Liberate not Exterminate

Curious George Brigade

2005

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Why did we write this Zine?

We wrote this zine because we feel this is one of the important topics floating around our scene right now. Most of these ideas are not original with us but we felt they have not yet been collected together in print format yet. We hope to spark some interesting conversations about cities, ecology and anarchy among our friends and future comrades.

Feel free to copy this zine and pass it out to lovers and fellow-travelers. You can just reprint a section or just the art. If you wish to get more information about any of the topics discussed in the zine just write us we would be glad to send you some suggested readings and web-sites. If you like the art, you may want to check out www.dominantfiction.com.

We Love the City and We Believe in Anarchy

We, like most anarchists in the world live in urban areas. We call it our home and it is where we do most of our political work. Yet many anarchists tell us the city is a problem, it is part of corporate civilization and has given rise to everything we despise. Our green anarchist comrades suggest that if we were serious about anarchy we would see that cities must go (along with most of the world's population). While it is true people can be blinded by love, we feel our affinity for the city is not blindness. When we dream, we dream of anarchy at home both in the city and in the wild. Despite where we choose to live and work, we find our passions are akin to our green brothers and sisters. Not only do we believe the city can be redeemed, we believe it might be the best hope for achieving the goals of green anarchy and healing the Earth.

Below is not simply a polemic in favor of an unsustainable urban lifestyle. We have spent years studying, thinking and working for this goal. We have read the works of many green anarchists and conversed throughout the long winter nights with travelers bringing the anti-civilization message. We have listened, we have read, we have argued but we still believe there is hope. So this is a political love-letter for the city and a promise to our comrades that our commitment to anarchy is real and our love for this planet is true. Anarchy and cities are not in conflict anymore than wildness and anarchy. This little zine is part of a larger project which in turn is part of even a greater momentum towards rethinking the urban. While it is true no leader has crystallized the different strands of these various movements, theories, communities and projects; we do believe there is a growing understanding that the urban environment can be remade along the lines of anarchy; and further, it must if we have any chance. We, raccoons, rats and feral cats, have much to share with our wild cousins. We do not shirk at the enormity of our task but celebrate its audaciousness. Others may dream of ruins but we dream of teeming lively neighborhoods.

Cities Need Liberation Not Extermination

"I'm a bank robber, because banks are where the money is."

We believe if you have a serious critique of capitalism and the state (along with the related oppressions they spawn), it might be wise to reclaim their fortresses-the cities. The cities are the home to modern capitalism and state power. They are the engines of the modern economy and the places where their devastating policies are made. We have to confront the enemy at their fortress, if we take away their fortresses they will cease to exist.

For too long, anarchists have surrendered where 3/4 of the world lives to these corrupt and corrupting powers. We believe urban anarchists must organize and create militantly radical infrastructure in the very belly of the beast, if we wish to have substantial victories. Retreating to the forests and wildernesses will not stop the dual juggernauts of capitalism and state power. Even the courageous eco-actions have either failed or simply sent the bastards somewhere else to exploit. If anything whole scale retreat weakens our ability to create active and real resistance to their rape of the wilderness. We must fight on all fronts but if we wish to actually stop them from pillaging the earth they must be stopped in the cities. If Derrick Jensen is correct that cities are "black-holes of resources", than we must actively engage in new, sustainable ways of living in the city. We must push cities towards livability, which includes being surrounded by a robust and free wilderness. It is hard to imagine the nation-state without the city. But in order to fight the

nation-state we don't have to reduce cities to rubble but take them over. Cities, like the wilderness, are not commodities to be bought and sold, they are the places where we live, work and play. Anarchism is already an international conspiracy, we are everywhere, we are the scruffy student in the college library, we are the pizza delivery boy, the school-teacher, the social worker, the architect, the squatter, the guerrilla gardener, this city is our home and we are taking it back.

Save the Earth, Reinvent the City!

Cities if done right can actually be good for the environment. Responsible, ecologically sustainable, caring and smart cities are possible, not just in theory but are being created in practice. High density urban areas can allow more land to revert to wilderness and speed the earth's recovery (if it is not already too late). For example, if all urban places had the density of Hoboken, NJ (approximately 35,000 people per square mile) the entire population of the US could fitinan area the size of the state of New Jersey. Imagine what the effect would be on the rest of the continent. Greater urban concentrations, that are based on bioregional principles, will dramatically reduce the need of technological tentacles (power lines, highways, sewers, etc.) that have strangled our forests and waterways. We can, and must, reduce the waste that our delusion of manifest destiny has given rise to. Such abominations like Las Vegas, situated absurdly in the desert, will no longer be sustained. To turn the highways back into meadows and the strip-malls return into forests, will require not only creative thinking but also complex far-sighted projects. Cities have been fertile beds for radical ideas with their concentration of human discourses, cultures and resources. Few machines, many hands and many minds.

Preserving Both Biodiversity and Cultural Diversity: Deep Urbanism

Many will argue that green anarchy is a result of the research and theories of deep ecology. Our green comrades took the revelations of deep ecologists and turned them into political praxis, creating a vibrant multitude of communities throughout North America. They have even had some heroic victories in their struggle to preserve the ever threatened Earth and for this we will always extend our solidarity. They have inspired us with their bravery,creativity, and endurance. They are an important part of the overall resistance, but alas only a part.

