answer, and noticeably it's the one many of us have taken, explicitly or not — is to resist (preferably in winnable campaigns), but barring wider social crisis usually at a somewhat muted level — all the time attempting some level of invisibility.

Given where we find ourselves, a lot of what we already do makes sense, even when the overt justifications for such action remain mired in visions of salvation (as outlined in Chapter 1). Ironically, these practical actions are sometimes abandoned when it is realised (correctly) that they will not lead to the transformation of the world. Just as counter-cultures/communes/communities of resistance may not be embryos of a future mass anarchist society, direct action may not lead to the destruction of capitalism; but it does protect some threatened ecosystems, helps many of us and stops the further erosion of some liberties. Strikes and syndicalism may not be steps towards a future anarcho-communism but they may aid survival in the here and now and open up time in which to live better. Riots may not lead to revolution but they can break the social spell for many. I wouldn't pretend for a moment that we are significantly slowing the death march that civilisation is taking life on earth, but the "weapons of the weak"[25] are the ones they have, not the ones they dream of.

The most fertile ground for resistance over the last 30 years has been neither 'underground' or 'aboveground' but in the networked space between the two. As noted earlier in discussion of increased surveillance, this ground may be disappearing from under our feet, irrelevant of arguments of its utility. For resistance cultures that are often skewed generationally towards the young it's often easy to forget how fast options narrow. There was a time, not many decades ago, when police had no riot uniforms and had to use metal rubbish bin lids as improvised round shields amidst an inner-city insurgency. Not so long ago animal liberationists could break into laboratories where no motion sensor would pick them up — because they hadn't been invented. Charities could openly run fundraising pushes for medical support for armed liberation movements abroad (SWAPO) — through the National Union of Students! This is no call for 1980s nostalgia — by others' reports, in many ways things are far better now; but some avenues have closed, and more will follow them.

To an extent, a lot of the type of actions that will become increasingly difficult, especially the spectacular stuff, could be dumped with little loss anyway. Often their only purpose is to make people feel they are Doing Politics.[26] However, some victories and successful campaigns

[24] Ward Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 1998) pp. 70–74.

[25] To use James Scott's term, in a different context. James Scott, *Weapon is of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

[26] In contrast, as French anarchist Pierre Chardon put it: "Anarchist action) — patient, hidden, tenacious, involving individuals, eating away at institutions like a worm eats away at fruit, as termites undermine majestic trees — such action does not lend itself to the theatrical effects of those who wish to draw attention to themselves." — Quoted in, David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement: 1917–1945* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), p. 42.

have achieved real gains, defended real people and places, and often with tactics which may be decreasing in viability. What, then, are the 'other side' thinking is the future of resistance?

For a start we should be clear that we are by no means viewed as the only, or even the main, resistive social force. Unhappiness, poverty, social division, irrationality and the desire to fight abound, and many in elites understand that the potential for chaos is often barely under wraps. As pointed to earlier in the discussion of the rise of mega-cities, state theorists often do not make the mistake of seeing economic crime as divorced from the wider class war. In terms of the strictly 'political', many activists seemed rather miffed when September 11th and the growth of Islamic terrorism upstaged the 'movement of movements' which a decade ago was meant to be the only game in town. The growth (limited as it is) of non-state authoritarian actors, whether Al-Qaeda wannabes or far right 'race soldiers', shows that there are many potentially insurgent subcultures behind the walls, many of which are our enemies as much as the states are.

Colonel Thomas X Hammes (US Marine Corps) in his influential book, *The Sling and the Stone*, popularised the idea of fourth and fifth generation war. Some military theories have long divided different forms of modern conflict into generations. In the most common schema First Generation War (1GW) is characterised by the emergence of conflict involving massive armies culminating in the Napoleonic Wars, 2GW by industrialised WWI style conflicts, and 3GW by World War II style Blitzkrieg. 4GW was developed in theory and practice by Mao and includes, amongst others, the wars in China, Vietnam, Somalia, Gaza, Iraq (following the successful 3GW blitzkrieg invasion), as well as the so-called 'war on terror.' This is a vastly simplified version of the scheme, but you get the idea.

