ANARCHISM IN THE BOONIES: PLACE-MAKING, TECHNOLOGY AND RESISTANCE IN RURAL CANADA

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Abstract

Looking at various locations around Canada, this thesis aims to better understand the ways in which modern Canadian anarchists are reimagining spaces in both rural and urban contexts. Through focusing on the use of technology and Do-It-Yourself ethics, this research demonstrates the unique ways this "scene" creates new forms of rural living and political opportunities outside of urban activism. In addition, this builds on existing ideas of how new media and technology can be tinkered with in politically meaningful ways--in this case melding aspects of punk, anarchist and "traditional" rural aesthetics and ethics to create fluid spaces of possibility.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract……ii
Table of Contents……iii

Chapter One: Introduction…….. 1

Chapter Two: Imagining and Negotiating the Canadian Rural Anarchist "Scene:" Readerships, Publics and the DIY Politic…… 12

Chapter Three: Distorting the Urban: Complicating the Urban/Rural Divide…….. 32

Chapter Four: Getting Out of the City: Dispossession and Decisions to Move to the Boonies…….. 41

Chapter Five: Anarchist Writing and its Role in the Rural…… 68

Chapter Six: "Tech-no-logic-kill": The Internet, DIY Culture and Navigating Isolation…….. 86

Conclusion…… 108

Bibliography…… 112

Image 1: A "punk" scarecrow overlooking a garden

Chapter One: Introduction

I met with Conan in the parking lot of a Tim Horton's in the city I'm now living, after having discussed getting together for this research. We had met before, but we were bringing a mutual friend, Cass, along for the ride up to his property—while I had discussed the interview with him online, we had agreed that this could also double as a social visit. It wouldn't be a long

drive but it was a very cold day so we decided to leave right away. The first few minutes were eaten up by the three of us joking about the idea of Tim Horton's being a marker of "Canadian identity" to some of our family members, and Conan went on about how it was just as "gross" a corporation as McDonald's or others. As we left the city, Conan turned up the CD player in the car—a compilation of scratchy punk songs. We discussed how some old friends were doing, where they were now, what had been happening throughout the winter (mostly mutual hibernation).

As we got further away from buildings and the last lonely houses of the city, things quieted down in the car. I began looking at all the small lakes and snowy trees surrounding them, sensing the calm that had been mentioned to me in so many conversations over the past several months—that "feeling," that came over so many when getting away from the humdrum of urban life and "escaping" to the country. I had driven this stretch before, many times, as it was the first part of the road that would eventually take me to my hometown, though we weren't going as far as that. No, instead of a nine or ten hour drive up to "the Kap," the small town my family still lives near, we would be taking a short two hour drive to Conan's place. The silence—which I attributed to appreciation of nature, but could have been just as likely the result of Conan concentrating on keeping the vehicle on the slippery roads—continued for some time. However, our friend Cass eventually chimed in from the back seat—"Oh god, did you guys see the pictures of me on Facebook from last week's show?"

This drive demonstrated the trickiness in the ways we understand "city" and "country," "nature" and "urban", and the many places in between. At what point did the "city," (albeit not a large one) turn into the "country," and at what point were we in "the bush?" It's unlikely that this

point, if one could be pinpointed, would be the same for all of us. For Cass, it may have been the point where her phone could no longer access wifi, or could no longer receive texts. Was it different for Conan, who drove this route so often? For that matter, were we "escaping" the city at all? Conan's house had electricity, it had running water, and there were neighbours within a ten minute walk of his front door—while this may be "the bush" for some, it certainly wasn't for everyone. This was my first visit to this property where I carried out interviews and met others like Conan I will discuss in this paper, many of whom described themselves in a variety of ways, as anarchists, punks, activists or back-to-the-landers.

In addition to complicating the dichotomies between urban and rural spaces I will talk about here, I hope this story demonstrates the presence of a key concept I wish to analyze—the role of "technology" in determining place-making within a variety of contexts and "spaces." With often greater access to internet and online technologies, these individuals living in rural areas often mentioned the use of social media, blogs, forums and other ways of connecting with like-minded individuals as key to their ability to "get out of the city." While many had, in the past, moved to large urban centres for the specific desire to find more like-minded individuals (be they punks, anarchists, or simply not "small-town jocks") the internet seemed to increasingly fill the role of being able to connect to specifically rural individuals who had moved outside of the city to try to remove themselves from competitive job markets, rigid and exclusive political or activist groups, or to achieve more self-sustained (or "community-supported") living. However, this use of technology carried a lot of ambivalence in a group which has traditionally rejected it for reasons of security and increasing commodification of online spaces.

The same evening we took the drive up to Conan's property and, after chatting for a few hours about his past and present environment, he had tried to start up a fire outdoors—to give me and Cass a "woodsy" experience, I guess. It had started burning, and we stood around the fire pit smoking cigarettes and drinking some warm cider Conan had made himself. While I had been outside of the city frequently over the past year, it was still nice to be able to look up at a clear sky full of stars that I was not used to seeing. We tried to tough out the cold night and get the fire roaring for another half hour—talking, gossiping, and some minor ribbing from the others about my new-found status as "hoity-toity academic"— before going inside to sit around the wood stove. Conan's "work-in-progress" of a house—with some exposed insulation, unfinished walls and supplies littering most surfaces, heated up extremely quickly. We munched on homemade pickles and drank the rest of the cider before calling it a night, leaving early to head back to the city the next day.

By any means these recollections could not be called exciting, ground-breaking, or even particularly interesting, but for this author it sums up so many of the nuances which filled the time I spent researching. At the same time, this story also includes so many of the elements that I wish to discuss, from Cass's immunity from what I saw as the "feelings" that come from the beauty of (seemingly) undisturbed nature by checking her social media posts, to a failed bonfire (to give us "city-ots" the "real" woodsy experience), to the ambiguity of our physical movement from "city" to "country." This story also does not seem particularly political at first glance—however an anarchist or DIY political ideology is something which is intrinsic to the place-making efforts of all those I discuss here. Based on this story, it's not clear that Conan is a self-identifying anarchist who has dedicated his time to getting away from "a life of entrenched

capitalism," or that Cass has been consistently involved in organizing and maintaining activist and artistic efforts in various points in Canada throughout her life.

This story also highlights my complicated role and the tensions that came out of it—as anthropologist, as "academic," as someone who at times needed to prove that my interviews were not some sneaky attempt to gather information on their activism or organizing. This is something which will likely not be resolved here, but I do hope to look at theory not only related to anarchism but relating to technology, space, and resistance to grapple with some of these complicated ideas. While I did grow up rurally, I was seen by many discussed here as an outsider who was unsuited to rural life (I am absolutely terrible at chopping wood, cleaning game, or anything involving mosquitos), while I have been involved in activism, my presence in academia often marked me as an outsider or removed from the "realness," and as a result my navigation of these spaces was often complicated. While I wished to work with a group that I identified with, this varied depending on the situation—at times my role as "anthropologist" or academic specifically designated me as an "outsider," both in terms of rural populations (where I was seen as having "left" to become a city person) and in anarchist circles where the academy was often criticized as failing to enact any concrete change. Regardless, I felt it to be important here to maintain a critical approach to speaking with these individuals and acknowledging my changing role in these contexts.

This touches on an important idea present throughout these stories, that of the "feelings" of those discussed. In this space of liminality between what could be perceived as urban and rural space (a definition which in itself is fluid and subjective), affect became prominent for my own interpretation of the situation. Many here—while linking their creation of personal spaces of

autonomy, anarchistic values, or anti-capitalist efforts and desire for political change—saw the way that they felt in these different environments as closely linked to their choices. For some, urban environments were linked to feelings of depression while rural areas were seen as more "peaceful"—others saw the social isolation of the city as leading them to feel urged to escape, while others craved the autonomy of rural environments particularly for the lack of crowds.

In each of these cases it becomes apparent that no real dichotomy exists between many of these seemingly opposing spaces—rural or urban, online or offline, community or isolation, these designations were occupied with fluidity, and often simultaneously. While each division is referenced at times by those I've talked to, when analyzing these concepts further it is clear that even for those who imagine these spaces as separate, the divisive lines become blurred and shift, often purposefully. When undertaking this research I quickly noticed that many of the urban activists, anarchists and travellers I wished to speak with had relocated to these rural environments in the past several years, and were using online resources to keep in touch with scattered individuals who had undertaken the same movement outside of cities. As a result, these two circumstances, the movement of urban "punks" or anarchists—many of whom lived in precarious spaces in urban environments, or intentionally created a environment in which they were "dispossessed" — to isolated rural locations, as well as their use of new media and technology to connect, are the major focuses of this paper. While the two seem to coincide in ways which are incidental, I argue that this use of new technologies is integral to conscious moves to create new, politically charged and highly liminal spaces in which these often marginalized individuals can exist.

In addition to looking at how online spaces factor into the lives and politics of this group (*or* in addition to seeing how these lines become blurred), I wish to examine these in contrast to ideas that politics/activism/culture are often accessed in urban environments, and show the varied and complicated ways Canadian, self-identifying anarchists navigate place, often contrasting this notion—particularly through relocation to the rural—be it in shoddily built cabins off of Lake Superior, an anarchist commune operating in northern Quebec, or tents next to cherry orchards in British Columbia. Through looking at the ways in which these people conceptualize their own politics, relationships between themselves and urban life, as well as the particular ways they tinker with technology to navigate these spaces, I hope to show the complicated relationships which occur between the urban and rural, online and offline delineations that are so often taken for granted as separate but ultimately become fluid boundaries. In particular I hope to focus on how the ethics of "Do-It-Yourself" or DIY are inherent in how these individuals actively create new spaces through the use of zines, self-made websites and the sharing of resources in opposition to dominant capitalist spaces.

This concept of DIY ties closely into how I hope to think about space critically, and how these individuals interact and imagine the spaces they create through inhabiting and moving through certain parts of rural (and urban) Canada. In thinking of these it is helpful to keep in mind how imagined ties and reterritorialization fits into "the changing global economic and political conditions of lived spaces" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 11). Through reimagining meaning associated with rural spaces these individuals make room for themselves outside of systems and spaces they see as marginalizing themselves and others. Through the use of technology these ef-

forts seem to aim to create a space based around utopian views of nature, inclusion, mutual aid, ideas of "freedom" and DIY ethics.

I begin by attempting to understand how these individuals—who occupy a variety of spaces throughout Canada—can be imagined as a group or "scene." In this, I hope to show how these individuals create a sense of identity in particular ways which reflect both horizontal organizing and particular DIY politics through the use of zines and online forums to create a community of readers and contributors. I then look at the ways in which environment has impacted decisions to move to rural areas, particularly looking at individuals' sentiments toward urban spaces as sites of activism previously and how they imagine the spaces they operate within now, as well as how a sense of dispossession (or self-dispossession) factors into their ideas of this space. Lastly, I describe different ways in which they view technology as allowing this type of lifestyle to exist and thrive, through the creation of networks resisting dominant forms of living or social expectations through technology in particular, something which is engrained in the lives of these individuals.

With these concepts taking shape, it may be helpful to look at how I met and interacted with this group to further define the "scene" I am discussing here. While originally hoping to talk to urban anarchist/activists, I found myself in a rural community for a few weeks at the onset of this thesis. Due to my appearance (as "punk" or something like it) and through existing networks in this rural space I was introduced to an older gentleman who lived on his own land outside of my parents' town. This man described himself as an anarchist and an artist, and I ventured out to his property to talk about how he saw himself in relation to the activist community in centres like Toronto and Montreal. While we spoke only once he emphasized the importance of online re-

sources for feeling a sense of connection to other anarchists worldwide. He also introduced me to resources like The Country Grind Quarterly.

It was through this zine and its online resources (http://www.countrygrindquarterly.com/) that I connected with many of those I will discuss below. The zine itself targets a specifically rural audience and describes itself as being "by and for rural punks." While a subscription was initially free for rural residents (which applied to me at the onset of my research), expansion of its reader-base and economic demands lead to it being offered for a small fee. Zines can be accessed both online and through the hard copies sent out in the mail. In this zine, I found many articles sent in by readers (often pseudonymously) and contacted several authors through social media to discuss their experiences with me. I quickly found that I had ties to several of them through my existing social groups through Canada. As a result, the majority of my semi-structured interviews began with discussing the zine and other online resources as a jumping point to broader topics.

While I was able to meet up with most individuals, many lived in isolated places throughout Canada that were not feasible for me to reach at this point, but they were often just as willing to chat online through e-mail and social networking sites. These interactions were often more loosely structured, and often took the form of message board posts on particular topics which multiple users could respond to and discuss. Due to this approach, the conversations collected here could be deemed a result of "multi-local" ethnography (Hannerz 2003: 21.) My fieldwork not only took place in both urban and rural spaces throughout Ontario, I also accessed spaces online to interact with those discussed here. I believe that this approach is necessary in understanding what could be seen as a "network" of rural Canadian anarchists, which are not certainly characterized through taking part in the readership of this particular zine but for the pur-

pose of this fieldwork, could be imagined as such. This is also a necessary approach because the majority of individuals connected with one another through the use of internet resources (as well as submissions to offline zines). However, while their relationships could be classified as resulting from "online" activity and networking, the "local" was always referenced and maintained a prominent role in these interactions (for example, users posting in zine classifieds or online boards often began with indicating their physical location offline).

Methodologically, I utilized loosely-structured interviews and participant observation when possible—whether offline in cases of "hanging out" at the homes of individuals such as Conan, or online while taking part in conversations on message boards. While some conversations were more fluid, I sat down for several extensive interviews with seven individuals: Conan, Terrence, Harlow, Jazz, Ryan, Colleen, and Adam. Each allowed me to record and expand on many of the concepts they had touched on in less structured contexts. Some of them met me in cities, others were living in urban environments currently, and the rest I travelled to their rural homes. While rural locations were maintained as markers to membership in this "scene," urban centres were often sites of importance for these individuals—many of the interviews I carried out took place in urban centres close to my own home, where I was lucky to catch individuals "travelling through." I believe that these spaces of "travelling" were often optimal for understanding the fluid ways in which these individuals conceptualized space—our discussions often occurred at liminal points, for example when individuals were returning to the city to look for work during the winter months.

This thesis provides an original ethnographic account of an underexplored facet of current politics present in rural Canada. I hope to contribute to a growing literature on post-structur-

al politics and the spaces where they thrive, particularly focusing on the idea of “scene” as a point of meaningful political possibility. In this, these fluid and liminal places, which are often located outside of the academic focus on political change and resistance, can be seen as potential places to examine new efforts for making change in both physical and social spaces. My analysis of the role technology has to play is key in this understanding. By looking at these often marginalized and overlooked groups of young, anarchist individuals scattered throughout rural parts of the country, I hope this work leads to more research that considers these groups as a significant part of the Canadian political ecology.

Chapter Two: Imagining and Negotiating the Canadian Rural Anarchist "Scene:" Readerships, Publics and the DIY Politic

While this paper involves research with a range of individuals who can be found across Canada (and North America), it is helpful to find a loose imagining of their ties as a community of sorts. Through looking at the ways in which they describe and build their identities through print culture (through zines and blogs) as well as links to an (*imagined*) history of anarchist movements, it is possible to begin to see this group as based around a fluid political ideology surrounding not only an anarchist politic but concerns about personal well-being, self- (and community-) sustainability, and a desire to evade cash-based systems often associated with "urban" capitalist contexts. When reaching out to individuals, I often found them through online resources and zines and hope to see how these forums play an integral role in connecting these individuals who occupy scattered physical places across Canada. In this section I will look at the ways in which it may be possible to understand this variation and understand how this group or "scene" understands itself, as well as how a connected readership becomes necessary in this context.

For this purpose, the work of Michael Warner on publics and counterpublics (2002) proves a good starting point. By examining some of his characteristics for what defines a public, or possibly a counterpublic, it becomes easier to comprehend this often diverse group of individuals. While Warner views *the public* as existing as "a kind of totality" (Warner 2002:49), specifically as a local, national, or even international state-related community, or alternatively as a type of audience for a public event (Warner 2002: 50), he focuses on what he sees as a third type of public, "one that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation" (Warner 2002:

50). While those I will discuss in this paper do not necessarily all belong to the same community of "readers" in this sense, I believe that they may constitute a similar idea of a public in existing in relation to texts and ideologies accompanying them. Through the use of zines and websites, these individuals make up this type of community that is brought into existence through the creation of these texts.

Warner also sees more traditional types of belonging (in contrast to that of a community of readers) as linked highly to the state—something which these individuals actively reject. As Warner mentions, "the result (of these official belongings) can be a kind of political depressiveness, a blockage in activity and optimism" (Warner 2002: 52). This may start to explain the move to a more self-regulating identity, community or politic that is found here. This type of belonging can lead to "a disintegration of politics toward isolation, frustration, anomie, forgetfulness" and "reveals by contrast how much ordinary belonging requires confidence in a public" (Warner 2002:52). Along these lines, the particular ways in which this group establishes belonging (as living in a rural space, as attempting to avoid relying on the state at all costs, as living "closer to nature") can be found to stem from these types of frustration and distrust of the general public—particularly increasingly competitive and cash-based urban environments. As Warner sums up, "without a faith—justified or not—in self-organized publics…we would be nothing but the peasants of capital" (2002:52). If one thing can be said of all of those interviewed here, a desire to avoid becoming "peasants of capital" can be seen in each of their efforts and actions, particularly in these efforts of maintaining a "self-organization."

I also wish to look at "counterpublics" as a tool to understand this group. While a counterpublic is a public as well, it differs in a number of ways, particularly in its inability to address

more broadly recognized "publics"—often due to a marginalized state of its participants (Warner 2002: 79). A counterpublic may be seen as aware of its "subordinate status" and that the "cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one" (Warner 2002: 86). This, as demonstrated below, is very true of those discussed in this paper, and often seen as a source of pride by those contributing. Counterpublics are also intentionally attempting a transformation in their environment or political climate, rather than simply circulation of "mainstream" discourse (Warner 2002: 88).

While Warner sees counterpublics' drive for transformation as a necessary part of their existence, he also defines their relationship to the state as a way to "acquire agency" (2002: 89), something which becomes problematic when applied to groups (anarchists, for example) who wish to avoid institutions of the state when creating a community or political forum. However, "for many counterpublics, to do so is to cede the original hope of transforming, not just policy, but the space of public life itself" (Warner 2002: 89). I believe that through using physical space —moving outside of urban centres, for example—those discussed here attempt to avoid becoming parts of these types of "social movements" which exist in relation to the state purposefully. They do so in order to maintain a transformative element as a counterpublic/alternative politic or to change the way the structures of society currently exist. Most individuals have been active in these types of social movements at some point or another (Occupy, Toronto's G20 Protests, etc.) and have often expressed frustration that they ultimately tend to cater to dominant culture to achieve change.

In relation to these types of print culture, another way of thinking of "rural" activists, anarchists, or punks in this project is to see them as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991).