It is only recently researchers, thinkers and most importantly "ordinary" people have been examining the complex ecology of the city. Audubon Society was shocked to find more species of birds in New York City than in the entirety of North Dakota. There are over 20 plants that exist solely in this city of over 8 million souls. There are animals that range from rats to coyotes that share this largest American city with us. Many people would be shocked to know that parrots live in Brooklyn and falcons soar above Wall Street. New York is not alone with its diverse flora and fauna,all major urban centers are teeming with animals and plants, many with new hybrids not found anywhere else. The city is like a desert, in that most people see it lifeless and devoid of variation, but neither is true. We know the desert is a fragile and wonderful environment that creates unique adaptations to the harsh geography. The city is a made environment but it is not solely used by humans. Some species have learned to thrive like the falcons, pigeons, rats, raccoons, etc. while new species have developed to take advantage of the urban environment like

the feral rooster and the brick martin. The green anarchists have done much to show we have lots to learn and gain from intimate experiences with nature. We city-dwellers could not agree more. The city is filled with wild life and we must learn to listen it. We believe it is wrong to believe that a pigeon or Brooklyn parrot is any less natural or wild than a spotted owl or a bald eagle. One can experience the wonders of nature in the city, perhaps not in the same quantity as out in the wilderness, and learn from these experiences. Cities could, and some have, developed to be more open and protective to the wildlife that shares their urban neighborhoods. The ecology of the city is more than simply the flora and fauna of its area but also the relationship between everything from micro climates, human occupation, and architecture. Committed individuals are finally turning their sights towards the problem of keeping city ecologies in balance but this will of course always be threatened by corporate greed. Capitalism is not only threatening the Northwest's old growth wilderness but also ecology of the cities.

The green anarchists (and others) have done an admirable job drawing attention to the need of preserving our dwindling natural biodiversity. We agree that biodiversity is integral to a healthy ecosystem. We sincerely believe cultural diversity, like bio-diversity, is also key to thriving human communities. Cities are natural reserves of cultural diversity, one can walk through the neighborhoods of London, New York, Port Au Spain, or Hong Kong and experience not only ethnically distinct areas but new hybrids of intermingled cultural identities. Linguistical, cultural, ethnic and stylistic variants are in continual dialog with each other in the healthy city. The city allows these diverse communities to cross-pollinate and create new more flexible identities that enlarge everyone's horizons. Out of these fusions can come a multitude of resistances to the suffocating hegemony of capitalist and nationalist conformity. The city air of cultural hybrids and diversity allow everyone to breath more freely. The anarchist cornerstones of affinity and free association are more easily realized in these swirling concentrations of cultures. The stifling conformity of tradition is opened up in the discourses of different styles, languages, cultures and passions. Large concentrations of people allow us to find true affinity that matches our ideals and dreams. There is a reason people leave the stifling tradition of the rural areas and seek the cities, it is a natural desire to find tolerance and communities that we can share in. The cities allow us to reinvent our lives and create new families. It allows us to join our desires of freedom with others creating communities of personal and communal liberation.

Beneath the Paving Stones is Chaos

While it is true oppressors be them kings, real estate moguls or petty politicians have always tried to create the perfectly ordered city — these attempts have for the most part ended in failure. This is because the city naturally strives for liberation because it has a natural propensity for anarchy and chaos. These oppressors have used zoning regulations, armies of militarized cops and business improvement districts to try to control and regulate the population. They seek to remove public spaces, discourage gatherings, prohibit non-commerce activity and cripple spontaneity but no city in the world has ever completely succeeded in taming its populace. Most cities strive for centralization but the reality as (lived by any city dweller) is that most large urban systems are by necessity decentralized. The neighborhood, the enclave, the ghetto or the hood has its own modes of self-organization. The happy truth is that chaos in the large city is endemic and it requires a huge amount of resources and energy to keep it subjugated. The slightest implemen-

tation of chaos into the system turns the dreams of the oppressors into nightmares. One need not look far or into the murky past to see cases where the feeble authority of the city crumbles and brings forth not self-destructing chaos but self organization and mutual aid. When New York suffered its last blackout in 2003, the city's neighborhoods came together: neighbors checked on the sick and elderly in their communities; secretaries and bike-couriers directed traffic; and stores gave away free food, beer and even sneakers for those walking home. In fact crime reached a record low during the 36 hour black-out. Buenos Aires had an even more remarkable transformation during Argentina's monetary and political crisis. Neighborhoods organized themselves into local spokes councils and everything from stores to factories set up real worker councils to ensure the city functioned. Voluntary medical services and fire services were provided by both professionals and local inhabitants while everyone took a more active involvement in securing their own neighborhoods. For months the city, despite the economic and political crisis, ran smoothly and was more democratic than it had ever been. We only need to give the city a sharp shove to release it from the grips of those that wish to strangle the vitality of the city. Chaos can be our ally in liberating the city and preserving the natural environment.

To us the city represents at its heart, choice, chance, chaos, creativity and possibility. It is the unique place that can allow our personal choices to find company and outlets. The city is home to chance encounters, never knowing whom you will see on a street corner or what a neighborhood has to offer. Chaos runs right below the numbing billboards and stays in the shadows of the streetlight's glare but is always around us. Chaos organizes, reorganizes and destroys the city. Cities attract creative people for a reason. Cities are first and foremost created and are always seeking to recreate themselves. Novelty and change are part and parcel of the urban experience, just as order and tradition are part of the rural experience. Hunter-gatherers maintain the same knowledge, architecture, myths, ideas and tools for hundreds of generations, while cities undergo change almost daily.

