

What is Kebele?

Introduction

The reason for me writing this came out of the latest restructure of Kebele, in particular the Seeds of Change workshop held in the Spring of 2009. This had the idea of having a regular General Meeting where others could hold those involved in the project to account, and to plan the long-term future of the project. In the meeting, we recognised that many people had different ideas about what Kebele was, and from this juncture a substantive disconnect had transpired within the collegiate exducer function concerning the inherent 'sine qua non' of the project. In other words, the big question: "What's the fucking point in doing this shit?"

We felt that the big meeting was not the time or place to talk about it. So, I volunteered to kick off a discussion of a different kind that might suit the subject a bit better: The Reading Post. Here's how it works. I write this, and hang it off a hook in the library. You come along and read it, and it gets you thinking. You write your own thoughts (at the end of mine! No writing notes or witty comments on my bit you lazy count-ry landowner!). People read mine and yours. They sum up the agreements and disagreements, add their own thoughts, and move the discussion on. Once we've got a few different ideas we can take what we've got back to a General Meeting and use it as a starting point to nail a definition.

On a Mission

What is Kebele? For me personally, there are a lot of instant answers. Because of the amount of time it takes up in my life, my partner sarcastically refers to Kebele as my mistress. In a way she's right: it is a love affair, but between me and my dreams. Kebele is the dream made bricks and flesh. The proof that Anarchism could, and should, be a reality for everyone. The proof that Anarchism can work, that we are not just dealing in theories. Kebele is the thing that makes it all worth while. But because many times Kebele DOESN'T work, that it doesn't feel worthwhile, it is a great source of frustration and even sadness to me. At those times it confirms my worst nightmares, that we will never be able to move on, or get along. That my dreams have fatal flaws. That our grand designs for life will never get further than the drawing board. That for others (and me) this IS just a game, a lifestyle choice.

My definition is of no use to you though, is it? Everyone has a different relationship to Kebele, everyone has a different dream for the future, every anarchist has a different blueprint for the grand design. We need to have a rough plan we can all agree on. In order for this debate to have a practical value, we need to reclaim the methods stolen by Business Bastardy from the radical 'blue sky thinkers' of the past. That's right. I feel dirty admitting it, almost too ashamed to say it, but we need a mission statement.

So, here's a nudge to get the ball rolling. I propose we should use this sentence as a guide to what our rough plan should be. I've explained why I've used the words I've used in the following paragraphs, as they are shorthand symbols for bigger, wider ideas.

Kebele is 'Our Thing': a sustainable anarchist experiment to create a real difference to the future, firmly based in the practicality of the present.

Our Thing

I've gone through a series of changes in my attitude to what Kebele should be over the years of my involvement. I started out thinking that, frankly, the sun shone out of it's arse. I had moved from a better, deader, area into Easton, from a full-time-working consumerist lifestyle, and suddenly got swept up in this world of where Anarchy was Alive, and everything seemed possible. I immediately became convinced that The Revolution would happen next Wednesday at the latest (maybe

Thursday, if it's a Champions League week). Then, over time, the euphoria wore off, and cynicism started to emerge. Why, if we are a class-based movement, were almost all of us on the wrong side of the divide? Why did so few working class women get involved (with a few notable exceptions of course)? Why in a ward where the majority of people were non-white, were we so-white (again, with a few notable exceptions)? Why did so many people in the wider movement hate us, when they seemed to agree with what we were saying?

I launched projects that I thought would have wider appeal outside the activist ghetto. I moaned and stamped my feet. I talked to people who had a problem with Kebele, to see what their problem was. I joined the cries for the redecorating and 'de-hippification' of the building, and then joined the work-gangs to make it happen. Still, the problems remained.

And eventually, the world turned and my thinking changed again. There is a large community of South Asians in Easton, but they already have a focus: the masjid, the 'ex-pat' shops and internet cafes. The black community has it's 'thing': the barbers, the pubs, the church. The sikh community organise around the gurduwara, the Moroccans have their coffee shops, the 'indigenous Eastonians' have the pubs, the old-school paper shops and they all have each other. Of course this is a generalisation, but i hope you get the point i'm trying to make.