Hammes spends most of the book explaining 4GW, pointing out that this is a form of war the US and co are, and will, be fighting for some time, and that — at least in the 20th century — it is the only type of war that it has lost. The Western states have mostly been pretty successful in stopping 4GW 'terror incidents' happening within their borders for a whole host of reasons, not least of which has been their increasing capacity for effective surveillance of networks. Hammes states that "Fourth generation war is more than seventy years old and is reaching maturity." "While we are only beginning to understand it clearly, history tells us the fifth generation has already begun to evolve." He's open about saying it's too early to tell but his best guess is that 5GW may be carried out by "super-empowered individuals or small groups" who, unlike 4GW, are not embedded within wider networks, and therefore far less visible. This is pretty much a description of how much of the ELF and ALF have portrayed themselves, though rarely a description of reality — as the successful repression of networks from '80s animal liberation to the '90s green scare show. It also resonates somewhat with the increasing appearance of 'lone wolf attacks across the oppositional spectrum. It's worth pointing out that "super-empowered" in Hammes' sense doesn't just mean an overabundance of Nietzchean self belief, but the force-magnifying effect of high technology.[27]

Earlier we looked at military thinking about insurgency in the new mega-cities of the majority world, but those who would maintain the submissive peace also remember the LA Uprising and are rapidly militarising as they await its return. The extent of apocalyptic thinking amongst

[27] Incidentally the theory/practise of 4GW is highly evolved and while incorporating guerrilla and network war has a wider meaning on paper and on the ground. For this alone the book is worth reading. Colonel Thomas X. Hammes (USMC), *The Sling & The Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St.Paul: Zenith Press, 2004). Quotes, p. xiv and p. 290 respectively. The ALF do hilariously make an appearance as a possible screen for a Chinese military 4GW false flag attack on the American 'livestock industry.' p. 259.

elites (and the failure of oppressed classes to often live up to them) was most evident in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Yet even in the day-to-day absence of such uprisings there are, and will be, opportunities to intervene and participate in moments of wider social and ecological struggle; to show leadership from below, help instill a fighting spirit and provide important infrastructure. Success often comes when upsurges seem to appear out of nowhere, but benefit from the will and experience residing in established communities of resistance. Politicos often want to push these moments beyond their natural lifespan, but momentum lasts only so long, and it doesn't take much time for the state to organise. Such situations will not be the foundation for a total libertarian transformation of the world, yet they do have a chance of occasionally achieving real class gains, defending communities and ecologies, making people safer, showing people their own capacity, and breaking social spells.[28] They can, obviously, be costly, both in terms of repression and the calming power of having let off steam. We should also be under no illusion that authoritarian social forces — on both sides of the barricades — will not try and control such moments for their own uses.

It seems then, at least in the minds of some of our enemies, that the main *offensive forms* that resistance will take in more surveyed and grating future temperate worlds, will be those of unnetworked super-empowered small groups (and individuals) and largely unmanaged episodes of mass social opposition. For now, a middle ground also exists — mostly occupied by activism and crime — but maybe for not much longer. As I said earlier, subversive actions serve the needs of power as well as liberty, so toleration may last longer than strictly technologically necessary if it plays the role of inhibiting emerging forms of action. It should also be obvious that the oppositional forms so far mentioned — existent or yet to appear — are methods of opposition, not enablers of transcendence or ending. This will not stop them being claimed as such. In our circles *some* communists will no doubt see social struggles and outbreaks of disorder as leading to transcendence, while *some* primitivists will see 5GW as a way of ending civilisation in its heartlands.

Situations in far off lands also call, and those behind the walls can get out — at least at the moment. It is often dangerous to go where battle-storms are brewing, potentiality for anarchies opening up and ecologies needing defence, but some always "prefer liberty with danger over peace with slavery."[29] Even some of those who don't, may feel an obligation to fight, either to a level that may be unsustainable under surveillance states, or with wild places and peoples, which in much, but by no means all, of the temperate world, are increasingly few and far between. Despite the denials, civilisations still have many outsides, and as I have argued in earlier chapters global heating will probably expand many of them.

[28] "To be a feminist, one has first to become one… Feminists are not aware of different things than other people; they are aware of the same things differently. Feminist consciousness, it might be ventured, turns a 'fact' into a 'contradiction.'" — Sandra Lee Bartky, quoted in: Carol J Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1991), p. 184. Whilst many articulate their Anarchism thanks to the written word it's rare, in my experience at least, that many decide to become anarchist through it. Rather the most powerful 'propaganda' is that 'by the deed' — lived experience, either through involvements in resistance or through meeting the love and lived ethics of anarchist communities.

[29] A Polish aristocrat, quoted in, Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Cosimo Inc: New York, 2008), p. 70.

