Seaweed
Land and Freedom
2013

Two chapters from ”Land and Freedom” - ”An Open Invitation” and ”On Parks”
This is an excerpt from Seaweed’s book: ” Land and Freedom An Open Invitation”

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Contents

Traditional Habitats and territories

In several parts of the world and in some parts of Canada many of the old ways have been lost, or nearly so. In the Pacific Northwest, however, this isn't the case. It seems sensible to promote a return to the traditional ways of the people of the land, because, as we have seen, the empirical proof is there for long-term harmonious occupation. Naturally, in some countries, there could be real challenges for some peoples regaining control of these parks in order to live according to ecologically harmonious principles because it would mean reawakening and re-learning buried systems of subsistence and self-organization. There are also new environmental limits that might conflict with traditional life ways. But the simple fact remains; if it is their land it must be returned.

Back home, in Canada, in the Pacific Northwest, radicals can focus on protecting areas from industrialism and capitalism while also arguing for the free access to those lands by the people whose territories they have always been, rather than for the creation of parks. And, if the lands aren't under claim by an indigenous nation, why not consider making them your own home, regardless of what the authorities and misanthropes have to say? Maybe you and your friends can become the First People to inhabit them.

Special acknowledgment to Marcus Colchester for his exceptional essay " This Park is no longer your land". It formed the basis for mine.

renew their traditional life ways need to have access to these areas, especially if the parkland in question was actually part of their traditional territory.

Even liberal organizations like UNESCO have begun to realize that there has been a negative social impact associated with many protected areas. In some places in Asia, Africa and Latin America, provisions have been made for local control so that traditional lifestyles might continue. But these tend to be limited "buffer zones", where the original inhabitants can control "development projects". And these attempts have not succeeded.

Apparently coalitions of indigenous peoples have had some success in forcing international bodies to recognize their inherent right to manage their traditional territories. "In the 1990s, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), the World Conservation Congress and the World Commission on Protected Areas all adopted new policies and resolutions which strongly endorse indigenous peoples' rights and promote the co-management of protected areas, based on negotiated agreements."[7] However, these organizations aren't arguing for free access to one's habitat, but to "negotiated agreements" with outsiders and centralized authority, and land bases integrated into the scheme of state regulations and subject to the pressures of politics and the market.

Regardless of some recognition, many parks and conservation areas, especially in impoverished countries, remain part of the greater theft of traditional homelands by arrogant, powerful outsiders who impose their views of what constitutes healthy habitats. It isn't parks and conservation areas that will help stem the tide of destruction and plunder, but recognition that new ways of living are required. And these new ways can be informed by the old ways of land based people.

[7] This park is no longer your land

An Open Invitation

A habitat is a territory that provides sources of water and food as well as reliable sources of materials for shelter and heat. Typically it is where you first made love, learned to swim, caught your first fish, and perhaps even fought a battle against a belligerent neighboring group. Practically everybody in your community knows the names of the flora and fauna of your habitat, where the berries are, when the birds leave and return. Most inhabitants feel a kinship with the totality of your habitat, not only its flora and fauna, but its weather patterns, rocks, streams and mountains, its unique smells and sounds and the various combinations of them that make the singular music of your home.

Urban civilization obviously won't fail because of the actions of a minority of eco-activists and indigenous traditionalists. However it is possible that a majority of those repulsed by the destructive basis of civilization will become anti-authoritarian fighters dedicated to creating a world of ecological communities, each success along the way a revitalising inspiration. If enough of the population participates a critical point will be reached where the drive of our collective push toward kinship with our surroundings will become unstoppable.

Revolution is not everywhere or nowhere. Any region can be liberated through a succession of actions, events and strategies based on the conditions unique to it, as the grip of civilization in that area weakens through its own volition or through the efforts of its inhabitants. It would benefit these liberated regions to form alliances or meld in some way, but they might not choose to do so.

It is up to each of us to look for the weak points and the vital points of our opponent's armor within our geographical area and to strike them. It is not true that until all humans are free none are free. But it is true that none are free until all are free within the same place. And it is enraging and sad that some might enjoy freedom and authentic community while others don't. It is this sense of solidarity with others, our refusal to be atomized, that compels us to spread our freedom.

