

There are so many ways I could talk about my time living in a high-rise flat; my personal and public lives there became entwined, in a way they never were before or after. My work as an artist became ripe with the tension and campaign of my daily experience, and my private life reverberated with drama, chaos, reactions.

Another dream arose last night, the second lucid one in as many days, and two full years after having left the place. It came out of my consciousness with a vivid message of unfinished business; something undigested sits in my mind and knocks persistently on my forehead to come out. It was a dream of trying to get back to my high-rise flat; something to do with the lifts, a sense of being disoriented and in physical danger. But of the many symptoms that living in a multi-storey roused in me, this dream is a gentle lapping echo of waves of intense experience, in comparison to the crashing breakers that overpowered us all in our lives there.

Returning to my high-rise flat to clear my last belongings from the place, and make a final exit, was a moment laden with meaning and ceremony. My new home, in clean air and away from the harshness of industry and culture, had already brought clarity to my head and heart as I set up a new nest, and escaped my tangled existence. The final trip north to Wester Hailes was reluctantly made, with a view to tidying up all final loose ends. Even as I re-entered the estate, I was suddenly aware of my altered status: I was now a foreigner. The building that had sheltered me for four of the most intense years of my life, it suddenly felt entirely unfamiliar. Already having had a glimpse of a safer, more placid lifestyle, my new perspective flooded my senses and awoke me -boom!- to what I'd been numbing out, in order just to survive.

Aside from a sudden understanding of not belonging, a sort of toxification came upon me; my nose and throat quickly became raw, my head soon after to accumulate a significant ache. Instinctively I began to hold my breath, such was my reaction to the air, in contrast to the rich nourishment of the country environment. The unceasing rage of the dual-carriageway traffic now got right inside me; it cut through my thoughts and into my waking vision. And I was relieved to have brought water from my new house: I suddenly saw how unclean the water here really was. The pipes, the insect infestations, the ancient rotting tank- this water had touched and filled me completely over the four years, and an understanding dawned on me of the subtle and pervasive effect it had had, on my energy.

Without the blank shield of unfeeling I'd cultivated to protect myself there, I was naked. My energy dipped violently, and I truly felt out of my depth, in the wrong place, and near to panic- as if I were in the atmosphere of another, less hospitable planet. I wanted desperately to leave. My newly-acquired calm was horribly disturbed, in the way a sea is torn up into waves by a passing vessel.

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My equilibrium has returned, with the distance of two years between me and the Calder High-rises, and with it a clear view of my four years in Wester Hailes. It was the most intense, rewarding, insightful and transformative period of my life and work, and yet it also almost got the better of me. The place was full of hidden riches and possibilities, but it was at the very same time a whirlpool of the most supreme, ingrained patterns of negativity; a regular free-fall into the most confused and confusing pathways through bureaucratic quagmire.

During the years 2004-8, as a default choice to escape homelessness, I considered a high-rise flat to be at least a long-term lease, a warm and wind-tight space to hide from the world, and a great deal better than what the private sector was offering. That simple choice, which came out of a desperate need for the most basic home stability, ended up as a powerful revelatory experience, in

which I explored from the inside the problems inherent in our contemporary civilisation in general, and high-density living in particular.

My initial distaste at the state of my new environment grew into a determination to follow some issues through to a satisfying end. However, my first steps in joining the neighbourhood tenants group, chairing it, and then representing the 408 households on an area board; all these efforts, communications and demanding led to precisely no improvement. Persevering, my volunteer access-all-areas position led me onto the shadow board of a proposed new housing association for Edinburgh; the governing body for a separate housing department from the behemoth council beast. Alongside a postgraduate study in art, space and nature, which allowed me to explore some more radical, interconnected ideas around transformation, I began to understand what was really going on, on a deeper level.