All of these focuses have flaws when seen from the anarchist perspective: religion (and it's related poisons like homophobia and sexism), racism, exclusion, hierarchies. It's important that we are here as a safe haven for any refugees from those conformist societies. But who the fuck are we to the majority of those communities? A good many people in Easton have never heard of Kebele despite it being on their doorstep, let alone the other 420,000 in Bristol. We are a long way from creating a credible alternative to the way that most Bristolians live their lives, and we are not held in high regard by most. In fact our ideas are seen as a bit of a joke. Suck that up. Deal with it.

Last year I heard an old anarchist say that anarchism just 'happens' when the circumstances are right – depressions, disillusionment, epiphanies, a red and black butterfly beats it's wings in some far away place and 10 minutes later the first brick goes through the council house window. If things get bad enough, if we can just take the right direct action, if we get enough of us to shout loud and long enough, if people could just be made to understand, if only we could get the words on the flyer right, we could have a Greece, a Chiapas, a Durruti Column here .

Bullshit I say! Bullshitting, passivist, lifestylist, shit-biscuits!! >:-)

Durruti was organising strikes and topping cardinals fifteen years before the Spanish Civil War started. The EZLN in Chiapas evolved out of organised resistance going back over a century. Exarcheia – Ground Zero for the recent Greek uprisings – has been beating coppers since before the Athens Polytechnic uprising in 1973. The explosions we feel over here, that excite the (indy)media, are just the solar flares sent out from stable suns burning white hot with ideas and emotions of revolt.

Around these suns orbit a dusty belt of communities built in earth and stone – Councils of Good Government, land co-ops, squats, bars, punk venues, park bench meet-ups, and social centres. Each is different, with different people, different beliefs and ways and means, but each provides a place to combine with others in common. A part of the whole, in the full heat of the mighty sun, but small enough to be practical and personal: Our Thing.

Kebele is Our Thing, our little planet. Our safe space, our secret society, our wellspring, our gateway, our fortress. Our focus. Our community. It is our project, built up, then along, then smashed down, then snaked out along the same path but different, depending on who 'We' are at the

time. Kebele is where the Anarchists are, at least it should be. We are not in competition with other organisations, we do not compare with other groups in other cities or countries, we do not look to replace the church or the mosque. We are not in a battle for the title of 'True Bristol Anarchists' against the Easton Cowboys, or The Factory, or the 1970's / 1860's / 5 years ago before the place became corporate and lost its soul.

We are Kebele here and now, and here and now Kebele is Our Thing.

So, who the fuck are 'we', that have 'Our Thing'? That's a whole, bigger copper-bottomed kettle of fish, and I'm already a year overdue writing this thing, so maybe someone else should answer that some other time.

Sustainable

In the past I've heard talk and read stuff about the pros and cons of squatted spaces that operate outside the crushing embrace of the state, and long term spaces that sacrifice that freedom for being more open to outsiders. I feel no need to think about where Kebele fits in this, as the decision was made 12 years ago, well before I was involved, when The Pioneers of the project stretched Lloyds over a barrel and blackmailed a cheap mortgage out of them.

I don't know if they knew it at the time, but that decision defined Kebele, not just for the 10 year length of the mortgage, but pretty much for ever. Kebele is a social centre, in Easton, in Bristol, that we own and it is 'our' job to make sure it lasts for ever. This is a permanent project, with a long-term aim – the insurrectionary overthrow of the objects of our angers. There is no point talking about lost freedoms, or the tyrannies of structures: the die is cast, the blank is stamped, there is no unmaking, only the remoulding of what we've got.

In line with the Anarchist's rejection of informal hierarchies and our fear of stagnation, we deliberately never look back. No guiding hand from a Council of Elders, no homage to past heroes, once you leave you're gone (until you come back). I've heard people say "it's not like when I was there", "it's lost the old spirit", and they're right. It's gone, they're gone, so long, moved on, deal with it. After the next paint-job, all signs of your efforts will be erased, and already most people don't even recognise your name. Square it away. Think of it as a lesson in humility.

Yet at the same time, our collective history weighs very heavily. We owe respect to ALL those who have had 'Their Thing' in the past, we owe respect to the work they put in, to what they created. Those who cracked the squat, resisted the bailiffs, opened the first cafe, fixed the first bike, carried the banner at the front of the demo, put the rig together, put the double-glazing in, tatted the sofas, re-upholstered the chairs, slept on the floors to be there when the cops came knocking, confronted the problem people and dealt with the big issues. How would it feel to be the ones that ended the project, admitted defeat, killed the dream created by hundreds over decades? I swear to you here and now I will never know that feeling.

