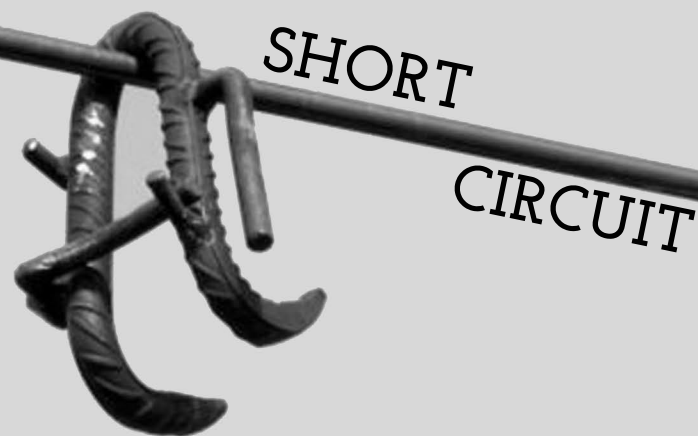


Counter-
logistics is not simply a
matter of blocking all flows, of
stopping movement, of locking things in
place where they are. It is a matter of block-
ing those flows that constitute the material
and metaphysical tissue of this world, while
simultaneously enhancing our own ethical
connections, movement, and friendship.
Helping migrants to cross borders and remain
undetected, helping information to cross
through and within prison walls, destroying
surveillance cameras, defending the basis of
new worlds seized in opposition to the
old—these are as important as blocking rail
lines and disrupting commerce.



PART I

Introduction

&

ZAD, Commune, Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

THESE DAYS EVERYTHING IS ABOUT SPEED, FLEXIBILITY AND initiative. Goods are delivered to us before we order them, and criminals arrested before committing crimes. Mechanisms of control mirror mechanisms of profit, both in the “productive” sphere of crafting citizen-consumer subjects, and the disciplinary sphere of surveillance, monitoring, and repression. Knowledge of systems, networks, location and movement become ever more important for both the state and capital, just as that knowledge becomes ever more seamlessly integrated and indistinguishable. There are a few different words for this tendency. One word is cybernetics: the study of systems and networks, the conversion of human relations into an ecology of data points that can be tweaked

and controlled but remains self-stabilizing. Cybernetics comes from the Greek *kubernèsis*, “to pilot or steer,” as in to steer economy, society. We want to disrupt the piloting of this ship, to take what detritus is usable and leave the rest to sink in the rising oceans.

Above all, cybernetics seeks to know everything. Just as the liberal subject arose arm-in-arm with the commodity—exchangeable, formally equal—the contemporary subject is tracked with the same precision as contemporary goods. RFID chips and flexible production chains are used to ensure that each item arrives where it should, when it should, without fail. Social data mining tracks consumers just as precisely, detecting and shaping their desires. Anti-theft devices and ubiquitous surveillance are the negative reflections of RFID chips in shipping and location-based smartphone ads. Everything and everyone must be known, and all must be kept in its proper place. Just as Amazon was patenting “anticipatory shipping”, planning to ship goods before they are ordered based on consumer behavior patterns,¹ the Chicago Police Department was unveiling a new “predictive policing” model, using social network analysis to identify those “most likely to be involved in violent crime.”² And of course, we can trace a continuous thread from location-specific advertisements on your phone, to cell phone records being used to track comrades, to drones bombing suspected terrorists in Yemen based on the location of their SIM cards.³

What are the practices that link regimes of control and production? The ideas conceived in Silicon Valley

1 (<http://techcrunch.com/2014/01/18/amazon-pre-ships/>)

2 (<http://www.theverge.com/2014/2/19/5419854/the-minority-report-this-computer-predicts-crime-but-is-it-racist>).

3 (<http://gizmodo.com/report-nsa-phone-data-guides-drone-strikes-which-kill-151974430>)

of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!”

“Have you used it much?” I enquired.

“It has never been spread out, yet,” said Mein Herr: “the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well. Now let me ask you another question. What is the smallest world you would care to inhabit?”

—Lewis Carroll, *Sylvie & Bruno Concluded*

"That's another thing we've learned from your Nation," said Mein Herr, "map-making. But we've carried it much further than you. What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?"

"About six inches to the mile."