But by this time, my energy and resources were drained, and my character had shifted from vibrant optimism to disillusioned cynicism, as I felt myself being sucked into the very tangle that I was making sense of. The situation was not going to be viewed holistically by the council or the tenants, so I withdrew my every involvement, and retired to lick my wounds. It felt like a social experiment, but I was inside the control-zone; stuck within a dreadful polemic of funding, intentions, self-fulfilling prophecies and bloody-mindedness.

The socio-political de-activation that overwhelmed my usually clear and active voice, can only be described as impotency. The disillusionment that was visible in the neighbourhood and wider demographic; it affected me into seeing myself as a third-class citizen. It appeared that there was no way to find solutions to the simplest of issues, even when they threatened health, well-being and sanity. The break-down in communications between tenant and landlord had become so compounded that any action, empowerment, expression or collective development on the community's part was effectively quelled before the question had even been asked.

Much as I would love to expound the merits of high-rise living, it is most definitely not for the faint-hearted. I looked at the original utopian genius behind the tower block, and at the many visionary projects, past and present, local and international, that had transformed life in such boxes as the council estate. I could see possibilities, and even *intention* within the city council, to want to shift the dynamic, e.g. via stock transfer, more pro-active local management, and area development projects. And yet my everyday experience was one of being lumped with every other resident into a small, neatly-categorised file way at the back of the cabinet, in a silent, dark basement: I was suddenly a statistic, and not a positive one. Though there were more and more rules about the involvement of residents in decisions made about their living environment, the reality was a faceless corporation which fed into the already distinct paranoia of the council tenant psyche.

It took most of my four years in Wester Hailes to fully recognise my acquired lowly social status. Despite been politically, environmentally and spiritually aware throughout my adult life, here I was being treated like a person needing to be guided through every aspect of the day with a large text, plain English leaflet. This was supplied -copiously- by people who were effectively responsible for my safety, security and community stability, but who were truly perverting every channel that I should have had to voice actual concerns. The pigeon hole I was relegated to was a homogeneous cell in a uniformly demoted cultural sector.

Ultimately, residents were asked to represent themselves and to present their opinions and ideas, and yet were expected by the 'service provider' to separate feelings and personal views from the experience- we were asked to act as a part of a machine, rather than the human beings who lived inside this dysfunctional matrix. The harsh fact is that it *is* stressful to live amongst violence, disease, constant danger and seriously unhappy people and environment. It is not possible to walk

down an intimidating stairwell, perhaps stepping across a recently used needle, then stand to the side in the lift to avoid a vast pool of pee (animal or human?), after which tiptoe through dog-shit, broken paving slabs and burned-out unidentified objects, avoiding having all manner of liquids and heavy things being thrown from windows above; to travel thus to a meeting, and then arrive composed and quietly accepting, whilst council representatives effectively tell you that none of what you have seen exists.

It appeared that the more I became involved in local politics, the less could be done: those I attempted to refer to for help or to hold responsible, rebuffed me to an increasingly familiar grey zone. Rather than signposting to the appropriate person or department (simple questions soon spiralled into extreme endurance tests and epic quests for knowledge), the stance of most first-point-of-contact staff was that of the passive-aggressor. A mirroring of the residents' behaviour, of course, but unfortunately a major influence on the cul-de-sac effect, i.e. ghetto-isation of problems. Infuriated day after day by every interaction, my thoughts were on how the f##*! anyone who didn't have a degree or two would navigate this dynamic. Even with my extensive experience in speaking out, and with artistic skills of expression, and the ability to look at a situation both as a whole, and with solutions-focussed-tinted spectacles; none of this gave me advantage, either in my own requests, or when working on behalf of the community or city.

The entire situation, both locally and on a city level, was treated to an immense lid, a blanket muffler: this problem is too big, too compounded, too expensive to even look at, thank you very much. Just keep it contained. This was not a spoken reality, rather the subconscious stance of all on *their* side, in opposition to *our* side.

