



Imprisonment is for Burning

**A Story About The Defence of a Forest
and a Case For Dis-identification**

Ella

Imprisonment is for Burning – A Story About The Defence of a Forest and The Case for Dis-identification, (2023) by Ella, is a gift to those who may benefit, and it may be copied and shared for emancipatory purposes. In return, I ask you to support or start your local anti-repression group, and act on a more conscious freer world for all.

If you would like to make a financial contribution for this work, with intent to support people undergoing or recovering from repression, one could share resources to this association's account.

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Intro

I was born into a mixed family, parents both of colonised countries, who had migrated and found each other in a big city, looking for work. For what both these ancestries have been through, I am sure that the strong desire for autonomy is impregnated into my DNA. The intergenerational trauma of having culture, traditions and language forbidden, starvation, enslavement on plantations and then industry, and migration in search of relief, but particularly having common relied upon land expropriated, and the severe punishment against those who rebelled, can be seen as a similar story that played out in the Dannenröder Forest. “Danni” as we named what became a home. This has been one of Germany’s only healthy forests¹, occupied for over a year between 2019-2020 by activists inspired to stop this highway horror of capitalism. Yet now Danni, Herrenwald “Herri” and Maulbacherwald “Maui” have been cut through, the A49 construction is presently underway, and folks who participated in resisting the deforestation are assessing how to go on, affirming the why.

I took it upon myself during the 529 days in the Frankfurt JVA3 womens* prison, after my arrest from this place, and also in this writing, the challenge of healing from this reoccurring collective trauma of colonisation. We want our stolen land reclaimed and wilderness restored, our personal and collective boundaries respected, our work to fulfill ourselves, our resistance amplified until they cannot ignore, deny, disown and reject best interests of others any longer and must seek a win-win scenario. For this we essentially need prison society, all the physical and abstract bars of our cage, smelted down and cast into tools of freedom. To truly integrate our shared experience we need to see that all that we hate, for of all the hurt it has done to us, just like all that we love, for all the fulfilled desires it has brought us, is an intrinsic part of ourselves. Whether self or other, each is a fractal of the everything expressing the free will to define or merge itself, an existence to respect. If and when we master these relationships, we may integrate the crisis humanity is leading in the world today.

In the consultation cell with the lawyer before my first court I named myself Ella, it was the first sound that dropped into my head when I realised that my imprisoned self would need a pseudonym to keep safe and focus on the cause we were struggling for. It certainly sounded more appealing than the ‘UWP1’ the prison processed and some guards chose to call me as, acronym for ‘Unknown (Female) Person 1’, one of many in the arrested “UP group”. Coincidentally the spelling and the sound ‘Ella’ relate to Spanish and Portuguese pronouns for she/her, this for me reaffirmed my will for autonomy in both Earth and human bodies, especially those feminine and othered. Later on a supporter in the courtroom pointed out that backwards Ella spells *alle*, meaning “all” in German. The painted placard “*wir sind alle ella*”, “we are all ella” made me smile as it literally reflected, and fit a classic solidarity slogan, but also with reminiscence to the fact we are all affected by what we do to our environment. Lastly I came to know that the imperative in Greek with the same sound $\epsilon\lambda\alpha$ is what’s used to tell someone to “come” or “go ahead”. So, may this

1 As attested by tree expert Philipp Funck
<https://www.fr.de/rhein-main/landespolitik/dannenroeder-wald-und-a49-der-preis-des-fortschritts-90058469.html>

offering be a tool that is used to come together, define the world we wish to complementarily destroy and create, and be reasoning to go ahead and merge with those who wish to thus destroy and create it.



Just one part of the occupied Dannenröder Forest, with beech trees estimated to have been 300 years old. May this web of once stunning life, Rest in Power.

1. A Poem About What Happened

What follows is the poem I spoke to the court on the first day of the appeal trial, 17th of January 2022. It recounts how I was made a state captive. I rehearsed it a lot before the eventual day, when I would lower the folder that shielded my face after the wall of cameras had left, and own the trial which was mine and ours to be seen, heard, felt and ultimately understood.