Civilization didn't succeed everywhere at once, so its undoing might only occur to varying degrees in different places at different times. In any case the process of domestication is an ongoing one. Once it succeeds in colonizing any given area civilization isn't inherently permanent. Its continuance relies on our belief in its superiority, our submission to its authority and on our failure to have successful insurgencies.

Unfortunately civilization is a march toward death. Just to ensure that some diversity of life will endure the brakes must soon be put on the mega machines seemingly unstoppable, out-of-control locomotive of catastrophes.

The captivity of the civilized must be kept up on a daily basis otherwise we'd be constantly organizing and revolting. Coercive authority relies on entertainment (tourism, drugs, television, etc.), ideologies (Marxism, religion, science, etc.) propaganda (schools, mass media, etc.) and repression to keep us dumb and scared. Many of us who recognize that something is deeply wrong don't fight back primarily, I believe, because of feelings of isolation and poverty as well as fear of retribution from the repressive apparatus of political power (police, military, courts, jails, etc.).

While the rule of capital and centralized power might seem omniscient, they actually aren't. There is a totality of domination but the totality is not yet dominated. There are many psychic and geographical blind spots, openings, frontiers where the sentinels and soldiers are few or at least fewer. We can take advantage of these. Our struggle for individual and collective

where non-profit foundations and United Nations sponsored organizations are eagerly trying to protect what little land is left that hasn't been destroyed by industrial modes of living.

Unfortunately, be it the Twa peoples expulsion from Congo's Kahuzi-Biega National Park, the Maasai from the Amboseli National Park in Kenya or tribal people in southern India forced out of the Indira Gandhi National Park as part of an "eco-development" scheme funded by the Global Environment Facility, parks and conservation lands remain one more force which dispossesses tribal peoples. In Africa alone, one million square kilometers of land has been expropriated for conservation over the past one hundred years. Estimates in India range around three-quarters of a million people pushed off their traditional lands for conservation, in Africa the number is likely in the millions. I haven't done the research to determine numbers in North America, but certainly it is in the tens of thousands over the past century. Unfortunately, and ironically, land that has long been occupied and protected by indigenous peoples continues to be deemed "wild" and therefore suitable for "conservation" primarily by having them declared parks, thus making them out of bounds for the indigenous peoples who maintained them in the first place.

What happens to the people who once lived rich, meaningful lives within these habitats? They become like you and I. Dispossession leads to rootlessness, discouragement, depression, inability to be self-reliant, bad nutrition, broken communities, severed kinship ties, and anger, too often turned inward or directed to the nearest person.

I think we need to realize that dedication to creating parkland and conservation areas does not necessarily coincide with helping regenerate ways of living harmoniously with a habitat. More often than not it promotes a misanthropic outlook that posits intact, healthy land areas being by definition "human free", rather than capitalism free. Furthermore we tend to ignore the fact that indigenous peoples seeking to maintain or

It provided for them. There are a large number of pictographs still visible today throughout the valley, from small single symbols to one of the largest pictograph sites in Canada. At Asking Rock near Stryen Creek, the Nlaka'pamux can stop to pray and ask permission to travel the valley safely.

According to the organization BC Spaces for Nature: "Evidence of the Nlaka'pamux's inhabitancy is found throughout the valley. Where the Indians once wintered in gigantic pithouses at the confluence of the Fraser shallow depressions of their winter storehouses can still be found. Numerous culturally modified trees, cedar trees with large, rectangular strips of bark missing, can be found near Teaspoon Creek. This small grove of cedars provided an important source of fibre for cord, clothing, roofing, basketry, and insulating materials."[6]

In 1993-1994, protests in Clayoquot Sound, also in British Columbia, reached a climax with nearly 800 environmental protestors arrested. This was the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history. Needing to heal the fracture between itself and many environmentalists, the government at the time doubled the provincial park land-base in BC. As a result the Stein Valley Provincial Park was created as an area to be co-managed by the Lytton First Nation and BC government. There is allowance for the Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park to be used for "spiritual" activities, but I don't know at this time whether the Stein is also being used for subsistence activities or not.

Asia, Africa, India and Latin America

While we have been focusing on North America, the park model was actually exported throughout the world forcing millions of tribal peoples out of their habitats/territories. This practice continues to this day in Asia, Africa and India, for example,

[6]BC Spaces For Nature

freedom isn't pointless or hopeless or so overwhelming as to make total surrender appear reasonable and inevitable.

