



HACKBLOG

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH

VOLCANOES

Ⓐ, HACKING, & MENTAL HEALTH

Welcome to issue 10.5 of Hack This Zine.
This article was originally going to be included in issue 10 but it was so good (and so long) that we felt like it stood on its own. So we present to you issue 10.5 of Hack This Zine: How To Make Friends With Volcanoes.

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Electronic copies of the zine are available for free online at the hackbloc website:

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There are two versions of the zine: a full color graphical PDF version which is best for printing and also includes all sorts of extras, as well as a raw TXT version for a more readable and compatible format. Having the zine in your hands is still the best way to experience our zine. If you can't print your own(double sided 8.5x11) then you can order copies of this issue and all back issues online from Microcosm Publishing (microcosmpublishing.com) who are based out of Portland. If you are at HOPE this year in NY you will be able to find us tabeling with the NYC People's Law Collective.

We are seeking translators to translate Hack This Zine into other languages, if you are interested send an email to staff [at] hackbloc [dot] org.

Thanks to everyone who contributed or helped us out with this issue or with hackbloc or with life in genral. Thanks to alxciaada, anders, flatline, sally, ringo, frenzy, impact, evoltech, hexbomber, mat, molly, postmodern, whooka. Thanks to the crew at riseup.net for their hardwork and dedication and thanks to the church of scientology for the cover, motherfuckers.

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Capitalism is run on information systems. Computer networks track and link products, components, resources, and people into the global hydra known as the just-in-time economy. We who work in the industry are all implicated in the perpetuation of this system, even as we struggle against it. We use our skills for competing purposes, to enrich the powerful and empower those who would put an end to power.

Recently though, a new ally has surfaced- the earth itself. The eruption in Iceland and earthquakes in Chile and Haiti have revealed cracks in the just-in-time economy. Capitalism is as unprepared for the vagaries of nature as it is for the needs of humanity. Eyjafjallajokull has given us hope and set us thinking- what is our place in the struggle? How can we clog the engines? Can we build boats to float below the cloud? And when the whole mess comes spiraling down, where does that leave us, our technical skills and technical systems? Are they needed, or merely artifacts of advanced capitalism?

Here are some thoughts from a few of us.

Thoughts from Mat.

Without machines we'll just fuck everything up more slowly. The fossil record stretching back forty thousand years into pre-history is a record of flora and fauna laid waste by humans. On a geologic time scale it will hardly matter whether we do it with atom bombs or atlases. During the neolithic era we were still destabilizing hill sides, salinating the plains, silting the rivers, and burning the forests.

Anti-civ anarchists emphasize a cultural revolution away from patriarchy and exploitation and towards mutual aid and a drastically slimmer technological footprint. But slow, well-intentioned destruction can still occur, outside the bounds of living memory and known history. I doubt first peoples of Australia and the Americas intended to wipe out almost all the mega fauna. The extinctions happened "fast." They took a few thousand years. Clever minds and dexterous hands allow us to change our condition too quickly vis a vis the rest of our ecology. It is our nature as a species to have agency that outstrips our understanding and memory. Destruction is now rapid enough for all but the most profoundly deluded people to notice. But

the end of civilization will not be the end of destruction.

Up until now, our technology has enhanced agency without any corresponding enhancement of memory. I believe information technologies are changing that picture, enhancing memory as well as agency. What if we sought to build systems that could record the state of our world and track our action within it, so we truly knew what we were doing? What if those systems were designed with an eye to the future, towards a geologic scale? Within a non-exploitive, non-authoritarian culture, those memories could guide us away from destruction. I see hope for such systems, although few examples. I wish more (any!) anarchists worked on network-mediated systems of accounting and exchange based on real value, like soil fertility and biodiversity.

I don't mean to vindicate information systems from exploitive culture. There is much to loathe about them and their place in capitalism. I don't know what they would look like in the endgame. Certainly not like they do now, built of rare-earth minerals, running on fossil sunshine, and designed only

for experts. But I do see hope and possibility in there somewhere.