While Anderson, like Warner, was writing about nationalism in particular, he argues that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (1991:6), and many of the ways in which these zines, stories and online forums use imagery, language and place can be seen as fitting into this type of idea. While Warner also sees print and readership as a large part of creating a public, Anderson links print-capitalism in particular as allowing for the types of nationalist imaginaries he discusses (1991:36). Through looking at some of the self-created zines which are distributed around North America (the Country Grind in particular), this idea of an imagined community can be seen taking shape—articles commonly use the term "we" as a marker of not only horizontality in the creation of the zine, but also to refer to the community of "country punks," "backwoods anarchists," or "back to the land skids." While there are a variety of markers which allow for fluidity within what membership to this community could look like, there are distinct markers of belonging (farming imagery, utilitarian clothing, traditional anarcho-punk symbols) for what this scattered and varied community consists of—living in rural settings (full- or part-time), subscription to anarchist or anti-capitalist beliefs, and "practical" skill-sharing and community support, whether online or offline.

As far as the online-based facets of this group are concerned, activities often take place on forums, whether related to online versions of zines, social media pages, or blogs dedicated to DIY farming, living, building, etc. Christopher Kelty provides helpful tools for looking at how the politics of this group are inherent in their online activities despite writing about a more online-based community of "geeks." While those I spoke to for this project were not a group based distinctly in online activities, the vast majority of them did use the internet and social media sites as important tools at some points in their lives for political engagement, social networking or

idea sharing (amongst other things). Again, I hope to emphasize the importance of these online activities in the spaces these individuals are creating for themselves and demonstrate the recursivity present between "online" and offline politics.

Kelty's concept of the "recursive public," (2005) a term he uses to describe the "geeks" he works with, is extremely helpful—particularly when used to build on Warner's concepts of publics and counterpublics. This recursivity is clear when Kelty compares the forum—the internet—to "nonrecursive publics such as a newspaper or a political gathering" (2005:202), which may allow for criticism from those making up the "public," but ultimately adhere to the same structures and systems. Within this, he sees these non-recursive publics as offering (at times) the feeling that the public has impact on what is being written, while in reality this is often not the case. While Kelty also notes that many of his online geeks vary greatly, he states that "only one significant quality is shared by all of the geeks represented here: they are a public constituted through a shared sense of concern for the technical and legal conditions of possibility of their own association" (2005:192). He sees the internet as not only a highly political venue for his "geeks," but a structure that the geeks themselves must work to maintain (2005: 202). While in Kelty's context, the internet is the space in which this activity takes place, the individuals I discuss here see every aspect of their lives in this light—through actively affecting this recursive space throughout their daily lives they work to maintain and make possible new spaces they see as avoiding (or minimizing) problematic dominant political structures.

While there are clear differences between Kelty's geeks and the "rural punks" I discuss here, the ways in which they interact with the internet can demonstrate similarities. While they may not code or hack like "geeks," the ways in which online activity is carried out is distinctly

related to how these people live their lives according to their values and politics. Examples of this include attempts to refuse to pay for internet access (through accessing free Wifi hotspots, using public libraries, etc.), discouraging members of collectives to use transparent social media (or at least the presence of clear disdain for sites like Facebook), and the use of crowdsourcing sites for community support and awareness. These ways in which they maintain their online personas, activities and connections are dictated by their personal politics. In addition, the ways in which print media is created here may also be seen as contributing to this recursive movement—DIY tools for creating, accessing, sharing and contributing to ideas and information, including tips on how to live rurally and contact nearby members are some examples. These ways in which the use of the internet is incorporated into otherwise isolating political activity (removal of oneself from urban environments) helps to mediate not only a sense of togetherness but maintains active political engagement and support in what can otherwise be seen as a scattered group.

When thinking about how this togetherness can be understood despite such variation, Císař and Koubek's (2012) use of the term "scene" helps bridge some of the gaps in theory mentioned above. The authors also struggle with how to describe those they are working with, a group of hardcore punks in the Czech Republic (often not unlike those discussed in this paper). They find the term "subculture" to be inadequate, as it "no longer seems to capture the complex realities of contemporary cultural and political youth scenes" (2012:1). Instead, they use the term "scene" to discuss the many different aspects of groups in and around hardcore/punk activities in their project. For Císař and Koubek, the "scene" is a dynamic term, and "cannot be viewed as a compact unit with clear connections to the political activities or other social formations, such as social movements" (2012:1) and that many different aspects interact and clash in different ways.

For them, in the scene, "both the political and cultural elements complement one another in various configurations, thus creating a discursive space in which the characteristics and focus vary depending on the outside environment and circumstances in which the scene developed" (2012: 2). In this, they highlight the many different ways members engage with politics locally and globally, "the mainstream," and even music, where each member may experience unique connections and alienations to both the "scene" as well as dominant culture (2012:3). While they base their use of the term 'scene' in previous theorists' conceptions of it (Straw (1997) Peterson and Bennett (2004), Stahl (2004)) who described a scene in a variety of ways as networks, "informal assemblages" **(**Peterson and Bennett (2004), or otherwise, Císař and Koubek list a few unique characteristics through which to understand a scene as a theoretical tool which are relevant here.

One particularly important characteristic they point out for the purposes of this project is the "interconnectedness of political and cultural activities" or that "a given scene is framed from different perspectives" (2012: 5). This works particularly well for this group, as while there is an interconnectedness, there is also a high level in variation as far as goals, politics, and tastes are concerned. While some individuals moved to rural areas in an earnest attempt to break away from capitalist systems and government regulation, others did so with the thought that—though they held very anarchist ideals—anarchism was something which would be a long way from being realized (whether individually or societally) and their goals were more closely related to their own mental health, happiness and satisfaction. Other causes which were important for some were not necessarily a priority for others—while some saw food sustainability as incorporating an exclusively vegan lifestyle, others moved to rural areas for the explicit purpose of hunting their

own meat and depending less on store-bought goods. Some saw political punk music as an important part of the scene itself—a movement which is also steeped in DIY culture—others seemed indifferent to listening to any music for overtly political reasons. For most, a movement away from using monetary forms of exchange (for society as a whole) was key in their politics, though for some this was more about individual goals and circumstances.

Císař and Koubek also see scenes as being linked to a certain space (2012:5). While those I talked to lived in a variety of spots throughout Canada and did not necessarily think of certain physical spaces as part of this scene, two possible venues could be seen as providing this type of link. Císař and Koubek see this link to place as being particularly "local," because "being a part of the scene can be physically experienced and the signifiers of membership can be enacted and validated" (2012:5). In the case of this project, a central locality does not exist so much for those in this scene (though a rural "type" was often described) as locations can vary all across rural parts of Canada, the same types of "signifiers of membership" could be enacted in online spaces or concrete written documents. In other words, the locality may be seen as situated in the zines and online spaces in which readers and contributors can enact the same types of "signifiers of membership," such as commiserating about small-town jocks or discussing fishing lure choices.

While Císař and Koubek, in their particular experiences in the Czech Republic, mention those in that "scene" seeing the internet as leading to less genuine forms of membership identity, etc, (2012:12) this is not necessarily the case here. For them, they saw the internet as changing the way in which the scene was organized, with the internet overtaking physical spaces and becoming the primary source for sharing music, booking bands, and organizing protests and

demonstrations (2012: 22). This seems to be the case for many discussed here (and a growing trend in much of the Western world), but often this dependence on the internet seems to be placed within a broader patchwork of tools and interactions, picking bits and pieces of what worked for them politically, practically, socially—though this may also be due to the younger ages of many of these individuals. For them, these exact characteristics of the internet within the "scene" allowed for similar levels of organizing and communication without having to physically reside in city centres. While social media was at times criticized heavily for a variety of reasons (which are discussed below), it too was viewed more as a tool in many of these cases something which could be used and moulded to how they needed it—to keep in touch, to share advice, art or ideas, to warn others about potential abusers travelling around or, alternately, "safe spaces" throughout the country.

It seems that the term "scene," is the best fit for this type of analysis as it allows for the understanding that many of these individuals are more (or less) involved than others, that they participate in a myriad of often fluid ways, and that their conceptualizing of whatever group they are a part of (the radical community, those who live rurally, punks, *country*-punks, travellers, anarchists) as all being part of, at least temporarily, part of a "scene." Ultimately the "scene" is, for Císař and Koubek, "the space of a specific (often urban) location formed by social networks of interacting individuals and groups with multilayered, but overlapping identity." While in this case the location formed is not necessarily urban (though at times it might be) the interaction of a multiplicity of groups, causes, and identities that make up this group certainly fit into this type of description.

It also helps that "the scene" is a term used by those in this paper regularly, instead of an abstract academic term which I must try to fit them into. Sometimes the "scene" was used to refer to the urban activist community, at times it was used to refer the national or global community of "(country) punks," and at other times still it was used to refer to particular sub-groups within these. However, there was a sense of cohesive understanding that they each saw themselves as belonging, currently or in the past, to this "scene." So while sometimes my conceptualizing of this "scene" to lend some cohesion to the otherwise often ambiguous ties between those I am referring to in this paper may not fit perfectly with "this scene," or "that scene," through using Císař and Koubek's notions of the multiplicities, contradictions and fluidity which come along with the term itself (2012) this seems the best way to define this group without confining it.

Finally, the term anarchist as used by those in this "scene" is something worth thinking about, as it is a generally common thread throughout if not always clear in its use. While I state that most self-identify as anarchist or holding anarchist ideals, this is how anarchists often come to be described, according to David Graeber: " Anarchists when they first appear in stories are almost invariably referred to as "self-described" or "self-proclaimed"; it is not clear whether the idea is to offset the presumably pejorative implications of the term…or to suggest the ridiculous pretensions of a bunch of kids who want to identify themselves with a social movement of days gone by" (2009: 459). Anarchism absolutely holds a place in the actions and lifestyles of each individual here, though this too proves to be a flexible term which is "tinkered" with in varying ways in different contexts. Individual relationships to anarchism were often described in fluid and complicated terms, though this is not atypical of anarchist movements or groups in general.

Helpful in understanding this better, a history of "anarchist resistance culture" compiled by Jesse Cohn utilizes a variety of different ideals and activities ranging from 1848 to 2011 to piece together a rough timeline tying together some of the anarchist movements globally, particularly in regards to its links to print culture (2014). Some of his definitions, while (intentionally) loose, are not only helpful in creating a working definition of anarchism in this context, but also how this group may fit into an existing and historical tradition or imagining of rural, self-sufficient anarchist individuals and groups, reinforcing ideas here juxtaposing themselves against an "urban", often colonial opposition (further: Cohn 2014: 72).

Cohn also struggles to define the people he writes about in his history, seeing "resistance culture" as allowing one to think of these actions as "'a way of life' rather than specific "works and practices"" (2014:6), and sees anarchism in particular (in comparison to other resistance movements) as "something different and broader, aimed not only at one particular oppressive regime but at all forms of domination and hierarchy" (2014:7). This touches on objections that have often been used as ways to discredit or criticize anarchist movements—and this is echoed in the varied and sometimes contradictory ideals of those in this paper—there is no single and easily-communicable goal because there are a variety of intersectional issues which may be weighted differently by different members of the scene (something which may even be seen as a symptom of greater online organizing which avoid the production of "a short list of specific, actionable demands that would readily translate into dominant media and political formats" (Juris 2012:272)).

In Cohn's anarchist history, the idea of "exodus" which may been seen in the movement to the rural here is not new within anarchist movements globally, and is in fact central to his nar-

rative. In discussing the sources of revolution (both external and internal to the movements), Cohn compares the beginnings of revolt to following an escape tunnel out of a prison (2014:19). Referencing Laundauer's "Durch Absonderung zur Gemeinshaft [Through Separation to Community" …"Landauer's conception of anarchism as exodus, striving toward "community" precisely "*through* separation," illuminates the purpose of anarchist resistance culture: to enable us, *while remaining within the world of domination and hierarchy, to escape from it"* (2014:20, emphasis in text). In Cohn's understanding, this exodus can (and often does) occur without a physical change of space (2014:20). However, in this case that movement is precisely what I wish to focus on. While for many of those Cohn is discussing, there were social and economic barriers to the type of physical movement present here, there are a variety of circumstances which have allowed these individuals to relocate physically, often taking the form of existing ties in rural communities, online and offline networking and space-sharing.

For many of those in this "scene," Cohn's concept of exodus links into their feelings of needing to "escape" urban environments for their own sense of well-being as well as political reasons. However, it also helps to conceptualize how many of these individuals maintain ties to anarchist politics while functioning within (at least at some level) "the world of domination and hierarchy." While attempts are made to further themselves from what they see as oppressive systems of capitalism, most acknowledge that their survival at this point is often a mélange of evading as well as managing their relationships with what they see as a problematic social structure—be it depending on capitalist waste through returning to urban centres to dumpster dive, or maintaining part-time work in city centres to support their rural homes, these individuals do not un-

derstand these acts as negating their anarchist politics but rather a necessary compromise at this point in their lives. This is often framed in terms of "getting what you need and getting out."

Related to this, another useful concept Cohn introduces are anarchists not as consisting of "great thinkers" to the degree of many other ideologies but are more likely to include "a host of tinkerers" (2014: 25). In this context, tinkering—whether with physical space, internet devices, or farm machinery—is an important drive within the entire "scene", demonstrating an underlying resistance in itself, especially in adapting common cultural tools or ideas to fit into a non-capitalist, politically-charged use. The concept of tinkering—with theories, spaces, web-forums or even machinery—becomes important in my analysis here. Rather than set markers of what can demonstrate belonging within this "scene" of "backwoods-anarchists," tinkering and mixing aesthetic and theoretical pieces from a variety of other sources with no necessary pattern becomes inherent in how the scene itself is organized. This fits into the overall concept of DIY that permeates this scene—each individual is able to decide how they fit into the group and individual style is encouraged, at least ideologically.

This tinkering extends to the use of print in a particularly anarchist sense—there aren't proletariats waiting to gain political consciousness through the actions of vanguards, but instead a horizontal relationship created through readers and writers, "the desire to suggest a reader's own thoughts, to constitute an "intimate commentary" is a desire not to instruct, to direct, to lead from above, but to form an *internal* bond" (2014:33) which is highly affected by contributors and readers. Anarchist educational material may "aim to make every worker an intellectual" (Flecha in Cohn 2014:60) both in print and face-to-face dialogue. In this sense, the use of DIY zines, forums and mailing lists is intentional in keeping with an anti-hierarchical form of sharing ideas,

information and goods which is so intricately tied to anarchism historically.These texts are not detached critiques of society but intentionally grounded in reality, as seen in the zines discussed here, where often very practical how-to's are steeped with not only advice but anarchist ideology as applied. These types of relationships between reader and writer are also likened to "a kind of visceral, immediate presence that resists the anomie and isolation O'Conner identifies as the defining features of modern, urban, industrial life" (Cohn 2014:37), further supporting the desires here to physically move to rural spaces.

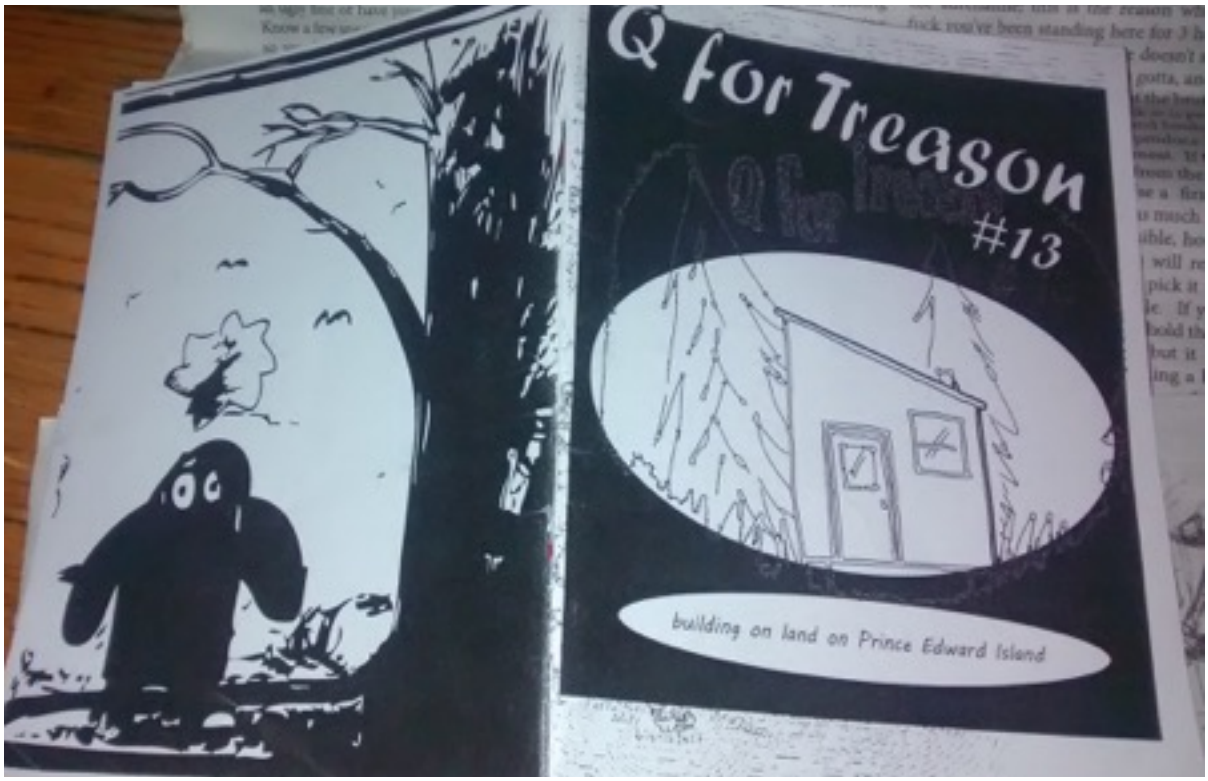

Image 2: Example of one of Adam's zines

Anarchist readers are often marginalized—geographically, economically—and often historically "practicing trades threatened by the advance of industrial capitalism" (Cohn 2014:37). This places those discussed here (a concept reflected in the imagery and language of the zines

and blogs discussed) in a long history of not only marginalized groups but within an imagined tradition of craftspeople, travellers, and practical workers—thus using text to create a link from the already scattered individuals across rural Canada to a transnational and transhistorical working class anarchist community. Cohn also sees the very aesthetic of anarchist zines as reinforcing these concepts:

> sloppy layout, misspellings, smudgy drawings, contempt for bourgeois journalistic standards: the zine typically advertises its own amateurishness as a way of signaling [sic] not only its authenticity (this is not capitalist media!) but the identity of sender and receiver, writers and readers—in keeping with the principles of an anarchist economy, in which production and consumption are to be fused together as much as possible. (Cohn 2014:39)

The mythic "farmer" or worker is evoked in many anarchist pieces, often in contrast to the modern or urban, and entrenching anarchist literature in a folkloric tradition (Cohn 2014:77) of a romanticized rural past is common.