This pattern is the key both to understanding and to bringing solutions to, this graphic representation of our broken-down culture. The oppositional stance is one guaranteed only to perpetuate oppositionality: an eye for an eye, the knee-jerk reaction, the itchy trigger-finger, and all that. A more evolved perspective would consider the whole; the situation in its entirety, *now*, before attempting to make any change. Permaculture, rapidly becoming an accepted methodology, asks us to look at what is good and what is not so good about our current situation, before exploring a future vision: once we do this, the first step is usually biting us on the nose. In contrast, refusal to even acknowledge the majority of the problems -with the (perhaps unconscious) intention of renegeing responsibility for them- this will result in build-up of problem, loss of respect to service provider, and multiple other ripples echoing outward like the dark smoke from an ill bonfire.

For example, one of the first aggravations that affected me in my new multi-storey existence was that of the epic proportions of dog-poo, in various stages of decomposition, that appeared to be an accepted part of the internal and external landscape. My astonishment multiplied when I was told that dogs were not allowed in the flats; the suggestion by council employees on every level, was that dogs did not exist in the high flats. What they *really* could have said was that, because the council cannot legally enforce eviction of the animals, and because they do not want to be going around mopping up litres of piss and scooping up great heaps of unmentionables every hour of every day, they would rather not look at the issue at all. Never mind all that, I thought, let's face the facts: many households in the high-rise have at least one, often three large canines; there are no proper allocated exercise areas nor poo bins; no penalties are enforced; no educational signage is used. Result: acceptance.

Discussions on any matter came up against the un-scalable wall of 'we cannot do anything about that'. This was a mantra repeated ad infinitum on the first level of investigation; calling on the phone, writing an email, visiting the concierge office or the local area offices. Despite my near-obsessive purpose, the eventual consensus, in each layer of the bureaucratic nightmare, was that

nothing could be done. This was not as a point of reality, but as a disclaimer; the truth was that nobody really wanted to a) do anything, or b) get involved. It was more than anyone's job was worth. Similar in many ways to the dynamic of the current world situation; we know it is not good, but how is it our individual responsibility? The existence of corporate responsibility seemed to remove individual accountability: I had the local concierge manager threaten me with legal action from the council's lawyers, after I (as chairperson of the neighbourhood group) dared to suggest that the concierge was not doing their job properly. An air of tetchy entrenchedness met our every request, complaint or demand: each attempt to cross No Man's Land, to reclaim ground, was met with sniper fire, even when carrying a white flag.

The residents of the Calders were once referred to as 'my' tenants, in regards to 'you'll have to get your tenants to do something about it' (I believe the issue was dog waste on stairwells): a quote by senior management. How easy to dismiss the issue as the community's- it might be interpreted as a slip of the tongue, but it is a clear indication of the pervading thought- that it is the fault of the people, their situation. Simplistic, counter-productive, and the invisible strap-line of the council in particular and society in general.

Social economics and the measuring the less tangible, although infinitely more important, aspects of community life will hopefully bring vital life-lines to such places as the Calders estate. Such a melting pot of cultures and demographic: unique individuals with multifarious talents, energies, strengths and desires to contribute; we'll reel in astonishment in a better future, to think that this could have been viewed as anything other than a wealth of potential. If 'the problem' is looked at a) as a whole, and b) as if the people within it were unique and sentient beings, rather than bleak factors in an equation, there can be multifarious simple but profoundly effective effects put in place, and a vastly different trajectory manifested.

Perhaps Edinburgh's is a unique, excessively quirky psyche -prone to snobbery, cold cynicism, and absolute refusal to look at it's own shit. The shape of the city in its spokes-of-a-wheel layout, with all the dirty areas thrown centrifugally outwards, certainly supports out of sight equalling out of mind. And yet there we are; waving our bare backsides at rich visitors entering on the major roads into our beautiful capital- we're flinging our kitchen waste out of the highest windows, whilst our violent-barking dogs chase alongside their cars. Isn't it great having tower blocks to contain such uncivilised behaviour!