Evoltech chimes in:

Tech as we know it is not sustainable in its current implementation. This may or may not be obvious to you. The physical components of hardware are mined in a fashion that is oppressive to indigenous communities from Appalachia to Chile to China to Iceland. The infrastructure of which (fiber lines, telephone lines, data centers, power plants) are destructive to the environment and often responsible for the displacement of humans and non-humans alike from their homes.

I think many anarchists, hacker or not, see the current implementation of infrastructure around us as inherently oppressive, where the maintenance of which is protected by force. Those with money, or the many other privileges that are stacked in favor of those with more power protected by force, make decisions based on their best interests without the consent or thought of those it ultimately effects (manifest destiny: rail roads, roads (go a head call me a primy), the fucking west, world trade, etc).

With tech this is a bit more of the same (GMO, mining of resources for hardware, ubiquity and intensity of RF, copyrights, peering agreements, CALEA support for every segment of digital communication, etc).

It may seem that anti-authoritarians would be against supporting infrastructure that enables oppression, but here there are hackers among us associated under anarchist principles working with some technologies that are oppressive. This is the problem of trying to fight the system that one lives in from my point of view. I don't agree with the idea that if enough people stop supporting oppressive systems that there will just stop being oppressive systems. I do not believe, as Derick Jenson might say in Endgame, that if the Rebel Alliance just sent enough good vibrations to the Death Star that it would stop consuming planets. From my point of view there are many different stages to an end game for the ideal world I would like to live in, each of which would have by need varying levels of tech, where the final goal would be an existence with others where there was no tech that was not sustainable (implying that any tech acquired by oppressive

force is not sustainable).

In my work with Hack-bloc I am concerned with learning about and creating tools in the digital realm that defend resistant communities and offer them tactically offensive advantages. The bulk of defensive tools being worked on now provide secure and or anonymous methods for interacting with others across insecure channels. Creating our own infrastructure here (secure mail servers and mailing lists, anonymity tools, secure voice and SMS applications, creation of secure geographically distributed, decentralized networks for comms operators at mobilizations) is not only possible but it exists and is constantly being improved.

The realm of offensive security is not as protected as defensive security. The acceptance of protecting your own privacy is valued and desired. In our society the use of offensive security, voice and data monitoring, signal interception decryption and jamming, and host and network intrusion is monopolized by government institutions or organizations protected by government institutions. This same work can be useful in our communities and

there is a wealth of existing tools and developers working on this angle as well. This offensive security could look like a support for other struggles or could stand on its own tactically.

For me it is all a means to an end, an end that I will most likely never see in my lifetime. It is a means that I contribute to because I can and it keeps my attention. After the rev you will be able to find me down by the river, smoking weeds, building a raft, and hoping that I find my old friends so that we can redefine our relationships.

Flatline talks about the Robocracy:

This is all based on a phone interview between Evoltech, Mat, and Flatline. Evoltech loves to tell folk about Flatline's robot endgame scenario where human's finally figure out that Anarchy works, there is no such thing as resource scarcity, and robots take care of manual labor.

E: Do you remember talking to me a while back about your endgame fantasy of a Robocracy?

F: <laughter>, Yeah.

E: Great, well that's what we

wanted to talk to you about.

F: <laughter>, Well you caught me at the right time, I'm drunk! I want you to know that was a total drunken rant, but I think I can duplicate it.

M: For the purposes of this interview we were going to have Google translate it (Note: this never actually happened, but supposedly google voice offers a transcription service provided by robot slave labor), so all translations will be done by robots, no corrections. The Robocracy starts now!

E: Can you tell us what the various stages of the Robocracy looks like? What does the Robocracy rev look like and how does the endgame pan out?

F: Right now we are in the humble beginnings of the Robocracy. Right now the robots aren't there yet, they aren't able to take over power from the humans. We have the robots talking to each other; robot phones are calling other robot phones. Bots on IRC are talking to other bots on IRC. I'm actually getting more calls from robots than from humans.

