Toward an occupy land movement

Regeneration as an anarchist vision

Seaweed

2016

There were many aspects of the Occupy Movement that were praiseworthy: its decentralization and internationalism, lack of a reformist list of demands, the explorations of collective decision making and of course its goal of helping human societies become less hierarchical. But what were the Occupy protesters occupying? Wasn't it essentially urban space as a means of temporarily reclaiming some property to use as a media-like base to complain about social and economic inequality?

How might someone looking through the lens of insurrectionary subsistence consider Occupy? I think that it's worth wondering if Occupy would have been more powerful and threatening if there had been a more personal and immediate goal of occupying land. In a city this might mean occupying a park and a nearby building, for instance, not to use as a space to become either engaged citizens or drop outs, but to use as infrastructure in a real attempt at exploring new social relationships. The park might be used for planting an orchard and a garden, building a hen coop and setting up ponds to attract wildlife, as simple examples, and the building used for shelter and defense from hostile forces. Of course, urban inhabitation offers more opportunity for destroying the enemy's infrastructure than it does the creation of liberated space that could support some sort of sustainable urban permaculture zone. But the points must be made that we are dispossessed and that access to land is essential for any group of self-directed people.

Or imagine if the protesters had marched out of their city and brought their considerable numbers and resources to support the nearest indigenous land re-occupation effort. What an incredible opportunity to be allies and co-conspirators with folks who have been on the front line against capitalism and colonialism for centuries. There are such efforts all over Canada and the U.S. Or if each encampment had gone out into the nearest public or corporate lands to set up their own land occupation camps, as attempts at creating places to self-organize and survive in a non-urban setting and as a way of opening new fronts against the nation-state in solidarity with indigenous fighters and communities.

Urban living has to be abandoned in order for any truly anarchic set of living practices to succeed. With that as a backdrop belief, then insurrectionary subsistence becomes clearer as a specific revolutionary perspective. It involves trying to take steps that help further access to land for communal groups; either indigenous people reclaiming their traditional territory or non-

indigenous people accessing land to create their own authentic bonds, free of the forces of either the market or the state.

How does one describe the freedom that anarchists are yearning for? Is it freedom from-as in oppression, domination, mediation, domestication, colonization? Is it freedom to-as in to explore, imagine, experiment and dream? It is both and therefore I wonder how these two might intersect, and how our means to this intertwining might contain its ends.

Insurrectionary subsistence practice is identifying one's potential habitat and making attempts at dismantling existing industrial activity and doing our best to stop industrial expansion there. Unlike direct action ecology which advocates attacking industrialism in order to protect wilderness, insurrectionary subsistence attacks industrialism generally, wherever one lives, in order to help the local ecosphere regenerate not for abstract spiritual or ecological reasons, but in order to protect one's potential home.

Like primitivism, insurrectionary subsistence encourages attacking industrialism not only to protect wilderness areas but also as part of a greater goal of destroying mass authoritarian civilization so that humanity can ultimately return to lives centered more or less around hunter-gathering. But insurrectionary subsistence also aims to secure access to land in order to begin experimenting with different green ways of living here and now, without any predetermined destination in mind. We trust that truly free, self-organized, self-directed people will end up where they need to be to fully realize themselves. Life is full of spectrums and grey areas, like the undefinable boundaries between the hard and the soft, so it's important not to get stuck on specific expressions and mental constructions, like "bio-regionalism" or "nomadic hunter-gathering" or "paleo" or "permaculture" or "cultural materialism". There are gradations everywhere, disagreements about definitions, new information and insights that continually ask us to reconsider our perspectives. This is important for anarchists, who must be guided by the desire to fight for dignified lives as well as by the ecological principles of regeneration and renewal. Chaos and paradox define our surroundings and our histories as much as any rational template.