I recently sat at a dinner party and conversed about this place, which is now a part of my history, memory, identity. The phrases "decent people don't go around raping and killing" and "I don't want them anywhere near me" -who is that a reference to? Who is that 'type' who lives in such places, who can be so easily dismissed, relegated, removed from the rest of us 'decent' folk? Is it me, or my student friends, or the musicians or deejays or carpet cleaners, the people who worked hard and long to pay the increasing rent and bills? No, it wasn't particularly us, it was simply that people have a need to distance themselves, and to make themselves the goodies, versus someone else, the baddies. We judge in many ways, but still the clash I was coming up against again and again was that of cultural compartmental-ism; the locking away of those who do not behave in the mediocre rhythm of the normal mind or neighbourhood. What is outside the norm must be rejected.

This is indicative of a cultural psyche led by conventional Western medical preference for suppressing disease; keeping undesirable symptoms contained, or cutting them out from the body entirely. Following this philosophy, the ultimate solution to our country's social quagmire is amputation. Hopefully it will not come to that: there are alternative ways of viewing reality, and there are possibilities for grass-roots transformation alongside top down improvement; holistic over-view *and* under-view.

I attended a symposium on The Future Of The Tower Block (as it were), and was enthralled by Lynsey Hanley's presentation of her experience having been raised in a vast housing estate in Birmingham. She spoke about her book 'Estates- an intimate history', and it was the first time I had heard an intelligent and informed person speak openly about life in the municipal outback. The rub came during the question and answer session afterwards, just when I thought some sense was being made: a member of the audience, obviously someone on good authority, inferred that her overall stance was a little negative, and that she should see the beauty on these stately aspects of our collective history. Her reply was a little demure, I thought at the time, but in hindsight she was hopefully taking the piss out of the entire symposium. "Oh, I hadn't really thought of it like that; perhaps I'll try to look at it a bit more positively in the future." The difference between us and them was clear, as the audience relaxed back into their seats, glad that her perspective was so easy to dismiss.

The reactions of visitors to the environment I lived in, the regular comedic interactions with city council reps, the daily sights, sounds, smells and atmospheric qualities of the high-rise, these regularly, punctually brought home to me the huge polemic between the status quo of other Edinburgh suburbs, and the unchecked, constantly-bubbling-over pot of mismatched ingredients that is a badly-run council estate. My life changed whilst I lived in the Calders, it transformed radically; I was wakened to the worst and the best in human interrelationships, and I gained huge insight into what the eventual consequences of an material-oriented culture can be. I observed myself trying to fit in, trying to flourish; trying to provide solutions to what are ultimately fairly simple problems, and again and again found myself locked tightly into that pigeon-hole: blocked both metaphorically and literally.

Throughout the various channels I pursued in my attempts to ground a vision of solution, I was met with a consciousness of inaction: not a small, neat refusal, but an immense pervading mythology of *impossibility*: every problem had an equal and opposite answer, a reason that there could be no action on that particular issue (or any other). There may be radical breakthroughs in contemporary scientific views on the interconnectedness-of-all-things, but it will take time to bring that awareness into everyday thinking, and it may be even longer before we can use it as a model to affect positive change on our afflicted social housing sector. As one councillor mentioned in a high-level board meeting during stock transfer discussions "It takes around 2-3 years for the positive improvements implemented by the council to be recognised and acknowledged by tenants". This struck me, but it took a good while to understand how profoundly: I eventually understood, that we as residents were perceived to be more than a little backward; that we were obviously just not appreciating how good our experiences in council estates were. How ignorant we were, to not see how much (statistically!) the council had shifted overall! How silly of us to view the daily grind as anything other than a happy gift. Shiny smiles on posters, rising percentages over a period of several years, these details of the reports unfortunately did not filter back to us in The Zone.