Thinking about audience, these zines—while some may be "recruitment" pieces in line with more traditional forms of anarchist literature (Cohn 2014:52), they are often intentionally directed to "rural punx" or contain a level of exclusivity and address those already existing in the community of readers. While ads may ask "Want to live in the middle of nowhere with other like-minded people?" they typically address an already existing rural community as well as activism already underway. I argue that this is linked to a desire to align oneself with a history of anarchist writers and avoiding purely theoretical literature. For example, historically, many "avant-gardes" writing about anarchism were largely dismissed because their "engagement with

anarchism rarely amounted to participation in or "commitment" to the anarchist movement" (Cohn 2014: 68) (something which in most of these cases is linked to individuals in the "urban" scene). In these cases, writing in zines themselves (as a collaboration) can be seen as involvement, but indexes of lives steeped with activism or otherwise anarchist endeavours riddle all types of articles as a way of self-designating membership.

This helps demonstrate why I focus on the "zine" (as well as its online counterpart) as an important part in conceptualizing this scene. Zines may also be seen as inherently fitting into the anarchist ideologies found in this scene surrounding attempts to reject commodified culture. Like growing your own food or sewing your own clothing, "publishing" your own literature and art-work fits into this anti-capitalist attempt to break away from a cash-based and "mainstream" economy in favour or alternative forms of organizing. As one zine-creator puts it, zines them-selves may be seen as a distinctly political form of tinkering/creating:

> [While] other groups of individuals come together around the shared creation of their own culture, what distinguishes zinesters from garden-variety hobbyists is their political self-consciousness. Many zinesters consider what they do an alternative to and strike against commercial culture and consumer capitalism (Duncombe 2008: 3).

This sentiment is echoed in regards to the online resources accessed by these "rural punks" as well and while access to the internet was often spotty, self-authored blogs and DIY forums were often used for everything from advice on building and hunting to sharing artwork and political manifestos.

Image 3: Example of "Country Punk" aesthetic in a zine.

The Country Grind represents both the aesthetic as well as the ideas behind this group—it contains the "cut-and paste aesthetic" familiar to punk and anarchist zines, but also incorporates symbols associated with these movements. In addition, "rural" symbols such as scythes, tractors, individuals in overalls, vegetables and fishing tackle are common in the designs present on the zine's covers and articles. This is also reflected in the personal aesthetic of individuals like Conan and Terrence, who don utilitarian (black) clothing like thick work-pants and bandanas, as well as visible DIY "stick-and-poke" tattoos, permanently indexing both their rejection of mainstream societies' ideas of "acceptability" as well as a no-nonsense, working class ideology present in Cohn's analysis of anarchist resistance culture in general.

Like this "exodus" out of the city, or relocation to the rural, I wish to avoid an oversimplification of the role of zines. Like the emphasis of the "serenity" of nature, the political potential of the zine is not without its downfalls. The zine itself—while an important outlet and tool within this political scene—may not be a tool with which to change the systems it seeks to protest (Duncombe 2008:4). However, in this case I feel like The Country Grind (discussed below) and other zines and blogs mentioned here understand the relatively closed audience which they seek to address—they are not aiming to reach a mainstream urban readership, but often intentionally avoiding doing so (for example, this zine in particular originally only shipped for free to rural addresses). This further ties into my argument that the format of the zine (whether in hard-copy or electronic) provides a material example of the sentiment behind this scene itself—it is self-aware in its limited capacity and marginality.

Furthermore, the ways in which I aim to conceptualize this "scene" are directly related to the themes I wish to explore—themes which are also necessarily dynamic and difficult to apply

universally. One of the reasons this group is difficult to define is related to the particular ways in which they make space and the ways these complicate the divides of urban and rural terminology. For the most part, urban and rural spaces are rigidly divided conceptually (often with negative connotations associated with the urban) though in reality urban spaces become necessary contexts in which to find cash or community resources to support existence in the rural. I wish to approach this divide in a similar vein to the approaches of many theorists regarding online and offline spaces. Like Kelty's approach (2005) to the fluidity and recursive relationships between online and offline activities and spaces, the urban and the rural in this context become terms which may correspond to the imagined (*not imaginary*) divides between, say, Toronto and rural Saskatchewan, but often exist within a recursive relationship of political, economic and social activity. While the terms "city" and "country" (or bush, boonies, etc.) are used to delineate particular spaces in zine articles and discussions of space, there is no systematic way in which these delineations are imagined or maintained.

In attempting to understand further how an anarchist politic fits into these conceptions of place making—particularly through text in the form of zines—I wish to examine the affect present in the ways individuals described place and the politics inherent there. I believe the ways in which feelings are tied to particular spaces and place play a role in how they are interacted with and presented in print. In this I think it is important to keep in mind the liminal spaces in which affect often exists—whether it is Adam living in rural Prince Edward Island and travelling to work in downtown Vancouver, Conan reentering the city to see a punk show, or Jazz returning to the city for the winter "off-season," many of these stories exist in the "midst of in-betweenness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:1).

Keeping all of this in mind, it is helpful to think about how anarchism and DIY ethics are maintained as an important part of how these individuals think about the constitution of this "scene" themselves, and how it allows for them to represent themselves in particular ways. This is often related to these types of DIY or lived politics, and the aforementioned recursivity within this scene is highly linked to their ideas of themselves as anarchists. With this idea of the "scene" as well as how urban and rural spaces fit into this, in the following examples, I will demonstrate the trickiness of many of these concepts, as well as the political potential present in these creations of spaces—both physical and ideological. In doing so, I hope to shed light on what appears to be a growing population of young, politically engaged individuals who are using technology in unique ways to create spaces for themselves, often stemming from a dispossession found in the urban. In this, affect becomes an important factor in why movement linked to anarchist practices occurs. The new places which are created can be found not only physically but as highly linked to these technologies I have mentioned above, particularly in the form of recursive texts and online spaces.

Chapter Three: Distorting the Urban:Complicating the Urban/Rural Divide

In order to look at how these individuals conceptualize and create space, it is helpful to look at some previous approaches to studying "the urban" and it's usual oppositional counterpart, "the rural." Keeping in mind the concepts previously discussed of fluidity of the "scene," this look at the urban/rural continuum on which these individuals often place their experiences is key in understanding how these are constantly tinkering with the spaces and places within which they exist. In this section I look at how different individuals came to rural spaces as well as their relationships with cities—one which is often seen as linked to their own "survival." In addition, some theory is linked with the ways in which they associate urban spaces with capitalism and a need for cash, and how this factors into how they see their current role in connection with other rural anarchists (and how self-dispossession plays a part in this connection). With looking at this in greater detail, I aim to explain how many factors exist simultaneously in how the "rural" and "urban" are imagined.

Using Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) as a tool of comparison, and while he was writing about Paris (and is not unproblematic) his work can help to examine the flip-side of what I am looking at here—rather than those leaving the urban he looks at the psychological processes which individuals undergo when moving from rural living to more urban settings. While he argues that the city is a more "rational" space based on reason (over "rural" superstitions), many of the characteristics he attributes to the urban are the very reasons that these "rural anarchists" have chosen to get away. Many of the reasons Simmel believed that urban life was more desirable or "modern" are the very reasons individuals here wished to escape urban environments.

The first of these characteristics which Conan in particular described as off-putting (rather than enticing) about city living has to do with city-dwellers reacting to one another "rationally" (for Simmel), as opposed to country life where relationships are more "emotional" (1903) thus creating a barrier between individuals who encounter each other on city streets. Aiding in (as well as stemming from) this more "rational" interaction, money plays a huge role in Simmel's analysis of the city. He states that money-based transactions are more likely to take place in the city, while in rural areas emotional relationships make them less frequent, money being given less importance (1903). Simmel's "country folk" handle interactions differently because they have a more intimate knowledge of those they are trading with, and with that comes the ability to not only create more personal interactions for goods, etc. but also allows for trade in which the particular consumer is kept in mind (1903). In contrast, goods in the city are created without a particular client in mind, manufactured to fit into the broadest available pool of consumers (1903).

While money is certainly used, to some degree, by everyone I've talked to for this paper, the desire to avoid having to use it in any given situation, as well as to try to escape the urban/capitalist environment as much as possible is a primary goal. A money-based economy, which for Simmel is inherently tied to the urban, allows for a standardized, qualitative value to all aspects of modern life (1903). While he may have seen this as a positive attribute of city life—something which encourages reason over rural superstition and emotion—placing "dollar signs" on everything from goods to people is perhaps the most discussed reason for leaving the city, in one form or another. In particular, when it came to working for wages many saw this as commodifying themselves, whereas the work they did on their properties in rural areas was seen as

for their own survival and well-being. As individuals like Adam, Colleen, Jazz and Conan discussed (along with many contributors to the zines), while money was rarely totally eliminated from their way of living, a greater reliance on their own skills surrounding finding food, building shelter, relying on nearby neighbours and community members and accessing online resources all contributed to not only a lifestyle which they saw as more in line with their politics but also helped with their overall satisfaction and happiness.

Simmel isn't the only one who tackles these stereotypes of urban life, and while they should be seen through a critical lens, they often echo distinctions discussed above. In looking at these dichotomies between the types of commerce which take place in cities or "villages", Zenner (2003: 53) includes the internet as a third point in a spectrum of "commerce," which begins with travelling salespeople and moves toward magazines and malls in increasingly urban environments, eventually culminating in the internet where he argues that "the old distinctions between remote, isolated, rural agricultural communities and urban industrial centres are no more" (2003:54). In Zenner's argument, the internet functions as a way to erase the distinctions which are associated with different "places" when it comes to spending and accumulating capital, something discussed in relation to both online and offline place in more detail below. While I disagree that the internet functions to erase these distinctions altogether, I believe outlets like The Country Grind and the blogs I will discuss below help to connect these spaces in interesting ways that may even attempt to emphasize and reinforce these distinctions.

While Zenner sees the internet as a way to erase some differences between the rural and the urban, he does not believe this is a total transformation either—rather, "while a distinction between agricultural or pastoral rural communities and urban centres is no longer as sharp as it

once was, people continue to sense a difference between the rural and the urban." (2003: 56). He sees these differences as being contingently perceived and not universal (2003: 56) something which is clear when talking with individuals like Conan, who demonstrate the ambivalence associated between transitions between urban and rural contexts. These contingencies (for Zenner) may often be dependent on "roots," or a sense of shared memory in rural communities (or urban ones) "entwined in memory and personal identity" (2003:59). While many here do not necessarily identify with these types of "roots," they do often ground their identity in markers long associated with the rural, "hard-working" farmer or worker—idealizing and connecting with an imagined memory of a rural past.

Wirth's 1938 article on "urbanism" also struggles to define urban space though echoes ideas about the "coldness" of urban space—while those here use words like "detached" or "claustrophobic," in each case what classifies "the city" is not set. Wirth argues that this is an inherent characteristic of urban space, though attempts to classify what a city is in certain ways (1938: 59). In addition, he does not see the "urbanism" as being necessarily limited to "cities" themselves (1938: 59). He attempts to remove urbanism from "industrialism and modern capitalism," (1938: 69) though in the case of these "rural punks" this is precisely the association which causes so many to try to escape urban environments. While he sees the city as allowing for a multitude of difference in its inhabitants, like Simmel, he believes this breeds the type of environment which prohibits the widespread and close social interaction which rural environments might provide (1938: 72). This creates an environment where personal relationships change, whereby

> The contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental. the reserve, the indifference, and the blasé outlook which urbanites manifest in their relationships may thus be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others….. therefore, the individuals gains, on the one hand, a certain degree of emancipation or freedom from the personal and emotional controls of intimate groups, he loses, on the other hand, the spontaneous self-expression, the morale, and the sense of participation that comes with living in an integrated society.(1938:72)

Wirth sees this as linked to the "predatory relationships" that come out of living in the city, where close living quarters and minimal emotional connections breeds "competition, aggrandizement, and mutual exploitation" (1938:75). The lack of emotional attachments may also lead to increasing social and legal regulations and "rigid adherence to routines" in order to maintain order (1938:75). This sentiment is present in ideas surrounding policing of behaviour in urban environments, which I will discuss below. In addition, close proximity heightens feelings of inequality, where space is competed for and is "put to the use which yields the greatest economic return" (1938: 74). He also links this increasingly distant form of socialization and increased commodification of goods and time to those living in the city becoming "progressively farther removed from the world of nature" and where "there is virtually no human need that has remained unexploited by commercialism" (1938: 74, 79).

While Wirth's analysis of the city, like Simmel's, is not without its flaws (and often oversimplifies these dynamics), it may start to explain how many of these individuals have imagined

their places in urban environments, and also why they became dissatisfied or dispossessed in these contexts. Dispossession in particular can be seen as occurring particularly in the cases of these individuals becoming extremely marginalized in urban environments, and while some carried more privilege in these situations than others, they were often trying to escape the same systems which carry out these forms of oppression. In this, if possession can be seen as the opposing force to dispossession (Butler and Athanasiou 2013:7) then these individuals can firstly be seen as experiencing dispossession through precarious living arrangements and a lack of possessions, markers of necessary membership in capitalist systems (Butler and Athanasiou 2013:7). Many are young, have experienced joblessness, exploitative labour, or homelessness in urban environments, causing them to attempt to seek out contexts in which they could "refus[e] to stay in their proper place." However, unlike many forms of resistance mentioned by Butler and Athanasiou 2013:21) this often does not take forms of resistance through "staying in place" when dispossessed but rather creating new, meaningful spaces outside of cities in order to "transform space."

This introduces the role of money, both in the city and its place in these rural lifestyles, particularly one that surrounds anarchist ideals and goals of self-sufficiency/community-reliance. While dispossession—both by capitalist systems and through self-conscious dispossession—may propel many of these individuals to "transform space," this space often involves a level of recursivity with previously experienced urban environments as well as the types of jobs or opportunities which primarily exist there. One article from a rural anarchist zine addresses this issue in a way which was echoed by many here—that money is ultimately something which must be used to some degree, as something which can be a (begrudgingly) necessary tool in a larger system of capitalism. This author also places their experiences within the context of survival— "I'm talk-

ing about when your family is in danger of starvation, freezing of bankruptcy, of what the fuck ever, when you need *it,* money." Speaking of this as a constant throughout recent history—where a broken leg, a bad harvest, or other unexpected events could lead to disaster and tragedy on a homestead, "sometimes you gotta go down into the streets and hustle. That's real."

They describe one situation which called for cash as stemming from legal fees "We ran the family business from the farm. On slow computers out in the boonies we lived the dream, supporting ourselves financially and putting money back into the community, raising a family and watching the crops grow. And then, a year ago, the lawsuit, and scared wholesalers pulling away…For me, the city is a weird haven, a place to soak up sodium light and the smell of piss and dumpsters—a place to go to get cash….People talk about country skills, here's a good one: make fucking money somehow." Cities and capital are seen as things to be tolerated when necessary, but something which would be avoided if the choice is available. The author ultimately uses a metaphor stemming from nature itself: " I move in cities like a polar bear swims the oceans: I get what I need and get out."

In this instance the city, in addition to "a place to go to get cash," was described as an inherently more violent place. "Quads tip and tractors tip. But the cities host the ultra-violence, more people means more fucked-up people." The author describes "getting lucky" and finding a job not quite in a city, but as a tractor operator at a golf course nearby. While he described gaining some skills at the position that helped in his regular life, he ultimately held disdain for the hierarchy that the patrons of the club maintained between them and "the help" : "I endured my status as "domestic" to get strong in knowledge and experience, but chiefly, for food, for propane, for clean water" Like for Conan and Adam, the city was seen as a space in which to ac-

cess resources when necessary (whether for survival or networking) to maintain the possibility of furthering the development of personal space outside of it. While as a youth, he took jobs to pay rent, and tried to fit them to his interests, "this time, these longs months, I'm doing it to protect our way of life. To protect the sheep and the goats, the pig, the chickens, ducks, dogs and cats. I'm doing it for the privilege of turning rows and pulling weeds; for dark nights, for a little space around us. For my family."

From both Simmel's and Butler and Athanasiou's analyses of the city one sees a place of "possessive individualism" (Butler and Athansiou 2013:7) and reliance on cash, and this is why their work is particularly helpful in understanding why the city may be a place which is undesirable to those who wish to build not only a life where money is often abandoned for more personal forms of trade or self-regulated goods, but also those who aim to create communities of support. Adam in particular described his desire to move to his land in P.E.I. as stemming from him and his partner wishing to find work that was based less in a cash economy and more directly related to his own survival, something he saw as less to do with self-sufficiency and more to do with "community-dependent" living. They did not wish to purely cut themselves off from the humdrum of working in the city, but also aimed to integrate into a group which could rely on symbiotic relationships and sharing information, ideas and goods in order to better the group as a whole.

Based on this idea of the urban as an accessible place—often to be tolerated, at times being a very necessary source of income or resources, the rural seems to take on an association with desirability in contrast to the urban, while still keeping the way open for movement between the two. While the association of the urban with "capitalism" is certainly not without flaws, it is

often a common theme in how these individuals see “the city.” Stemming from this, I wish to explore in more detail how individuals saw their lives leading up to decisions to move outside of urban environments. Some common factors became clear—particularly levels of precarity and marginalization while living in cities. However, a frustration with political activism undertaken was also a factor, as well as feelings of isolation from urban anarchist communities. Lastly, affect clearly plays a role in these decisions as well, with many linking their “exodus” to a desire to live in a particular way. The following section looks at these movements and place-making endeavours in more detail.

Chapter Four: Getting Out of the City: Dispossession and Decisions to Move to the Boonies

While the divide between urban and rural spaces is clearly complicated and often represents a complicated imagined dichotomy as demonstrated in the previous section, the relationships between these individuals and space was often communicated in these terms. Looking into how these dynamics can be linked to earlier experiences with urban or rural environments shows some common factors in how people in this "scene" came to move to rural environments. The types of self dispossession mentioned above play a role in these movements, but also factors surrounding a burn-out or frustration with urban activist groups, desire to return to rural hometowns, and seeing a type of "survival" less alienated from one's self all became factors for creating these rural spaces for themselves. This is why I believe it is important to look further into these "decisions to move to the boonies."

Each individual I met had lived in both rural areas and cities around Canada, often travelling between the two throughout their lives with mixed experiences. These moves were often linked to changes in their personal politics, reflected in their fluidity of being in physical space. While circumstances have led to some returning to urban environments, the idea of living in rural spaces has retained a closeness in their imaginings of transforming the political climate, be it personally, globally or locally. These often included an initial move from rural, childhood homes to urban environments in order to seek out like-minded individuals (whether musically, socially, politically) but eventually resulted in rejecting these communities for a variety of reasons. Often these individuals experienced homelessness in urban centres, at times inhabiting squats or living on streets and in parks.