Court trials can not just be incredibly boring and in need of an aesthetic flare, but very overwhelming and scary in the way that state loyalists make decisions about one's life without truly considering the most affected people's best interests. Legally the defendant has the right to speak at any time during the trial, although one's lawyer may encourage what they believe to be the safer option of the right to remain silent. I do not endorse the law as I see it as benefit to only some classes, the elites and property owning, and a detriment to others, the undervalued and impoverished. I rather encourage a society that is moved by intrinsic motivation which can self regulate with conscious consensus. Therefore I made 6 speeches during my trial and appeal when I felt communicating my reason necessary.²

² More of these speeches and poems can be found at <https://freethemall.blackblogs.org/unbekannt/>

Before reading on, here is some glossary for a better understanding of forest occupation vocabulary:

Walkway – Two ropes tied high between 2 trees or more, used to traverse between them, climbers usually securing themselves to the top one and standing on the lower, and move around out of reach of regular cops.

Traverse – A single rope enabling one to move tree to tree without another rope to stand on.

Tape Slings - Material for securely climbing the trunk of a tree.

SEK – *Spezialeinsatzkommando*, the German special task force unit of the police, usually dispatched in counter terrorism operations. Their anonymous code names indicate which area they are from, K – Köln, D – Düsseldorf.

Verpiss dich – German translation of “piss off”, used more harshly like “fuck off”.



Frankfurt JVA3 generally didn't allow stickers and plant life through in letters, but I did manage to decorate my shield by putting some stickers directly onto it as they arrived with letters. I also adorned the table with one leaf that got through by blagging with the prison guard, and also a small bunch of fragrant herbs that someone gave in the first trial.

Opening Poem

On the morning of the 26th of November 2020,
I awoke to the sound of alarm aplenty,
Cops and machines closing in to tear down us and our defence.
The state adhering to the climate emergency a gross pretence.
I said good luck to the comrades and tree-house that I left,
Set out on a walkway holding onto my eco-justice faith, not quite bereft.
I believed and still do that if we hold evictions back long enough,
Win-win solutions will arise from a principle called love.
So I intended to move from tree to tree and peacefully be,
A guardian to the living world as it had guarded me,
And together demonstrate that we will never surrender,
To the murderers of living beings we hold to this degree tender.

58% biodiversity loss, human induced in the past 40 years³,
This is the reality of deforestation and it's brought me to tears,
The fire salamander, the dormouse, the bats, where will they go?
When the homes of endangered species are fast becoming roads.
This enchanted world is becoming impoverished by exploitation,
Climate science warns of a potential 4° warming estimation⁴.
The solution is carbon in the ground, it filters the water this land and it's people are drinking.
Why does contaminating life's foundation not disturb enough profiteer thinking?
Forests cool our planet by CO2 sequestration,
They regulate our water cycle and prevent inundation.
Forest brings us joy because their beauty is beyond measure,
We encourage everyone to explore these wonders that are our common treasure.

And so, there I found myself between trees with cops on each side
And just like that dormouse I ran towards a tree-house to hide,
I switched my securing from one traverse to the next,
But was pulled back in a way that buckled my legs.
Cop K214 had a hold of one of my tape slings,
And any climber can tell you the danger that that brings.
Attached to a harness which secured my life,
The situation became more than ecological strife.
I could not keep my balance and likewise my mind went unstable,
To keep calm and avoid repression in this moment I just was not able,
The only thing I wanted was to get away from this aggressive being,
The reports of police brutality everyone had been seeing.
The SEK police had been letting activists fall from increasingly shocking heights,
With one suffering spinal injuries, who knows what they recklessly might?
Distrustful, being pulled, losing center, all for me, was really not OK,
In the fearful disarray my impulse made me further disobey,
I stuck out my foot as a warning for him to back off,

3 Living Planet Index study statistic that measured between 1970 – 2012. Their most recent statistic has risen to 69% in 2022, with far more alarming rates relating to the Caribbean and Latin America.

https://wwf.panda.org/discover/knowledge_hub/all_publications/living_planet_index2/
<https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-US/>

4 Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change report 2021 statistic.
<https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

The evidence shows he was double secured, safe against any 15m drop.
I usually know to keep one's limbs where police can see them, is where they best be,
But amidst all the stress a survival instinct took hold of me,
And my body reacted in a way that offended the police,
Here, accused of violent attack, I remind of the greater attack we intended to cease.
Invaluable centuries old trees crashing to the ground,
People in their thousands gathering, making unbelievable sound,
Yet officials in the offices ignoring and handing out licenses,
We, through weeks of chainsaws, were so saddened by forest night silences.
Other animals fleeing because corporate money is being prioritised,
Worlds fragmented, poisoned, when financial growth has been authorised.