These changes are often detrimental to the lives of city-dwellers. Too often change is an excuse for those in power to continue their oppression. Despite this, there are possibilities. The city with its choices, chance encounters, chaos, creativity and changes can produce anything. Possibility is the currency of the city. As nature provides an abundance of experiences so does the city. Experiences we can choose to learn from, improve upon and move forward towards balance. The city provides experiences that can be found nowhere else. For example, one can watch the flow of humanity and enjoy the seclusion of anonymity at the same time. You can involve yourselves in alternate lifestyles for an afternoon or a lifetime. You are constantly challenged and educated by those that are different than you. This is not to say that there are not equally unique natural experiences to be had in other forms of living, but by eliminating the city we would be loosing not only cultural diversity but also a varied range of beneficial human experiences. We as anarchists need to try to enlarge our experiences, skills and dreams and the city is one of those places made for the task. It is no wonder many of us choose to travel to, live in, fight for and dream of cities.

The Coming Apocalypse: Anti-Civilization Bunk

Many anti-civilization critiques are valuable but they are unfortunately undercut by much nonsense that is nothing more than reactionary noble savage sentiments. Some try to pass this off as based on reality where the fact is far from the truth. For example it is not uncommon to

read about egalitarian hunter & gatherers, and how if we usurped civilization we could exist in some Eden-like utopia. While it is certainly true there are some hunters and gatherers (e.g. Inuit) who are remarkably egalitarian and may even exhibit a number of admirable anarchistic traits, it is hardly universal among hunting and gathering peoples.

There is in fact nothing magical about hunting and gathering that leads people to reject hierarchy or oppression. To be honest we must acknowledge that many of the same evils we despise in civilized communities we can find (though writ small) among these pre-civilized peoples. Sexism is extremely common among the majority of hunting gathering people expressing itself in domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, longer work hours for women and girls and of course female infanticide. There are also quite explicit hierarchies among many tribes. Often a few men (though less frequently women are included) have a monopoly on spiritual powers and even in some cases the use of violence. Conformity is also quite common, some anthropologists have argued it is a necessity among these type of tribes. This conformity is absolute, its adherence is enforced by violence (uncommon) and social isolation (often) which can be fatal for those that step outside the tribe's taboos.

We shouldn't see hunters & gatherers as non-humans. They are like us, they are neither worse nor better. The structure of hunting and gathering does not preclude hierarchy, violence, or oppression. Simply returning to some misty "Golden Age" is not going to cure humans of the problems of power dynamics. This form of economic reductionism should be labeled for what it is, a reactionary fantasy. It rejects the complexity and agency of humans while denying a hundred years of research on the topic. There is no particular survival strategy, pastoralism, hunting and gathering, agriculture, horticulture, etc. that is inherently egalitarian or anarchistic. One can find a few examples in all forms that suggest humans are capable of living in a non-exploitative way. There is no single simple solution to ending hierarchy and oppression. City-dwellers are no less or more capable of creating egalitarian and non-hierarchical structures than any other humans.

There is another common fallacy used by green anarchists in their relentless attack on urban living. They argue that as a species humans can not live in such dense environments. Again they return (as they inevitably do) to the hunter & gatherer model of population density. Leaving behind the ethical implications of getting rid of 5/6's of the world population, this argument falls flat on its face. It is a result of misapplying the predatory model. The predatory model of optimal species density makes the faulty assumption that since we are at the top of the food chain, we need the same amount of territory as other large predators. Most large predators are of course carnivores and we as a species are omnivorous. Thus neither the predator nor the prey model is sufficient for understanding our ability to live at high or low population densities. There have been and are large mammals that live in unbelievably dense clusters, without the aid of any technology as we understand it. There has also been a great deal of time and energy devoted to study humans in extremely dense, often artificially induced, populations (e.g. refugee camps). The research does not support the claims made by primitivists and others that humans are ill-equipped to live at density levels found in most cities. Again this points to inherent desire to reduce the complexities and flexibility of the human species to a simple one-size fits all solution. We as anarchists reject such simplistic reductionism and dogma in favor of a more varied and nuanced approach.

Hunters and gatherers only work four hours a day while civilized folks in the US must toil in excess of 40 hours, is a common argument. That must mean that hunters & than 9 times as efficient than us sweating away in cities. We have the right to be suspicious of such claims from

primitivists. The number of work hours is confusing at best, since other anthropologists have recorded much higher numbers some as high as 10 hours a day when travel is taken into consideration. The real problem is how much of our work in the modern era is for subsistence (food , shelter and clothing)? Do we honestly believe that we are working 40 hours a week just to feed ourselves, put some clothes on our body and have a shelter? One recent study from the University of Chicago suggested the average American only spends about 15% of their income on these things, the rest is taken up with luxuries, entertainment, taxes and health care. So who works more, hunters and gatherers or city-dwellers? It is hard to say and in the end not important. Marx was right, it is not about labor but about alienation. Most humans (whether they are civilized or not) enjoy working if they can see the fruits of their labor and they have control on how they will expend their labor. People work for free in gardens, on their homes and volunteer in record numbers. It is capitalism and wage slavery that is the enemy not the number of hours needed to obtain the basic necessities. Even if a worker in a dismal sweatshop only had to work 5 hours a day to provide the "basics", we would still be against that type of work.