My anger blossomed like a pregnant wolf, not even frustration or fear for my own security, though it would have been fully justified, but on behalf of a disparate and voiceless demographic, which I supposed I was now firmly demoted to. It took two years of contemplation, discussion, philosophising, rationalising, to *digest* this experience, and to contextualise it within the evolution of cultural consciousness. I was *institutionalised*; locked up against my will, for no reason other than not having fitted into the consumerism dynamic: my lifestyle was categorised by the 'service industry' landlord and all its components. Alongside my mismatched community, I was pigeon-holed by friends and society alike; the weight of this collective (distorted) vision pressed down on my usually positive perspective, then swallowed it in one gulp.

The dominating feeling of being in that place was of being dismissed, *unloved* -compassion absolutely absent. The analogy of an abused child comes to mind; if a child is being loved, supported, listened to and nourished, they will instantly be both *aware* of any abuse they come into contact with -that it is wrong, and they will know how to *seek help*. The psycho-emotional control over a child is the presiding factor in the abuse; the abuser is able to effectively disable the child's reaction- turning them into passive creature of numb acceptance: familiar discomfort. The example might be an extreme one, but it has much relevance to the energetic dynamic of this social/ cultural situation. Because the lines of communication out of such an estate as the Calders were guarded by staff seemingly resentful of their charge, every angrily-expressed need was immediately met with reactionary rejection.

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The naiveté of both the service provider and culture at large, is in thinking that a lid can be kept indefinitely on such an aspect of society's most challenging atrophies. The logic is that they are looking only as far as a) the capacity of a budget, b) the remit of their own role within the corporation: damage limitation rather than nourishment of healthy or successful areas. Parallel to all of the above, and most ironically, is that real life in the meantime continues, in dismissed corners of society, just as in the natural world. Comfortably-off folks sit in comfy homes in comfy suburbs, reading details in the paper of disastrous happenings in comfortably far away places. That far-off world is however often surprisingly more vibrant, abundant and *magical* than we might be led to expect by the media, or by our own projections.

My first perceptions of Edinburgh as a city, when I arrived there in 2004, were of its rich cultural diversity, eccentric intellectualism, and pro-active eco-awareness. The shock at my moving to the outskirts (to a *high-rise*!?) was expressed openly by all new people I came into contact with; long-term Edinburghers and students alike. The snobbery was p-r-o-f-o-u-n-d: the closed-ness of minds to even listening to, debating or considering anything that might exist outside of the neatly-boxed stereotype of The Coonsil Estate. At the same time as connecting with the artistic and eco-communities in the city, I was being enlivened and surprised by the actual experience I was having in this new community of mine.

Rather than presenting a romantic image of a 'salt-of-the-earth' type (a bit fucked-up, self-abusing, and unemployable, of course, "but oh, *smashing* sense of humour"): that lovable rogue, the jolly down-and-out, Rab C. Nesbitt wasn't quite to be found. What did meet my initial scepticism was the single-most interesting community of the most diverse individuals, cultures, perspectives. Widely varying social situations and utterly unique situations; people who were, for vastly different reasons, all in this same boat -this sinking ship of crumbling concrete and toppling infrastructure. With few of the resources, securities or daily joys to survive on that most of society would kick up merry hell if they were without, and under the 24 hour strain of a volatile physical, psychological and emotional landscape, we displayed all the symptoms of our stress outwardly- the healthiest place to show them.

There was something powerful and authentic in this place, which I finally understood as *freedom*. For every story about those who've undergone immense hardship and gained pseudo, or literal, enlightenment, there is a truth lurking. As I moved between city centre and local networks, being involved in community education, local representation, and the arts, I was staggered to conclude that the people in this estate were healthier, on some level, than those grouping smugly round the central hearth of plenty. Hahnemann's homoeopathic principles seemed a good analogy, of the healthier expression of illness always moving outwardly. Here was a place where all symptoms were laid out publicly to a large degree; emotions displayed openly in the 'village square' between

the high flats. We all lived passionately, in close quarters with intense people who were unafraid of what those next door might think. A more Mediterranean, family and group-oriented culture flourished, in contrast to the vilely complex hen-pecking of Old Town cliques.