"Only six inches!" exclaimed Mein Herr. "We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map

are made material in China and shipped to us. Likewise, the ideas of cybernetic management are made material through—and in—that shipping. We can call this the applied science of cybernetics: logistics, what some man calls "the active power to coordinate and choreograph, the power to conjoin and split flows; to speed up and slow down; to change the type of commodity produced and its origin and destination point; and, finally, to collect and distribute knowledge about the production, movement and sale of commodities as they stream across the grid." Logistics becomes more and more central to generating surplus value across the globe, creating ever more resilient networks of distribution that can defeat bursts of proletarian activity or climate chaos.

As partisans of disorder, the study of logistics becomes strategic for us as well. That shift is taking place; the last three years have seen in-depth investigations into logistics and transportation infrastructure, accompanying an increasing turn towards interrupting those networks as a primary strategy. In 2011 the blockade of the Port of Oakland, and of ports up and down the West Coast, put into practice a call that has been issued since the collapse of the global justice movement: block the flows of capital. From the piqueteros of Argentina to the sabotage of French train lines, from the port blockades of Occupy to the indigenous-led rail blockades of Idle No More, it seems that we are beginning to take our own advice.

This theoretical and practical turn takes place alongside an increase in the visibility of communisation theory; Endnotes and SIC, as the two nodes of communisation theory most prominent in the US, articulate a complementary understanding that any possibility of communism must unfold without a transitional stage. Revolts,

when they spread, must immediately begin to appropriate those resources necessary to sustain themselves, must immediately begin to experiment with forms of life that do not reproduce state logic, and forms of existence that do not rely on exchange, work, and value. This might sound familiar to those anarchists who in 2009 were already proclaiming “Occupy Everything!” and “Everything for Everyone!” Where the communisation milieu as expressed in Endnotes and SIC dismissed Tiqqun’s contributions out of hand as voluntaristic, non-materialist and escapist, recent turns in both have echoed the simple, practical calls issued over a decade ago. Despite our many differences, we can agree on the following: capital more than ever depends on rapid flows of goods and money, and it is only by disrupting those flows that we might exercise a proletarian power that is otherwise neutralized by the hyper-flexibility of capital. Logistics, cybernetics, movement and speed are integral parts of the circuits of value production and control. The task of struggles, if they are to approach communism, is to immediately interrupt flows of goods and circuits of control, and to communize what is available. All of this requires a level of preparation, of planning, of investigation—where are the weak spots, what information might we share when the time is right, where are the resources that can be seized.

This is not a project of vanguardism, or of voluntarism, but a wager that the upheavals of the recent past are not over. Neither is it a call to wait passively, or to build consciousness; instead it is a method of preparing ourselves, to practice, to interrupt what we can and experiment with new methods of sabotage and sharing, and above all to be ready. The forces of recuperation are strong—recently the Department of Homeland Security issued a statement

Just before boarding the ferry, you check the internet and see that the police have pulled out of two main crossroads in the ZAD. The Interior Ministry can no longer maintain its militarized presence without hindering its ability to protect Paris. In this period of weakness, the Zone to Defend will grow. You close the internet, walk out of the cafe, and into the streets of Calais, filled with immigrants trying to reach their families on the isle. It is the spring of 2013.

*Where are the words,
where is the house,
where are my ancestors,
where are my loves
and where are my friends?
There are none, my child.
Everything has to be built.
You must build the language
that you will live in,
You must build the house
where you'll no longer be alone.
You must find the ancestors
who will make you more free,
and you must invent the new
sentimental education
through which once again,
you will love.*

praising the anarchistic mutual aid practices of Occupy Sandy after the devastation caused by the hurricane. It is a question of how to respond to the existent and to future crises in a way that both supports ourselves and undermines the ability of the state and capital to reassert themselves once self-organized efforts address the worst of the crisis.

While most of the pieces in this book outline a theoretical understanding of cybernetics and logistics, and a practical suggestion of frameworks for strategizing disruption, “Disaster Communism” and “The Anthropocene” stand out in their suggestion that, in autonomous responses to disaster, we can glimpse some possible, positive project. Remaining apprehensive, they offer a different view than the purely negative politics of the communisation milieu. Responses to natural disasters, while always partial and almost always ultimately recuperated, also often rest on non-market, solidaristic approaches, divided as they may be by class and race. The pieces are a welcome breath of fresh air, recognizing just how fucked we are with regard to climate and capital, and seeking to position our responses in that reality.