The most dangerous result of idealizing hunters and gatherers, or any "other" for that matter, is that it objectifies them and sets people apart from the rest of humanity. Hunters and gatherers are people like we are, with the same fundamental minds, creativities, skills and problems. We can look to them for examples and models (like we should with any group) but it is foolish to gild them so much they are no longer human. The distinction between civilized and wild is not so concrete and absolute. No contemporary group of hunters & gatherers could meet the requirements of these extremists. In fact it is not uncommon to read writings condemning certain traditional people for being "traitors" because they fail to match up to some dogmatic anti-civilization checklist. This is not only ludicrous it is potentially damaging. Many traditional cultures are actively fighting their own extinction at the hands of loggers and oil companies, we need to show solidarity not seek to idealize them or call them traitors.

The major problem with the extreme anti-civilization argument is that it is religious in nature. It seeks to ignore rational thought (some gatherers are more go so far as to reject language) and relies on a return to a mystical golden era. Is there really much difference between the primitivists view of hunting and gathering societies and the fundamentalist view of the garden Eden? Evil, or civilization in their case, is introduced by unknown and unknowable causes and opens up a Pandora's box of ills upon the world. The extreme anti-civ folks wait for the end of days to come, seeking signs of the inevitable collapse of civilization, when the majority of the population will be destroyed in a planet cleansing apocalypse. Just like the fundamentalists they believe they will be left standing when the smoke clears, instead of God's chosen people they are the Gaia's chosen few. Like religious fanatics before them, they seek to retreat to the fringes of society, returning to the land and waiting for the omens to appear. They actually seem to rejoice in the on-coming apocalypse but fail to see that any "end of days" could irreparably change the planet making it inhabitable especially for hunting and gathering peoples. We feel it makes more sense to try to stop the destruction now. Fight with our passions, dreams, intellects and lives. If we all retreated to the land, there would be no land left worth inhabiting. We must stop the rape of the Earth in both the cities and the wilderness. It could be our only hope in saving our shared planet.

Oasis Or Reform

Unfortunately many will miss-perceive the below projects as useless reforms. They will denounce the people who engage in them as non-revolutionaries and thus make the mistake of rejecting their projects. This would be foolishness and possibly fatal for our planet. We need to create bases and open spaces, especially in the city, where people can experiment and create sustainable resistance (just as we seek a sustainable planet). If we are actually interested in radical change there are some things we must do now: we have to build new economic, justice, and social systems. We have to do this all while maintaining an equal emphasis towards destroying the existing Empire. We must be creative and create long-term supports and temporary sanctuaries while at the same time tearing down the walls of capitalism and the state. To be successful we must start somewhere, and inevitably this will look like the examples below. We need to link these isolated projects together with real solidarity. We need to share and innovate with communities working to remake the city. We need to expand the possibilities. As eclecticism is a key to healthy thriving cities, we much become radical eclectics in our urban projects. We need to open up spaces, and protect them, for resistances to grow and evolve. We know that many participants in the below projects would not identify themselves as anarchists or even radicals. They are ordinary folks doing extraordinary things in a hostile environment. Many of these projects do have affinity with anarchist principles like: mutual aid, anti-capitalism, horizontal decision-making, and voluntary association. This work can only benefit us in our ability to create broad-base resistances against "The System". We must be willing to learn from them and seek to inspire them to expand their projects. We must be willing to support them in their struggles as we will need their support in the future. In a society where voluntary association and mutual aid are crucial components, we must also engage in mutual trust. The city is a dialogue and we must be willing to engage in it in honest ways if we have any hope in breaking through the propaganda of Empire.

Below is a sampling of grassroots projects by ordinary people trying to recreate the city in a more sustainable way. Some of the projects may be modest but all have possibilities in creating a more sustainable city and resistance. We are impressed with the diversity and inventiveness of these projects and the people who keep them going. We feel these projects are useful oasis's for anarchists, to be used as models in which to envision and put in practice a new city.

The city is a social, cultural, political, psychological but also physical place. It occupies a particular geographic location and its bones are structural elements — buildings, roads, infrastructure systems, green spaces. These elements are the body that the "genus loci" or the spirit of the place inhabits, and a city's spirit is constantly being transformed by the rebuilding of its body. Rulers have acknowledged and used this reality for centuries. Today's hyper-capitalism is reshaping countless cities across the Global South, Eastern-Europe, Russia, the far East, China and so many more. And if it is true that if you change the physicality of a place you change its spirit, scattered around the globe, communities of resistance are trying to do the same thing, changing the spirit of consumption and greed into a spirit of sharing and mutual aid.

One of capitalism's main tenets in its relationship to the physical world is that "things" are valuable because they are scarce. And they truly are if every living human on this planet needs space and resources dedicated solely to herself. Those of us who reject capitalism know both intuitively and from experience that this is a fallacy and that we can multiply and reinvent our available resources simply by sharing, multi-use, and reuse.

In cities, capitalists are endlessly convincing us that land and buildings are scarce, yet this scarcity is maintained by consciously letting resources lay underutilized. Communities of resistance have been reclaiming and subverting urban and peri-urban land and architecture for centuries.