Conan told me he has lived in many places around Canada, both rural and urban, throughout his life. He spent his childhood and early teens living outside of a small town in central Ontario with his parents and sister. Conan remembers, as a youth, "romanticizing the city," eventually moving there on his own as a young teenager. While he was still living on his parents land, he remembered having to hitchhike into the small town nearby in order to try to find "friends like him:"

> There was the farm across the road, and a forty minute walk to the closest store, I had to hitchhike to get to the nearest town, which could take hours depending on how lucky I got. After a while I wanted to find other people like me, I was sick of the same jocks I saw at my high school every day and if I went into the city I could find other punks, and we would just hang around. You read books you know [about the city], for sure I roman-ticized the city, and that definitely added to the choice of heading there. It made me real-ize that there was more out there to talk about, to do.

Soon after, Conan—due to a mixture of frustration with his family life and the isolated location of their home—moved south to Toronto. While he was anxious and excited to try "city living"—creating his own space in a new urban environment—he didn't have a home to stay in and quickly found himself living on the "streets, parks, cubby holes and squats" of the city.

Conan at the time of our initial interviews could be described as gruff-looking, although this became less prominent once we began to get to know each other. Brown curly hair (which he had assured me he had not washed with shampoo for at least fifteen years) and a sparse, rusty beard gave him a bit of an "unhinged" look at the point of our meeting, something which our

friend referred to as “the mountain man-look.” He wore thick black work pants and a thermal undershirt as we stood around chatting with mutual friends. He hastily drank a beer while making terse conversation and smoking cigarettes. As I learned more about Conan’s life, I began associating parts of his appearance more and more with what I knew—he did seem to reflect a variety of physical markers of survival of both the streets of the city and the solitude of the country. Unlike some of the others I talked with who were very open and generous with their experiences, Conan generally seemed suspicious and closed. Whether this stemmed from being homeless in several large cities across Canada during his early youth, or from having become accustomed to living far away from most people, is difficult to say (and could be a combination or independent of both).

Conan did describe himself as “having political ideas” when initially moving to Toronto, but always having a hard time focusing on them due to having to survive day-to-day and living by the moment. He was aware of “anarchist meeting places,” where people got together to discuss and organize, and was involved in a couple of marches and protests (though eventually he ended up using them more as resources to make money panhandling from the crowds of people than anything.) He listed his priorities at that point as having more to do with finding places to sleep, finding food and making money to buy alcohol. While Conan did seem to have fond memories of some of his years living on the streets of Toronto, and eventually some time in Montreal at an anarchist squat, he eventually left the urban environment in order to spend time living with an anarchist collective in northern Quebec.

While addiction had become an issue while living in Toronto, and contributed to his eventual decision to return to rural living (and in fact moving even further from any city centre

than he had lived previously), he also cited how "cold" it was. "It was very…is that the word? Cold? You know, it's actually hard for human contact, or to meet like minded-people, everyone's closed. They're stuck in their own circles, and maybe not accepting to invite you in, or it's harder to meet them, to be invited in." While he saw this as a contradiction to his original desire to move to the city to meet other "punks and like minded-people," he recounted having a hard time getting passionate about politics in the way he would later in his life, while living on a piece of land in the woods.

Conan's initial move to the northern commune in Quebec occurred after spending some time in Montreal, around the same time that the G20 protests were happening in Toronto in 2010. Conan spent his time living at a squat in Montreal with a group of anarchists, a collective which had a few members living there permanently but also housed other travellers while he was staying there. He recalled a variety of activities taking place, from bicycle maintenance workshops, to a fenced-in vegetable garden outside, to a small brewery downstairs. They would also collectively venture out in the city to dumpster dive for food regularly, attempting to the best of their abilities to lead a cash-free existence feeding off the waste of Montreal. The house collected their furniture and tools from donations from friends or through finding them on curb sides, where city residents would place unwanted goods. As Conan noted, "it was very self-sustained for living in a city."

While living there he met some people who lived on a piece of land a significant distance north of the city. He described it as a small community in the woods, which a collective of people had acquired together. Immediately after moving there, he joined in building the structures necessary for day-to-day life, gardens for food, describing it as "totally off the grid." They built

their own irrigation and dug their own latrines and outhouses, and there was no electricity whatsoever. There was a vehicle that was used by people in the collective, though unlike most vehicles which were used by others in the paper, its diesel engine had been modified to run on vegetable oil—something which could be seen as more sustainable and often available as waste from establishments in the nearby town. This demonstrates the tinkering so clearly at the forefront of this scene, where everyday goods were often reimagined to fit into an anarchist politic and allow for a particular type of rural living closely linked to a DIY ethic.

"I enjoyed being somewhere that self-sustaining, but also huge sacrifices were made not only by myself but the rest of the people there, to keep it going. It was very hard living, there was no access to any technology, you had to brew your own beer. We'd go into town to dumpster dive every once in a while, and we could go to a spring for drinking water but besides that it was very isolated." Conan recalled one such visit into town where he had found himself absolutely covered in mosquito bites. From my own experiences in northern Ontario and Quebec I can imagine Conan entering the town—to gather supplies, to make a phone call, to dumpster dive—and shifting to feeling self-conscious about his bug bites. In the woods, everyone would be aware of what the red, angry spots all over his body meant—blackflies, mosquitoes, and whatever else had been benefitting from Conan's fresh city blood. However, Conan described feeling nervous when leaving the collective, that others might think he had some "terrible rash or disease" and mark him as "gross," despite no one actually having said anything at the time. Knowing Conan as I do now (as possessing a generally surly demeanour), I can see him skulking around a small town, or occasional visits to Montreal, grimacing at passersby in defence of his condition and assuming the worst of those around him. While he said others with him didn't suffer from such

terrible reactions, he attributed this to their superior strategies (of those "in the know") for prevention or, alternatively, that the bugs loved his "new" blood.

Conan mused for quite a while on the similarities and differences of what he saw as "survival" on the streets versus the "bush."

> The amount of work—hard work—living out there, in the woods, it's every day. But I guess it was like that on the streets as well, you kind of do worry about where you're get ting your food, and your shelter, and depending on what the weather's like what kind of shelter that would need to be—do you need to warm up, or cool off, it's all very relevant to everyday living in both places.

This juxtaposition was very clear in Conan's story, when he referred to hardships living in northern Quebec, he almost always compared them to a similar circumstance living on the streets of Toronto. Conan saw living in the city as incorporating different kinds of work, and the ease that "everything's there for you—you just have to find it rather than work for it, you don't have to produce as much." He saw his politics as being different in these spaces as well, seeing politics in general as being more "passive, more like civil disobedience" in rural locations. "You're not in the face of it, but it's probably more closer to the belief, like it's more personal activism, rather than being on the front lines in the city in a protest. And then even if you're more passive in the city, you can do that with the internet, or like a pirate radio station, whereas out in the woods you didn't have access to that."

When we were discussing this juxtaposition, Conan seemed to have become a bit more friendly with me and invited me for a second visit to his property. We had been sitting on his dock chatting a bit, he was asking me what I hoped to get out of this project and I was trying to

think of what that might be (at a very early point). While he had initially seemed hesitant about it altogether, the more we talked it the more he seemed to agree that it was something some people might want to hear about. That day the sun was warm and there were only a few clouds, and the water of the river in front of his house was moving slowly. Every now and then some kind of fish would jump out to snap at a bug, or a large crow would fly over our heads. He lived on a sharp bend in the river, with a creek branching off and flowing behind his house and shed. While we sat there his small home speakers pumped out music from his kitchen window, up the hill behind us.

There was a large pier in the middle of the river in front of his property, something to do with logging at some point. Some birds were hanging out and we took some time to watch them while I thought of more things to chat about. Every now and then a few individuals in small aluminum boats with loud motors would come by, on some kind of fishing trip. Overall, however, the dock allowed for some quiet—sounds of lapping water, with that faint music in the background, and we continued talking about his property, and my project. Happily, the more we talked about it, with me being pretty dismissive about what I could really pull together about the topic, Conan became more positive about it in general. He began talking about the satisfaction he found when he began making things himself, or doing work which created something. He told me that the first "job" he had to take that he actually enjoyed using raw material and turning it into a deck for an acquaintance, "It was so much better than taking some shitty job helping shitty rich people, just to make money to pay rent." He described the appreciation that came from taking a tree, cutting it down, and gaining the skills necessary to turn it into something with a practical use.

Conan, in addition to being able to rely less on cash and odd jobs in the city, also opened up about how satisfaction and pleasure were a huge motivator for him to get away from not only urban living but also into making things for himself and others near him. Like others I will discuss below, Conan did use cash for some things but enjoyed being able to escape using money as much as possible. This seemed to be partly political, but also involved satisfaction from learning important skills and a great sense of accomplishment from a level of self-sufficiency. Again, this brings up the role affect plays in these decisions to create new spaces or physically move. While he often stressed survival as the basis with which he viewed his life—both on the streets in Toronto and otherwise—this idea of personal satisfaction and accomplishment pointed to more than simply survival for his choice to live in his rural home.

Another individual who moved between rural and urban spaces throughout her life is Colleen, who is active in a back-to-the-lander community and living rurally with her partner at this point in time. She originally lived in the same community as a child. She also described a desire to get out of the "woods" during her early teenage years—primarily due to boredom. "I remember really, really hating it as a teenager and just wanting to get out." While Colleen aimed to move to the "big city" of Toronto, she initially settled on moving to a GTA suburb with disappointing results. One goal for Colleen was to find more like-minded friends, having limited success fitting in with her local peers. She recounted the moment she realized that finding new peers in this suburb would be more difficult than anticipated, ultimately leading to her return to her small, rural community (or as she described it, she "fell in with the hippies again").

"I remember sitting on the front stoop, and this guy pulled into his driveway and got

> out and I [said] "Hi, hi! How are you?" and he looked really alarmed and ran into his house. I think I left in a couple of months and went back home. I ended up getting a job, a friend of my dad ran a hippy cafe. So I got a job there, and that's how I reintegrated in the community and realized 'Oh, maybe I don't want to move away!"

Despite wanting to move to a large urban centre, Colleen recalled feeling at home in her father's "hippy community." She described remembering the process of turning away from this community as stemming from her entrance into the "indoctrination station," or the local high school, and involving a need to impress her more "mainstream" peers—something she found she was never able to accomplish or gain any fulfillment from.

This echoes experiences of others' time in the suburbs, where several others I chatted with spent their childhoods and teenage years. Harlow, a twenty-three year old woman from another GTA suburb, saw this as her prime driver in travelling to remote and rural areas. While she did not describe the same distaste for the lack of a close community there, she did feel a "claustrophobia," particularly when returning to visit her parents after time spent living in an orchard in British Columbia. "I look across the street and I can see another house that looks exactly like mine. I can walk forty-five minutes and still see another house that looks exactly the fuck like mine. And I hated it, I wanted to be able to see the ocean, and the mountains, even that fresh air." This brings up the divides these individuals made in their own experiences of space, and the markers which were associated with them—rather than identical houses on suburban streets (signifying for Harlow monotony, routine and "claustrophobia") Harlow wished to place herself amongst mountains and fresh air, a place she divided from her childhood suburban home entirely.

These three stories demonstrate what was clearly a huge factor in many individuals' decisions to move to more rural areas, that of personal satisfaction. While many other forces were at play in each case, feelings of happiness, calmness, or achievement were high on lists of "why?" when it came to moving rurally. In Conan's case in particular, the contrast between struggle and satisfaction was highlighted many times, and while he did describe rural living as consisting of sacrifice, hard-work and difficult times of scarcity, desire to be there and the satisfaction of seeing the results (in terms of goods made, food harvested, and connections created) overrode the hardships in many cases. For Conan, he described that he would far prefer eating squirrel in times of hardship than return to long hours of panhandling, struggling to find unfulfilling jobs and unfriendly urban crowds. For Harlow and Colleen as well, hard work may not have necessarily consisted of the same types of street-survival Conan encountered in urban environments, but instead was made up of extremely competitive social settings and particular expectations (within a capitalist economy) they did not feel fell in line with their own personal politics.

At the risk of reinforcing the rift that may be constructed between urban and rural environments, while meeting Harlow in the city after her return from "out west," it seemed to become marked when she commented on the oddities of being in the city for the first time in a significant period of time. We walked through the city streets to get to a park we were going to sit in. The bustle of people, almost touching you while they walked by but not registering your presence, the smells from various restaurants pouring onto the sidewalks, and the slow gait of pedestrians looking at the sites, the whole environment forced us to talk of the "coldness" the city could demonstrate—the indifference of passerby which put off so many individuals I chatted with. Even when we did sit in a park to chat, the contrast to interviews I had conducted in rural

areas was marked—the park had trees, and maintained grass, and "nature," but in contrast to the vast amounts of (relatively) empty spaces in which I had conducted my last chats, they were everywhere—parents playing with children, hipsters playing with dogs (something which Harlow mocked adamantly—the hipsters, not dogs) and a group of older men sitting at a picnic table, drinking from mugs.

For Harlow, this environment offered fewer chances of connecting with the types of people she had been living with in British Columbia. She found herself having to watch her behaviour in a way she was not used to, and found it to be a less politically charged space. However, she did maintain contact with those who remained, and described using social media to achieve a similar sense of community:

> That's what I love about being in an environment like, where you've met a group of people like you, where I can see people who agree with me, where I can say shit. They're not going to get mad at me for being mad about shit. "Fuck yeah, let's get mad together, let's post an angry Facebook status about it"

This demonstrates Harlow's tongue-in-cheek way of referencing her own uses of social media both after returning to the city and previously, something which she may often see as a fault but is clearly a way that she connects with other "people who agree." Part of Harlow's experience living in a rural area was due to wanting to escape expectations (another common thread to many individuals here.) Harlow noted her own privileges in life, that she was always able to access a stable home-life, that she held the qualifications necessary for what she saw as a "career" that could offer financial stability which many others were not able to, but she nonetheless found herself feeling the pull to "get away," and that living in rural B.C. allowed her to act as she wanted—to escape the expectations of "professionalism," and access a community of fairly self-suffi-

cient individuals. When she mentioned that Facebook was a way she saw solidarity through anger about society—capitalism in particular—she showed her resignation that while the system was "fucked," she still had to function within it to some degree at this point in her life, something which was a common theme: finding the balance between functioning within society but trying not to contribute, or to hopefully combat, what was seen as mainstream society's downfalls and injustices.

The suburb itself is also something which came up many times and, in these cases, were often places which held particular disdain and were frequently associated with reasons for the decision to live rurally. While the urban, downtown core of Canada's city-centres could possibly allow for opportunities to connect with other anarchists, musicians, or community efforts/activism that they wished to take part in, the suburbs always represented the "worst" of city living (and capitalism) for them. The lack of community—private streets, prevalence of strip malls over community and a lack of the support which so often led them to move out to rural areas where, while isolation may be common, many saw community being emphasized over the individual. Simply because suburbs were brought up so frequently as a point of disdain, disgust, or a general symbol for what was problematic in society as a whole, it is important to note they were often intentionally contrasted with the types of interactions which could take place in rural "villages" or towns.

Colleen saw it as "remarkable" how much many urban dwellers relied on these "financial systems" and structures of capitalism. "People don't even understand what they would do if the power went out, they think "Okay, I have some candles somewhere and a flashlight," but what's the next step? What if the power doesn't come on for a week?" Colleen, thinking back to a wide-

spread electrical blackout in 2003, described her friends in Toronto saying how much more tight-knit their communities were, "They said that it was remarkable how much more connected they were to everyone that was around them, like everyone would meet at the park, barbecuing, and it was actually way more communal and everyone got to know each other. They didn't have their own little cube that they could exist within, they actually had to reach out and get together, and it was a really positive thing—it was necessary." For Colleen, much of why she chose to return to the community she lived in as a child had to do with her own children, and the hopes to create a sustainable future for them. Colleen hoped to be able to set up a system in which her family could move away from depending on buying food and other goods for survival and instead rely on the small community around them, as well as their own hard work, to grow and raise their own foods and goods.

Ryan was another individual living rurally who had children and a similar rural upbringing—while he was involved in the punk scene in nearby cities he described himself as part of a group of "redneck punks" who would go to Toronto and "bring a big bag of fish or eat raw meat…we were always camping, rough dirty and smelly, we were always country punks, even in the city." He saw this type of living as engrained in his upbringing and wished to teach his children how to survive outside of the city and capitalist system: "Just like surviving on the streets you have to learn to survive in the woods, they need to learn how to self-rescue themselves in case anything ever happens." In terms of responsible food acquisition, Ryan described a situation where he found his son killing snails—"I told him he had killed something so now he had to eat it, but I really enjoy snails so I made them too tasty and it backfired."

While Ryan described always having “an aversion to cities,” he just recently found himself coming around to the idea of communal living rurally. While he described believing communal living as “nonsense” which would almost unavoidably turn into “hippy debauchery,” he found himself coming around to the idea if there were the “right group of people.” He saw “green space” as being a necessary part of enjoyable living and, like others here, found urban spaces to be overwhelming, recalling “when I was younger I would go to Toronto and think no, I have to get out.” Ryan’s experiences reinforce the important ways in which feelings of enjoyment or disdain play into how individuals chose to live in rural environments. While many reasons were given for avoiding the city (a dependence on a commodified workforce, a lack of viable resources, discrimination, etc.) feelings of happiness associated with either nature itself or the “freedom” of isolated environments were factors related to “getting out” of the city.

Like Ryan, others often moved between urban and rural spaces in different stages of their lives. After living in Toronto, Colleen found herself in a smaller city centre, midway between the city and her small rural home. Along with her partner, Colleen opened a small music venue/bar which was aimed at being a “politically inclusive space” where artists and clientele could discuss radical politics, as well as create a haven for the type of people who didn’t quite “fit in” with the rest of the community. While it was a popular space for the punk community in the town, it also encouraged a variety of other counter-cultural musical and political tastes. However, she found herself noticing many of the same issues which were present in the city—being ostracized by certain members of the community for not adhering to dogmatic political norms, infighting, and a lack of community support and sharing.

Colleen was not alone in expressing frustration with urban activists group and lack of support—though it is helpful to understand what this may stem from. Marianne Maeckelbergh's analysis of horizontal organizing in "alterglobalization" movements may be applicable here, and discusses the necessity of conflict in order to acknowledge and appreciate diversity and avoid a single, univocal message (2013:34). She sees this as a major part of how traditional centralization of power can be avoided in these movements, "given that power has the tendency to continuously centralize/accumulate, and can even be unintentionally exercised, horizontality has to take the form of a continuous process that constantly counteracts this tendency with the creation of decentralized, collective forms of power" (2013:31). I believe that much of the frustration presented here and elsewhere surrounding the perceived "all talk, no action" nature of many movements can be linked to this idea of highlighted diversity and alternate (horizontal) decision making, in particular this "conflict" and its possible alienating qualities.

