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Technology And Anarchism

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An increase in the use and utilization of technology does not come without its faults. In 2009 Elliot Madison, who used Twitter during the G20, was arrested and his house raided for reporting police movements. In 2006 Jeremy Hammond was charged with hacking the conservative site "Protest Warrior" and served a little under 2 years in jail. We will see these raids and arrests becoming more common in the years to come. It's important to learn from the mistakes of others and realize their contributions.

To a Technological Conscious Insurrection!

Cyberpunks Rise Against Civilization!

This article is inspired by the Geek Mafia series, thanks for giving us hope. It is dedicated to the anarchist hackers who have faced or will face the cold steel bars.

A few years ago a simple book came out by the name of "Recipes for Disaster" came out. It had everything in it from how to paint billboards to sexual consent and more. By the end you felt you had a new tool belt to combat the forces of capitalism and the state.

But not once in the hundreds of pages did it seriously consider technology and its impacts on the anarchist movement. And how could they? No good anarchist tactics text has. It seems that anarchists as a whole have a great grasp of how to riot but when it comes to technology and electronics we are as silly as a baby with a fork near a socket.

This is more than security culture

The modern anarchist movement has highly benefited from technology and the Internet, being able to disseminate information and has also the privileged of not facing strong oppression from the state in the medium, but I fear that this time is coming to an end. For too long the anarchist movement and related movements have enjoyed a freedom normally reserved for mainstream computer users, especially in western nations. Freedom of Speech as the states call it, but we see a common thread from the state following from more repressive nations of confiscation of technological devices such as cell phones, laptops and storage media. Once this information is in the eyes of the state, it is copied and used against us.

What this means for modern anarchists

If anarchists are to stay a fighting force within the political spectrum a serious consideration of technology and its impacts on our movement is needed. This writing hopes to start the conversation.

A serious Security Audit: Defensive Technology

Businesses do this all the time, they hire outside firms to analyze their networks for weak spots. As an observer and a participant I have taken it upon myself to preform this audit on the anarchist movement. You can boil down technological faults to 3 things. We will call them the 3Es:

Email: The most commonly used form of communication on the Internet, including anarchists. Email lists predate many of the “social networking” we know now and is still a main use of organizing. Yet email is weak because of it’s nature. Email is a postcard, not secure in anyway from prying eyes.

Encryption: Encryption is the only way of safety when using technology, although not an end all be all (it takes the National Security Agency 2 weeks to crack strong encryption), it can help us. Everything of importance should be encrypted from emails and chat logs to full hard drive encryption. If we encrypt everything, even the stuff that doesn’t matter we make it that much harder for them to access any of our information.

Erasure: It is very important to know how to get rid of information. Many people think that dragging a file to your trash bin means bye bye, but this is simply not true. The only true way of getting information off of media is destroying it. This also should be considered when posting things online, as logs are kept for a really long time. Are you sure you want to post about that action on Facebook? Once you delete it you can be guaranteed that someone will have a copy of it.

By using these 3 faults, you can analyze how your organization is (or is not) using them. By making your communications secure, you can put up a more defensive wall against the state. But what if we want to go further?

Getting Serious: Considering Offensive Technology

For what is out there, Defense is the card most anarchists play when considering technology. When you have a good grasp of defensive technology, it’s time to play offense. What does this mean? It means a lot more than reading “2600”¹ and watching “Live Free or Die Hard” and masturbating about how “cool” it would be to bring down the system through hacking. Offensive technology is not only about hacking the gibson², it’s about skills building and practice. Do you know how to build a transmitter? Can you write code? Do you know which wire to clip, the red or white? Do you know the concepts behind EMP? What’s a diode? What is “rooting a box”? packet injection? cold boot attacks? logic gates?

If most of that you could understand, great! If not, then why not? The state is doing it’s part in learning and building all kinds of new technologies, why aren’t you? The government has teams of the best hackers on earth to protect itself, when there is a insurrection, it will be important to find their weak spots and use them. We can’t expect underground hackers to help us when the time is right. We need to learn these skills now, before the robot armies takes over. I challenge you this weekend to learn a technological skill that you always wanted to.

What this means for us

It means we have a lot of work to do. Education is the first step, those among us must throw energy to get less techie anarchists on the same page about the importance of technology in the anarchist movement. It also requires a great deal of time to skills sharing and building. A technology conference that involves questioning the state is long over due. The feds have Defcon, we need Anarchycon!

¹ a periodical about hacking

² “gibson”: hacker jargon for “mainframe”