The most common way of reusing or subverting land is the construction of shanties or "informal settlements". Informal settlements are the most common form of urban living in the Global South where close to half the urban population lives in such areas. In fact, certain cities count hundreds of shanty-towns which occupy land that was either unused or dedicated to other uses. Based on informal or traditional land tenure, shanties are not only providing housing for new urban populations with few options, but represent an important change in urban and peri-urban land-use. This change to the planned land-use, and the densely built environment of the shanty can at its worse negatively impact the environment and by extension the health and well being of shanty residents, but at its best it can spur environmental preservation efforts not only by residents but by supporting communities.

Here are two examples: in Istanbul, Turkey, the residents of a shantytown located in the city's erosion zone have done a great deal to stop land erosion by planting olive groves. The olive trees with their extensive root system prevent land erosion, provide a green cover for the area, as well as a source of income for shanty residents. Their age-old method has proved many-fold more successful than the concrete jerseys used by the city administration as temporary retaining walls against erosion.

In Mexico City shanty-residents living in the city's green belt developed with university students the Ecologica Productiva a plan for transforming the green-belt into biological preserve while providing for the living and economic needs of the inhabitants. The plans, later scuttled by government intervention, included sustainable technologies like solar-powered dry-compost outhouses converting organic waste into fertilizer along with communal management of a variety of natural resources.

Closer to home, in hundreds of North American cities, community gardeners have been converting abandoned lots into beautiful gardens. Many of them provide not only much needed green space but food for their communities. In the last 30-something years, community gardening and urban agriculture have become a popular feature and a recognized asset to urban neighborhoods. Yet many gardens, especially in our own city, are still struggling with displacement and evictions stemming from their informal squatter origins. The progressive institutionalization of community gardens in the US has become a double-edge sword, making the creation of new gardens using the traditional ways of squatting abandoned property less sustainable and jeopardizing the life of previously established gardens. Still community gardens are a prime example of reclaiming and subverting urban land, growing edible gardens often in brown fields and other areas considered ecologically beyond repair by the mainstream. They are a wonderful successful experiment in stopping and reverting the environmental degradation of the land without millions of dollars in remediation and massive land-works. They have also become a catalyst for community participation in both tending and preserving the gardens, knitting neighborhoods together. This type of community-building is an important step in sustaining and launching lasting resistance.

Vacant land is not the only urban space that is being reclaimed and reinvented by communities in resistance. From our western experience we know of many buildings that are squatted by those who need a place to live or wish to open an independent space for cultural and social encounters. Squatting has a long and energetic history in NYC and other North American cities. The North

American squatting scene has for the most part been limited to residential enterprises (which of course can be radical) but Europeans and others have taken squatting much further. The stories of squats in Berlin and social centers in Italy are just two examples of squatting that provides the impetus for a real counter-culture to the rulers of a city.

Berlin squatting, like squatting in NYC, began in the economic recession of the late 1970's. A vibrant and integrated squatter counter-culture grew up in the Kreuzberg neighborhood. The cornerstone of these communities was communal living, and the creation of radical social centers: infoshops, bookstores, pirate radio stations, coffeehouses, meeting halls, bars, concert halls, art galleries, and other multi-use spaces where grassroots political, artistic and social cultures were developed as an alternative to the regulated and isolated life of capitalist German cities. From these safe and thriving social spaces grew major grassroots initiatives (involving people from around Berlin) to fight nuclear power; to break down patriarchy and gender roles;to show solidarity with oppressed people throughout the world by attacking the European-based multinational corporations or financial institutions like the World Bank; and after German reunification,to fight the rising tide of conservative neo-Nazism. Undoubtedly these actions would have been more difficult and less militant without the presence of a safe harbor in which to incubate and launch these acts of militant resistance.

Around the same time, Italy launched its own mass political squatting movement. The movement began in 1975 when some radicals snuck into dilapidated buildings in poor neighborhoods of Milan, Rome and other large industrial cities, cleaned places up and issued manifestos stating what they hoped to accomplish. The neighborhoods generally lacked preschools, libraries, vocational schools, medical clinics and spaces for organizing meetings and concerts. Typically the squatters invited the local population to their social centers. Leoncavallo, Italy's first and most famous social center, is a giant structure covered with magnificent murals, containing a concert room, a show space, a skateboard ramp, numerous offices, a documentation center to help immigrants and several bars. Currently, Italy has approximately 150 social centers. Social centers are autonomous zones where the government and police are not welcome and where city-dwellers feel free to actively participate in a vibrant and varied community. Social centers are fairly well integrated in the communities they reside in and have been quite successful in injecting radical militancy in many local campaigns. They have spawned a number of new radical communities including the famous Ya Basta! White-overall movement of the late 1990's and ecological defense groups.

Squatting has not been limited to buildings and empty lots, the very infrastructure of the city has been hijacked by various communities. Shanty dwellers and squatters have long ago become adept at siphoning off energy and water from absurdly centralized and "managed" city utilities. Others have "gone off the grid" freeing themselves completely from the unsustainable infrastructures of modern capitalist cities. One group in Paris has reclaimed abandoned underground sewer tunnels and caves to create a fertile ground for radicalism.

La Mexicaine de la Perforation, a clandestine cell of "urban explorers" and political radicals which claims its mission is to "reclaim and transform disused city spaces for the creation of zones of expression for free and independent art and culture" created a cinema (showing political films), with restaurant and barannex (also used for meetings).It was constructed in a series of interconnected caves totaling some 400 square meters beneath the Palais de Chaillot, across the Seine from the Eiffel tower. This underground community has created free and open space to delight and challenge the residents of Paris.