Likewise, two pieces on the ZAD—the Zone to Defend, a long-lasting land occupation in France—give us an alternate view of struggles from the ground. Dismissing both the abstract high theory of communization and the nihilism of American insurrectionaries, they point to the intersection between affective struggle—how revolt changes the immediate social relations surrounding and constituting people—and a long-term spreading of insurrection and communization. The ZAD functions as a practical counter-cybernetics in two ways, interrupting the creation of an airport and constituting a world that can sustain itself in opposition to this one. There is resonance here as well

with the free states and blockades of Earth First! at the turn of the 21st century, and the anti-roads movement in the UK in the 1990s. Those who would dismiss this as mere activism would do well to take into account the longevity, scale of revolt, and support for the ZAD across France.

This book is a study guide centered around two complementary questions: 1) how do we interrupt the flows of capital, effectively, where we are, and relate that to where others are, and 2) what do uprisings, riots, and unrest need to spread, and how can we help to fulfill those needs. We hope that the essays within can serve as a point of departure for future investigation and activity. How do we begin careful, extremely local, investigations of our towns and cities, with an orientation towards communising material resources and spreading struggles? What warehouses contain what goods, and where are they? Just how much tear gas do the police have, and where does it come from? We remember the 2008 riots in Greece, when the police ran out of tear gas and needed emergency supplies shipped to them, as a missed opportunity. What better way to show international solidarity and to spread revolt than by sabotaging the delivery of repressive technologies? What buildings are vacant, ready to be occupied and transformed? How can we learn from the militarized failures of past occupation attempts? *Call* states that “If private property is essentially the discretionary power of depriving anyone of the use of the possessed thing, communisation means depriving only the agents of empire from it.” How do we do that, really? Just how vulnerable are the railroads, ports and highways to interruption or diversion? “Choke Points: Mapping an Anticapitalist Counterlogistics in California,” the last piece in this book, begins to concretely address these questions and points towards a methodology of research.

you are. But this ignorance is a blessing, and you are without value, like the first man. Wander the roads. If you weren't so lost, you wouldn't be so destined for encounters.

Let's go away. It's high time. But please, let's go together. Look at our gestures, the rising grace within our gestures; look at our abandon, how beautiful it is that nothing catches us; look at our bodies, how fluidly they mix. How long it has been since such free gestures descended on the world.

But you know, there are still walls against our communism. There are walls within and between us that continue to divide us. We are still not done with this world. There is still jealousy, stupidity, the desire to be someone, to be recognized, the desire to be worth something. And worse, the need for authority. These are the ruins the old world has left within us and which remain to be demolished.

When you are dropped off on the motorway, you see ZAD PARTOUT tagged on a billboard. You walk the rest of the way to Calais, thinking of everything you have just seen of the past months. You have finally experienced it and now that the memories are within your imagination you will know what you are fighting for. Just as the edge of the port city comes into your view, you remember more words, written in 2003:

That it might take a generation to build a victorious revolutionary movement in all its breadth does not cause us to waver. We envisage this with serenity.

bridge, a few young men tag the words ZAD PARTOUT. In the super markets, unseen thieves walk out the doors with hundreds of euros worth of groceries. Refugees from Syria, Kurdistan, and Libya sit at the bars, watching the world go by. The metropolis keeps running. You are reminded that the crisis has yet to hit France as it has Greece and Spain.

Back on the motor way, you hitch a ride back up north towards the UK. On the radio some analyst is talking about the recent situation in Cyprus and the selling off of the countries natural gas rights. The driver of the car informs you he works for a gas company and his job is to locate gas reserves. He says it is only a matter of time before they are drilling in Spain. The experts say this will increase jobs and put more money in the economy. This is the crisis, engineered to extract more resources from the earth. As the car hurtles down the motorway, you watch the TGV train speed past a nuclear power plant. Thirty kilometers further on, there is another nuclear power plant, and you know that before you reach Calais you will see several more. You think of the struggle against the train in the Susa Valley and when you look up in the sky and see the planes you think of the ZAD, brought into being in order to stop an airport. And then you remember words you read years ago, words you had almost forgotten:

So lucky are the orphans – the chaos of the world belongs to them. You cry over all that you’ve lost; indeed, we have lost everything. But look around us: we have gained brothers and sisters, so many brothers and sisters. Now, only nostalgia separates us from the unknown.