For instance, because so much of our captivity relies on internalized cops, on the daily reproduction of social misery by our own compliance with the various roles expected of us (worker, citizen, soldier, intellectual, consumer, activist, artist, man, woman, etc.), the weakest point in our opponents armor is probably our ability to refuse fulfilling these expectations of predictable behavior. It is through withdrawal from scripted roles and cultural constructs that we will get to know our neighbors and comrades, indeed ourselves, in a more honest light, revealing our true complexity as individuals. and thereby be more able to create the communities of resistance that would be helpful in order to form the bases of our offensives. It also means attempting to collectively withdraw from our participation in the institutions and behaviours of capitalist civilization: entertainment, schooling, dependence on welfare states, wage work rather than subsistence skills and self-reliance, electoralism and other forms of representation, etc.

Cities are not habitats industrialism is not wealth

In order to become free individuals embedded in genuine communities we need habitats. Cities are not habitats; they are concentrations of labor and commodities and an opportunity for power to synchronize the activities of masses of workers and consumers, of large populations. They are also one form of the many sacrifice zones that civilizations rely on. Their original wild state has been erased. Nearly every original expression of life and diversity and the organic has been paved over, or re-formed from above by officialdom and its planners. An ecologically healthy, self-reliant culture would find such zones incapable of providing adequate food for a fraction of

their existing populations. Free individuals would likely recognize them as hopeless wastelands of environmental desolation, rather than potential playgrounds to be newly explored and filled with expressions of the marvelous. Urban ways are inherently un-sustainable, they are destructive to the environment and to the human spirit. Their territories are organized entirely to accommodate political power and the market.

Sustainable, self-reliant, autonomous groups of people need a land base, a territory. This means that we need to make the acquisition of such bases a focus of libertarian struggle. This doesn't mean a simple return to a movement of rural communes, although these could be an important part of a diverse movement toward achieving this objective. Rather having land, or at least access to land, must be acknowledged as the necessary condition it is for any group of people to live freely, to support themselves within. For some radicals the focus might then drift away from activities aimed at reforming urban living with co-ops and community gardens and free schools, for instance, and toward the re-appropriation of their lives through the re-appropriation of sustainable land. For others, it could mean a shift from urban activism, no matter how militant, to identifying a potential habitat and making efforts to occupy it. Both of these approaches entail abandoning cities either literally as the places where they currently live, or as the central stage where they assume that the revolutionary struggle must occur. Assuming that all important struggles must occur within urban settings only reinforces the belief that urban societies are here to stay. Struggles and resistance against capitalism and authority are valid everywhere. In fact, the more an anti-urban element exists within the struggle, the more threatening it is. Radicals should be able to focus energy on solutions wherever they live: small towns, villages, cities, ghettos, ethnic neighborhoods or islands.

In order to create self-directed groups based on ecological principles, we need a habitat to experiment within and with,

From an essay by Marcus Colchester:

Many indigenous peoples remain perplexed by western views of what conservation means. "My Dad used to say: 'that's our pantry.' We knew about all the plants and animals, when to pick, when to hunt," remarked Ruby Dunstan of the Nl'aka'pamux people, who have been trying to prevent the logging of their ancestral lands around Stein Valley in Western Canada. "But some of the white environmentalists seemed to think if something was declared a wilderness, no-one was allowed inside because it was so fragile. So they have put a fence around it, or maybe around themselves."[5]

The fact is that humans, like every living species, need a habitat. Call it a territory if you will, but we need a place that we know intimately, that creates us as we create it. And because indigenous peoples in North America had this intimacy, it was incumbent on them to protect their land bases from incursion and invasions, especially destructive ones. After all, as Ruby Dunstan pointed out, these were their "pantry", land bases that were part of their sustenance and their lives in myriad ways.

The lands weren't untouched by humans. In fact, humans lived within most of the "wilderness areas" that became parks, although to an outsider they appeared "pristine', "untouched", "wild", but were in fact closer to a type of permaculture on a grand scale. Humans had inhabited many of these "wilderness areas" for literally thousands of years. That they were so rich in their abundance as well as appealing in their natural beauty is really a testimony to the organic ways of their human inhabitants who were determined not to spoil their pantries but to respect and understand them.

The Stein Valley, like Yosemite and Banff, was a living example of harmonious human occupation. The valley had been significant to the Nlaka'pamux people for thousands of years.