All of these examples have several common features — multi-use of space, diversity of both uses and users, and larger numbers of people being able to enjoy small amounts of space. They reject the scarcity model of capitalism by providing good working models for a different way of living and organizing urban space.

Squats and social centers are obviously not the only way to organize in non-hierarchical ways in the city. Any resistance counter-community must also develop counter systems to distribute necessities of life (economy) and social justice. Cities have been at the forefront of developing new and alternative economic models of varying degrees of radicalness.

Most cities are dominated by capitalism. In fact, capitalism was born and has flourished in the city. While all of this is true, it doesn't mean that capitalism has gone unchallenged in urban areas. A surprisingly large number of folks have rejected the exploitative nature of capitalism and have formed various economies based on principles more akin to those of anarchism. There is the LETS non-monetary system that has spread to over a dozen cities in North America that involves tens of thousands of folks. It uses a modified version of bartering and has systems in place to prevent hoarding, speculation and wealth accumulation. While it is far from perfect it does represent a model that many people feel is worthwhile and meaningful. Cities in East Africa have long used "distribution centers" to deal with the allocation of everything from food to radio batteries. These centers are often found in poor neighborhoods and informal settlements. The system is informal and self organized, relying on the natural surpluses and changes in peoples' life situations to keep materials and products in constant circulation without using chit, money or other such currencies. In some places this kind of exchange makes up 40% or more of the local "economy". East Asia has used various communal resources to effectively maximize living standards of working class folks by sharing like the Korean "kite" for example. Madison, WI has developed a fairly comprehensive and complex cooperative system. Its goals are, "self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity." While it still uses money and has many elements of capitalism it has nonetheless developed a huge alternative system to standard capitalism. It has linked together workers, farmers, residents, consumers, artists and other Madisonians for over 30 years.

Anarchists have begun to adopt anti-capitalist economies in a variety of cities. Most of these attempts have been small but are innovative starting points. Recently anarchists have been thinking about new economies, ranging from new fangled parecons to ancient gift-based societies, and putting them in practice. Food Not Bombs, free stores, really really free markets, free-cafes should be just the beginning. We can (and need to) develop truly radical systems that both provide for the needs of those living in the city and at the same time challenge directly the exploitation of capitalism. We have a long way to go but we have started.

Much of the exploitation that emerges from modern cities comes from irresponsible consumption expectations. This includes growing oranges in the desert, flying tropical bananas to Moscow by the ton or any thing to do with Las Vegas. What is clear is that the needs of the city and those who choose urban lifestyles must be radically alerted to make them sustainable. For centuries cities have relied on brute force and coercion to meet the unrealistic demands of those living in metropolitan areas. Food is the most obvious need of dense populations in limited geographic bio-regions. If a city can not feed itself, it will be forced to get food from the countryside. This can easily slip back into modern exploitation and domination.

Much has been done in Europe and the Global South to reduce the amount of food needed to feed the city. The US still throws away about 1/2 the food it brings into cities. Even when cities get their consumption under control they will still need a staggering amount of food. Fortunately

the last fifteen years have seen a dramatic increase in urban agriculture and the initial results are encouraging.

In an increasingly urbanized world, many new urban dwellers know that cities harbor vast untapped resources that could be used to grow food. All over the world there is a turn to urban gardening and animal husbandry that, combined with technological breakthroughs on the renewable energy front, offer hope for a sustainable future. Shanty dwellers also know that cities harbor vast unused resources — mounds of garbage, nutrient-rich wastes flowing unused into the oceans through sewers, and the legendary ingenuity of people. With these resources mega tonnage of food can be grown, and mega tonnage of meat and fish harvested within city limits.

There are reasons to be cautiously optimistic. For example in Europe, in 1990, 65 percent of Moscow's economically struggling families raised their own food, up from 20 percent in 1970. There are 80,000 community gardeners in Berlin with 16,000 on the waiting list. Reykjavik produces nearly 40% of its food within the city limits, mostly through informal cooperative gardens.

East Asians have long excelled at urban agriculture for several reasons. First, they are willing to plant every unused square foot of land. Second they are willing to use any and all urban wastes for fertilizer. Third, farming is an ingrained family and community chore, much as it was when people lived in traditional villages. The shared task of raising food has another effect — it helps keep families and communities together, despite the pressures of modern urban life. Super-dense Hong Kong produces nearly 50% of its fruits and vegetables with in the city. Tokyo has used rooftop gardens to great result, over 70% of roof-top acreage is used for the production of food. The three largest cities in India get 80% of their poultry (meat and eggs)needs from small chicken coops and feral chickens. In greater Bangkok, 60% of the land is under cultivation, 72% of all urban families are engaged in raising food, mostly part-time.

Cities in North America have also been experimenting with urban agriculture. By 1994, 300,000 households in the US were using a community garden, and 6.7 million more said they'd do so too if there was one nearby, the numbers are even higher per-capita in Canada. City farmers play a major role in waste recycling, creating a closed system in which organic wastes — from food, manufacturing and sewage — are reused instead of festering in dumps and polluting waterways. Human waste is turned into compost, domestic waste water safely irrigates many crops, and aquaculture stabilizes animal manure. In Mexico City, for example, many families keep pigs — urban pig farmers recycle up to 4,000 tons of the city's food wastes every day as much as two of the polluting "waste management" mega-plants.