You go, you are lost. The measure of your value is nowhere to be found. You go, and you don’t know who

This book focuses primarily on the economic—how can one interrupt the valorisation process in an era of decentralized production, and how can one acquire the resources necessary to spread a struggle. The economic is never enough, however. Cybernetics works on us and through us not only through cell phones, surveillance cameras, and social networks, but through our identities, our tastes, and our activities. The human strike, the refusal to be captured by appeals to necessity and urgency, the elaboration of new relations amongst us and between those we encounter—these qualitative measures are more important than the amount of material throughput that is interrupted by a port blockade, or the amount of food or space that can be seized during an occupation. The danger of beginning a process of investigation and preparation is that our material needs are created by and within capitalism; it is hard but not impossible to become materially self-sufficient, to reproduce oneself as a social milieu or as a family. This danger of recuperation lies within all potential positive projects, and must always be carefully considered.

When imagining what to make common, the question of exploring new needs is an important one. How do we take space that challenges gender? How do we share space in ways that allow for experimentation and new encounters rather than continuation as ossified cliques? National liberation movements and past revolutions shared the same weakness of Occupy—acquiring material resources to continue life as it becomes paramount, and we return to relations of production and urgency that prevent experimentation with new relations and new worlds. In this collection, “Communist Measures” from SIC begins to tangle with some of these ideas theoretically, while texts from the ZAD point, again, to the practical manifestations

of this experimentation. Elsewhere, Claire Fontaine's elaboration of the human strike and "the revolution within the revolution," Tiqqun's *Sonogram of a Potentiality*, and "Building a Permanent Movement" in *Til the Clock Stops: Crime, Opacity, Insurrection*, investigate these questions in their own ways.

Counter-logistics is not, then, simply a matter of blocking all flows, of stopping movement, of locking things in place where they are. It is a matter of blocking those flows that constitute the material and metaphysical tissue of this world, while simultaneously enhancing our own ethical connections, movement, and friendship. Helping migrants to cross borders and remain undetected, helping information to cross through and within prison walls, destroying surveillance cameras, defending the basis of new worlds seized in opposition to the old—these are as important as blocking rail lines and disrupting commerce.

The end of this book contains a list of materials for further reading. We hope that you will use this book to create your own local study group, to meet with friends, to remain opaque while acting and preparing. Some will reject this book as too voluntaristic; others will say that we are being vanguardist, that as pro-revolutionaries our only role is to observe the unfolding of revolts and to prevent other intellectuals from intervening. We have our own critiques of militancy, of activism, of voluntarism. We know elite militants will not bring a revolution, or at least not one that we want to be a part of. However, we suspect that those with the know-how and the intention can prepare their own contributions in advance. As some friends said, "there is not a problem of the head, but a paralysis of the body, of the act."

In the ZAD they speak of counter-cybernetics in

VI

A few weeks later, sitting in a bar, you find out the situation at the ZAD is same as it was before you arrived. Everything continues as it did, the zone persists, and there are more manifestations planned in the future. You look up at the television screen above the bar man and see conservatives fighting police in Paris over the equal marriage law, the unemployment rate jumping to 27 percent in Spain, and a bombing in the US. You find another seat, away from the television, and read these words about life in a free zone:

At the camp we got to see our usually grouchy, unsatisfied child in a new light. Already after two days she moved up and down the steep hills on her own, queued for the peoples kitchen by herself, asked other grownups for help, and did not only cry for us parents...In the evening she helped stack the firewood and fell asleep, without any discussion, around the fire with a hundred noisy people around. Food that she would not eat normally she ate with a ravenous appetite, also because of the lack of any alternatives. She met passing cows and goats without timidity. During the day she did not search the contact with us parents so much, but was where there were other children or activities or people she found interesting.

Back in the metropolis, you see the Roma camps nestled along the side of the motor way and watch the smoke flow out their precarious chimneys. Hundreds of cars speed by, exuding exhaust and garbage. Down by the river, under a

And so it is only natural that you see the nightmare. In the morning you awake to the news that the police have returned. A group of people hiding in the forest ambushed them as they approached. One of the cops was severely beaten, another set on fire. In response a large group of riot police started an offensive against the new barricades and soon you are on your way there along with many others. The fight is in progress when you arrive, attack, counter attack. As the chaos unfolds, you remember the people on crutches, the people missing eyes, people you have met on your travels who have suffered serious injuries at the ZAD, and yet dozens of people surge forth, throwing rocks and bottles at the police, screaming at the tops of their lungs and raving like mad people. And then you see three canisters arching in the sky, heading directly towards you. You get out of the way, one of the canisters lands in the soil beside you, and rather than exude tear gas, the canister explodes, leaving a large crater in the ground. It is then you understand this is real, this is the nightmare, trying to break into the zone.