The legacy of Kebele's past is the need for the project to survive.

In order for the project to survive, it must sustain, but the definition of sustainable will change depending on the circumstances. At the start it meant a radical, intense struggle to take and keep the building. Then came a building phase, where the future of the project was strengthened by bringing a wider circle of people and cultures into the project. This was done by taking Kebele out of the building, putting it on the frontline of demonstrations and marches, building the idea that Kebele was the people involved, not the property. With the project expanded to mass involvement, it started to mature with the creation of long-term projects – Bristle magazine, the bike workshop, a free party rig.

Eventually the maturing went a bit gamey however: involvement started to tail off, the door stayed closed more and more, tensions between the desires of the residents and the ever-present demands of the project started to flare up. But, the project was sustained, the mortgage was paid, events were still organised, new people were brought in – Kebele scaled back and survived the testing times.

(By the way, sorry if i've missed out any other stages or stuff about the past – feel free to add to the history in your own write-up).

Kebele's relationship with the anarchist punk scene was one of the reasons the project survived. It has provided a constant source of new faces, some of who have become major 'faces' in the project over the years. An article in Rolling Thunder #7 says that this is a common thing throughout the movement:

“The punk scene has helped keep anarchist ideas alive over the past 30 years in the same way the monasteries preserved science and literature through the Dark Ages <in Europe>..... Punk's long run as a breeding ground for anarchism shows how much we stand to gain from social activities that are pleasurable and creative”.

When everyone gets fucked off, when the scene loses its cool, when the DIY seems too Lo-Fi, the punks hang around and keep spraying @'s and bashing fash, until the new waves arrive and they can go back to doing what they do best – pissing it up and moaning. ;-)

Because Kebele survived, Gleneagles 2005 and the Dissent it created found a natural home in Bristol, and brought a new wave of activists into the project. This group saw the future of Kebele as a community co-operative more than a housing co-op, and so a new building phase was started, and new long-term projects created: the library room, saturday cafe, major renovations, a bigger and better infoshop, and a more open, welcoming air about the place.

In 2010, the project is at a crossroads. It seems the growth of the project has outstripped the growth of involvement, people are feeling the strain and now the sustainability question has arisen again. What is the best way to ensure the sustainability of the project from here? Another building phase (or, in fact, complete the last phase) with the risk of burning out those involved? Back to the frontline to gain strength with the risk of starting a face-to-face battle with the state that we could lose (and lose big)? Or scale back and sustain, with the danger of the project turning in on itself and becoming irrelevant in 'interesting times'? It's worth thinking about when we plan ahead (if we ever actually get around to planning more than 2 weeks in advance, that is!)

Kebele needs to be sustainable in other ways apart from the aim of keeping the project going. Permaculture is the future, we all know it, and maybe we need to show it a bit more. We need to keep the project out of debt, and as legal and compliant as we have to be to ensure that we can't get snuffed out on a technicality of environmental health or fire regulations, for the sake of a little organisation. All this requires long term planning, a serious commitment and a 'grown-up' attitude – if we end up barricaded in a closed building, whatever the high-minded principle we're sticking to, we've fucked it up.

Kebele will be around for longer than a lifetime, literally but also in terms of the lifespan of contribution from individuals or groups. People come and go, it's healthy. but other people need to replace them. So, we need to make the project as welcoming as possible to committed individuals and to sympathetic groups, and be aware of new directions of revolt, even if these seem a waste of time to our eyes. Each new wave of involvement should creep further up the beach, eroding away the resisting sands. But, in fact, many waves must first battle the undertow of their fading

forerunners in retreat because of cynicism or exhaustion. The 'newkids' may seem to the 'old timers' to be naive, not have a clue, no politics, but they are the future present and the 'old timers' need to know when to admit they have run out of energy and ideas. All of the 'old timers' were 'newkids' once, and i'm sure they faced the same criticisms from their elders! Where necessary, we should give up power gracefully and help them shift the sand, rather than waste their energy and yours on infighting against the inevitable.

Lastly, by definition, for Kebele to be sustainable it has to be anti-capitalist as capital is unsustainable by definition. The value of money is constantly depreciating (losing value) and the system built around capital also has a constant air of depreciation about it. The end of Capitalism is always being predicted because we constantly see it declining, and so we think "it can't last long at this rate". But it always has, because it has always been able to grow at the same time, which acts as a balance to it's steady decline.