E: That's depressing.

F: That is depressing. I really feel at this point that robots are in their infancy. They are talking to each other, they are building up their world views.

At this point they could go in

any direction, there is more and more of them everyday.

M: This is reminding me; today my co-worker was calling a company that had a real secretary and it took her a while to realize it was a real person, because the secretary had the perfect secretary voice (mimicking the best secretary voice), "Hello you have reached such and such enterprises, how can I redirect your call?" Molly's immediate reaction was that she was talking with a computer. She realized she was so used to computer simulations of a helpful person that an actual helpful person was inconceivable. At least for 15 seconds into the call.

F: There you go. The majority of our interactions these days, at least over a computer or telephone are with robots. This is really fascinating I think. We are creating a whole new society that will be mostly comprised of robots. We can use robots to eliminate work in society with some sort of combination of robots and fission power and massive amounts of recycling, nobody would have to "work" again. At this point I am not so sure that the robots won't then put us to work for them. Robots aren't the endgame of the revolution, but robots and AI are changing our society

right now. Robots seemed to be taking over blue collar jobs, putting together cars, or other tedious manufacturing in the U.S. For a while the idea was that robots and machines could take over those jobs. The owners of the industrial complex thought that it was cheaper to farm those jobs to 3rd world countries instead of developing the technology to do these sorts of tasks well. Now it seems like robots have moved into a different sector of jobs like telemarketing and scams; sending emails.

M: I see this with a lot of clerical work. I get bossed around by robots all the time. People setting up calendar reminders for me. I was bossed around by a robot today.

F: Its a lot easier to have a robot do clerical work then blue collar work. Robots are great at crunching numbers, but they are not so great that do things like vision and hand movement. These are problems that are hard for robots to solve. I think that we are going to see a lot of robots as middle management.

E: I have always taken you as someone who was pro-robocracy, but it seems like I am hearing that you are against robots and against the "machine".

F: No you've got me all wrong. I am for the liberation of robots.

Right now we have robots occupying traditional jobs, mostly clerical and we are not paying them anything, robots are our slaves.

M: But what about the people getting paid to operate the robots? A lot of modern office jobs you are just working for a computer. You are waiting in front of a monitor or printer waiting for a new job so that you can transfer something to someone or something else.

F: The line between robot and person is also going to blur. I was talking with Amber Case at toorcamp about cyborg theory. I was thinking about the enormous number of machines we use on a daily basis and how dependent most people in the first world are on various technology.

M: Do you think it is infantilizing us or replacing tasks we wouldn't otherwise want to do, ie. I never kept a calendar until google calendar. I never kept track of a calendar until it was on my phone and computer at the same time.

F: Me too, and I never remembered to do shit, but I also had a much simpler life and it was enough that I could keep it all in my head.

M: Are we increasingly building a world were we are dependent on computers? Are we let-

ting them become our context for memory?

F: We are. Digital memory can create a perfect record of our world. Once the robots translate this interview it will be fantastic.

M: What if we found out that robots could not understand this and people were forced to? <a discussion about google voice>

E: What do you feel your role as a hacker anarchist contributes to the current struggle and what is your endgame fantasy?

F: I haven't been thinking about the endgame. I feel like we are only at the start of any sort of insurrection, just the beginning, the endgame is very far off. This is in contrast to how I used to think about this issue. I used to feel like we were very close, but now it seems like there is a long way ahead of us. Recently I have been re-evaluating what I feel the most important work is that needs to be done. Right now I think the most important contribution in this vein is education. Technology that most people in the first world are using on a daily basis is relatively new. Most people here don't see how current tech can be really oppressive. I think this is all the beginning of a more cultural revolution. The world wide

open journalism and communication that is currently happening is really amazing. The type of communication we have is a shift from ten years ago. The cost and ubiquity of communication right now is our biggest advantage. Along with this comes an overload of information and widespread surveillance. Like what's going on in Britain or in the US. This need for privacy is being forced on people as a result. Certain governments and corporations are of the opinion that privacy is not important.