The battle goes back and forth until the police mass their forces and then push forward, overwhelming the barricade. They are met with molotovs during the final counter-attack. As you and the others retreat, someone sets the bar beside the barricade on fire, making good their promise to never let the police have it. You have time to catch one last glimpse behind you and see dozens of riot police in gas masks running through smoke and tear gas towards you, the bar burning behind them, the nightmare having reclaimed the space you all liberated two days ago. The police line comes to a halt beneath the tree house. This is the new border between freedom and order.

the language of mud: sticky, gumming up gears, vehicles, police operations, trotskyite flags; hyper-local, impenetrable.

Mud is opposite of the metropolis. Concrete covers the metropolis, hiding the soil below. Mud is polymorphous, the metropolis is angular and static. The metropolis is hard, mud is soft. And it is everywhere in the ZAD, surrounding every structure, forming along every path, the constant companion of the free people in the fields.

We hope to muddy the waters for those who watch us, to slow down that which is fast, to throw mud at our enemies and, just maybe, to grow something sustaining from the muck.

ZAD, COMMUNE, METROPOLIS

protecting the earth, the rites of spring, and for clear reason she ends her prose poem with the words, MAYBE GOD IS BLACK.

It all comes back. In the commune, in the forest, in the bar, in the house, everyone talks about the Black Panthers. It has been going on for months. It is the common thread running through this web. As the English words on the radio fade away and are replaced with techno music, you think of the autonomy, the self-sufficiency, and the self-defense of the Black Panthers. You think of the threat they posed to the order of the US and how the questions they posed still have not been answered. But as the techno music blares, you realize you have been seeing the answer this whole time, struggling to take shape. When someone hands you a spliff, you realize you are not high.

In the morning, over 1000 people arrive carrying shovels, picks, plants, chickens, seeds, and supplies. They go to different pieces of land and begin planting, tilling, building new structures. In the afternoon you go to the new barricades. There, people are tearing up the concrete road and digging into the soil. In the rear, at the cross roads, people are eating food, drinking wine, lounging in the sun. By the early evening, there are five new barricades where before there was only a skull and cross bones spray painted on the concrete, signifying police occupation. Before you arrived at the ZAD, the map you studied showed this location as a place to be avoided. Now it is a center of life, filled with happiness and celebration. At night you go to a party at an occupied farm on the other side of the zone where a new house has been constructed. There you eat sandwiches and crepes and drink wine and watch people dance inside a large tent. And then you go to sleep, content to with the knowledge that the zone has grown wider and denser.

the nice British university student on holiday, the copper tells you how lucky you are to live in a country where you can fly the Union Jack and not be called a fascist. As you struggle to keep a straight face, he says it is a tragedy he cannot hang the Tricolor from his window. Later he says that there are too many immigrants in France and the French identity must be preserved. Also, he says, the French are lazy and need to work more. He is the first copper you meet. The second is at a toll booth on the motor-way. He arrives on his motorcycle, arrogant and cocky, and tells you to move to the other side of the toll booth. The third cop you meet is one of many and he throws a grenade at you.

But before that happens, you are in the ZAD one evening, sitting with a group at Le Chat Teigne, when you hear word that only a handful of police are guarding the cross roads beyond the barricades. Tomorrow is the Seme Ta ZAD, a manifestation meant to reclaim land and plant crops in the zone. Perhaps the police are trying to lower their profile, expecting the arrival of the media, old people and children to arrive in the morning. Regardless of the reason, dozens of people begin heading to the cross roads, you with them. When you arrive you see the first new barricades springing up, but you follow a large group heading towards the police. By the time you arrive, the attack has already begun. 50 people rush the three police vans. Several tear gas grenades go off, but the wind pushes it towards the police. Just as the gas exhausts itself, the attack resumes, and the three vans flee in terror, met with the sound of hundreds of people cheering. You return to the cross roads to help bring barricade materials to the front. Someone has brought a sound system, tuned in to Radio Klaxon, the pirate radio of the ZAD. Inexplicably, an English voice comes on and the large crowd quiets itself. A woman begins talking about

I

PERHAPS YOU SUSPECTED AS MUCH, BUT WHEN IT EXTENDS before your eyes it is undeniable. It starts off simply. You wake up one morning in a stone house, built hundreds of years ago, having stood through revolution, occupation and peace. After drinking tea you leave the house. The snow is still clinging to the ground below the trees but the sky is blue and there are no clouds overhead. You have nothing to do today but walk into the village to use the phone and get a drink at the bar and so you set off on a five kilometer hike through the forest.