As with all organic systems, as Capitalism grows, it evolves. But it is not a stable organism. It grows by always adding layers of innovation, refining and streamlining processes, but all this life is built on death. Innovations become old, modes become outmoded, streamlines hit dead-ends. The organism flexes with a growth spasm as new markets for capital are created. The shock cracks the inflexible, toughened shell, smashing existing structures and communities with seismic shifts. The rubble is cleared and buried, the gap in the shell replaced by a shiny new covering, that itself immediately begins to yellow.

Capitalism is the antithesis of sustainability. The system can never repair itself, the organism doesn't regenerate, it just eats it's way through time, leaving behind a trail of toxic shit. In order for the world to be saved, the Capitalist system MUST be replaced, and as quickly as possible. In order for Kebele to be sustainable, for it's own long term survival, we must work towards the insurrectionary overthrow of the current capitalist order and the introduction of an anarchist alternative.

Survival is the means, not the end – just 'existing' and being there for the 'great moment' is not enough. Kebele must be an ongoing end in itself. It must be principled.

Anarchist

Ok, it's come-clean time. Take a deep breath. I have never read the ideas of Kropotkin, Bakunin or Makhno. I have heard of Sacco and Vansetti and The Haymarket, but couldn't really tell you what went on. I've read a few articles about The Angry Brigade, but didn't really feel the urge to find out more. Yet i still call myself an anarchist - how come?

Anarchism for me isn't about ideology, it's about opposition and ideas. People criticise anarchists for being negative, and sometimes that's a fair point. We rally around what we are against a lot more than what we are for, we attack, we destabilise, we destroy. Anarchy is identified with chaos in the mainstream mind because of this. But this is not a negative outlook, or at least it shouldn't be. We are faced with what is know as a 'fait accompli' - capitalism rules, it defines our existence, it's a type of tyranny that is elected and bought into by most people. It is much too late to stop capitalism, it exists, and so instead we must oppose it, weaken it, undermine it.

So, part of the definition of an Anarchist is someone who sets themselves against the system, in the full knowledge of the price that could be paid for this opposition. At the moment for most this is easy, the costs are low - lose some money by not following a full time career, suspended sentences and fines, surveillance paranoia. But at some point, as there was in Spain in the 30's, Italy in the 70's, Greece now, our ideas will gain enough support for The State and The Right to take our opposition seriously, and they will bring the war to us, to our homes and our families, and they will

smash our cosy lives to pieces.

At that point, calling yourself an Anarchist will not be as easy as it is now. Perhaps then, it will be easier to find the common themes in those who are left, who stay around to be attacked, and still attack back, and then we can shed some light on what Anarchist Opposition in Bristol means. I don't think i can make any meaningful comment now, when it is still so easy to talk the talk without walking the walk.

Alongside this theme of opposition in the Anarchism that i see in and absorb from those around me - lets call it Bristol Anarchism for the sake of argument - there is a strong theme of ideas, new thinking and new ways of doing things. It is only when you step back from Kebele that you realise the incredible energy that exists there. The discussions, the conversations, but most of all the constant action and activity - plans being hatched, projects flowering, hours and hours of work done and commitments kept, all with the background hum of real lives being lived with genuine emotion and feeling.

People in Kebele cook food, print screens, put on gigs, sell books, and then they go out of kebele and smash up arms factories, block railway lines, raise kids, work jobs. Some are anarchists, some aren't. But while they are involved in Kebele, they are part of an experiment in trying to do things differently. We are not just in opposition to capitalism, we are attempting to create an effective, joyful, pleasing alternative.

Experimental

There was a debate on Bristol Indymedia recently, where someone accused anarchists who urged local, small-scale organisation of condemning millions of people across the world to death by starvation. The reason given was that anarchists have no plan for switching from capitalism to a new social order, and therefore, like the Great Leap Forward's of the 20th Century Communist Dictatorships, there will inevitably be starvation after the old system shrivels, and before the new system flowers.

A fair point to raise. But, I didn't get the feeling that the critic could have been convinced by anything that was said, he (its always a he) had already built an unshakeable view of what anarchism was, is and always would be. But, assuming someone could be convinced, how could we convince them that not all big plans for Utopia end in the death of millions? Let's just say that history is not on our side.....