K214 tied my sling to a branch lower than me,
Still pressed with the aim of relief in setting myself free,
I went for the carabiner that kept me from a safer place,
I tried to open it, my heart in a loaded race.
He told me "*Verpiss dich*", I told him "I want to",
He claims that I swore at him, I tell you, I did not do.
Then on my hand I felt the pelt of his metal ring
That came from his strike whipped from a sling.
I tried to keep my distance but he continued inflicting pain,
Using wrist grips I screamed, his will to torture I conclude, to blame.
At tape slings length, I stayed as cop D111 with tree-stabbing spikes arose,
And out of nowhere he punched me hard in the nose.
I was threatened with a taser, to which a coldness ran through me,
I had been shocked enough, this escalation, truly unnecessary.
From the impact my face began to swell.
They tried to tie my feet and all this for me was hell.
I pushed off my shoe, and they eventually cut me from the traverse,
But it was after being lowered to the ground I really felt their curse...
They took their weight off me and when I had turned,
Amongst all the cops looking down on me, K214 affirmed,
With a snarl so vindictive, that of me they would make a show,
And now I'm a framed deterrent, and everybody knows,
That my repression is a scare tactic, a discredit, an activist's distraction,

But on the contrary now all the more are for peaceful direct action⁵.
My case has brought an awareness about criminalisation at the mercy of the state,
I use this position to remind us, that we and ecosystems have a common fate.

In disbelief, lying on the forest floor that last time,
The police crowd surrounding me orchestrating this crime,
I felt something so horrible that anybody would wish to escape,
I thought this must be what it's partly like to be gang raped.
And can you imagine how the Earth feels to be shed of her skin?
This lack of relation, to our downfall, it will bring.
Because of this situation I've been in prison now 417 long days,
The support of countless comrades has made me unafraid,
These are the people that never asked for any personal documentation,
Eco-defense, our intention, the most important identifying information.
We come here today to have an unjust sentence reversed,
And I present my statement of facts to you in this verse,
So that meaning and harmony, out of struggle can be accepted, even admired,
Thus contribute to the zero-sum games of repression and ecocide, one day retired.
I say everything I know to be true.
And the feeling whether to trust me lies in each of you.
We are in this together whether we like it or not,
With demolished habitats, rising temperatures, the universe is giving us a shot,
To reassess our values that must include the lives of others,
With compassion for the Earth and misjudgment of me rediscover.
I thank you for your attention, and understanding that dissolves our separation.
I hope that out of crisis depths we will provide a transformation.

5 I was encouraged by my lawyer to stick in the adjective 'peaceful' to calm the nerves of the state. But I want to acknowledge for peace, all sides need to be willing to resolve a conflict. However, the state benefits from this conflict and shows no inclination for peace. The peaceful power we have in this situation is to resolve opposing parts within ourselves before stepping 100% of our being into a direct action.

2. Choose Consequences

On that fateful day of my arrest I unconsciously choose my consequences. I chose in a split second to defend myself, having known that this is something the cops could turn against me, although of course this fact was not reaching my conscious awareness in the distressing moment which came the reflex. What was reaching my awareness was an aggressor, pulling at me at a 15 metre unstable height, and an instantaneous need to send a wake up call to the brutality they were causing myself in that moment, as well as us all in a bio and climatological crisis of civilisation.

I had decided before then that in the moment of my personal eviction from the forest I would be wherever I needed to be. Using the rope walkway system, that acted like a network of bridges, tree to tree and structure to structure, I would be one of those that the cops would have to chase, the tactic being to delay them as much as possible, which would give opportunity for further intervention.