Love, health and insurrection

> It is my opinion that the situation is hopeless, that the human race has produced an ecological tip over point… but assuming there is a possibility of changing the societies "course in the darkness deathward set", it can only be done by infection, infiltration, diffusion and imperceptibility, microscopically throughout the social organism, like the invisible pellets of a disease called Health.
>
> — Kenneth Rexroth, Anarchist and Poet, July 1969[30]

We have chosen to be anarchists, presumably at least in part, because we feel it is more healthy and ethical to be so. It is better not to be bosses and servants in our intimate and social relationships. Turning the pain we feel into resistance is better than turning it on each other, our own class and our own bodies. It is environmentally healthier (to use a degraded term) to defend wild freedoms than let all of earth become civilisation's territory.

If Rexroth were alive today he would not be surprised that it's now probably too late to change the "course in the darkness deathward set". Yet those of us who have chosen to be anarchist, in some of the most domesticated places on earth, still need to find each other — both to be effective and to be socially rounded. We have to maintain some invisibility from power whilst still being socially present enough to be contagious.

Too often some people's activism resembles the manic phase of bi-polar disorder. This is followed inevitably by a depressive phase, which once having disillusioned folks of feelings of omnipotence only reinforces illusions of powerlessness. To become stronger and healthier, and encourage and support others to do so, it is sensible to set ourselves realisable short term goals, rather than adopting an all or nothing perspective. This is the case whether it is in what we want our resistance to achieve, what we want to actively create, what we want to learn or simply what we want to become. In this way our conscious action can take on the function of collective therapy, making our lives measurably improved for being anarchists, whilst achieving wider social and ecological gains. There are many answers on how we can do this.

> We are anarcho-syndicalists on the shop floor, green anarchists in the woods, social anarchists in our communities, individualists when you catch us alone, anarcho-communists when there's something to share, insurrectionists when we strike a blow.[31]

An Anarchism with plenty of adjectives, but one that also sets and achieves objectives, can have a wonderful present and still have a future; even when fundamentally out of the step with the world around it. There is so much we can do, achieve, defend and be; even here, where unfortunately civilisation probably still has a future.

[30] Kenneth Rexroth, 'Radical Movements on the Defensive', *San Francisco Magazine,* July 1969. Bureau of Public Secrets — Rexroth Archive, (www.cddc.vt.edu/bps/rexroth).

[31] Crimethinc., 'Say you want an Insurrection: Putting the "Social" in Social War', in, *Rolling Thunder, No. 8,* Fall 2009.

10. Desert

Here I have tried to map present and plausible futures whilst calling for a desertion from old illusions and unwinnable battles in favour of the possible. I would hope that the implicit call throughout, for us to individually and collectively desert the cause of class society/civilisation, was clear. Yet I can already hear the accusations from my own camp; accusations of deserting the cause of Revolution, deserting the struggle for Another World. Such accusations are correct. I would rejoin that such millenarian and progressive myths are at the very core of the expansion of power. We can be more anarchic than that.

Much of this piece has been 'big picture', but that should not detract from the true value of the hands on, the local, our emotional relationships and day to day projects. The future should not be allowed to foreclose on today, even if today is foreclosing some possibilities in the future. No future is worth living or fighting for that is not existent in the present.

None of what I have outlined in this piece is amazingly revelatory; in the anarchist community I live in some mix of these ideas are often felt to be common sense. In others I think this is the case too. One would however not know that from our overt stated positions either in text or often in the way we talk to each other. It's almost as though we feel we have these views, despite being anarchists. Yet, as I have outlined, I feel discarding progressive and revolutionary articles of faith can make us stronger, freer and mentally healthier.

To be disillusioned — with 'Global Revolution' and with our capacity to 'Save the Earth' — should not alter our anarchist nature, or the love of nature we feel as anarchists. There are many possibilities for liberty and wildness still. What are some of these possibilities and how can we live them? What objectives, what plans, what lives, what adventures are there when the illusions are set aside and we walk into the world not disabled by disillusionment but unburdened by it?

> If I cross the river will you cross the river
> Or drown in this desert, this empty cup we're drinking from
> If we are beasts, we are not beasts of burden
> So ride alone, or ride with many others
> Just ride away as fast as you can.
>
> — Blackbird Raum, *Valkyrie Horsewhip Reel*[1]

[1] Blackbird Raum, 'Valkyrie Horsewhip Reel', *Swidden* (Santa Cruz: Black Powder Records).

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