I've been around long enough to know that eventually all sets of analyses, like cultural materialism as an example, will seem outdated and inadequate and will need revisions and rethinking. All over North America, for instance, the non-civilized experimented with and integrated many customs and activities that would be considered outside the limits of nomadic hunter-gatherer lifeways: some had dogs that lived among them, some planted the odd crop, others maintained specific conditions to encourage food or medicine sources through fires, many lived in permanent, if seasonal, villages, etc. Hierarchy did not always accompany the lives of those who engaged in these practices or experiments. And what some outsiders, like anthropologists, could describe as hierarchy in some instances, might from the subjects themselves not be considered coercive or alienating or having any basis in domination whatsoever. There are simply so many varieties of gathering/hunting cultures and of the non-civilized generally, that the description seems to fall short as sufficient to adequately encapsulate our destination. Best from my point of view, is to start by getting access to land with the crystal clear desire to begin experimenting with free ways of living.

In terms of where I live, fairly close to large areas of land, I do know how to hunt and have hunted, but civilization has made widespread gathering-hunting an impossibility for the time being. This doesn't mean that occupying land is pointless, it just necessitates conceptualizing and accepting a practice that has only a few stepping stones in some places to a green anarchist lifeway while in others the stepping stones required would be so numerous that one has to accept

some transitional time period of helping re-naturalize a habitat. It does seem true that the more sedentary the people the more likelihood the existence of rank and privilege. But there isn't a causal connection. Other factors also come into play. And based on my reading of anthropological evidence, permanently located villages, established within fairly small habitats, with seasonal subsistence campsites, are also sufficient for experiencing completely free, undomesticated and healthy existences.

The participant in an organically self-organized subsistence movement wants to be embedded in a habitat. They don't aim toward an exclusive means of providing food or set of living arrangements. They just want to be free people rooted in a dynamic and healthy environment. I think that a settled village of ungoverned individuals, (or even cluster of them), for instance, perhaps divided in smaller groups within it along some affinity or blood relation, one that also supports seasonal subsistence camps, is as ideal a setting for humans to experience complete freedom and direct experience with our surroundings as a nomadic group of gatherer-hunters. These people would sustain themselves by fishing, maintaining berry patches and wild starches, perhaps even planting a simple crop like squash or encouraging oyster production through subtle interactions. The destination is a place where we are free to experiment with our social configurations and we have the habitat to support us as we do so. If that leads to nomadic hunter-gathering, or nomadic gathering-hunting or village based gathering-hunting or village based hunting-gathering supported by squash crops and domesticated cannabis and valerian root medicines, then so be it. Most concepts seem to break down into ever smaller units or even to completely liquefy into infinite constituent parts once we try to pin point and confine and set apart from all other concepts. What precisely is nomadic and what sedentary? What exactly is domestication? Where does the hierarchy anarchists are opposed to end to make room for notions of old timer wisdom?

While I am overjoyed when spontaneous and broad proletarian insurgencies and uprisings occur, like they have recently (2012 to 2015) in Montreal, Ferguson, Baltimore, Greece, the Bay etc., I believe that each of our lives counts, each of our undertakings potentially contributes. Some of our activities quietly chip away at the dominant reality while others are more dramatic. I don't care if at times my actions accomplish nothing. I want to live and try and experiment, and of course there remains the possibility that in a coalescing of all our small attempts something greater might occur, that perhaps one day some might actually help liberate an area. In this sense I support and encourage everything from the formation of intentional communities to clandestine sabotage of industrial projects, from the setting up of wilderness camps for a few friends or helping out at an indigenous land re-occupation camp to disruptions of normalcy in riotous behavior at anti-police brutality marches. All of these activities create bonds between comrades, highlight what and who our enemy is and build experience and wisdom. Hunting and fishing and gathering wild food is as important as writing to prisoners.

Insurrectionary subsistence is the attempt, successful or not, to wrest a little territory from the nation-state and the market. This land base might be a stepping stone toward eventually reaching a habitat or it might be taken with the intent of becoming part of a habitat itself, say through re-naturalizing efforts.

This is not just a call to "green" our revolts, although this is one way to speak about it, but to make more of our activity aimed toward accessing land or protecting potential habitat for anarchist living experiments here and now.

It is a call to consider the implications of realizing that without access to land, no group can sustain itself.

Free people living in healthy habitats is the destination, insurrectionary subsistence is one of the means.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Seaweed
Toward an occupy land movement
Regeneration as an anarchist vision
2016

Blog site

theanarchistlibrary.org