Danni came to have a large media outreach, which when eviction approached became supported by what has been criticised for their enabling of aggressors, corporation Greenpeace⁶. The intention was that if enough of the masses see and understand the issues of ecocide and thus climate change, critical public opinion would be too much for this “green” local government and highway investors to bear, and they would have to abandon the insane, on so many levels, project. Also, by alerting the tax payer to the amount the eviction would end up costing⁷, would reduce the will of a money orientated society for possible further evictions, even if we were to lose Danni. This tactic of mass movement in the end got criticised as playing too much into the local mainstream that would not comprehend or support our anarchist principals that went beyond the abolition of a forest annihilating project and transition in mobility, and that we could have given more energy to self organised channels to create a more self determined, diverse and perhaps affective reaction.⁸

I felt myself become quite frustrated living out the almost 8 week eviction up until my point of captivity because I could see this strategy obviously was not working. Whilst people of the forest were moralising which tactics were legitimate or not to use, some of us were questioning will we have a forest or not? Will we have a living planet or not? Sitting in a tree and passively resisting the abuse, like resistance I had made in times before, thinking that “ok we are losing this battle but maybe we win the war of information and a greater change somehow will come”, although is valuable because it creates an awareness, was not proving enough for those in power to change. Awareness without aligned action is failure to the plant, animal and mineral world that are probably

6 See *End:Civ* (2011) by Franklin López, a documentary about the crisis of industrialised civilisation which explains the co-opting of Greenpeace. <https://crimethinc.com/videos/enciv>

7 31 million euro, the total eviction cost according to <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/plus232942683/Dannenroeder-Forst-Steuerzahler-bleiben-auf-Kosten-fuer-Raeumung-sitzen.html>

8 See *Troubles in Danni Critical Reflections on the Dannenröder Forest Occupation* (2021) for more reckoning with the way Danni mobilised. <https://waldstattasphalt.blackblogs.org/en/2021/10/03/troubles-in-danni-critical-reflection-on-dannenroeder-forest-occupation/>

at this stage in evolution, praying for human extinction. Alas, it is up to affinity groups opposing any project to consider and decide for what they do think is enough for insane projects to take the moment they are given whilst blocked, outside of robotic lives, to actually question why they are experiencing resistance, and instead how to consider and heed the needs of others in decisions that affect them.

I also became frustrated that the focus of our struggle through daily conversation and actions seemed to be mostly about facing eviction as if we were projecting and therefore creating the loss that we suffered, rather than imagining an actual victorious scenario, such as project divestment, and bringing that potential forth instead. We were following a pattern of past German forest struggles among others, Hambach, Trebur, Lausitz and Eifel which I had not been such a part of. These gave the people expectations, but I wondered were these getting in the way of finding new solutions in present circumstances.

From the confines of my cell, I regretted having not stimulated these discussions more, got out these feelings, observations and needs about our ineffective passivity, and negative expectations rather than imaginative creations. I regretted not having brought relationships closer by creating occasions to talk about what kind of self defence makes real sense⁹, and how best to stay safe from repression in taking more assertive actions.

Another tactic that most of us were significantly playing to defy the state and their exploitative intentions was to dis-identify. This meant that when we entered the political context that was Danni, as in other zones of resistance, we generally left our legal names behind, shared less personal information and masked up, everyone to what degree they found necessary for individual and collective security. When it came to evictions and our potential arrest, we prepared against being identified by making our fingerprints unreadable by putting so many little razor blade scars across them, then pasted them with glue and glitter which would deflect the light of the finger print reading machine. We covered our scars and tattoos with sealant adhesives which cannot be so easily washed off in 24 custody hours, painted faces and therefore remained safer in anonymity from repression. We did this to break the chain of the state's categorical surveillance, but also as a position against all states and their apparatus of oppression in creating profiled targets to punish and individualise us away from the cause that holds us together.

When I went into custody, I had expected to be released the next day, but had not realised the severity of the physical resistance I made. When the judge read the accusations and sentenced me to jail until trial, I thought all this was an exasperating farce¹⁰. I knew during the arrest that the scene was being caught on camera by comrades, the court would see it, realise that their accusations would not hold up and let me go. But days turned into weeks, that then turned into months. I realised that video footage is likewise great for awareness, but not enough to compel courts that are upholding the status quo which video evidence is speaking against to decide fair or

⁹ Forests and everything that depends on them, I also consider part of the self, both ego and it's attachments, but also universal totality which I am also a part of.

¹⁰ A comment that the prosecutor highlighted and read from one of my personal letters to a supporter to the court, along with a quote of Pablo Neruda "They can cut all the flowers but they cannot stop the spring" which we found ironic and pleasing.

rationally. The only condition to get out was to give my identity papers for them to be able to investigate me more and hunt me down if I evaded further court. I was reluctant, damned if I did, damned if I didn't give in to their will to control me and break the movement.