[5]This park is no longer your land

east of Calgary near Gleichen, say they've been trying since 1960 to gain control of a 68-square-kilometre parcel that was used by their ancestors for rituals."[3]

The Siksika are part of the Blackfoot Confederacy, which consists of four different tribes, the Pikuni/Peigan, North Peigan Pikuni, Blood/Kainai, and Blackfoot/Siksika. Banff is the most heavily developed national park in North America, entertaining more than five million visitors a year and there have been fights there between environmentalists and developers.

Environmentalists claim that added development "will put added stress on a fragile lake region where grizzly bears, lynx and wolverines are already threatened by the presence of as many as 20,000 tourists a day."[4]

Closer to home

In 1989 I went to the Save the Stein Valley Gathering. I joined with many others and climbed to alpine elevations in the Valley, near Lytton in southwestern British Columbia, Canada. I spent a couple of days listening to Indigenous elders and activists and scientists from near and far. The non-native activists spoke primarily of helping to preserve an intact and unlogged watershed, a "pristine wilderness." The First Nation elders on the other hand spoke of protecting their traditional territory and of a hope of regenerating traditional ways.

The U.S. Wilderness Act states that parks are places "where man himself is a visitor who doesn't remain." But isn't it industrial modes of living that threaten the organic world? Isn't it how we live, and not simply our presence, which really makes the difference?

[4]New York Times August 14 2002

to learn from, to grow and gather food on and to help provide us with shelter.

If we can push the project for social freedom and harmony with the biosphere toward one initially dedicated to the liberation of geographical areas within which we can re-create/rediscover viable habitats then several things become possible. For instance, a movement of genuine and stable communities might begin to establish itself. Should this arise, with its tastes of deep bonds, personal freedom, collective self-reliance (not on a state), organic self-direction, etc., our ability and motivation to resist will be much stronger.

Most non-native radicals are admirably fighting *against* specific forms of oppression and injustice or even trying to find ways to oppose the totality of our domination, but few are fighting *for* a communal place and the territory it depends on. This is because so many non-indigenous people of North America are still visitors or settlers; they haven't made this place home yet. Few have either a deep connection with our surroundings or with those who live within them. Our insurgencies could be focused on the liberation of territory as potential habitats from the rule of the market and statist forces so that our nascent communities of withdrawal and resistance can become embedded communities thereby gaining the strength to be genuinely effective forces for authoritarians to reckon with. Non-native rebels should be aiming for a time when they too will be defending their kin and their habitats or territories.

I take great inspiration from our comrades in Chiapas, Mexico, who, in defense of their territories and relations, took the first shot and, to a large degree, have won. With the realization that indeed we have nothing to lose but our false freedom, false wealth and false community, we too could be preparing ourselves for secession from the nation-states and ideologies that old us captive, wherever we live.

Much of North America consists of territory still claimed by the descendants of earlier tribal/clan/extended family peoples,

and anti-authoritarians need to acknowledge this when going native where we live. It's important for us to educate ourselves about the indigenous folks who lived in our area before contact with empire and its civilized soldiers and citizens, and to reach out to the traditionalists, our natural allies, among them. Colonization and colonialism can take many forms, including well-meaning anarchist attempts at occupying land.

Some might believe that an anarchist uprising always includes the liberation of geographical areas from the rule of the state and capital and therefore always include a renewed relationship with the natural world. But this isn't the case. Many radicals and rebels still seek anarchy through the creation of large political organizations, by winning converts and taking over the levers of production and distribution. They want us to manage civilization for ourselves rather than abolishing it and creating a total transformation of our life-ways. Their vision still includes cities, factories, an ethic of production rather than a subsistence ethic, overarching infrastructures (transportation, industry, research, large political organizations) and large scale agriculture. That set of ideas has as a condition a situation in which the natural environment is subservient to humans rather than predicated on a more harmonious, reciprocal relationship. If the primary relationship we have with the natural world is based on its domination and colonization, then it would seem that everything built on that approach has a predictable outcome: the degradation and eventual depletion of the land that it relies on, just as under capitalist civilization. Unfortunately we can't have our industrial cake and eat it too. Anarchist industrialism, like its sibling, capitalist industrialism, is untenable in the long term.