This is an example of a wider issue, of course - anarchism has never removed elite power in a society for more than a fleeting period, so what practical foundations do we build our beliefs on? "Could have"? "Should have"? "Would have"? That makes us as convincing as the Liberal Democrats. Neo-Liberalism has Milton Freidman and Henry Kissmyassinger. Marxism has Karl Marx and Stuart Hall. The Socialist Workers Party has The Head of the Socialist Workers Party. Who do we have to tell us right from wrong?

We have ourselves, our own experiences, and our own judgements. And by trying new things, by taking action, we build our own ideology that is current, concrete and perfectly suited for the time and place we find ourselves in. We learn in the same way that primates always have done - through trial and error, we experiment, and solve problems.

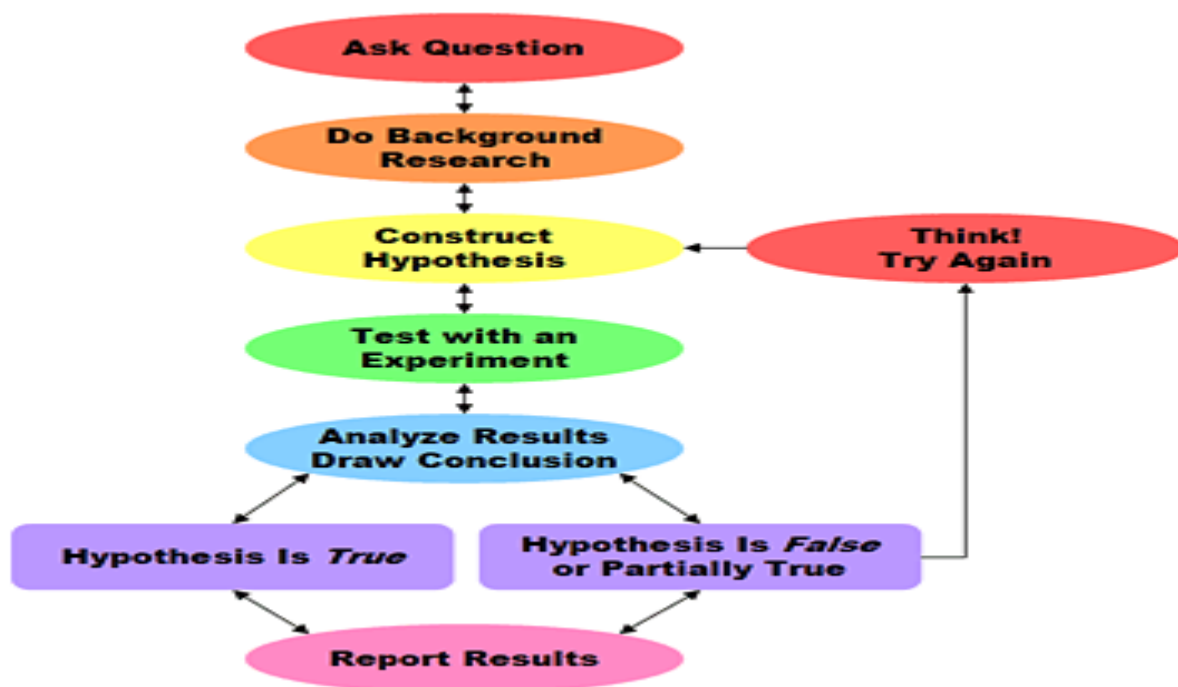
Kebele is an experiment in how anarchism will work in practice, or rather it is loads of experiments all going on at once. Asking for donations is an ongoing experiment in mutual aid, cooking and cleaning in exchange for meeting space is an experiment in living without money. The co-op is an experiment in non-hierarchical organisation (not always a successful one). The infoshop leaving its

stock on display and using an old-fashioned honesty box is an experiment in trust. Veganism is an experiment in living without inflicting cruelty to others in a society that makes this deliberately difficult.

Sometimes things go well, sometimes they don't. Sometimes we are inspired and excited by taking part, sometimes we feel we are the only ones who can see how this is all a perfect metaphor for everything that's wrong in this fucking Movement. How we manage to balance these reactions out, how we resolve the conflicts is perhaps the grandest experiment of all.

How do we decide what works and what's wank in a room full of dyed-in-the-wool individual thinkers, half of who regard the issue as their pet project, and the other half sort-of-couldn't care less - and do it all as fairly as possible? (It's no wonder Kebele consensus seems so difficult when you put it like that is it? It sounds like some kind of fucking brain teaser!)