On the way you pass small peasant hamlets and stone crosses and when you are in the trees you are directed to the village by small wooden signs. In the distance you hear the freeway but you try to ignore it, focusing instead on the sounds of snow collapsing under your boots and the

calls of the birds. But somehow the sound of the freeway becomes louder and it is only when you are staring at the river do you realize that what you were hearing was the sound of flowing water and nothing else.

When you finally reach the village and enter the bar, a few locals are there drinking wine and smoking cigarettes. They shake your hand and curiously watch you as you grab the phone and retreat into the back room. When your friend in the metropolis picks up the phone they ask where you are and you tell them about your experience with the river and how you thought it was the freeway. They laugh and ask when they will see you again and you say you don't know. After hanging up the phone you find a glass of beer with Picon liqueur waiting for you. You pick up the glass and salute the comrade who gave it you after your long walk.

II

But then there is something else you had not foreseen. For so many years you have caught glimpses of freedom, sometimes in a riot where your comrades controlled a few city blocks for a few intoxicating hours, sometimes in a squat during a period of rebellion, sometimes just in your imagination. And then you enter the ZAD, the Zone To Defend.

It occurs to you, as your boots sink deep into the wet earth, that mud is opposite of the metropolis. Concrete covers the metropolis, hiding the soil below. Mud is polymorphous, the metropolis is angular and static. The metropolis is hard, mud is soft. And it is everywhere in the ZAD, surrounding every structure, forming along every path, the constant companion of the free people in the fields. As you enter the outskirt of the ZAD, avoiding the police check-

a long table with dozens of others, eating a collective meal while a fire rages in the hearth behind you. When the meal is finished and dozens of empty wine bottles clutter the table, someone begins projecting images on the wall. They detail the construction of a two story house made with wood processed at the communal mill. It was built in pieces and then smuggled into the ZAD. The last images show the finished house standing amidst the mud and trees, a gift to the free people of the zone.

A few days later, you are in a small hamlet, staring at a flock of male sheep. When you ask your comrade if their wool will be taken, she says no, the sheep will be eaten, just like the goats, the rabbits, the pigs, and the ducks. In the afternoon you and her take the goats up into the hills. It is the first time you have seen the herd instinct in play, the way the goats follow you as they would another goat. It makes you sad to see their trust, and when you ask her if it will be difficult to kill one of these animals she says yes, she has grown quite attached to them. In the evening, with the goats back in their stone barn, your comrade cooks you pasta with beef. As you eat, she tells you she has only killed one animal, and she only did it because of all the purchased meat she has consumed throughout the course of her life. In the cupboard are dozens of jars of duck confit, preserved in their own fat, made in the commune, ready to be eaten. To be autonomous, to defeat alienation, is difficult.

V

It is only natural that you would see the nightmare. As you hitch from Calais through the country side, you are picked up by an off duty gendarme. While doing your best to act

IV

You watch the chain saw cut through the trunk of the tree. This is first time you have seen this take place in reality. There is snap, a scream, and soon the tree has fallen, rolling back and forth before becoming still, lying on the ground. And then you are in the communal lumber mill, feeding boards through a machine, turning them into geometrically perfect planks for the floors of a house.

In your world, you know anti-civilization anarchists who inhabit wooden houses built by other people. When they are not on their computers or texting on their smart phones, these anarchists are constantly refining their ideological purity, attacking those who do not repeat the same rote lines, and basking in their own powerlessness. They take for granted the material world they live off and within, never questioning where it came from and the thousand unseen and forgotten sacrifices that brought it into being. They would condemn you for being here as they would never condemn themselves.

In your world, you also know Marxists who constantly talk about an abstract concept called the means of production. But it is never their own means, it is the means of the enemy, waiting to be seized at the correct moment. The slavery and exploitation that brought these means into being are forgotten, as is the alienation inherent in such means. You have never seen these Marxists create their own means of production, built with joy, intention, purpose.