Once beyond the aggravation of noisy and regularly inappropriate neighbours, an aliveness grew in me, a passion stirred by being around this authenticity! I did not have to hold my tongue, or deal with closed, stale attitudes and dialogue of the conformist elite: I was among like-minded creatives in one sense. My favourite days were the neighbourhood group meetings; anarchic to begin with, occasionally attended by police because of a broo-ha-ha, but invariably alchemising at the end with a rucksack of Lamot being placed on the table and the roll-up tin being passed around. One momentous evening, after our inaugural jumble shop opening, a neighbour presented an epic meal of curry and the works, and we sat around our meeting table feasting into the night. It felt like Christmas, a wedding, or a prize day, and it was so brilliantly precious because of where we were. That moment dazzled in the darkness, dirt and grey, and especially in the face of the cold shoulder we were faced with in every direction, from everyone outside of here.

Does the value of beauty, love, camaraderie increase according to context? Or is it more that moments like the one above arose contrary to what we were told to expect? Stereotype is a hard rock to break down; the buck might be passed from department to management, from concierge to social work, and so on, etcetera, but responsibility lies in each and every one of us: not to perpetuate the tight binds of negative image both put on us, and that we dish out. The most glaring issue, *the* potent area for transformation, was in the *acceptance* of a community like Wester Hailes as it is, by ignoring it. Tolerating and then repeating cramping limitations placed upon the individual and the collective, by ignore-ance. Not the physical restrictions in all their colour and mess, but internal blocks which pervade us all: only living in a tower block, partaking of meals together with others living there, talking into the night, laughing and frowning, can glean understanding.

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I began clearing two small plots directly below the flats, outside of our community group's meeting rooms. Work began up early in the morning, before the rowdies were up and chucking stuff out of windows above me. The huge, metal clad torso of Dunsyre block loomed protectively above me, deflecting the glare of early sunshine, and birds could be heard somewhere almost close by. A sense of service, perseverance, achievement and meaning came upon me here. The two tiny plots had somewhere fallen between guardianships; nobody had maintained them in at least ten years, going by the layers of out-of-date wrappers and beer bottles. A healthy domestic worm had developed thick and heavy, on a diet of discarded chip suppers, alcohol, and a particularly potent pile of neatly-packaged waste from some domestic pets, which had evidently been thrown from the window for many years.

Smiling where I could, and saying as many hallos as could be forced upon passers-by, I tentatively began dragging out refuse and branches; people looked sideways at me and muttered, or pretended not to notice. Rhetorical questions like “What the fuck are ye doin' that fur?” and “Thur's nae point daein' that, the kids'll jist smash it tae bits, the wee shites!” met with nervous laughter and dismissal on my part, though I was plenty worried. But then I met the kids, who came hurtling over from great distances when they spotted me gardening. In all my art workshops and tutoring in better-off areas, I'd never enjoyed with such enthusiastic assistance. They joined in with me with such fervour that, despite clumsy feet on the beds, and fizzy-pop-induced hyperactivity, I felt a serious sense of hope, of potential, and of the seeds of change being planted. The two tiny gardens burst forth with flowers, beans, potatoes, donated apple trees and blackcurrant bushes.

Weeding out the occasional can or picking crops, the passers by now stopped and spoke, or threw bright comments on the improvements. I was offered assurance, support, advice, and was congratulated by young and old. An intriguing air of possibility transformed faces, words and mannerisms.

This small victory, rooted in my compulsive need to physically intervene and make some, any, difference in the estate, this helped open my eyes to the energetic dynamic of the estate. The perpetuating of negative cycles by affirming impossibility, the use of heavy cynicism to push away any positive change, I saw ways out of the downward-spiralling dynamic that we were rafting towards the end-of-all-things waterfall on. This fatalistic mentality was to be expected within the estate, but the further I stepped into community representation, and stood up to speak on behalf of the residents of my high-rise village, the more I saw blindness to joy, to solution. It appeared in response to my every interaction; a pervading denial of anything good being possible within the context I was living and working.