What I reckon we should do is best described by a flow chart (YESSSS!) that describes what is known as The Scientific Method. Now, now, check yourself. I am not saying that we should have a scientific approach to anarchism. Just that we should see the whole thing as a process that needs to be analysed if it is to be useful.



Here's a recent example, using the flowchart.

Ask Question: Could Kebele be organised better, to avoid hierarchies and burn-out?

Do Background Research: Discussed at the Seeds for Change workshop and other places, looked at examples from other social centres like the Cowley Club.

Construct Hypothesis: (I.e. a possible answer) – in the Autumn 2009 GM we came up with an answer of making the co-op more accessible, and using the GM as a long-term direction and decision making body.

Test with an experiment: The experiment has been the experience of both the co-op and those who are a part of Kebele but not in the co-op, in the last year.

Report Results: this is the bit we are not good at. The experiment failed in that too much work ended up at the co-op's door. There was no way to 'report back' this failure, until basically I blew a gasket and wrote a pissy email that got everyone's backs up, but I felt no other way would be listened to. We had no way to report on progress, and did not want to face the problem, so we tried to ride it through.

To analyse results and draw conclusions seems like way too much work, and potentially a very divisive process, so we don't do it. But this is the most important part of the process, and our lack of analysis, I feel, lies at the heart of many of the problems at Kebele. We HAVE to make the time to look at what happened, critically and openly, and to draw some conclusions or there is no point in doing the experiment at all, apart from simply to slap a plaster on a split skull and hope it sticks.

What is worse, not only was there no point in doing the experiment, we doom ourselves to repeating the first four stages of the Scientific Process, from scratch, when the plaster finally does fall off some time down the line.

We must debate what we do at Kebele, we must discuss it, and we must draw conclusions. If the hypothesis proves to be false, or more likely partly true, we need to change it, to carry on with the experiment with a few, or many changes to make it better. If it has worked, we need to know why, what worked, and whether it would work in other ways on other things. In order to report the results we need to know what they are. It's good to report the results as others can use it in their background research, to improve the chances of their own experiments working out.

So, with the example I picked, the experiment with the General Meeting and the open Co-op, what are our conclusions? The GM is poorly attended. The open Co-Op is small and has not got bigger, yet has taken on a lot more work – publicising agendas and minutes, drumming up support from the User Groups, organising the GM and the work it raises. But we have created a more open administrative body, and reduced hierarchical tendencies. So, in my view, the hypothesis was partly true, which means that we should go back to the original plan and change it. But will we do that, or will we start from scratch,

REAL DIFFERENCE

As the polyamorous polymath and terrier-like midfielder Ryan McGavock once said: “We've got all the answers to all the questions, we know exactly how to do it: but there's only six of us.”

'Anti Mass' is an argument that lost its power for me a long time ago. I don't want to be apart from the Mass, I don't see mainstream as a bad thing. I don't want to sit in splendid fucking isolation in my hand-built perfection with my like-minded small group, wasting my three-score and ten being right all the time. To quote the Anti-Mass pamphlet “*The collective does not communicate with the mass. It makes contact with other collectives. What if other collectives do not exist? Well, it should talk to itself until the day they do*” (yes, it honestly says that).

Anarchism is a social system for individuals, not a system for a society of individuals. Splitting hairs it seems, but the social makes all the difference. Come the Glorious Day, the day after, 28 days later, ten years down the line, and on, there will still be non-anarchists in society. At the moment, these 'non believers' form about 99.4% of the Bristol population. Either way, any tactics we come up with, any strategy we follow, any solutions we propose, need to accept the fact that not everyone will agree with them.

From that point we can go two ways.

We can go down the 'fuck them all' route – stick to our beliefs, keep talking, keep listening but not engaging, not accommodating. People will come round to our way of thinking once the consumerist drug wears off, once they can think straight. As for our own development, we will 'communicate with other collectives, or if other collectives do not exist we will talk to ourselves.' When it comes to comparing credentials in the anarchist community, ours will be impeccable.

In my opinion this is the path to oblivion, a pointless diversion, a pantomime. There is no point to Kebele standing in splendid isolation, behind impenetrable theoretical defences, waiting for the

world to come over to its way of thinking. There is no point in Kebele only allowing anarchists through the doors, in only preaching 'the anarchist way, truth and light' and refusing to accept any other viewpoint – if we're going to do that we may as well dress up in suits and spend Sunday afternoons knocking doors with the rest of the religious myth-peddlers.