Somewhere on that long line of time I had a phone call with the prisoner support team and inquired about the people in other prisons who had also not given ID. They informed me that they all for their own reasons had submitted, which meant that I was the last "unknown person" left in this imprisoned struggle. Some of the others had been arrested collectively and made the choice to show ID collectively, but mine was an individual case among others.¹¹ If I was to also submit, then the narrative could be made that they all gave their IDs and got out, and be interpreted as if what we were opposing was not worth the fight. But the struggle for a life safe from the surveillance of the state, their threatened punishment for non-compliance, their papers that legitimise nations and their borders which exclude so many, was a struggle I felt in this position, with lies being told against me, so angry about and with the innate need for commitment to transform it by continuing to refuse it all.

And so being the last person inside, solidified my hesitancy whether to give the ID or not. A hesitancy that plagued me every time I faced a restriction on my freedom in that horrid place. But being in a lose-lose scenario can really show one what they value more. So I decided that the pressure of being enclosed in the industrial prison complex for a maximum of 6 months before trial, continuing to spend so many hours in isolation, putting up with the frequent screaming and banging of other prisoners, the stupidity of officers, the mundane life, and all the hindrances to basic needs like connection and closeness, would be a pressure I could take if it could result in people waking up to the subtly oppressive regime we were all living under, and perhaps realise their own power to change it. If I was willing to put my greater freedom on hold by refusing papers and oppose all this, maybe the shock wave of this scandal would manifest a wider liberation, to one day live our lives on our own terms. Thus I chose the negative consequence of staying imprisoned, for the positive consequence of collective awakening.

3. The Scapegoat vs Big Brother vs You

Before Danni I had been compelled to take action against the world of oppression within other strains of social movement, in one case anti-militarism. The arms industry makes billions in monetary profit from the killing and maiming of civilians and their livelihoods, which make up far in the majority the numbers of casualties. This sick game enrages me and so with a group, the war profiteers became one of our targets for intervention. We intended to create cause for their

¹¹ One of the other "UP"s said to me after my release that it was a big question for them if they should have stayed inside and we fought the case for anonymity somehow together. My thoughts towards this were that although it would have been great to have each other there, "prisons are for burning" and it's probably better that only one of us went through this waste of a place.

narcissistic bubble to burst, to make the public aware and responsive as to the atrocities they were responsible for, and give energy towards a collective change for peace.

After some investigation and planning, one early morning outside a weapons facility, part of the group locked ourselves into a concrete device we had brought into the middle of busy roads, outside both entrances on a big day of their deliveries. I cared so much about this issue and trusted that many activists had gone before me, that haphazardly I would manage somehow to be alright.

With the support of a wide campaign we managed the blockade, and by also threatening the police with legal action for what could have ended up in personal injury when they went to forcefully pull us off the road. But as expected police special forces arrived, cut the locks away and arrested us. Although the delivery truck drivers and blocked traffic heard our chanted slogans and people saw our banners there and on social media, I've had to deal with the grief in my repression that these spectacles are inadequate for those complicit in war, ecocide and exploitation, to seriously reconsider their choices of livelihood. These people have deep held beliefs about what they are doing is 'good' and 'right', thus seem to be so walled in on anything that might bring guilt or shame on their conscience and let them choose another way. Here I naively came to know of how defensive Big Brother¹² would become of their beliefs, so embedded in the core of their sense of identity.

Throughout the action I followed the strategy of giving no personal details and no comment to every question, to keep myself and others safe, just having to submit to my photo being taken. But our campaign recommended lawyer told me that for my non-compliance they would most likely want to keep me in custody for several weeks, a potential I was not prepared for. Like any living being I was urged to keep my freedom away from a lonely, bleak enclosure, so I gave the identifying details used like a shorter chain, and was released back into the bigger cage of a state dominated world.

Weeks later I felt the consequence of this chain, not in court, but in a political space where I happened to meet a comrade from that anti-militarism action. They told me that one of the 'friendly' police communicators at another demonstration had approached them. This cop asked why I was not here at this demo? What was I up to instead? and such, referring to my description and full legal name, something I had not shared among the potential for snitching in a higher security culture. This voyeurism crystallised the movement towards anonymity for me, as I, like no one, likes to be creeped on by an abusive entity.