Obviously we need more urban agriculture, too much space in modern US cities is left fallow. The court is still out if cities can actually produce enough food to be absolutely self-sufficient but many cities around the world are pushing the envelope towards 100% self-sufficiency.What is amazing and inspiring is that this trend is truly a massive grass-roots movement that has for the most part been ignored by large Governments, Universities and large NGOs. Communities have spontaneously realized the many explicit (eg. providing healthy foods cheaply) and intrinsic (eg. knitting communities together) values of urban horticulture.

Water is another indispensable need of cities. Many modern cities have giant earthworks bringing water from hundreds of miles away (getting further each year). Not only is it expensive and environmentally damaging, it is for the most part unnecessary. According to a UN 1990 special commission on water and irrigation, most cities can obtain most if not all of their domestic and commercial water needs from a combination of conservation, local watersheds and rain-water collection. In fact, until very recently that is how most cities did it. The obvious problem with

rainwater, and for that matter private wells for capitalists and governments is that it is free and by nature decentralized. Capitalists have turned water into a commodity and governments have used it to exert even greater control over people. The good news is people are starting to organize against this engaging in water conservation and returning to rainwater collection. Greywater systems are growing throughout the world. New approaches to plumbing have reduced water consumption in some cities by more than 65%. Rain water harvesting is also growing. For example Vancouver has seen a number of "water harvesters" collect so much water they are able to meet the needs of their of neighborhood and sell the extra water (at a cheaper price) to local industries. Others are looking at ways to obtain water from other sources like snow and even dew. Obviously not all cities, especially those built in dry bio-regions, will be able to support their current population. Yet we know that even desert cities, before massive irrigation projects, were able to maintain fairly large populations with sane approaches to water. There is no reason we can not do as well.

Pollution is turning the very building block of life, air, into a deadly toxin. It is a severe and purposefully under-reported health disaster in cities spanning the globe. If cities are to be healthy environments they must meet their energy demands without suffocating the inhabitants. The first step must be creating post-carbon cities. This obviously means getting rid of the internal-combustion engine. For too long cities have been designed for traffic not people. By eliminating vehicles not only will air quality improve but a great deal of space devoted to them will be freed up for other more human and ecological purposes. Most people underestimate the amount of space devoted to vehicles in the city from streets, parking lots, garages and so on. There is of course other added benefits to eliminating internal combustion engines, people will be safer and noise levels will substantially drop in urban areas. Many cities have been experimenting with car-free zones and the number of car-free cities has doubled in the past five years.We must remove the rumbling, polluting, predators from our streets and free our urban landscape.

Cities must also rethink their energy needs. In a post-carbon future, there will be no need for polluting power plants. This like removing traffic will open up new space in and around the city. Most modern European cities have been developing alternate means of providing energy. These non-polluting methods have included: geothermal, solar (active and passive), natural hydro-power, wind and methane management. Despite what the US government and big oil companies would have people believe, huge amounts of safe renewable energy are being harnessed throughout the world. Poor countries have been using a variety of passive, low-tech strategies to ween themselves off non-renewable resources. Of course if these techniques are to be realistic cities must radically change their energy use habits. Some cities have actually reduced their energy consumption in the last ten years, while America has continued to increase it at a demented rates. Some researchers believe that cities can reduce their energy needs, by instituting sane conservation models, by as much as 75%. One of the important characteristics of changing energy needs, is that most of the alternate techniques for power are decentralized and often free. This would reduce at least some of the power of both states and capitalists.

Unfortunately many of the above examples ranging from urban agriculture, to water harvesting and the innovative ways people are making the city sane and sustainable are isolated. Most cities lack an integrated counter-culture that connects squatting to agriculture to green power to political transformation of the city.

The Free Town of Christiania in Copenhagen, despite its current difficulties, is probably the one western, contemporary, on-going model of isolated projects integrated into a real counter-

culture. That explains why the Danish government is in such a hurry to “normalize” and “legalize” Christiania.

Like many other squats around Western Europe and the US, Christiania began in the 1970ies when people took over an abandoned military barracks area in Copenhagen. Since, the squatted barracks have evolved into the Free Town of Christiania. The Free Town has a complex system of self-governance, with various councils focused around different tasks: Common Meeting, Economy Meeting, Area Meeting, “busyness Council”, Cooperative Worker´s Meeting, and House Meeting. All decisions are made by consensus, while straw polls are sometimes taken to assess the residents’ opinions.

In the early 1990ies, the residents of Christiania prepared a Green plan for the their town in response to authorities’ development plan for the area. Based on the principle of self-organization, they wished to address the development of Christiania as an open, creative and constructive urban area in balance with nature.