While many of those I chatted with here did see many urban political movements and activisms as productive and important, suspected hypocrisy, ineffectiveness and exclusivity can be linked to the frustration that arose from attempts to take part in them. Conflict within these important processes to make multiple inputs heard on equal ground was seen as rendering many of the communities of activists less effective than they could be. Maecklebergh sums up many sentiments from Colleen and others, that "this acceptance of conflict is a crucial first step, but to make the acceptance of conflict productive, movement actors need to transform conflict from a fundamentally adversarial dynamic into a cooperative and productive one" (2013: 32).

Colleen saw this frustration as contributing to her now living in a rural environment and interacting with back-to-the-landers:

> I feel the political climate is just so intense and so overwhelming and often very negative because I feel like the backlash for me is "Okay, I'm going to create my own country then." My own little piece of paradise and there's still politics involved in that, you still have to deal with some people, but I deal with the people I want to deal with. You know, it feels selfish sometimes but what the hell can I do?

What Colleen described as interactions with "polemic anarchists"—individuals who she saw as aggressively maintaining what they saw as singular, "correct" views, actions and beliefs within this local community—can be linked to other individuals' decisions to flee urban political scenes. Many times individuals described wanting to get involved in local urban politics but feeling drained, or often that there was no "real" action occurring in these communities—or at least not what they saw as activism which was making enough of a difference. Terrence, another self-identifying anarchist who left Toronto in favour of a more rural setting described similar frustrations with narrowly defined political communities in the city, and saw his upbringing in a rural community as lending to his more tolerant behaviour.

I initially met Terrence at a local cafe in the city I was living in. He was dressed all in black with a toque on, even though it was the middle of summer. We decided it would be too loud to talk in any productive way and left, walking down an alley to the back of the building. There was a dumpster and a small community garden which someone had started but seemed to have forgotten about, and we found a perch on a narrow, metal fire-escape staircase, him sitting one step higher than me. We both lit another cigarette and began chatting. Terrence, in addition to his toque, wore a black, worn fanny pack which was too large for his hips, and a pair of black

jean shorts. He had on a black loose shirt with a white logo on it, and clunky combat boots. His head was shaved under his toque, and large jewelry weighed down both earlobes and highlighted his nasal septum. His long, thin fingers were covered in "stick-and-poke" tattoos and were animated as he told me stories from his past, both from childhood and more recently, becoming more so as he became more engrossed in what he was saying.

Terrence described himself as being "way more immersed in the radical community in Toronto" and spending more time "doing physical activism," including student protests and involvement in action surrounding the 2013 homeless shelter crisis. For Terrence, involvement in the "radical" community as well as "physical activism" involved actions taking place offline and particularly protests and the occupation of physical space, something which he linked to urban environments in particular. Like many others who had left the city, Terrence still enjoyed returning to Toronto when possible and maintained connections to the activist community there, though logistic and financial barriers existed which prevented him from physically visiting regularly. Another reason Terrence saw himself as contributing less to "physical activism" had to do with this new, rural location. According to him, his new home was not only smaller but had a more "laid back" political scene. While he saw this shift as perhaps affecting his activism and the way he expressed himself, he still saw himself as having "good politics." He also saw the physical and mental (as well as financial) capabilities of the activists he associated with in his new location as being very different than those he worked with in Toronto, and saw many of them not possessing the privilege to be able to regularly participate in these types of "physical activism" due to physical or mental disabilities, logistic issues, as well as the aforementioned financial barriers in getting to "the city." Terrence also saw the much smaller scale of the activist community

there meaning that it was not always feasible or effective to have the same types of protests as those he participated in when living in Toronto.

In addition, a kind of political burnout can be seen in Terrence's conceptions of their activism which can be seen in other individuals who have made the decision to leave the city, further encompassing this idea of dispossession. Terrence in particular explains a shift from a "physical activism" to a more personal and individual politics, something he saw as evident in the music he wrote:

> "I've definitely noticed it takes a toll, like in the music I was writing a year ago versus the music I'm writing now—it may be less political (though still very political because that never leaves you), but more focused on my own mental health as opposed to in Toronto, activism and politics were very much the forefront of my everyday life. Here I have the privilege to step back and focus on myself, which I think is really important, but maybe affects how I relate to the radical community in social settings a bit more"

Like Colleen, Terrence saw a clear disconnect between himself and what he described the "radical" scene when relocating outside of the urban environment, and describes his "relationships with people in the radical community having diminished or turned sour incredibly quickly in contrast to when I was in Toronto—like I've lost touch or I'm no longer accepted in certain radical, politically-correct communities." Unlike Colleen, Terrence sees this disconnect or shift as relating more to their change in activist projects, their shift from "physical activism" in the city to a more personally based politics, or "if you're not going to do *that* kind of activism you're a shitty activist" (emphasis in interview).

Relating to Colleen's frustrations, Terrence saw many members of the urban radical community as having these rigid political ideals, though failing to apply them to their own lifestyles—something they pinpointed as a problem with change and action effecting society as a whole. "How do you expect to apply your radical politics to larger things and help society as a whole if you can't even apply them to your own relationships and yourself? At this point in my activism, I am reverting to working on myself and focusing on myself because I think that's going to make me a better activist in the future and a better part of the radical community." Like others I spoke with, Terrence saw his focus from a more overt activism to focusing on his own mental health, or a personal politics as being perceived as not "effecting as large a group of people" though still maintaining important value in political experience. However, he understood the urban political community as seeing this more personal politic as "not enough" in terms of overt "activism." Ultimately, he saw that the self-reflection that came from relocating to a rural location as necessary to his own political effectiveness. However, while Terrence describes himself as doing less "physical activism," he does believes that he is still living politically, embodying the same anarchist, political ideals in day-to-day life in a different way than before.

This type of personal politics can be seen in other discussions of resistance to capitalism as well. Brener and Shurz (2002), point to the concept of "micro-resistance" as being key in the use of anti-technologies to bring about real political action "combat[ing] the expansion of capitalist instincts and orders in every direction, every place (2002: 5)." While their advice that using the technologies of power is ultimately ineffective is actually the reverse of what I discuss in this paper, forms of resistance they suggest are very much in line with Terrence's notions that resistance starts at the personal level—"Struggle at the level of elementary particles of thoughts and

activities. Start with yourself, with your own context, your professional field (2002: 5).” Ultimately, their anti-technologies are necessarily “indescribable and non-reproducible,” (2002: 5) to do so would be to transform them into the very technologies they aim to combat. While many of those in this paper do use these technologies, they aim to transform the way they employ them in order to “start with [themselves],” be it transforming the engine of a car to run on waste, or using Facebook to share and organize on a large scale. I argue that while Terrence and others may use the technologies which Brener and Shurz (and many activists) dismiss as ineffective (and they themselves often find problematic), they do so in order to accomplish many of the “dubious and crazy practices” which undermine systems of power, that their “fart in a cocktail party” (2002:3) of systems of capitalism may include some forms of technologies which are in fact reimagined to become “anti-technologies.”

Jazz, who was also active and volunteered in local organizations as well as those associated with their school while living in an urban environment, saw activism as being more “necessary” in the city. They saw themselves as more angry living in urban environments and thus more likely to contribute to overt activism (what Terrence described as “physical activism”): “I feel like that’s when I get most riled up, so I think that it might actually be better for my activism if I were to not go back to those [rural] places, those places are almost like a utopia; I would live in that world and forget that I even have anything to worry about, and then I come into the real world and am like, bam! Reminded of all the things that I hate about what capitalism has done to so many people.” Jazz described feeling this while being in the city, in East Hastings, Vancouver and seeing people shooting up on the street, feeling that this—and particularly the disdain passersby held for them—summed up and reminded them how “fucked” everything was.

Another reason for moving from the city, in addition to similar notions of the closely defined expectations perceived in "urban" political communities, may be linked to escaping a similarly defined role expected from the greater social community, or more dominant social structures in North America. Jazz came from a middle class, urban environment, eventually attending university in a smaller city for four years. They have now been splitting their time between living in a handful of small, communal rural areas in Western Canada, doing piecework along the way, and occasional spurts in urban centres. I met Jazz at the local cafe where they had just returned from picking cherries "out west". They still had their giant knapsack with all of their belongings and provisions, and still appeared to be glowing (or burnt) from the sun—something we hadn't had too much of in my area. Jazz's hair was bleached and their skin was dry and cracking, something they later told me was mostly from the pesticides in some of the fields and orchards they had worked in over the past few months. It was strange to imagine them working in the clothing they wore now, though they insisted it had been their "uniform" for much of the summer months. A bathing suit top underneath a dark cotton shirt, missing its arms and neck, and a pair of "shorts," or what might have been shorts at one point, with roughly-sewn patches struggling to hold pieces of denim together and dusty stripes poking out here and there. Dark leggings were finished off by heavy wool socks and some brown work boots. Clipped onto Jazz's belt loop was a dusty, though still colourful, "unicorn tail" (or so they called it).

Jazz pulled out an eye-glass case from their backpack and began rolling a cigarette with the tobacco inside. Frantic, short conversation was shared around the table between Jazz, myself, and some regulars from the cafe. Jazz and I had discussed my research and they had already agreed to participate, but this wasn't the ideal time. We both grabbed a tall can of beer and re-

turned to sit with the regulars at the long, semi-rectangle of wood slats that formed the largest table on the tree spotted cafe patio. The creek next to the property could be heard faintly just a few feet away, over the railing, and we started asking Jazz how it felt to be back in "civilization." This recent shift became clear quickly after Jazz finished their first beer, when they proclaimed that it felt "so weird to have to go inside to pee…I've become so used to just squatting wherever!" From a conversation preceding our interview as well as these chats, I knew that Jazz felt strongly about the benefits of "escaping" the city—both for personal and political reasons.

In discussing why they initially chose to get out of the urban environment they grew up in, rejecting expected societal norms was an important factor:

> "A lot of the reason why I wanted to initially get out of living in and renting a home, and doing what we're technically "supposed to do"…one big reason was because I felt like this way I can still make money to be able to survive for myself but not have to give it up to some higher boss or power or authority. I felt for a long time that I couldn't mentally handle the idea of working a 9 to 5 job, and we are expected to do that and it's super overwhelming, especially for someone with depression"

Like Terrence, Jazz—both in terms of politics and their own mental health—saw a huge divide between the experiences of living in a rural environment or a city. While we sat discussing this issue in our current urban environment, Jazz explained that while they had only returned recently from rural British Columbia, they already felt anxious and "bummed out," and these effects on them were clearly overwhelming. They reported a noticeable decline in their own mental health

since returning, and were disappointed that the winter months drove them to return to an urban environment.

> "I'm surrounded by concrete structures, and it's like I can tell, the moment I get to B.C. and I see the Rockies and nature and the beautiful world around us I'm so much happier, it's uncontrollable. My mood goes up, I'm happier, I'm healthier, I'm cleaner—even if I'm not showering at all—it's just so much better. There's something about knowing at any point that you can escape, because in an urban society you're not expected to ever escape. We're expected to consistently be living like this, working in an office, taking the subway downtown, going home, that's it."

Jazz's emphasis on autonomy, escape and freedom demonstrates the inherently political nature of their decision to move out of the city, but also highlights the affect present in these decisions. While they have lived in various camps and rural areas since, they initially moved to northern Ontario in order to work as a "tree-planter" for a paper company.

While they still find employment throughout the warmer months doing piece-work, they have found these jobs problematic as well, " At some point there were clashing morals because I was working for a tree planting company, I'm working for a paper company! And a cherry farm, which is covered in pesticides." Jazz described realizing the "hypocrisy" in this type of work for those approaching it from an environmental perspective. They saw it not only working for large corporations who carried out shoddy business and environmental practices but also saw it as just further feeding into the capitalist economy—they described that while working at one camp, living in tents in northern Ontario, a group of co-workers drove into town on their days off in order

to buy groceries, bringing back the same blackberries they had picked that day in the very woods they were all living in. They also, like others, saw a move away from depending on cash to take care of their needs as a primary goal in living rurally, though acknowledged that this was not always possible, "it's a hard time negotiating not wanting to support a capitalist economy, but also having to survive."

While Jazz did make some money living outside of the city, they didn't see it as occupying as central a role in their lives—finding it easier to work around lack of finances through living off the land and depending on neighbours and friends. "It wasn't like, oh I have to pay rent, and I have to pay this, you had to worry about getting money for some things of course, but now (in the city) living in an apartment and paying rent, it's so mind-blowing the power money holds." However, Jazz saw personal autonomy both financially and socially as being the key to their pull toward not only this type of work but also living in "the middle of nowhere." Like others in this paper, Jazz was part of a fluid group who contributed to each others' survival while living rurally, attempting as best they could to escape depending on the "capitalist system". Like Conan and Colleen, Jazz lived within a closed group of a set community who supported one-another, finding and sharing food, setting up living quarters and attempting to live off of nearby resources as much as possible.

Both concepts of freedom and autonomy link into these particular types of communities which are imagined by some as existing purely outside of the city. In this, leaving the city is not necessarily an isolating experience (though it certainly can be for many) but involves belonging to a different type of group dynamic. Members of rural communities may be seen as more self-sufficient, but also more likely to "watch one another's back." Homes are seen to rarely have the

types of barriers found in cities or suburban neighbourhoods, and "most rural residents do not arm their homes with security systems." In addition, police forces were seen as "small or non-existent,", a desirable quality described by many here, with police unanimously viewed as oppressive tools of the state.

Jazz also points out a sentiment echoed in many others' reasons for leaving the city, something which may be tied to the perception that cities more clearly demonstrate the capitalist system. They found that while living in the city they were more sensitive to expected social and professional competition, especially when they were not able to hold a regular job. While Jazz did make money doing odd-jobs, they found their downtime in the city to be demoralizing—"I'm just sitting in my apartment, and I'm depressed, and I don't have a job and I feel like shit about myself. I see all of these other people doing shit, and I'm doing nothing. I think being in nature, the expectations of how you spend your time is different, it's really nice." While discussing differences between urban and rural living, Jazz described spending a brief period of time in Vancouver while travelling back to their current home for the winter. While they had spent stints living without any housing in particular while doing piecework in rural areas, they saw being placeless in the city as much more anxiety-inducing:

> Being without somewhere to stay in a big city, the feeling was a lot more empty. There were a lot of times where we'd be travelling in the country—like through hot springs and pretty rural farmland and it's so beautiful, and we had nowhere to stay but it was kind of okay, like we would sleep on the beach or the woods. But then in the city, you were constantly thinking "Where are we sleeping?" We have all of our stuff on our backs and everyone is staring at you, you are drawing so much attention. I definitely think that be

> ing placeless in a city is way more intense than in a rural place, a place you know where if you go into a bush with a few trees, the worst its going to get you is like a skunk, whereas, when you're in the city, just the feeling that "we have to hide, because we're visible and its obvious what we're doing", even though we're not being violent, we're not doing anything wrong we just really need a place to sleep that night.

Jazz saw this as being linked to those around them in the city, where "you're never going to get away from people." They saw being "placeless in nature" as allowing for less judgment for not adhering to what was expected. Like Conan, they saw survival in urban environments as being different than doing so in rural spaces, "I think in the street it's more of a dehumanizing experience, or it can be for me, and survival in the bush is a more empowering, "fuck yeah!" experience—eating wild game, fishing for yourself, and it tastes so much better, you're not bored sitting around, if you're on the street I feel like there's a lot of sitting around, and you just look at the people looking at you, judging you." Jazz also thought of "the bush" as allowing them to feel more safe when they were alone, remembering sleeping in parks in the city and feeling afraid that someone would come—either a police officer to arrest them, or that they would fall victim to assault or theft. "In the bush the biggest thing you have to be scared of is a bear, or a coyote, but I feel like that's almost more predictable than it is on the streets of a city."

While each individual had different experiences living in rural or urban environments, some common themes emerge. A desire to seek out similar groups politically often resulted in moving to cities, either for school, seeking out more overt activism, or escaping the monotony of suburbia or rural space. However, the types of politics which seem to be found in urban centres

also lent to feelings of isolation or burn-out, something discussed below in regards to the #Occupy movement in particular, but what is also relevant in other forms of activism in Toronto and elsewhere. Many grew frustrated with the ways in which movements seemed to involve a large amount of infighting with little real impact, though also saw it as a necessary process in maintaining horizontally organized movements—something which was integral to the anarchist ideologies many held as the prime drivers of their politics.

These types of reasons behind these movements—whereas many saw the "urban" as a place which did house some hope of their political ideals—may be seen as linked to the concept of "escape" as related to anarchism more broadly. Themes of home, beauty, serene and a "simple" rural life often pop up regularly, though the politically significant nature of living in these spaces is often linked to these. While many imagine their move to the rural as linked to their own well-being it is also seen as a move that does not necessarily remove them from the sphere of "activism," but rather allows for what they see as living more closely to their personal politics, as they do not have to compromise as much to survive in the urban. However, many of the tools which were used in "urban survival," such as relying on close community groups or activist circles, are also emulated through new channels such as online forums and zines—thereby avoiding the type of isolation many described at points in favour a contribution to this "scene." The following section looks at the ways in which these forms of connection are important and maintained in particular ways.

Chapter Five: Anarchist Writing and its Role in the Rural

As discussed above, all of these individuals mentioned anarchistic political beliefs as relating to their rural positions or decisions to leave urban environments, in some form or another. Those interviewed were involved with anarchist politics on a variety of levels. In this sections I wish to look at how these individuals perceived their relationships with anarchist writing in particular and how these reinforce the emphasis on DIY zines and blogs. Through looking at different examples of how this unfolds as well as the types of resources individuals in this scene share, I hope to demonstrate how these types of forums allow for a connectivity and cohesiveness in an otherwise varied scene, allowing for rural individuals in a variety of locations around Canada (and elsewhere) to learn as well as contribute to a body of knowledge—or conversation—around what is means to create these types of "rural punk" or "rural anarchist" spaces.

Jazz described "stumbling across anarchy" during their university schooling in a smaller city centre, specifically through studying critiques of "the institutions and system of capitalism and radical criminology." They saw the politics of anarchy as allowing for the "idea that we might not need to be governed by these people who aren't actually doing anything good for us… we might be able to govern ourselves in a way that's more efficient and positive and enjoyable." Here I hope to look at how this writing and the creation of spaces for these rural anarchists in particular to take part in a community of readers (or contribute) reinforces the idea of this "scene," particularly in the form of the DIY zine.

As mentioned above, Jazz also saw this type of lifestyle as much more possible and less problematic in a rural setting than they did in the city. Within North America as well there are a number of rural anarchist blogs and websites devoted to a variety of topics. These blogs demon-

strate how the offline lives of "rural anarchists" are indexed often in their online activities, with sites generally being ways to share information and techniques, experiences and art. Through looking at some examples of these it becomes clear that there is a spectrum of utility/politics which is present in many forms of communication uniting these different members of the "scene" across physical space. I have already mentioned the role zines have played in existing anarchist resistance movements, and their links to the DIY ideology which encompasses many of these. While some online resources don't necessarily follow this aesthetically, the ideas behind them retain this belief in DIY (or DIT—Do-It-Together) thinking. Through looking at some of the content present on these sites which were mentioned by individuals here this becomes clear.