Anarchy implies not only voluntary association and organic self-organization, but self-reliance, which occurs most naturally and easily within groups embedded in a specific region. We aren't aliens. Our feelings of indifference to our habitats grew out of an imposed separation from them by institutions

The name "Stoney" was given them by white explorers because of their technique of using fire-heated rocks to boil broth in rawhide bowls. The Nakodah were familiar with the area, having lived throughout it for at least several hundred years. They knew the trails and passes as part of their hunting grounds. There is archaeological evidence pointing to human occupation going back at least ten thousand years, but apparently the Nakodah came from somewhere around the Mississippi after an outbreak of smallpox in the 1600's.

In any case, by the time the Railroad was being built, the mountains were part of their home. I'm not aware of any uprisings to protect their homelands, however the "Stoney" were signatories to Treaty 7. (In order for the transcontinental railroad to make its way across Canada, it had to go through what were recognized as the traditional lands of different aboriginal peoples. So it was important for the Canadian State to negotiate Treaties with the distinct tribes living along the route to allow the railroad to be built.) Regardless, the whole territory was evidence of long term harmonious human occupation, much like Yellowstone.

Sadly, during the first decades, park managers would do regular predator hunts, believing that mountain lions, coyotes and wolves, for instance, should be killed to save deer and elk. And now, only a hundred and thirty years later, many of the Park's eco-systems are threatened, as are several of the animals who live within it, and the Nakodah live on a reservation.

In its 2007 annual report the Parks Canada web site states: "Parks Canada continued to work with the Siksika Nation and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to resolve the outstanding specific claim in the park." The claim is by the Siksika First Nation. Furthermore, in May 2000 the Siksika threatened " to occupy Castle Mountain in Banff National Park to pressure the federal government into handing it over. The Siksika, who live

[3]Calgary Herald August 20, 2000

managers of the park. "The valley is cut up completely with dusty, sandy roads leading from the hotels of the white in every direction… All seem to come only to hunt money… The valley has been taken away from us [for] a pleasure ground…" Their pleas were ignored and further evictions of remnant Miwok settlements were made in 1906, 1929 and as late as 1969."[2]

Canada's first national park

In 1871, as a condition of British Columbia joining Canada, the Canadian Government had to agree to build a transcontinental railroad linking BC to the rest of the country. Of course, the construction of a transcontinental railroad also established a claim to the remaining parts of British North America not yet integrated into either the Canadian or America nation-states. It then came as no surprise to me that Banff National Park was created in 1885, the year of the defeat of the Metis Rebellion, which cleared and opened the west for settlement, tourists and capital investment.

The official story goes that in 1882, Tom Wilson, a surveyor for the Canadian Pacific Railway, "discovered" Lake Louise, the most accessible centerpiece of the park, on the way through the Rockies. A year later the Cave and Basin Hot springs were discovered by three railway construction workers. People began to flock to the site, hotels went up and the town of Banff was born.

The truth, however, is that it was people from the Nakodah First Nation that guided Wilson to the Lake. In fact, they already had a name for it, they called it "The Lake of the Little Fish." The Nakodah (also known as Stoney) are descendants of the Dakota and Lakota nations of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, part of the large Sioux Nation.

[2]This park is no longer your land

of political and economic power which are threatened by land based people.

The present authoritarian order seems to have originated around the end of the so-called Paleolithic era. This is where we find the beginning of our systematic self-enslavement and self-alienation. All of the developments usually associated with the Neolithic revolution (urban living, agriculture, etc.) seem to ultimately lead to today's mega technological civilization. Over the centuries, myths have permeated civilized societies in order to make seem natural the ideologies that civilization is predicated on. These myths include the necessity of political hierarchy, a belief in progress, the notion of nature as hostile and the belief that economics (exchange rather than gift-giving) are inherent in all human social arrangements. Preceding urban civilization, many changes must have occurred within these cultures' collective psychological experience, for instance the emergence of symbolic mediation (language, art, time, etc.) that made domestication more likely to occur. These changes led to sedentary lives and the domestication of formerly wild plants and animals, breaking age-old, organic lifeways and creating a permanent cycle of increasing separation from our natural surroundings.