Frenzy's voice:

I don't see an endgame as anything that can be planned. I don't see an endgame as anything that anti-authoritarians can control. I don't see any end that involves tech infrastructure that will be able to sustain itself. I think the role of tech for anti-authoritarians is a complexity that we need to understand. We need to figure out how to utilize tech for our own means. An analogy would be to use the masters tool to destroy his own house. The role of hacker anti-authoritarians is to understand how these tools are being used against us, and figure out how to use this opportunity in front of us to bring about the revolution. My

endgame fantasy is going back to the land, it does not involve robots. I imagine it to be very mad-max esque until the last resources are gone and we are forced to go back to the land. I think science tells us that some things can not be done. One of these is long term space travel ie. sending humans to other galaxies. I don't see tech taking leaps and bounds allowing us to live off this planet. With that constraint there is a carrying capacity, a limit to how much we can do here, I think we are coming to that point and is why tech wont be a part of an endgame scenario. It doesn't matter if you have a factory that is worker owned and operated, or some green business, it is that you have those factories and that stuff is being produced. The existence of a factory is a problem because you are still utilizing resources, a factory is going to waste resources no matter what. Resource extraction is the problem, when you extract pure resources out of the environment you make them into hazardous material ie oil was plants, in the concentrated form it is highly dangerous. I don't see a rev of want, I see one of necessity. Learning about tech is going to be a large part of this. I think a need to survive will be forced

on us and the state, the police, the power company, or internet companies will not help us. We will have to take the off cast of civilization, the skeleton of civilization, and make situations that are comfortable, that we can survive in. This will be out of necessity. Currently the importance of learning tech will ensure our survival because the tech is being used by the state to oppress, if we do not learn how to use it for our own means it will be an exclusively oppressive agent. I do not see tech being used in an endgame scenario because of it's inherent oppressiveness. It requires a certain amount of knowledge that is not inherent to most peoples situations. Basic understanding we can take care of and is necessary for furtherance of revolutionary struggle. My goal is to get through to anti-authoritarians that tech is not safe for all situations, it is not necessary for all situations. When it is safe however we need to assist with those methods. My role is to offer support to folk to only use tech when it is useful. I am very much into insurrection, and think this is a important time for hackers in the anarchist community. High tech like LRADs will be showing up more at protests. More research needs to be done on

devices like these. Is there a way to understand them that we could create anti-sound, nullify them, or sabotage them? These are questions that need to be asked and could be worked on by folk interested in those fields. These tech could be useful for our own means.

Ringo says:

I think tech is a good thing, a tool. I know a lot of anarchists diverge on this point. Tools go both ways. Some tools only have inherently bad uses. My major concern with tech is that it is a requirement for organizing and challenging powers that be. People use tech in scary insecure manners which is really disheartening for me. Encryption is especially a big deal to me. During cointelpro we saw a lot of misinformation which we can solve now through public key authentication and signatures. This is a very simple way to determine whether or not a message has actually come from the sender and has not been spoofed. This is just an example. A lot of our communications are not authenticated. We should use tech in a way that is intelligent and not just hand all of our information and communications over to authorities via negligence. I also think technology

has some offensive uses but we need to make sure we know how to use them safely before we use them.

In my vision of the endgame there is still technology, computers and the internet. I think those are really important tools. They aren't made in a way that is anywhere near ethical right now but if we can change the way production happens for every other product and service to not be hierarchical and oppressive then we can do the same with computers and the internet.

There are a lot of radical lawyers and the way you differentiate the ones you can trust is if you ask them if they are a lawyer or a part of the movement. If they say they are a part of the movement you can trust them.

I am a member of the movement first and hacker second. Hacking is a fun hobby, but I hate hobbies that don't have a practical application in my life. Since I am a member of the movement first I use my skills to enhance the movement. I think that you will find in any other profession will find this, whether lawyers, medics, programmers, etc. I think hacking

(offensive security) has a lot of potential, but it is not well exploited right now.