"Anarchy Apiaries" (anarchyapiaries.org) is one such site (though not the only one of its kind) which offers a hopeful message of change in the form of beekeeping. On their website they ask, "What is happening? Apart from global warming, apart from a weak dollar and high oil prices, apart from our energy, food, water, economic, and personal crises, why are we so grumpy? Where is the connection that sustains our life force? Are we losing our ability to live in peace with ourselves and care for living things? Well, ask not what your paradigm can do for you —nobody out there has your solution. The generations now seem like separations. Nothing out there is going to change until we change ourselves. What we have brought the Honey Bees to bear is an ecological problem. An ecological problem is a social problem. Estranged, packed-in but alone, we have allowed fear and mistrust to govern our freedom." The answer? "The Hive is the window to our new world…We are rediscovering what it means to live in peace with the insects, the landscape, and each other, outside of the corporate scheme. They got the bombs but Bees got the numbers. Join together!" (Like other uses of online space, money isn't left aside al-

together: "Contact us to place hive and queen bee orders. This is blatant capitalism, people. Make your checks out to "Anarchy Apiaries." All proceeds go to direct action bee research.") In addition to hopeful messages of change through apiary activities, the website offers poetry about bees, images of bees, places for enthusiasts to share stories and advice for political change as well as caring for bees, and even a live-feed describing the varied locations of website visitors.

"Punk Domestics" (www.punkdomestics.com) is another blog which allows different users to share recipes, canning techniques, advice on brewing alcohol, DIY maple syrup or preserving just about anything. Anyone can contribute, and in addition to recipes they offer advice on how to forage and glean, identifying edible forms of particular foods and feed oneself outside of capitalist modes of production. Another blog which a few individuals used was "Hunter-Angler-Gardener-Cook," (honest-food.net) where food writer and former cook Hank Shaw offers unique recipes for food that he has foraged or hunted himself. Ryan described this blog in particular as being "inspiring" and its general message is to not only to survive outside of "factory-farmed meats" and "eating locally" but also to create unique and enjoyable dishes—examples include Spanish inspired "braised squirrel aurora" and wild boar headcheese.

In addition to online resources, zines make up a large number of communications and resources. The Country Grind, self described as "written by and for rural punks from across north america," offers a great resource for those who wish to connect with other "rural punks" throughout Canada, as well as parts of the United States. It offers an excellent example of the ways this community addresses themselves in a horizontal and DIY manner. While they mail out hard copies of their zine, they also have an accompanying website with a variety of additional resources and forums (www.countrygrindquarterly.com), on which they describe the zine as:

> a smokin' new magazine for the epically badass rural punks, back to the land skids, backwoods anarchists, etc! It's specifically for those folks who have run away from the cities in search of a simpler, saner, and more fulfilling life. All content is written by fel -low rural punks and is intended for a rural punk audience. Whether you live in a small town, deep in the bush, on a farm in the prairies, or tucked away in the mountains. Whether you're on grid or off. A vegan gardener or a hunter/trapper. You're a lone wolf or you've got a spouse and kids. As long as you're a punk and you don't live in a city, this magazine is for you.Our definition of punk isn't very strict. As far as this magazine is concerned, if you are living your life in a D.I.Y. way, are battling the status quo, and have some level of disdain for authority you're a fucking punk. (Of course, wearing mostly black and listening to loud aggressive music doesn't hurt.)

In the first issue, one of the organizers/editors offers insight into the reasons behind starting this project. They described initially having the idea for the zine with a friend while living "in the woods" together, "overtime I noticed that more and more of my friends are settling down outside of the city and I wanted to be able to stay connected with them." The author described having difficulties finding free time while living in the woods to begin the project, and wanted the zine to be "all about maintaining punk culture… it's a place for punks across North America to net-work and share stories experiences and ideas where we can connect and not feel so alone like the woods can do to us sometime." They also describe the zine as "anarchist to its core"—originally the zine was offered for free to rural residents, though eventually was offered for a small fee in order to cover printing and shipping costs.

In regards to the disdain for the capitalist drive of the urban "rat-race" mentioned above, there are many voices throughout the issues of this zine express similar sentiments. The type of competition that Jazz found overwhelming is echoed in others' reasoning behind leaving urban environments. One contributor sees the rural community as existing in opposition to competitive urban life: "villagers are usually tight-knit and look out for others as though they are one large extended family. People do not feel threatened by others. Neighbours are quick to help one another in times of distress, and small groups make it easy for people to raise their voice during community meetings" (Country Grind Quarterly 2). While these sentiments feed into the dichotomy I criticize above, they are often repeated by many of these individuals, creating a utopian opposition wherein the "rural" becomes associated with positive attributes (beauty, freedom, community, anarchy) and the "urban" takes on negative connotations (rigidity, smog, individualism, capitalism).

As one contributor to the zine furthers this idea: "in cities, nature is usually designated to city-maintained parks. The community has no say on how these parks are maintained…although parks can be fun, they do not depict nature naturally. In the country, you have nature for how it is." (Country Grind Quarterly 2). This demonstrates the link echoed in many of the articles regarding the dominant political structure and the city. In contrast to small parks maintained by humans, this individual sees, in rural areas, that "nature thrives naturally" and "encourages humans to take an environmental stance against pollution, because those who are close to nature live with the beautiful power of nature on a daily basis" (Country Grind Quarterly 2). This is echoed in other's sentiments about nature, such as Jazz finding it easier to "be political" while living in the forest in B.C.; Adam, another rural-living anarchist, seeing working on his land in

P.E.I. as closer to one's own "living" (than wage work), and Conan seeing politics as being more "real" when living in the "boonies."

This link between nature and anarchism may be steeped with imaginings of nature free of human interference, for example, one zine contributor believes that "wild streams choose their own paths, animals live without interference of humans, flowers blossom without the aid of man-made chemicals" This link between nature and a certain type of political stance, in this case of environmental consciousness are also evident in the amount of articles centred on eco-activism (anti-fracking, etc). The same contributor argues, "it is a common misconception that land belongs to the government. Governments are nothing but failed human inventions, which have nothing to do with nature…nature knows no politics. What better way to rid yourself of urban politics than by escaping to rural anarchy" (Country Grind Quarterly 2).

Cities, again, are also seen as intrinsically capitalist spaces full of consumerist behaviour (expand this idea):

> Factories, corporate headquarters, stock exchanges, shopping malls, and chain stores are always trying to sell you crap that you don't need so you can impress people that you don't care about. Villages and hamlets tend to be devoid of such capitalistic enterprises. While open markets and trading posts do exist, these businesses are locally owned and operated. Money stays within the community. Local foods are sold. Souvenirs are authentic to local communities. Prices are Flexible…. Time spent in nature offers tran -quility which can expel anxiety humans evolved from nature so when return to the roots of their origin when they spend time outdoors nature offers undisputed beauty which I am

> sober ugliness of the city days with nature promotes feelings of reflection euphoria and inspiration (Country Grind Quarterly 1)

The Country Grind zine in particular demonstrates the community of readers mentioned above, addressing those who are organizing its printing and distribution as a support for the overall scene: "the community of fine and funky folks putting together, contributing to, and reading this zine are there for you. Bringing you fabulous information, opinions, ideas, instructions, activities, laughs and a big fat dose of reality about rural existence." It is helpful to look at a sampling of articles in order to understand what types of issues are seen as fitting into this:

Fishcharge: Go fish and Survive (Country Grind Quarterly 3: 12)

Borrowed from (and graphically represented in the style of) the name of the popular D-beat hardcore band Discharge, this article champions the health benefits of fish themselves while promoting the "productive, country punk hobby that combines a good ol' time in the outdoors and (hopefully) puts delicious, healthy, wild food on your plate." The author places learning how to kill, gut and clean fish with a healthy lifestyle "taking control of their sustenance, (and) eating local foods"

> Fishing is a great reason to be out on the water, teaches patience and legitimizes your crusty ass drinkin' down by the river. And while you're out there, might as well take note of what kinds of pollution, dams and developments are affecting your beloved fishin hole as the greedy reptilian cannibals consume our planet with the tech-no-logic-kill juggernaut of capitalist in-destroy.

The author cautions to check the legality—to avoid risk of fines or having one's tackle confiscated, as well as to familiarize oneself with the types of fish in the area. In addition, the article offers advice on what types of tackle and lures to use for best chances. Not only does the author include how to clean the fish once caught ("if the fish has large scales, remove them by scraping them off with the backside of a knife, like how you live; against the grain"), but also a tasty garlic and butter filled recipe on how best to cook it. "Savor the meat you caught yourself and think about how you can ensure that you can continue to feed yourself this way. Waste nothing that you kill; eat the eyes and especially the deliciously rich little meat deposit in the cheeks. Enjoy!"

How Roadkill Becomes Art: Talking with Lisa Petrunia (Country Grind Quarterly 3: 18)

In this article, interviewer Shauna Lynn Russell interviews rural Canadian artist Lisa Petrunia, describing her as creating "colorful and mystical art pieces from found plants, insects, animal bones, skulls and skins." Shauna describes Petrunia's work, though made out of dead things, as holding the theme of birth, something Lisa sees as "explor[ing]…the cycle of life/death continuum and mimic it on a small scale." She finds her material primarily from road kill, or "dead stuff" she finds while hiking in nature. In addition, nearby neighbours and friends have donated or offered raccoons, rats, pig heads and other material—Petrunia stresses that she does not kill for her work, "everything is found dead." Petrunia outlines her processes of tanning and maceration to get the materials ready to work with: "You get used to the smells, to blood and guts, to maggots and other helpful critters." and "Every animal has enough brains to tan its own hide." Lisa describes the processes as an "accessible hobby" which is mostly free to carry out. She also emphasizes how much she loves that the materials themselves dictate how her art unfolds, and that "finding the materials amplifies my time with and appreciation of nature." In line

with this, Russell and sees her as possessing "a deep respect for the natural world and a unique ability to breathe new life into every aspect of her work."

The zine also has "rural punk classifieds" in each issue, echoing the tone present in the rest of the article—"Are you looking for that special someone to share a rural punk life with? Maybe you're a lone punk looking for a place to settle down? Or maybe you have a few extra acres on your land and you're looking for just the right punk to share it with?" The classifieds also include offers to buy/trade goods, musicians looking for those to jam with (with the most recent issue specifying "folk/oldtime/bluegrass/old jazz/ragtime/polka") or those looking for advice surrounding anything from trailer maintenance to mining claims. Dating ads are also included, including one "fella sailing from Haida Gwaii, BC to Glacier Bay, Alaska on old Pirate ship with wood stove and a shoestring budget…seeking a kick ass woman to share in the anchor hauling, amazing fishing, and possibly cuddles" and an "epic babe"/diesel mechanic who is "looking for the right lady to share my epic rural punk life with."

Some contributors to the zine also saw their moves from the city to rural areas as relating to physical health. Many attributed their move outside of the city as having to do with their enjoyment of outdoors-y activities as well as a desire to "feel better." Again, this emphasizes the role of pleasure as well as political motivation, moving to what they see as an (often utopian) ideal "nature". One individual saw activities like skiing, skating, snowshoeing, and hiking as great alternatives to those found in the city, which are largely based on having capital (though arguably, some of these activities could also rely on spending cash): "there's nothing to do in the city unless you have money to go to the bar, cinema, or mall—nothing to do but sit inside or wander in between skyscrapers, living [near] smog and spilled chemicals, all of which will grad-

ually deteriorate the longevity of even the most health conscientious individual." They relate this not only to exercise but food as well, associating the city with "manufactured foods and supermarkets," while "rural folks grow organic foods and gardens, hunt and fish organic game…the dietary options of the rural punk lead to DIY action."

This direct relation between everyday activities such as diet, acquisition of tools or sociability to "DIY action" further demonstrates what I argue is the driving force behind this movement or scene, and while this is not the sole context in which this can happen, for these individuals living in rural environments allows them to integrate DIY ethics into more and more of their daily routines and survival. For many, this DIY action was already integrated in their lives through involvement in the punk scene in addition to activist communities, where a level of self-reliance as well as anti-capitalist sentiment is a huge part of the movement. At the same time, in terms of "punks" in particular, moving to the "country" may be seen as an even greater jump. As one author in the Country Grind points out, "punks are primarily perceived as urban inhabitants," where "inner-city squats, graffiti infested skateparks and downtown punk gigs have helped portray images of an urban punk." However, this does not mean that rural punks would necessarily disagree with this mode of living, but instead, rural living is imagined as one way of resisting the dominant capitalist system:

> Punk has always been deeply rooted as a resistance movement. Living in rural areas is a perfect method for resisting the problems of the city. Your average city is plagued with pollution, cops, traffic, noise, crowds, and consumerism's social ills which punk stands against. All of these issues are found in small or non-existent quantities in a rural setting. (Country Grind Quarterly 1)

This contributor saw the urban as holding many disadvantages to health, happiness and political autonomy, though argued that brief stints in the city may help one appreciate rural life more—"if you take it in small doses, go to the city for the things you like and then leave before the negative urban aspects drag you down." While this contributor also saw a multitude of advantages to "country life," they acknowledged the isolation which can arise, where it can be difficult to run into other people or meet new individuals or communities. However, they argue that despite disadvantages like this, the types of communities in the countryside are more "tight-knit," and eager to look out for one another, emphasizing the types of community Jazz, Conan and others lived in.

One contributor to the zine who I met up with to talk more about his experiences didn't move to the country for overtly political reasons, though did have a desire to try to get away from having to "work as much," or rely on holding a full-time job. Adam and his partner moved from Vancouver to a rural maritime property in 2011 with the goal of buying some land. After spending some time travelling on their way—through the states and other urban Canadian centres like Toronto—they eventually ended up camped out on a friend's piece of land. Adam described the process of acquiring the land as less than simple, and getting used to Prince Edward Island as a unique experience. Leading up to the move, he and his partner were "both intent on living lives where we weren't working a whole lot—we both liked gardening and outdoorsy stuff a fair bit and were interested in living off-the-grid in a more—not self-sufficient but maybe community-sufficient, community dependent sort of way." Looking for something where they would not to live with "mortgages and jobs," they purchased a plot of land outright, something

he described as something afforded by Prince Edward Island due to its poor economic environment at that time.

This desire was also linked to wanting to "live a more direct lifestyle," and living in a way that more closely contributed to survival, especially doing work which was not purely in exchange for money. He saw work like gardening and building his own structures as more directly relating to "living," rather than service or monetary-based tasks which he saw as removed, creating capital rather than directly contributing to his own survival (as well as that of his community). This desire to work toward survival rather than for cash was also present in Colleen's desire to return to the boonies. After trying to run her bar with her partner, she described the amount of work necessary to even scrape by in the city, "What a lot of work and not much money, I've never worked so hard in my life and gotten paid so little." She saw the menial work that many do to survive off of a ("pitiful") minimum wage as a large part of the problem, and child-rearing, cleaning and other "necessary" tasks were often undervalued within the capitalist economy. She saw the solution as realizing that it is a "rat-race" and that it isn't working, "It isn't going anywhere, and the only thing we can do is try to create our own structure—and for us there are other people who are interested and have the things we need."

When I met with Adam, he had just returned to living in a city full-time, leaving his property on Prince Edward Island for the city of Toronto. I had been planning on carrying out discussion online, and Adam had kept a blog, created hard copies of zines, and contributed stories to journals about his time spent on his land in P.E.I., but due to a breakup had decided to return to the city to live for a time. We met at a small coffee shop bustling with other people, and I arrived before he got there to read through some of his writings. As he explained to me and also

recounted on his blogs and in zines, he had spent the last year and a half previously living in the cabin which he had built himself, though he had been living on the property off and on before building the structure for two and half years.

He described the many hurdles—some expected and some not—that had popped up throughout his experience living rurally. While he intended to live in Prince Edward Island full-time, he eventually found that he did need to have some sort of financial income to survive. "I never really needed to work full-time in the city because I was living in punk houses and stuff, but I wanted to set up a lifestyle (in P.E.I.) where I could work a little bit, maybe having some income from honey, or honey bees or something. But I know it's not realistic to think I could not have a job at all or not depend on money because in our culture it's a big thing." Ultimately, Adam and his partner found that it would have been extremely difficult to survive off of the land without the use of a vehicle, something which they needed to find the finances to support and maintain.

As a result of necessity, Adam returned to his position as a librarian in Vancouver, splitting his time between living on the West Coast in an urban environment and the East Coast rurally. While this was a long commute already, the rural location of their property meant it was that much further from the convenience of an airport. Adam described this process as exhausting, but also saw it as changing the way he viewed Vancouver, the city he had spent so much of his life previously: "It's funny, because it used to be that the transition was harder, when I was working in Vancouver, I found initially when I'd go back and forth, the city would seem really overwhelming and big which I didn't expect—I had lived there for years. I'd just sort of gaze at the

big buildings. Lately I've noticed I just get really irritated, or have been in the past, feeling like my space is being invaded or something."

In this regard Adam experienced both good and bad experiences, though ultimately wished he had been more integrated in the local "community," a term used in place of "village" or "town" by those who inhabited it. Initially, he described the situation as a mutual avoidance between him and his scattered neighbours which became closer over time. While he described some apprehension in divulging too much about himself and his partner, particularly that they were a couple, he found that their neighbours were often openly curious if not helpful, lending the two firewood, looking after their cabin while they were away, though their stay was not without incident. For example, at one point their neighbour felt "entitled to go through our land while drunk on a tractor." Adam saw this type of experience as a contributing to his lack of integration into the community, and while they were close with some members—a "few punks who lived nearby" and an organic farmer who was not far from their property—their initial goal of living a life based more on community sharing and support wasn't realized until later.

Adam described eventually getting involved in the "community" than he had been in previously, and being received kindly or at the very least "politely." He started volunteering at the nearby "eco-centre," a community-run river management centre, something which did help him earn a bit of income to help acquire necessary goods for his property, as well as become closer to other community members in addition to doing work which held his interest. He wished that he had participated in activities like this immediately after relocating to this land, rather than having members of the community seeing them as "the weirdos on bikes who don't come to church socials."

He emphasized some differences between community while living in Vancouver in contrast to his land in P.E.I. One thing Adam found was that there was a "lot of compromise as far as who you're friends with."

> I was used to having friends who had very similar ideas versus moving to a rural area, you just don't have those kinds of options. So this pretty liberal lefty person, in the city you would think, "Whatever, they're fine." But in the country they're actually really important. And there were people who were not the kind of people to consider themselves anarchists, but were old organic farmers with lots of knowledge. They might not have the same sorts of politics that people would have in the city, but they had solid ideas. And it didn't seem hard (to adjust), it wasn't unexpected.