Their plan, which has been in the process of implementation for the last fifteen years, specifically aims to make Christiania ecologically sustainable while improving both the built and natural environments. Christianianites based their work on three fundamental principles — the principle of self-governance and responsibility; the principle of solidarity; and the principle of balance with nature. These principles are regarded as the basic conditions for the free development of the individual within their community and in balance with nature. Fiercely anti-capitalist and independent-minded, Christianites have built their unique homes from the scraps that nobody else wanted. The squatters have decorated their walls with murals and graffiti, made their own coinage and fly their own flag (three yellow dots, representing the three i’s in Christiania, on a red background). They have even established their own holidays. Determined to create a place where they could create art, let their children play in nature and live-out free lifestyles, the Christianites transformed the area. The most visible result of the social experimentation in Christiania can be found in the inhabitants homes, which are as varied as its citizens; some are built in the abandoned barracks, others on the shores of the area’s serene lake and at least one in a tree. One is shaped like a UFO, another has grass growing on the roof and there is even one built entirely of windows. The uneven curves, asymmetrical façades and exotic building techniques contrast with the geometrically conservative architecture throughout the rest of the Copenhagen.Cars are banned from the streets, and ecological experiments with wind and solar power, garbage recycling and water treatment took place before the rest of the country had even heard of the green movement.

One of the basic premises of Christiania’s urban form is that nature and culture should both be part of the city. The built and natural areas should be weaved together into one organic whole, where in some areas nature has a free range, and others are cultivated by people.

Christianites have replanted the embankments of the river with grass. Water is oxidized with solar cell and windmill-driven fountains and water steps. They have made significant effort to reduce the energy-use of the area, and plan to build solar energy collectors and heat stores in the embankments. They have reduced the amount of waste they produce, with decentralized garbage sorting made by each household. In1991 the residents of Christiania were reusing 50% of their waste, today this percentage is even higher moving towards a goal of 80% reuse. They have done this by increasing composting, intense recycling and building a sewage system where greywater is recirculated through natural root zone installations. Water treatment is done locally, first by

the use of earth-toilets and low water use flushing systems. Water use is also reduced by water control systems, and rainwater collection and reuse.

Electricity use is reduced by low energy light-bulbs and appliances, low voltage systems, household windmills and solar panels. The long term goal is to convert exclusively to low-voltage renewable energy sources — solar, wind, and combustion.

Heating is also decentralized, with passive solar heating (50% of shower water is heated by solar power), experiments with new furnace types, and with waste water installations. A conscious effort has been made to use ecologically sustainable products, ecological building materials and recycled materials.

Christiania is a car-free town, where only products are transported by motor vehicles with limited access to the area. As the green plan puts it "fewer machines — many hands".

The residents of Christiania have made significant changes to the way they live and to what they perceive as their needs. They have done so because their community is based on autonomy, and the right of the inhabitants to decide for themselves in what kind of environment they wish to live. Making decisions collectively and with responsibility to the community has given them a common understanding of their need for a sustainable life in balance with nature. The environmental improvement initiatives in Christiania are the result of self-governance and direct participation in both making decisions about improvement through a decentralized structure of consensus-based decision-making and direct labor making the improvements themselves.

The Anarchy of Abundance

Our anarchy is an anarchy of abundance. It must be in order to survive against the power of our enemies. We are forcing the horizons wide open to the imagination. We believe there can (and must) be a world that has both wilderness and cities — a planet where people live in hunting-gathering tribes and in the diverse neighborhoods of cities. Where the goals of both groups are in harmony. There is enough creativity in our minds, enough courage in our souls and enough passion in our hearts to accommodate both green and urban anarchy. No desire need succeed by destroying the other.

For too long many anarchists' message to people has been that preserving the environment and living a in a sustainable way will take huge sacrifices but has to be done because it is the right thing to do.

We agree that it will take a lot of hard work to save our planet, but we don't believe it has to be a sacrifice.We don't believe that we must give up everything including art, homes, and even language if we are to live in harmony with our planet. We believe that living in anarchy, is a better and more meaningful way to live, in the city or in the wild. We reject the fear-mongering of capitalist scarcity — the idea that you can never have enough and poverty, isolation and even death is only a paycheck away, is what keep capitalism going. We believe the city, and the world, have magnificent abundance. There is work that needs to be done (a lot of it), but it won't be done out of some sense of duty or sacrifice,it will succeed because people find it full of meaning and joy in their own lives. Too many people think being environmentally conscious is a chore, but it can be empowering and fun. Working with a group of friends in a community garden is much more meaningful than pushing a cart alone through some soulless mega-mart. Allowing

animals and wildlife to share the city will bring new experiences that can teach and enthrall us for free.

In our little zine we have shown how millions of people are injecting new meanings in their lives by actively rethinking and recreating the cities they live in. What they are doing is right for the environment and the city but it is also intrinsically powerful in and of itself. Capitalists need people to be always hungry for more, states need people to be so fearful that we voluntarily give our power to them. We seek to make the city a place of abundance and where we can trust our neighbors again. This is happening and will continue to happen. Our individual autonomy is best realized in a self-selected community, and the city allows for many communities to grow. As we redesign the city, we are in fact redesigning our lives. We can all become architects and builders of our future, and what could be more powerful and fulfilling than that?

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Curious George Brigade
Liberate not Exterminate
2005

Retrieved on June 8, 2009 from dominantfiction.com
Who is the "Curious George Brigade"? Most obviously, we are the authors of this lil' zine. We are also an action-orientated international anarchist cabal. We are friends, comrades and co-conspirators. You can't join the CGB, so just make your own damn brigade. We also wrote a slick book called, *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs* (www.ageofdinosaurs.com or www.yellowjack.com). We are always looking for feedback, so you can contact us at cgb@ageofdinosaurs.net. Let us know what you thought of it.

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