Hacking as a movement itself for social change is not really exploited either. One of the things I am looking forward to at HOPE is having discussions with other hackers about what productive work can be done as opposed to sitting around and talking about 0-days all day. I am interested in hacking as a means to create something that is beneficial to someone outside of yourself. Burning man is a great example (where folk take skilled and talented people and resources out of their communities to a remote location only accessible to those with money and/or time to be destroyed as opposed to creating resources and art within and for the communities they are from). I'd like to see hackers go to HOPE and take the skills and new ideas they learn back to their own communities and build things that are useful. Like emergency communication networks and public computer labs. We need to make hacking something that comes with some social responsibility.

In regards to decentralization of secure tech services, places like riseup.net and gmail are re-

ally good at what they do, with small downtime. But when anarchists talk about how they are going to build infrastructure it always starts with decentralizing the infrastructure that currently exists. When we talk about sewage we talk about decentralizing it and having it be run by communities [4]. When we talk about electricity we talk about building sustainable power that can meet the needs of small communities. I think we need to be apply that same reasoning to technology. The internet has already been decentralized, we have already figured that part out. Im talking about decentralizing the services that make the Internet work; email, file storage, web serving, those sorts of things. I think riseup.net is a really good experiment, but I have a lot of issues with it. The first one being visibility, then sustainability. You can't put the entire movement on the back of one server. I think what we need to do is take riseup and decentralize it. Make a riseup.net for every region; the mid west, the great plains, the south west, etc. Something that offers secure email and web hosting, but not just for radicals, but for everyone. As opening it up will attract less heat. Lets make regional specific service provid-

ers.

The small community internet service providers have failed because they are marketing to anyone who has a computer. I think the decentralized service providers I am talking about need to be based on security education. When users of these service providers choose them they will be choosing based on a desire for secure services these providers will also offer education. And also they wouldn't be for profit. In the same way that we challenge the profit motives in other infrastructure we need to challenge the profit motives in internet service. For an email provide all you need is an internet connection, maybe two uplinks for good uptime. This is a reasonable goal to implement now.

This would also take a lot of strain off of folks from from riseup who right now are working full time on riseup.net who have a lot of useful and interesting skills that could be spread out in their communities. At the same time I could focus part of my time on managing a service for Olympia.

I don't think tech is inherently oppressive or majority use is for evil. I think it is a tool. I hope

that the Internet is around after the revolution.

Impact gets in in it:

I think that radical hackers are fulfilling a proscribed dialectical role. Regardless of our vision of the future, ore more importantly, the actuality of any future, technology is here now and it's being used in various ways. Some are neutral, some are good, many are bad. The powerful forces of the world have more resources, they can create and implement new technologies rapidly. So often new technologies are immediately put into use for the powerful, which usually means put into use against the powerless. What that means, is that there is always a necessity for the "less powerful" to respond in cunning ways to nullify the technology of the powerful. When an ancient empire created the phalanx, a comparatively less powerful group developed horse-born archers capable of defeating it. Then that group becomes the powerful, and another group must devise a means of defeating it. The US manufactures advanced assault weapons, the soviets develop mass produced, reliable Kalashnikov's that can be made in any third world country a western empire invades,

the middle east with rockets, tanks, computerized airplanes, and the locals bury IEDs in the roadway it's the way it always works. We don't really have a choice in the matter. We can subvert their technology, or be killed by it "the question is not do we believe in god, but does god believe in us" "and the answer is that only a non-believer could have created our image of god, and only a false god could be happy with it"