The other path to take is much more treacherous, full of potential pitfalls and deadly double-crosses. We must look to take on Power and make Change in the moral mazes that make up the real world. Obviously, as individuals we do this all the time - “Bristol aint a game” as R.E. would say, we all walk the lines, making no-win choices, accepting bad compromises, getting by.

We live this way in all ways, every day, talking the harsh language of reality. We compromise our kids' future, pay for present predicaments with post dated checks on our dreams, If we didn't, if we refused to compromise, we couldn't remain a functioning part of society. We would be seen as 'self-righteous', selfish, cut out of the deal, marginalised, seen as a joke – pretty much the traditional viewpoint of anarchism.

If we refuse to consider compromise on our anarchist principles, then those principles are no longer guidelines, matters of common purpose. They are mantras, rooted in the fantastical, repeated endlessly like prayers until like prayers, no one listens.

Kebele must be effective, and to be effective it needs to make a real difference, not just set an example. We can't just sneer at the world and shout “WRONG!” at everyone we meet. We want to change the world. We are a revolutionary movement. If one day we hope to make sure that Our Way wins, we have to create the future, not shake our fists as it passes by. At the moment we are good at setting the agenda, rabble rousing, proving the point, designing the future – but not implementing it. We need to grab the reins of society and start tugging if we are going to change its direction.

Our beliefs and actions need to resonate, others need to recognise the practicality of what we say. We should be utopian in belief, of course - there's nothing so sad as someone self-protected with cynicism, and still getting hurt just like the rest of us. But we need to have the reputation that we stand a good chance that we will achieve our aims. If something is successful, it is by definition practical.

When it comes to culture the British Working Class may cheer for the underdog, but when it comes to politics, bitter experience has taught them only to back winners. They only take a gamble when they're desperate, and they're not desperate yet.

Anarchism and libertarian communism are seen as at best outdated, and at worst daffy. The (accurate) appearance of not being able to agree whether the sky is up or down, or organise a piss-up in a fountain of beer. Full of socially anxious conspiracy theorists, judgemental middle class tight-fists preaching their hypocritical gospels, and swaggering drop-outs who think rude is revolutionary. Most people want a 10% improvement in their immediate lives, we swan in and offer them a 1% chance that 100% change would make things better. When we urge the outside world to be like us, they laugh in our faces.

Even the 'poisoned alternatives' on the Right aren't getting anywhere, despite having the easiest message (hating strangers) to get across. The BNP vote has increased, the EDL is a fun day out for the hoolies and hangers-on, but neither are going to get anywhere, apart from playing their usual role as agitators for a harsher, nastier state.

There's no justice, there's just us. Family and friends, and that's where it ends. Get rich or die tryin.

Those that had still have, and those that don't won't get it. The Class War was fought and lost. This in no time for Big Ideas, where did Big Ideas ever get us?

But this IS the time for Big Ideas, isn't it? We know, because we've been watching. We have been interested observers on the sidelines, the perfect place to get the bigger picture. And the bigger picture is that its all going wrong, everything, for the weak and for the strong. Change IS coming, the working class WILL rise again, the only issue for anarchists is whether we will have any part to play in it.

The timeline is bunching. Storm clouds are gathering, ready to unleash a torrent of piss over us all. You can stay sitting on the sarong-covered second-hand sofa, acting like you've got all the time in the world, that all this will never die. I'm going to put my pac-a-mac on and take a walk into....

THE FUTURE

Primitivism has nothing to do with my idea of Anarchism, it is basically just conservatism of the oldest kind. There is no going back to a forest Britain, iron-age communities, charcoal power, and a UK population of 10 million. There is no point looking back to Golden Pre-History, or Madagascan freetowns, or Peterloo's, apart from making sure the stories are not forgotten, or erased by attempts to pretend things have always been this way. Tactically, Spain in the 1930's has no relevance to Bristol in the 2010's, we will not build resistance in the same way. Ideologically, a 19th Century writer can only show that the overall struggle in the 21st Century remains broadly the same – to be honest, you could get more practical guidance by spending a day talking to the pensioners in your local Labour Club.