This movement between the "political" in the city and in the country brings up the question of how personal politics play out in the places one lives. While Adam thought that there were compromises to be made in connecting with the rural community he was living in, he also found that many of those living there were often easier to get along with than those he had encountered in the city who "have ideas but don't do anything." This demonstrates the same type of sentiments voiced by others surrounding political communities in the city which might "talk but don't walk"—or walk but don't accomplish much, situating the urban in a space of political discussion and the rural in a place of "doing." While Adam described being more "active" politically in cities he had lived in before Vancouver, he attributed this to Vancouver itself being "a pretty funny place for activism." He and his partner both identified as having "anarchist ideals," but found

few projects they were interested in while living in Vancouver. This echoes previous sentiments about the frustration which can come out of political involvement in urban activist communities

While many described a reason for moving out into rural areas as a draw from "nature," Adam didn't necessarily see his space in P.E.I. as serving this purpose—"I mean not nature…in Prince Edward Island because it is less of a wilderness kind of area, but definitely that's one of the things that made it so okay to live there. When I go to northern Ontario, northern B.C., Yukon, North West Territories, like in sort of real wilderness places I definitely feel this like, a peacefulness or a connection or something like that that I don't get anywhere else, even if it's like a natural area in the city." When looking at the different reasons presented here for "fleeing," or abandoning the Canadian city centre, it helps to think about the city further and what it can represent. The city has often been seen as a hub, not only for human activity in general but activism in particular, and looking at some examples of (stereotypes) of urban sociability is helpful in understanding some of these notions of the city.

In many of these cases writing to others in similar rural environments, whether through contributions to these zines, creating personal blogs, or taking part in online discussion, helped foster this recursive relationship between offline and online as well as throughout a variety of physical spaces. Through sharing experiences and advice this scene is contributed to and "created" by a variety of readers and writers, who demonstrate this recursive relationship present in the production of zines as well as web-based writings. In this, technology clearly becomes important in not only combatting isolation in rural environment but also maintaining a political dialogue and sharing with others, demonstrating attempts of getting away from the types of "possessive individualism" (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 7) which is so often associated with urban envi-

ronments for these individuals. Having demonstrated the form that many of these forums take—ones which are highly dependent on a horizontal contribution and organization—I wish to expand on why online technology in particular is an important tool used in this scene, as well as how it is seen ambivalently by many who contributed regularly to these online zines and blogs.

Chapter Six: "Tech-no-logic-kill": The Internet, DIY Culture and Navigating Isolation

> Technology does make us stupider, for sure. But there can be smart, or at least reasonable, ways to use it. Being that this technological trend is likely only to get worse before it gets better, it seems to me we are better off learning how we can live smarter with all this technology around us, using it in some ways, rejecting it in others. Rather than just rejecting the whole lot and completely alienating ourselves from the world that is grow ing around us, with or without our participation….I guess the moral I'm trying to get across is technology is not our friend. It is an evil cast upon our world, constantly trying to distract us from reality, but we shouldn't beat ourselves up for using it, as long as we use it consciously and smartly (is smartly even a word?)" (Country Grind Quarterly 1)

Online resources definitely allowed for a level of interaction and connectivity often instantly with other rural individuals, and were used by all of those I talked to at some point. However, these were often tools which individuals had a difficult relationship with, providing welcome information, resources and forms of community while at the same time representing much of which they were hoping to "escape" from. While "the internet" can be understood in a broad variety of ways, for the purpose of this research, unless otherwise specified, those I have interviewed mostly saw their use of the internet as consisting mainly of social media sites—Facebook, Tumblr, and active readership in blogs and online zines. This did vary, often based on the age and experience of individuals with social media, it was a common activity for everyone involved to some degree. Often uses of the internet (and technology) involved other kinds of ac-

cess, often to DIY, how-to blogs, music-sharing sites, access to "radical" podcasts, though these often also incorporated a social aspect and open dialogue.

Though the internet was rarely imagined as a central part in the politics of those I talked to for this project, it is still helpful to use some tools to try to conceptualize this "web," not only in terms of how communities exist online, but also how we can view "cyberspace," within the spectrum of place discussed here (from urban to rural, etc.) In terms of avoiding thinking of on-line space as a removed "cyberspace," in which actors exist detached from their "real" selves in a timeless virtual realm (Postill 2008:115), it helps to imagine it within this fluid spectrum of places found in the urban, rural and in between. John Postill discusses the benefits, in addition to moving away from this concept of "online" space, the use of looking past simply seeing online activity as based in purely "community" or "networked" formations (2008:414). Postill argues that the concept of community "merits attention as a polymorphous folk notion widely used both online and offline, but as an analytical concept…it is of little use" (2008:416). He instead argues that through examining "social fields" the tired connotations that follow community and network are avoided, and contextualization of local phenomena without having to ignore online activity are more useful (2008). I believe that these "social fields" could also be conceptualized as fitting into the concept of "scenes," particularly in this case.

Accessing the internet at all may also be seen as political, and while many attempt to use online resources for anti-capitalist movements, it is becoming more commodified than ever and often, when it can be accessed for "free" it is due to heavy surveillance by government agencies or private corporations (Coleman 2010:492). For many of those I've talked to here steps are tak-en to ensure that they hide their "real" identity—online security culture was seen as particularly

important—though this seemed to be situational in that they may use their real names in one space though not in another, and no one went to great lengths to encrypt information or hide their "offline" identities. However, this may have been due to the perceived peripheral nature of these online activities in many cases, where the activities themselves were not imagined as taking place "online" but instead the internet was seen as a tool to communicate ideas to "rural" individuals spread out across Canada and globally.

This brings up something that is often linked to academic analyses of online activities and cultures (particularly those associated with anarchist or activist movements) — anonymity. In discussing the online group which can loosely be referred to as Anonymous, Gabriella Coleman points to common tropes as describing online users either as "malicious teenage boys, living in their parents' basements" (the "hackers") or youth and young adults making up a generation of "digital natives whose sense of self and whose ethical frames are said to derive from their common use of social media technologies, like Facebook and Twitter" (2011:512), both of which may be seen as representations far from realistic demographics. Like Kelty's geeks, Coleman focuses on those who hold a higher level of technological know-how in order to maintain what they see as a variety of internet politics (2011:513), where anonymous communication and access to modification (hacks) is a huge part of how they operate (with the hacker group Anonymous giving a key example in the importance given to "real identity" remaining hidden online) (Coleman 2010:15).

In general, the internet seemed to be used as a tool when it became convenient for getting around, sharing, connecting with others or engaging in like-minded online groups. Jazz described how the internet could be used for different things depending on their situation at the time."The

internet—I guess it's such a quick thing to assume the internet is Facebook and social media, but using the internet in other ways, we were using it a lot for couch-surfing, which is to find places to sleep." In this case, "couch-surfing" sites (i.e. couchsurfing.com) may be seen as a point in which the online and offline are highly integrated—online access translates into housing (often temporary) and networking "in real life." The prevalence of smart phones allowed many to use these types of resources while travelling and in a variety of contexts. On ventures into the city, Jazz described online sources of "couch-surfing," along with social media sites such as Facebook, to allow them to access a community of both known and unknown peers in order to secure shelter for their visit. They also emphasized the communal and social aspect of this practice, seeing it as a creation of a known network of peers. In this sense, by securing somewhere to stay online, Jazz saw themselves as creating a new addition to their personal network and creating contacts in a urban centre near them to increase their support system politically and socially.

The use of the internet in modern political actions can be seen in a variety of ways, often contradictory in nature. While movements like #Occupy (something which many of these individuals were involved with at some point) attracted a significant anarchist interest and used web-based organization often, many see modern anarchist movements as overtly rejecting the use of new media. This is summed up by Gordon in regards to both computer-based technologies as well as larger scale energy movements:

> On the one hand, we find anarchists involved in numerous campaigns and direct actions where the introduction of new technologies is explicitly resisted, from bio- and nanotech-nology to technologies of surveillance and warfare. On the other hand, anarchists have been actively using and developing information and communication technologies (ICTs),

> as well as engaging in practical sustainability initiatives that involve their own forms of technological innovation (2009).

While Gordon references the same types of hacking and coding activities mentioned by Kelty and Coleman, he also discusses the prevalence of open-publishing and that "the internet is attractive to anarchists because its architecture enables a communistic informational economy" (2009). However, like many here, he acknowledges the fears that (under capitalism) technology will be used primarily to reinforce the established order (2009). In the case of this "scene," much like #Occupy, the nature of the internet itself is not what is being changed, but rather attempts are being made to use existing resources (like social media) for the purpose of developing a political narrative.

Also helpful in examining the ambivalent place of technology in activist movements is the work of Jeffery S. Juris (2012). While writing about the #Occupy Everywhere movement in 2012, Juris attempts to conceptualize the widespread use of social media and listservs in the movement while keeping in mind the importance of physical space (2012). #Occupy movements are not only relevant here due to the participation in the movement by many individuals here, but also that it may be seen as a prime example of the "new" types of protest which rely heavily on social media to connect varied groups with multiple goals. Juris, like others, links "new media technologies" (in particular listservs in the 1999 WTO protests and now Facebook and Twitter in recent movements) to changes in how organization occurs—though is careful to avoid placing too much importance on this within the movement (2012: 260). Juris wishes to find a space between the "techno-optimists and skeptics" in understanding the value of online forms of organiz-

ing and communicating, and sees the two—virtual space in addition to physical space—as part of the same effort of resistance (2012: 260).

He sees each as falling into an important part of organizing, and uses the terms "logic of networking" (online) and "logic of aggregation" (occupying physical space) as distinctions (2012: 260). In the examples I have been discussing in this paper these terms are further complicated, and while a "logic of networking" is certainly present in both online forums and physical zines distributed locally and globally, a tool which Juris sees as less at risk of "disaggregation" than physical spaces (2012: 266). Perhaps it is this fluidity and the staying power which comes with it that helps encourage this (often difficult to acquire) usage of the internet, though connectivity in potentially isolating rural contexts is also a prominently desirable quality:

> The combination of Twitter and smartphones, in particular, allows individuals to contin-ually post and receive updates as well as to circulate images, video, and text, constituting real-time user-generated news feeds. The use of Twitter and Facebook can also produce a sense of connectedness and copresence, potentially eliciting powerful feelings of solidari-ty as protesters read about distant and not-so-distant others engaged in the same or kin-dred actions and protests (Juris 2012:267).

Juris sees these protests as allowing for the visibility of these existing online networks in physical space, visibility which may pop-up and disappear but reflects constantly existing forms in virtual space (2012: 267). He sees these physically manifestations as key in moving these political efforts to "create more sustained movements" (2012: 268) and for those discussed here this may help to explain the choices to move permanently to rural environments rather than temporarily "resignifying" urban spaces.

However, while Juris sees the physical manifestations of #Occupy movements as contributing to feelings of solidarity and community, in the case of often politically isolated individuals living in rural Canada the opposite often proves to be the case—the internet and zines often provide ways of feeling a solidarity with a "rural punk" or "rural anarchist" community which can combat feelings of loneliness so prevalent in isolated physical spaces. Particularly in winter months many described using social media to keep in touch not only with a political community but with family and friends who remained in urban centres or faraway provinces. In this, new media can allow for the continuation of rural living and anarchist efforts through combatting a sense of isolation and promoting connectivity—connecting with the "scene" in a variety of ways. However, its use remains something many maintain a level of disdain for.

These ties between physical spaces and online networks—which exist within a unifying political ideology—depend on efforts that "seek to reappropriate abstract space and recast it according to an alternative calculus of use value" (Juris 2012: 269). While Juris is discussing the occupations of parks and urban spaces (and mentions urban squatters and direct-action on abandoned or commercial buildings) this can also take place online. Simple actions like using pseudonyms or other tools to hide identity on social media sites like Facebook can function to reappropriate the use of these spaces as well. While Juris sees the occupation of these urban spaces as often leading to "fatigue and burnout" (2012: 269)—much like that described by many who carried out activist efforts in urban centres—the internet allows for a more fluid involvement which can not only be "signed-out" of, but can be accessed from a variety of physical spaces. Ultimately, Juris sees these online spaces as integral to future movements, reflecting the anarchist ideals of Conan, Jazz and others: "Unlike that of the short and medium term, the terrain for such future-

oriented struggles is not the state but the autonomous, self-generated networks of movements themselves" (2012: 274).

As for the type of social networking Juris is describing, Jazz did not find themselves frequenting sites like Facebook in the same way while they were working and living in rural areas, stating that they "were engulfed in the other world" (nature). Upon visiting urban centres, and relying more on social media to secure lodging and connect with other people, Jazz recalls finding the practice "absurd" after going so long without feeling the desire or need to rely on it regularly for entertainment. However, for someone who often met a variety of people who were highly mobile, they described social media as an important tool for keeping in touch with others. "Sometimes travellers come and then the next minute they're gone, but the one thing I know is that I might be able to find them on Facebook—these people that you really connect with because you live with them for a period of time, it's a huge thing being able to see what they're doing, how they're doing…just knowing what's going on with them."

Jazz was also critical of social media in many ways, seeing the increasing expectation for "transparency" on Facebook, particularly in the form of using real names—and expectations that you are supposed to "really represent" yourself—as a downfall of social media as a tool for resistance. "That's so problematic for me, how can you create a site that it's possible to make up anything you want but then tell people to be totally raw and real, because nobody is, we're all performing." They linked Facebook to Foucault's panopticon, where individuals posting may not be consciously thinking of their actions in relation to other people, but that it's "always in the back of your mind." They described it as the online equivalent of "making sure you're not picking your nose in public."

One use for the internet that Jazz described as being more prevalent in "the bush," for them, was reading political literature. With an increased amount of free time, they found themselves seeking solitude in order to read articles and books online. Without having to carry around physical volumes, Jazz could access a huge body of work on their smart phone. "I read a lot of anarchist literature, I read this anarchy works—I spent hours in a tent reading that, it was awesome because it was cool to be living in a place where I felt like I was actually somewhat resisting in a way, whereas when I'm reading anarchist literature in my rented home with my landlord, it's kind of absurd." In this, Jazz saw a lack of authenticity in reading and investing in anarchist ideology while renting apartments in the city, while believing moving rurally somehow brought them closer to a "real" form of lived anarchy (though, as mentioned, this was not without compromises).

Jazz's belief that they were "actually resisting in a way" while reading anarchist literature in an isolated area of rural B.C. demonstrates the belief behind many of those who choose this movement to rural areas as part of a political action. While Jazz read physical copies of anarchist literature and critical theory while attending university, they felt much more "hypocritical" then, as they did not see themselves as enacting change in the community or individually. While they did take part in some activist organizations, their time in the "middle of nowhere" seemed to them much more politically fulfilling on an individual level due to a perceived "closeness" to political action. Jazz described realizing a political and social optimism in the woods that they had lost living in an urban environment: "it made me so much more fuelled, and excited, thinking "This is possible! We're doing it right now!"… we're all living in a place, feeding each other, doing great and everything's awesome."

Like Jazz, Terrence saw a place for the internet in his activism, in particular with issues of accessibility—both due to physical barriers and geographic distance:

> The internet is such a useful tool for people in radical communities who want to do activism and things like that. It's a whole other form, it connects you with other radicals across the world where there wasn't previously a connection that could be made. I think that's really important for sharing ideas and constructive criticism within the movement, or various movements that come out of radical politics.

In addition to those who are not able to (or choose not to) live in or travel to urban centres for events Terrence found the internet to be an excellent resource for those who were physically or mentally unable to attend these events. He described the internet as "a resource for people who were previously unable to make it to anarchist book fairs or bookstores, who are now able to sit at home and read the anarchist library, read articles about different activism and things that are happening all over the world. Information available to everyone, or at least more people than just those who can travel and tour." Terrence particularly saw the internet as an excellent resource for those who were unable to carry out other forms of activism due to physical or mental disabilities, but still wanted to be part of a "the community" of anarchist-based resistance movements.

This brings up something which few people brought up in detail, though was certainly something everyone touched on as an issue. The idea that the internet allows "information to be available to everyone," (something which Terrence does add a qualifier to) presupposes that everyone is able to afford and access online spaces in similar ways. While much has been written on the idea of the "digital divide," it is still important to acknowledge that this is part of a larger system of inequality globally. Within Canada, there are many barriers to access surrounding re-

mote locations as well as income and knowledge, despite the government's efforts to implement a "Connecting Canadians" initiative in the early 2000's (Middleton and Sorenson 2005: 468). However, the digital divide in Canada may be seen as steadily declining in many populations over the past two decades in regards to internet and cell-phones (Sciadas 2002:3), and increasingly accessible wireless access points and tech-savvy found in younger groups aid in the internet becoming a viable and cheap (often free) outlet for these individuals.

Ultimately, though some described technology like the internet as being an "evil cast upon our world" that we had to learn to use in particular ways, Terrence saw it as a "pertinent tool to the movement…anything can be used for evil, but I think it's doing a lot of good in connecting and sharing ideas to so many people." While Terrence was aware that this access was particular to Canadian (or Western) culture, and those privileged with the ability to access the internet, he did see it as something which could be beneficial to those who were otherwise unable to participate in a community of anarchists or part of a "movement."

Even within the experiences of those interviewed here, over their time moving into more rural locations, their access to technology changed and was often something unpredictable and sporadic. Adam, for example, sometimes had access to the internet through his mobile phone (if he stood on the right spot on top of a hill), but due to the unreliability of the connection he generally refrained from using it, instead using the internet only when he went into the nearby village library or hot-spots in town. Colleen did attempt to see if an internet provider could set up access on their land, but it would have involved expensive and intrusive work (cutting down a large amount of trees), so she opted to use the internet when she was "in town", or whenever she could access her mobile online services. She believed allotting finances to become "connected"

on her land was unnecessary, and also found that cutting down the trees would be far from "worth it." Jazz had similar experiences with access while they were "in the bush," though they were able to tap into free wifi from nearby towns more frequently than others. Despite this, all three expressed a sort of pleasure in not being able to connect (even if they had wanted to) unless they made the effort to do so, having to make the choice to physically visit areas where the internet was available.

Conan used the internet sparingly now, and said that while he was homeless in Toronto it wasn't really an option—both because of his resources and that the internet had yet to become a "big thing." He recalled that the squat he stayed at in Montreal in the early 2000's did have a communal computer set up in a shared living space, though the activities deemed acceptable excluded things like social media. Those living there were urged to carry out things which would contribute to the general anarchistic social space, "You weren't allowed to use social media at all, it was only for e-mails, for communication or organization, or for different sites or articles, research, but Facebook or whatever was really not allowed." This likely ties into Jazz's anxieties about the ways in which Facebook dictates its user profiles, expecting them to not only be linked to an e-mail address which is active and linked to a "real" identity (unlike many forums online associated with activist or "hacktivist" efforts, which can be used anonymously or pseudonymously) and creating a risk when organizing.