No matter the chronology, or whether there actually is an original source of domination, our contemporary predicament is most characterized by lack of access to land within which to freely live. We've all become either prisoners, livestock, inmates, refugees, dependants, slaves, servants and settlers or their various overseers and managers. Restoring/reclaiming genuine habitats means the liberation of geographical areas from the rule of the state and capital, as well as renewing our kinship with nature. Free people living in free groups in harmony with the biosphere need to locate themselves within natural, not political, regions.

It isn't possible to lay out a universally applicable practical strategy. Revolt takes myriad forms. Ultimately a combination/

confluence of defensive and offensive strategies seems obviously most promising. Occupy land and defend it, or at least look in that direction for ideas.

Toward a self-organized subsistence movement

Creating anarchy, or the undoing of capitalism and the dismantling of authority, is primarily an unknown adventure, but living in anarchic villages is in our blood. Since the first dawn we have been free except for the long nightmare of this urban civilization. Rediscovering voluntary association, creating collectively a new era of social experimentation will involve many events and upheavals and in many cases bloodshed, not because rebels are fixated on violence, but because authority relies on it. All over the planet, political authority is making it safe for the market to devour the wild and punishing and imprisoning its opponents.

In many areas where civilization is most ingrained and the population most bribed by the 'goods' of capitalism, we will likely free ourselves in bits and pieces, slowly removing our armor, questioning authority, re-discovering self-reliant ways, learning new strategies and tactics with which to oppose capitalism, unlearning the internalized forms of our domination like homophobia and racism, isolating leftist vanguards and politicians, learning about the natural world, etc. Demanding/creating large commonly held land bases fits very well within this overall strategy for self-emancipation. Cities just need to be abandoned, but this might take a long time in some places. Succeeding in renewing and regenerating large urban or rural areas by freeing them from the market will at least give many of us a chance to get some breathing room.

This discussion is about probing power for weaknesses while at the same time making attempts at self-emancipation. Ex-

snow and slush. "Expulsion from the Park deprived the Miwok of their traditional hunting grounds, grazing areas, fish runs and nut collecting groves. When they tried to take anything back from the whites, they were resisted with guns and then hounded out of the area again by the Mariposa Battalion.

Ironically the very word 'Yosemite' is, according to Simon Schama, a term of abuse used by the Miwok to describe the Americans who were assaulting them and actually means 'some among them are killers'."[1] Eventually all of the associated tribes were defeated and were forced to accept reservation life. Military units administered the park while the state continued to govern the area covered by the original 1864 grant. Civilian park rangers didn't take over from the military until 1914.

The extraordinary landscapes that made Yosemite desirable from a scenic point of view were actually the result of the Miwok's land use practices, primarily a direct outcome of the intentional burning of underbrush. After their expulsion, the activities of early entrepreneurs, tourists and settlers, (the construction of hotels and residences, livestock grazed in meadows, orchards were planted, etc,) wreaked great damage on the eco-systems, painstakingly and properly tended for so long by the Miwok and their ancestors.

We find this pattern of outlook and events recurring over and over again in the creation of parks in many places: a) the notion of wilderness as a place that doesn't include people living there b) the recognition that an area has exceptional scenic, wilderness or industrial resource value c) the area is protected by being turned into a park d) the expulsion and dispossession of its inhabitants who were often largely responsible for creating and/or protecting its beauty/resources in the first place.

"The Miwok petitioned the U.S. government in 1890. They called for compensation for their losses and denounced the

[1] This park is no longer your land - national parks on former native lands UNESCO Courier, July, 2001 by Marcus Colchester

On October 1, 1890, the U.S. Congress set aside more than 1,500 square miles of 'reserved forest lands' soon to be known as Yosemite National Park. But where did this land come from? Twelve years earlier, it was taken from a people known as the Miwok. The Mariposa Indian War, a territorial grab and an effort to subdue Indian autonomy, was the necessary precedent that led to the possibility of that first park.

Indigenous people have lived in the Yosemite region for about 8,000 years. By the mid-nineteenth century they were primarily of Southern Miwok ancestry. However, trade with the Mono Paiutes from the East side of the Sierra for pinyon pine nuts, obsidian, and other materials resulted in many alliances between the two tribes. There were plenty of acorns there and deer were abundant, making this a desirable place to settle. In fact, it had one of the highest densities of aboriginal peoples on the West Coast.