I felt like Neo in The Matrix, facing the sun-glassed dominator Smith with his 'it's inevitable, Mr Anderson' mantra. But beneath my daily battle to present a way out, I began constructing a mental map of the energetic flows; of how one insidious comment would lead to an extensive chain of thoughts, like dominoes being knocked down in epic rows; an accumulating avalanche of no, leading to NO, and on. It was a binding of both the internal (personal paradigm) and the external (practical and collective inter-relationship) in an eternal circle of downward-flow. So, I concluded, if that is the way down, what is the opposite and complimentary upwards force?

The third and fourth years of my stay in the Calders were productive, educational, cathartic. Around my postgraduate diploma at Edinburgh College of Art, I developed a 100 year vision, whilst representing the 408 households of the high flats on a local (Wester Hailes) level, and being a tenant board member on the city's stock transfer of council housing project. I worked locally, face-to-face and side-by-side with children and adults on the estate, both voluntarily and as an artist, and observed the very powerful immediate change that came over most people as soon as any facility was presented, an offer of chat and tea made, or a paint brush offered.

Looking back now, another film analogy comes to my mind: I visualise the two hobbits with the all-powerful ring which has the potential, in the wrong hands, to destroy all that is good and bright in their world. They are sneaking into the dark kingdom to put an end to the ring's reign, and it's that image, of the small, non-magical, but persevering quality, that in the end wipes out an all-consuming evil. We live in troubled times, but the answers to many of our problems lie in those small, persistent ideas, people, projects and intentions: the inherent good, creativity, positivity and health in people have a magnetic power in them; once set in motion, they radiate out increasingly potent and *potentising* ripples, growing waves of effect, which eventually become the norm.

Through multiple small and medium scale projects, I and a few other committed individuals rapidly created a community hub, a good flow of income, and residents networks. Each project gathered interest from far and wide, as well as from the more immediate area. Profound moment upon profound moment came to us every time we interacted, and it was obvious, at least to us, in this context, where we were, that if we went on like this, it would simply expand and accelerate. Yet our every turn was stamped upon; it was a crossing that simply could not be built, that might have bridged the chasm between what we saw as possible (and were enthusiastic to get our teeth into), and what the council were willing to give consent to. How did this situation evolve: the terrible state of things, the manpower there and ready, but the corporation wanting extensive financial projections, impossible guarantees? They demanded stability and responsibility from us which we frustratingly could not possibly provide: the whole point was that we were trying to make that bridge, to gain some stability, some trust within our communal thinking and acting; to rouse a

collective cooperation for the benefit of all. We were trying to build it from nothing, though, with the restrictions that the matrix had set in place; our impotence was being paraded and then shot down; the only way out was their way: conform and we will allow you your pre-digested, plasticated health and safety according to our rules. But how the fuck do you contain a jungle in a filing cabinet?!

There is absolutely no one-solution-for-all, and no pot of money to match the budget needed to produce top-down remedies for such ingrained social ills: any thinking which stipulates inaction until we find those, is merely compounding the problem. Real and permanent change is in attitude, belief and *intention*, in everyone. But the first place to begin radiating effects, is via the front-line service provider staff who set in motion communications, or not. The human touch cannot be prescribed, but at some point our consciousness has to get into a more creative, happy space, it's as simple as that. On a personal level, in the work place, collectively in our respective neighbourhoods, and in our every interaction, relationship, transaction or choice; sustainability comes via what brings more energy, vitality, growth.

Beauty and joy are sitting waiting for us to notice, in every moment, behind a flimsy veil of crap. There is a model, a map, that can describe the way out, but it demands the heart of people to shift from self-centred, self-protecting reactionism, to an optimistic collective viewpoint: infinite resources exist, but enthusiasm can only be engaged once trust has been gained. Those paying for the service should not be the first to offer the hand; they cannot, when they are so inconveniently preoccupied with fighting for their own survival.

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