The planks come out of the machine and are stacked in rows, waiting to be assembled into a house. Later that day you look over the blue prints for the homes that are to be built for the commune with their own hands. In the evening, inside a stone house next to the mill, you sit at

points, you remember the Latin word *humus*, signifying the ground, the earth, the soil. From this root comes the English word humbleness and humility, the perfect descriptors for the structures that constellate the fields and forests of the zone.

Your days pass as if in a dream. One day, you walk down a road and come to a tree house. You ask to come up and a voice from somewhere says “Yeah.” When you enter the two level tree house there is no one there. Having no explanation as to where the voice came from, you return to the road and soon come across a bar near a barricade. An old punk is dozing off inside and you don’t want to wake him. You look back the way you came and see no one. Up ahead, over the barricade, the road is also empty. And then you decide to go wander the woods. After stumbling around for a while, you come to a two story house built with tree trunks and tin. After knocking on the door and getting no answer, you climb a ladder to the second floor and find an empty bed. As soon as you lay down, you are asleep. This is the dream.

But it does not end, this dream, and you find yourself at La Chat Teigne, the center of the ZAD, a conglomeration of structures connected by walkways made of branches. There is a communal kitchen, a meeting hall, a tavern, a workshop, a shower, and several communal houses. You open the door to one of these houses and find over twenty people resting, sleeping, reading, kissing. Later, when night falls and a crescent moon hangs in the sky, you sit outside the communal kitchen, listening to crickets. Suddenly, a barefoot woman carries an accordion out from the kitchen. She walks out in the mud field in front you, stands under the moon, and begins to play. One by one, people emerge from shadows to listen, and when she begins to sing, so do

they. Although you do not know the words, you find it all quite beautiful.

III

In your world, communal living usually means paying equal rent, sharing a bathroom, having a chore list and bulletin board to write nasty messages to each other on. The very Protestant and very Western union of egos is what reigns in your world: collectives that resemble gold miners more than rebels, banding together out of self interest, a desire for cheaper rent, greater social capital, and sometimes laziness. Every so often there have been collectives born out of struggle, collectives with a common purpose, a rebellious intention, but these flames have been quickly extinguished by the hip nihilism that is more a product of capitalism than a desire for rebellion. You have grown accustomed to defeat, and the most defeated and hopeless of your peers remind you there is nothing else. This virus of despair, of capitalist nihilism, infecting Germany, the UK, and the US (the most affluent places), is a poison passed off as the highest insurrectionary analysis, the purest form of understanding, when in fact it is nothing but a death cult, a counter-revolutionary excuse for enjoying a decadent and empty existence.

But hundreds of kilometers away from the ZAD, in the nasty suburban sprawl of the metropolis, you find a collective, a commune, inhabiting the disaster and filling it with life. You sit in a living room, drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, and you watch as the entire commune walks in and out of the collective house all day long. Everything is shared freely, tobacco, food, beds, drinks, money, vehicles. Down-

stairs, people fix the engine of one of the communal cars, getting it ready for the big trip to the ZAD. You are told not to ask for things so many times you begin to feel like a baby.

A group comes back from the forest. They have been discussing love and cybernetics. When you ask what they have found, they tell you two things. 1: cybernetics wants to know everything. 2: love is what cannot be known. Over twenty people in the commune were involved in coming to this conclusion. But before you can ask them any more questions, you are off to their social center for a gathering of the metropolitan comrades. Everyone sits around a long table as the food is prepared. A few children play in a corner. Two women are pregnant. You cannot tell who the parents of the children are. Everyone treats them the same. In the midst of laughter, joking, and coughing, the entire group makes collective decisions about who can use the cars and what day works best for fixing the new house.

It is decided the next day would be best, and you go with them to help, swinging a sledge hammer, tearing down brick walls, carrying wheel-barrows full of soil, and ripping out wooden beams. This is going to be a massive space, part social center, part house, part gym, part studio. When it is finished it will be in the center of an immigrant suburb and will be a hub of life for those living in the neighborhood. After working for the day you drop one of the comrades off at their apartment. It is in one of the twelve story apartment blocks, the banlieue, and as you watch them walk off towards the concrete towers, you realize the commune is possible here, in the metropolis, and that it is possible to overcome defeat. On the way back to the house, the comrade driving the collective car tells you that you will go with them to the ZAD in one week. You begin to think you are dreaming.