After the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills in 1848, thousands of miners came to the Yosemite area to seek their fortune. Naturally, the local First Nations fought to protect their homelands. In December 1850, a trading post was destroyed at Fresno Crossing, and three settler men were killed. Later, a force under Sheriff Burney clashed with the Indians on January 11, 1851. As a result of this opposition to the invaders, the Mariposa Battalion was organized as a punitive expedition under the authority of the state to bring an end to the resistance.

The Battalion entered Yosemite Valley on March 27, 1851. Dr. Lafayette Bunnell, the company physician, who later wrote about his awestruck impressions of the valley in The Discovery of the Yosemite, wanted to "sweep the territory of any scattered bands that might infest it." He is also known to have had a take-no-prisoners approach to the conflict.

Three companies were formed and launched several campaigns. Indian food stores and even some villages were destroyed and tribal peoples pursued into the mountains through

panding one's territory, while shrinking the enemy's, is the ideal move in a territorial contest between opponents.

As authority is repulsed and its institutions dismantled, new opportunities will open up. As it stands now, based on experiences around the occupy movement and events in Montreal around the student protests (2012), indeed looking at many recent uprisings around the world, neighborhood councils and general assemblies, at least in cities, would likely become core institutions guiding radical aspirations. But rather than opening new doors, rather than making experiments in living possible, these assemblies risk becoming the new directors and representatives of revolt, reproducing large scale urban ways of organizing based on democratic values, rather than smaller scale, organic approaches.

As long as we are on a path, taking a specific direction, toward an end to all the prevailing truths, toward the creation of genuinely new relationships, then general assemblies can be a stepping stone, so to speak, on that trail. But if they are seen as ends in themselves, as the embodiment of what an anarchic society would look like, one where we are still embedded in cities, believe in the evolution of consciousness, and see an open, participatory democratic polis as an ideal, then they will become obstacles. The direction, after the carnival of expropriation, of the liberation of our yearnings, of the erasure of all rank and privilege, of feasts and dances and experimentation, must be toward building new relationships with and resituating ourselves within, the natural world.

On parks

Anyone who enjoys mountaineering, hiking, camping or exploring valleys, caves and canyons, is grateful that parks exist. They are a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of urban living, an opportunity to delight in the slower rhythms, fresher air and greater diversity of plant and animal life. Parks are refuges, oases of green in the otherwise dreary grey of concrete and pavement. The local and federal land areas put aside to a large degree for conservation and public enjoyment exist not only to provide a cherished escape from civilization, but a sanctuary for wildlife, whose habitats are fast disappearing under the guns of housing developments and industrialism. Parks, it would seem, leave little to protest about.

Recently, however, it came to my attention that some folk, primarily indigenous peoples, did have some complaints. And, as I did a little research, it didn't take long for me to discover that these complaints weren't frivolous. In fact, there are many real concerns around these seemingly benign oases. There is even a largely unknown history behind them, one whose basis continues to this day.

Indigenous peoples and parks

Parks originated following the invasion and occupation of North America by European powers and the settlers that arrived from these Empires. They were part of the conquest of the West of Turtle Island in the late nineteenth century, during the American Civil War and the ongoing "Indian Wars".

Most federal parks, not only in the US, but in Canada and indeed throughout the world, were once part of traditional indigenous territory. Following their introduction, millions of indigenous peoples around the world were forced out of their habitats.

Why has the public accepted this? First and foremost because parks have been viewed as necessary, benevolent tools for the conservation of nature. Secondly, many people have a personal stake in their existence, providing their only possible escape from urban living. And finally, most people simply aren't aware of the displacement of those millions that was necessary for their establishment. And so activists, radicals, reformers, and green minded people have accepted them without much critical thought.

Parks would also seem to be bulwarks against continuing encroachment into wilderness, and thus storehouses of flora and fauna for a future regenerating nature. However, perhaps its time to reconsider whether parks and conservation areas, as we know them, are a significant, long-term solution to the destructive madness of industrialism and to look more closely at what wilderness is and the impact parks have had and continue to have, on indigenous peoples everywhere.

America's, and the World's, First Park

In 1864 Abraham Lincoln signed a Land Grant bill giving nearly 40,000 acres of federal land "encompassing Yosemite Valley to the state of California for public enjoyment and preservation." The grant deeded both Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. This was the basis for the creation of state parks as we know them today; setting aside "scenic" lands simply to protect them and to allow for their enjoyment by the public.