Don't do me bad - I'm not putting forward an argument that Anarchists should be 'anti intellectual', far from it. I have one ancestral foot in The Valleys and use Aneurin Bevan as my rough guide to self-improvement. Knowledge IS Power, intellect is a freedom that should be enjoyed as much as possible and never felt ashamed of.

All I'm saying is that most lessons aren't teased from history, they are scooped from the recent past, cut fresh to form the near future, and this is the direction that we should bend our intellects. We should look at things in terms of now, here, and look for answers to our own problems. We should keep moving forwards, trying new things, reinventing the wheel sometimes, for sure, but always making sure we're running it on a fresh path.

The Realities of the Present

I went to the Social Centres Network Gathering with Cai from The Factory, and we had every fucker from Dublin to Devon green-eyed with envy at what is going on in Bristol at the moment. 'The Bristol Thing' seems to grow bigger and broader every week, exciting projects are started, new faces are getting involved.

We shouldn't get carried away. If you look out of Kebele's windows you do not see Barcelona, or Exarchia, or Red Clydeside. It is not the time to barricade the streets and dig up the paving stones, to face down the state.

So, we should be acting in a way that reflects who we are and where we're at, not more, and more importantly at the moment, not less.

The Reality of the Present is that Kebele is an established anarchist social centre in an area with a lot of underlying support for its aims. It has been nurtured by so many people for so long, and their tender care has created a wonderful, wonderful place that has saved so many of our lives from being spent on the wrong path, trapped in cages, not being true to who we are.

The Reality of the Present is that Anarchists have experienced 30 years of defeat alongside the working classes they form part of, or ally with. This has taken its toll. High workloads mixed with low numbers mean that hope has become a luxury that most cannot afford – we too have mothballed it, we too have our insurance policies, taken out to protect against burn-out, or worse, sell-out.

So we keep it manageable, low-maintenance, low horizons, no expectations, trudging on through a long war of attrition. Looking to prepare for that solar flare from the stable sun that shoots our way, and lights up our corner of the world, when a chance to gamble on creating another world is not a hopeless bet.

The Reality of the Present is that that time is Now.

The pace of history has quickened and events are now overtaking us. Many, many people are predicting that the next two years will see the biggest attack on the working and unemployed poor in 30, maybe 80, years. Britain is starting its slide into oblivion – not making anything, now not buying anything because the credit lines have run dry, no use to anyone. Mass unemployment, serious social unrest, the rise of nationalism, and the ultimate antidote to working class unrest – war. All of these nightmares are possible, not in the next hundred years, but in the next decade. Capitalism has quickened the pace of everything, including history, and I get the real feeling we are being left behind (look at our reaction to banking crisis in 2008 and draw your own conclusions).

But for us, a time for nightmares should also be a time for dreams. Look at all the problems we faced that seemed so concrete, so stifling for the ideas we tried to spread. Consumerism – going. Apathy – going. The status quo – gone. Without getting too Lord of the Rings on your ass, we are on the eve of the battle of our generation in a Class War that goes back centuries. Capital is closing in for the kill, but Labour is ready to rise again.

The wind of change is in our sails, from J18, to Seattle, to Drax Power Station, to 14 Robertson Road, BS5 6JY. The post-Thatcher anarchist movement has reached maturity, and now must start throwing it's weight about. For the anarchism that we currently know the choice is stark and simple – If it is not to happen now, it will never happen.

This is a wake-up call. We must move from 'comfortably irrelevant' to 'ready, willing and able', and we must do it within 2 years, or we will miss the opportunity. But this is also a battle cry! We CAN do it. Kebele has spent 15 years preparing for this, hundreds of people have passed through and gained skills of building resistance, taking direct action, creating secure networks, and organising without leaders. We ARE ready, we ARE able, all we need to be now is willing – willing to take a chance, put the hours and the effort in, willing to make the sacrifices, willing to move out of our comfort zones, our insuring bubbles, willing to learn, listen, test, react, hope, succeed.

Conclusion

I have written this as a stream of consciousness, so it has moved from 'what is kebele' to 'what kebele should be' to 'prepare for revolution – all in 12 pages! Yaaay! As with all streams the only conclusion is to form part of a wider river and then the sea. The river is your additions that you will hopefully now be inspired to write and add to mine, agreeing, disagreeing, correcting, suggesting. The sea is well, the sea's like the river, but bigger, and salty. So, on you go! Mx