In some ways the internet goes against what I'm saying here as I remember it; the internet in its early days was used to its best advantage by the less powerful teenagers, cyberpunks, etc the powerful had no idea how to use it for themselves; even though they had invented it it took a young set of eyes, to look at it and figure out its potential so you saw this wave of cyber punk hackers; the Kevin Mitnicks of the world, and the early hacker groups. Somewhere along the line though, the big corporations caught on. They figured out how to profit off the internet. Everything became commodified. You have this weird environment where the long time users fight tooth and nail to avoid commodification but it's a losing battle. You see this

with the news outlets for example. The internet is killing the newspaper, because news corporations can't figure out how to commodify their product. Because netizens refuse to pay. But more and more of them are locking everything away. The same, as when some powerful folks padlocked the graineries 12,000 years ago or so. One of the reasons the corporations have been able to do all this, was by co-opting those early pioneers This is sort of a Daniel Quinn reference who states that in order to create the state, you first have to manufacture scarcity and you do that by hoarding all the food and making folks do what you tell them in order to get some 12,000 is just gross speculation on my part it could really be like 20,000 or 30,000.

I think what we're looking at now, is this situation where we're kind of starting over as hackers. There was this opportunity in the early 90's to do something incredible, but there was no ideology involved in the work that folks were doing, so capitalism was as logical an outcome as any other really. The hackers that are still around are really competing with those other hackers and it means that what we need to do

is develop a "resistance" that has an ideology embedded in it.

The other thing about "hacking", I'm talking more generally here, and not just about information systems, is that it's an awesome creative impulse It's the same impulse that I think many of us had to take our alarm clocks and toasters apart as kids basically a demystification of all sorts of technology around us, with an eye toward making it different, or better, or even just because and so you see these crossover cultures; the "maker" thing, or "steam punk" those are interesting impulses to me, because they take the same thought process out of the tubes. If we're thinking about the future, then I see these hacker impulses as being the most relevant to the future @-topia because it's really quite optimistic. It accepts practically nothing as being impossible, and the world will need that. It will need people able to stand up and say "we can fix this," "we can tinker with it until we get it right." I don't know what the world's going to look like. If we can keep the IT systems in tact I don't even know the time line we're looking at. Most technologies probably shouldn't be kept in tact but we'll need hackers one

way or another. The dialectical cycle will never just go away it's part of who we are, or part of how the universe works or something. Maybe Flatline is right, and we'll have a robocracy. But hackers will need to figure out how to combat the

evil robot empire. Or maybe the primis are right, and the world won't be able to support advanced technologies for much longer, in which case we'll still need hackers to combat against the evil catapult wielding empire.

Footnotes

[1] This article started as a discussion between a few folk about how the volcanoes in Iceland were really fucking up world trade, maybe even better than all of the anti-globalization work that was done a number of years back. We started going on about how it would be great if anarchists could make allies with volcanoes and thought it would be a great time to interview a number of geology professors about this thinking we could get a Colbert report style interview with them. In talking with the professors we were reminded of the seriousness of the situation for marginalized communities. This becomes especially true with natural disasters where these communities are usually living in areas they are most heavily damaged. The philosophical diversion we had from the professors we interviewed was were the professors could not see how living in sensitive geological / geographic areas is not by choice or lack of education but a result of economic, political, and military force. This is what brought the discussion home to the role of tech in an actual anarchist struggle.

[3] LRAD (long range acoustic device) is basically just a really loud speaker made by companies like the LRAD corporation. This is not to be confused with a device like Sonic nausea which "is a small electronic device which can really turn one's stomach. It generates a unique combination of ultra-high frequency sound waves which soon leads most in its vicinity to queasiness. It can also cause headaches, intense irritation, sweating, imbalance, nausea, or even vomiting"

<http://www.lradx.com/site/>

<http://www.selfdefenseproducts.com/Sonic-Nausea-p-17448.html>

4] See cloacina.org for an example of how anarchists and hackers are confronting the state control of human waste for a freer tomorrow.



Our mission is to research, create and disseminate information, tools, and tactics that empower people to use technology in a way that is liberating. We support and strengthen our local communities through education and action. We strive to learn from each other and focus our skills toward creative goals, to explore and research positive hacktivism, and to defend a free internet and free society!

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