When I asked how this was enforced by members of the collective, Conan explained that since the computer itself was situated in the main room it would have been difficult to use social media anyway, but that "everybody adhered to it, most of us didn't even have Facebook at the time so it wasn't hard." Terrence also described using the internet in different ways when moving

from Toronto, and in addition to political-based interactions, he used his music to connect to others online from his more rural location. However, as mentioned above Terrence's conceptualization of his place online was not straightforward: "I wouldn't necessarily refer to it as a community…well I guess online it is definitely some kind of community, but I feel like the impact I've had (within the community) isn't as significant as other people (activists)." After leaving Toronto, Terrence found himself using the internet more both while travelling and while situated in rural Ontario. Like Jazz, Terrence used social media sites (Tumblr, etc.) to keep in touch with the "scene" in the city as well as other "transient and travelling people."

> It keeps me in touch with bands and other radicals in Toronto, but also, when I was in B.C. last summer—I can keep in touch with people I've met everywhere, even people from the states or overseas, that I've met via discussions online, and I can keep an open dialogue with them. It works with everything, bouncing political ideas off each other, organizing—if I were to go on tour I would have infinite access to all of these people who I know are solid, political people—it makes travelling and getting together in the radical community way easier. Most of these people I wouldn't even know, I wouldn't be able to meet or get in touch with without the internet.

Terrence used these online connections not only to navigate radical communities "across the world" but also to share his music, something he held very close to his own personal politics. In addition to sharing ideas, Terrence also expressed satisfaction in being able to share this music and self-made merchandise throughout Canada, the U.S., and as far as the U.K. He also described the freedom of movement that this facilitated. "If I ever go to California, B.C., Portland…I have connections there that I wouldn't have if it wasn't for the radical community that

congregates online." Terrence also saw the internet as being a way to connect with "the radical community" in a way that "caters to me and my disabilities and those of other radicals in the community so we are constantly sharing ideas and discussing even if i'm not physically or mentally able to [be present]."

In addition to seeing the web as an outlet to find like-minded people throughout the world, Terrence used it as a source of income—at times as a way to survive. He sold his music online, often to cover necessities like food, supplies and lodging. Terrence described one instance in particular where he felt particularly close to the online "radical community," when trying to raise money for his legal name change; Terrence raised money purely from donations online (through sites like PayPal) and noted that he received donations from urban centres all around North America. Even despite his move from the city of Toronto, Terrence received donations from individuals in Toronto—"people in Toronto I've never met but who heard from other radicals that this was happening and wanted to help." He saw this as intimately linked to the type of relationships which can occur online, that since these individuals didn't know him personally they couldn't just "walk up and hand you twenty-bucks." Terrence believed that he would not have been able to carry out his legal name change without this kind of support: "I'm going to have a name change, whereas I wouldn't be able to afford to do that because of my situation, and because of capitalism."

He saw this type of crowd-sourcing as a way of pooling resources to show solidarity with other individuals and groups on larger scales as well: "We can not only visually and textually offer support but financially offer support via easy, quick, instant money transfers to people." The speed, ease and convenience of money transfers was something Terrence saw as key to soli-

darity movements and support for those in dire need—people being evicted, experiencing health issues with themselves, a pet, a family member, suffering from injuries incurred in protests, police brutality as well as a variety of other circumstances. For Terrence, "offering financial solidarity in this way is important—we're living in a capitalist society and money is a "necessary" tool because of the dominant way of doing things."

Ultimately Terrence saw the internet as a tool which was changing the way radical communities could exist "in the world," especially allowing individuals to access those who fell more in line with their personal politics than those in their limited physical area: "I think that the internet is one of the greatest things to happen to the radical community because of the connections we can now make. Of course all of these things can be used for bad but can also be used for a lot of good." Terrence saw it as a way of utilizing the tools of dominant society to support a counter movement, explaining "all you need is a free wifi connection at a Tim Horton's and you can sell your art online. I have friends who sell art and live out of their cars, friends who tour cross country and play, sell art, trade and share information and they support themselves."

While Jazz described the community-building capacity of the internet through practices such as couch-surfing or social media, Terrence spoke of modes of maintaining what he saw as a "safe space" amongst fellow radicals across Canada in the form of "public-service announcements" surrounding "abusers or those who have sexually assaulted within the community." Terrence saw these announcements—often posted on social media sites Tumblr or Facebook—as "super important in terms of queer people and radicals in the community, and knowing who these people are when previously they could just hide under the guise of going to another city…now we can know, try to keep the scene safe worldwide with just the touch of a button."

The ways in which Terrence and Jazz described their internet use brings up the idea of DIY culture again, ultimately rejecting many of the intended uses of these sites in favour of modes of resistance or alternate forms of survival, creating these sorts of "anti-technologies" (Brener and Shurz 2002)—using the internet to sell homemade art projects or music, using social media to raise awareness about abuse in the community (rather than talking to police), sharing recipes for pickling, chainsaw etiquette, etc. can all be seen as fitting into a DIY ethic. Císař and Koubek, who offered the helpful analyses of the "scene" discussed earlier, also fit the concept of "DIY" into that scene, which is paramount in understanding online activity as well. They see the cultural and political spheres within their "scene" as being connected by the concept of do-it yourself (2012:9). These individuals are really attempting to practice DIY ethics (and direct action), and see rural living as inherent to that (DIY food production, house building, community building which is, in this case, more physically removed from what they see as "the system" than it could be in the city).

Colleen also fit into this way of using the internet for DIY endeavours, not through social media but a list she had been trying to organize for labour or tool-sharing which relied on gathering individual's e-mail addresses or phone numbers. She saw this as fitting into her and her partner's general "goal structure" for the future, which she ultimately describes as "getting off the financial system as much as possible." "What I'm excited about is trying to organize people because there are so many people up here who share resources and want to barter and want to trade but they just lack someone who's organizing it." Colleen's desire to organize this bartering system with the use of phones and e-mails demonstrates her pulling the use of technology into car-

rying out what was discussed above—trying to escape the types of cash-based lives Simmel and others saw as being so intricately linked to the city.

She said that some "ground work" had been created, with a "Community Collective" sheet already in place with e-mails and numbers. "It has people's names and e-mail addresses or phone numbers and what they have to offer whether it is a material object like a wood splitter or whether it be something like a skill they have that they would be willing to trade, and the big idea that I had was that I wanted to act upon was food sharing, because I feel that is a big part of people's lives, and a big part of what their money would go towards." Colleen used this technology when she could to try to support this food sharing effort. Some of those on the list offered machines or skills but many offered land which was suitable for growing particular foods—something Colleen didn't have much of on her own property.

"There's one friend who has fields that are cleared and need to be maintained because he's in the city right now, but you get everyone together, look at how much food they think they might need for the year—for the winter, for the season—and divide people into looking after plots." She saw this system as allowing for more efficient use of time and trading, where one individual could take care of one particular plot instead of having to worry about small quantities of many different ones. "We can together, we preserve together, we freeze, we dry things, just get the food thing going. Because I don't see what's going on now as sustainable, and you know, I really do feel like it's only a matter of time before it falls apart, and if it doesn't fall apart in my lifetime it will probably fall apart in my kid's lifetime, and all I can really hope for is that there's some kind of framework that they can step into so they have something that they know." This

demonstrates the ambivalence present in both relying on and rejecting systems of dominant society in order to try to reimagine these spaces.

Adam also described using the internet at some points—he maintained his blog throughout his time there—but since his plot of land was without electricity it was not often accessible. He did, at some points, own a phone capable of accessing the internet, but described having to climb up a hill to even hope to connect. There were internet access points, such as the library, in a small village that Adam could bike to within 25 minutes from his land, though he described enjoying the choice in when and if he was connected to the online community. While social media was something which was used to connect, many also saw knowledge surrounding country living as an asset to using the internet. Both Adam and Ryan described using websites and blogs to accomplish tasks they were unfamiliar with. One such occasion was when Ryan and a few friends used information from Google to clean an acquired "roadkill deer":

> The road kill deer was really fun. I was at home making dinner, my wife was back from school and I got a phone call from my friend who said his girlfriend saw a guy who hit a deer, she was waiting by the side of the road for us to come get it. He was out on the island hunting ducks, so I got in the van and went and found her. The guy who had hit it had come back to make sure it was dead, because he was a trapper, and he made sure we knew what we were doing so we scooped up the deer and threw it in the back of the van. We then realized that neither of us had even taken part in the gutting of a deer in over a decade, so we did a lot of humming and hawing and Googling and then he got out his knives and we dove in.

Ryan described using aforementioned blogs like “Hunter-Gatherer-Angler-Cook” to research useful tips on planting, hunting, and preparing and saw this as optimizing the way information could be shared and used. However, while Adam described finding inspiration to move from clearly articulated DIY how-to’s found on the internet, Ryan blamed these for many being unprepared to realistically live rurally: “Especially in the winter, I blame the internet for lots of people being unprepared—seeing on Facebook that this is a thing someone did, but what do you do if your pipes freeze? What do you do if you have a well and the power goes out?” While he described that he did use the internet to learn things surrounding food acquisition and building, he attributed most of his know-how to offline interactions with those he had done building with as well as indigenous people in the community he lived in, in addition to “traditional” methods globally which could be shared online. He saw this as a perk of using online resources, where “it’s all shared now, you can find all kinds of great ideas, ancient techniques, different soil conditions, taking all the information that at one point would be shared locally which might go from region to region over generations but now it’s blown up—now you can take some kind of Romanian building technique and couple in with Japanese aquaculture, mesh it all together and get the best of both worlds.”

Like most other things discussed here, technology in relation to rural life was a topic covered in the Country Grind zine. In one particular segment titled “tech-no-logic-kill” (after the band Nausea’s song, a group whose lyrics often deal with technology and similar political ideas), the author describes their love for this song, and the ideas behind it, so much that they have tattooed the phrase on their collarbone, a tattoo that they love but that has however “made me feel guilty about every piece of technology I own.”

> When I say technology in the context of this article, I'm mostly talking about computers, cellphones and other electronics. But Tech-No-Logic-Kill is so much more than that. It is the trucks we drive, and the oil we need to drive them. It is the cities that most of us have rejected. It is the mines that destroy our mountains and pollute our rivers. It is indus -trial agriculture and genetically modified crops, it is my own job at John fucking Deere! (Country Grind Quarterly 1)

They describe the aversion that they always held toward cell phones, but that they eventually got one due to the impossibility of getting a landline in their "cabin deep in the bush." "That was three years ago, now I have a smartphone and a laptop. I check my e-mail every day, text with my friends and coworkers all the time, and my phone is usually the last thing I look at before falling asleep, and the first thing I look at in the morning…Oh gawd, when I think about that I throw up in my mouth a little."

The relation of technology with what is perceived as the capitalist system is clear in many of these sentiments. McKay argues that the use of technologies in general—not purely web-based ones—reflect inequalities present in the capitalist system and are inherently political in their use (2006). He associates the use of technology as representative of the subjugation of workers and therefore key in social power relations—power relations, for him, may be controlled through rejecting technological "progress" (2006). This is reflected in Gretchen and others' feelings of disdain in reliance on web-based technologies as well as other machinery for farming, etc. However, in reclaiming the use of technology for independent and resistance-based endeav-

ours, machines (particularly computers and smartphones) are taken from the hands of the "ruling class" (McKay 2006).

"I really don't like spending all (or any) of my free-time on computers. I feel like it is a waste of my life. It is super tempting when you are right there, with a laptop connected internet, and nothing else that needs to get done. I've defiantly (sic) been guilty of my fair share of getting lost on YouTube, but ultimately that's not the way I want to spend my life. I have another tattoo, this one on the top of my hand so I can always see it: Do Epic Shit. What's more epic, downloading and binge watching the latest season of Game Of Thrones, or going outside and having an adventure, or even just reading a good book that teaches you something (all these Foxfire books don't read themselves)."

They attribute using the internet to maintaining the zine itself, and states that when they first started the project they were living in a "proper house (you know, with separate rooms, electricity, indoor plumbing, drywall, and the like)" and had access to the internet regularly. While they see sitting their cabin in the woods while typing away on their laptop as somewhat hypocritical (though with some tongue-in-cheekiness) they describe themselves as "too excited to see where it goes" to stop. "Let's be honest, I live alone in the woods. My nearest rural punk friends live either 100 kilometres south of me or 200 kilometres west in Saskatchewan. This magazine is the only way I get to keep in touch and contribute to the greater punk community." This further emphasizes the role of the zine and online forums to create a sense of community or connectedness in the face of often isolating physical locations, and while these individuals do aim to live rurally the need to connect with like-minded individuals remains.

They also discuss the age-group which is associated with this more widespread use of technology: "I think it is also important to realize that folks my age (I'm 28) were the first generation to really grow up with the internet. I was nine years old in '95, when the internet really started coming to peoples homes and schools. I grew up with a generation of kids who were never taught any of the traditional "obsolete" ways of doing things." In regards to the zine, they state that they don't know any other way to put it together, and "to be completely honest, I immediately assume that it would be too hard…While part of me hates myself for admitting that, I also know that in order to successfully communicate in the world I need to play their game. I need to not be so hard on myself for having a cellphone in this day and age, as long as I'm not an obnoxious douchebag with it. And I shouldn't feel bad about watching a movie on my laptop to wind down after a hard day, as long as it's not the only thing I do every day after work." This echoes other concerns about technology use, both with cell phones and the internet, that are often seen as something which can be used with moderation, and integrated in a more widespread anarchist ideology.

This brings up this ambivalence I have mentioned in regards to online technologies, which I see as an intrinsic theme in this type of scene—while technology is often seen as "evil," it is also an outlet for not only sharing but for pleasure. This may be linked to the younger ages of those undertaking these place-making endeavours who, as the previous contributor writes, we're the "first generation to really grow up with the internet." The level of integration these types of sociabilities have in these individuals lives from a relatively young age mean that often the use of social media is seen as a given, not necessarily a tool or venue that was present (or prevalent) in earlier generations of online activists or hackers. However, this use of technology is

also something which allows this type of scene to not only be created but to thrive and grow, and this acceptance that technology will be a tool used with increasing popularity and efficacy in resistance-based movements is echoed by everyone here, even older individuals like Conan.

Conclusion

With increasing integration of these types of technology in daily lives, these individuals are accepting (if often begrudgingly) that online communication will be a necessary part in how anarchist politics unfold in Canada at this moment in time. In many cases, these efforts are made possible through the use of technology (to access advice and resources) and certainly the satisfaction of those in these environments is linked to the ability to communicate to other "rural punks" through online outlets. This not only aids in minimizing feelings of isolation often associated with rural environments, but also allows individuals to tap into existing "scenes" through online resources and create a recursive space in which to contribute to a shared experience of "exodus" from urban centres.

These types of movements into rural areas, as mentioned above, may be linked to a variety of factors, often having to do with a marginalized past in urban environments. However, affect clearly plays an important role in the decisions these individuals make to create new places for themselves, and personal satisfaction was often seen as a reason to get out of the city. This was often linked to a frustration with many of the activist efforts in cities, where individuals perceived a large amount of infighting and judgement as well as—at times—a lack of action. While most did not disagree that these forms of urban activism (what Terrence labeled "physical activism") were important, they also expressed the need to focus on a more individualized starting point for living politically, wherein everyday life could become something which was intentionally focused on not only self-care but creating the environment around them. In this, the disposession which I have argued pushed many to create these places of resistance for themselves

may be seen as outwardly applied but also is linked to a self-induced removal from "normative" urban spaces.

While these types of movements to rural spaces are not particularly new in activist movements (Borsodi 1933, Jacob 1997, Veysey 1978), these cases I've looked at often took place on a more individualized platform than what could be roughly understood as "communal" living. I believe this is linked to the existing sense of closeness many experienced online, and the ways in which communication and organizing remained possible after exiting urban areas. As a result, these "rural" punks could exist in rural contexts without the necessity for a widespread physical support system of like-minded individuals. Like Adam and his partner, who had limited ties to the "community" they lived closed to, individuals can create politically meaningful spaces with the help of online contacts and content, learning DIY techniques for life away from the city. This allows them to avoid many of the structures they associate with urban spaces in particular, especially low-paying cash jobs and struggles to find housing and stability. However, this does not mean that there were not efforts to create meaningful ties with communities in these rural areas.

In the lives of some of these individuals with children, a prime motivator in their desires to create a more sustainable space outside of what they see as dominant systems (often linked to capitalism) is their offspring, and teaching them to be able to function outside of these structures but also utilize the tools they can to create change. Often, as in the cases of Colleen and Jazz, younger individuals were fitting into existing "back-to-the-land" or commune-like structures and rethinking the ways in which organization could take place through the use of new technologies. While older members remained and contributed, "new blood" was often seen as necessary to maintain the efforts of self- or community-sustainable living. They aimed to create a system of

self-sufficiency for their children or themselves in which they could thrive when (if) "the revolution happens."

Again, the use of technology within these efforts is not necessarily without criticism, and the ways in which it is used can be seen as embodying this DIY politic, often using online forums and spaces as a counterpart to existing zines and offline resources. I believe that the zine (online and offline) is an excellent demonstration of how the use of these "new" technologies (which are often highly criticized for overt commodification, etc.) becomes justified through alternative uses for "mainstream" social media sites, blogs, and message boards. The ways in which access to the internet affords opportunities to connect allows individuals to remove themselves from what they see as (often) harmful or toxic populations in order to not only live "more politically" but to gain personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

The use of indigenous systems of living outside of major, often industrialized urban centres was also something which was highlighted for many of those in this "scene." As demonstrated in the zine articles and websites mentioned above, the use of "traditional" indigenous knowledge was often seen as a way to avoid overtaking rural spaces and practicing harmful activities which could upset the often idealized idea of "nature" present there." These often fit into efforts to fight oppressive structures within the Canadian state, and attempts were made to avoid appropriating cultural norms while listening and learning acceptable ways for individuals to fit into (often primarily indigenous) rural communities without further contributing to these harmful colonial forces. An awareness of being mindful of the land on which they were living as well as learning sustainable ways of food acquisition, building etc. were emphasized as an important part in creating these places outside of urban environments.

While this scene is clearly something which is still being navigated by those involved, this liminality is part of what makes these efforts so politically potent. There is not a set "way" to become a rural punk or anarchist, and the multiplicity found in these individuals I've discussed here alone demonstrates the ways this manifests. However, similar tools are used to not only create the possibility of a purposeful everyday politic that incorporates a variety of anarchist and DIY ethics, but a sense of community is built into how these individuals are coming to interact online and through print culture. While these reactions stem from frustrations with the "system," they are hopeful that not only is political change possible on an individualized level but also that happiness does not have to be separated from these ways of life. Rural living with increasing access to technology allows traditionally urban groups (punks) to tap into these shared imaginations of a new form of political resistance, through making new places in which to practice particular forms of lived protest.

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