Trying to get a detrimental reality understood with action, tests the stability of those that are causing the damage. But instead of being open to integrate the reality of other affected people, these transgressors living in a fearful separate illusion remain closed, to which someone like an activist becomes the enemy, being perceived as threatening the pain of their potential loss. Thus like many who become known to controlling authorities, I was cast out into the hostile desert of surveillance like the scapegoat the rabbi imbued with all the village's sins in belief that by sacrificing it, something that represents a nuisance on their conscience, it will just go away. But this

12 A reference to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, (1949). I use this term regarding the surveillance state that protects capital from those that become conscious of and want to change these harmful dynamics.

is obviously idiotic and not working. Those, who think, speak and act on truths by active listening, that weapons are destroying the lives of innocent people, that the destruction of our natural environment is causing climate and emotional derangement, that the existence of prisons is creating more violence in the world, are something similar to a disease that tells the body that all is not well. When suppressed with medication that treats symptoms and does not address causes, we do not get to the root of a problem and transform it, namely the way that society mistreats others and falsely prospers from their harm, we will manifest in other forms in other parts of the body, just as I appeared and was scapegoated again later in Danni.

When we understand that on one level there are no villains, victims or heroes, just a reality of perspectives, and that the punishment and reward system related to this triangle of shifting perspectives is ruining lives, because it is a tactic of manipulation used to create closeness between allies and harm to perceived enemies, we can step back and choose to go directly to the core of the issue which is always an unmet need. Although I may be highlighted in any of these roles and it be true or not, I do not wish to be described in any. The positioning of these roles maintain dangerous parallel realities and prevent us in coming to share the same one, which through understanding, can be made revolutionary.

And so I ask some of my “villains”, what is it like to be you? What are you protecting and why? What is so bad about the unconstricted, safer world we are asking for?

4. Conditions for a Blooming Resistance

When I feel like I’m doing what I’m meant to be doing in life there seems to be a flow to it. As synchronicity occurs with that, I met someone who had also been spending part of the winter in the south of Europe, and was migrating back towards the same newly occupied forest in middle Germany as I was, Danni. I was glad to give hitchhiking a break, and with their van we went to spend some last nights at a squatted house on a secluded beach before setting off.

Coincidentally there was a sweat lodge taking place one of those nights, traditionally a purification ritual that seemed perfect before setting out on reaching the place that would later become something of a war zone. It was there I met another person, with whom we fell into the depths of political struggle discussion, and I told them about the place we were headed. It must have reignited the Zadiste¹³ in them because they asked to join, to which they were very welcome. And so we 3 new acquaintances left, getting to know each other better over several days on the road, even visiting hot springs on the way.

But news that was to make world history came from a phone call to Germany. It hit like a wave of shock that pressed the air out of me, “No!” I responded, European governments were planning to close borders. This was the information that a new dystopia was forming, control

13 ‘Zadiste’ referring to those who partook in ‘la ZAD’ of Notre Dame de Landes and its offshoots, French acronym and neologism for ‘Zone à Défendre’ (Zone of Defence).

measures being imposed ‘for our own safety’ against a spreading virus called covid, and news nomad who trusts more in the safety of unity, rather than the protection of division, wants to hear.

We had crossed Iberia but wanted to pass two more borders, so our non-German friend and I decided on a discreet passage so as to not be hassled by authorities that tend to make our lives harder. We checked out the map and choose routes where to get out of the van and hike across. We scaled our way down steep slopes, through forest and made fun of our gallivant, meeting up again with the friend who was officially allowed to cross borders to get home on the other side. We were jokingly being smuggled across, although a type of trek more racialised people on the move from further afar have to endure exponentially. We eventually made it to the occupation through darkness and mud, were welcomed with pancakes and shown a ladder accessible and insulated tree house large enough for many to sleep in, hence was its name ‘Flying Carpet’.

As the world got locked down, the forest became a refuge for those that did not want to be subjected to what became a suspicious mass imprisonment experiment in the name of protection against something novel and other to us. Many of those, uni students took the opportunity for a more comprehensive education immersed in the struggle for a living planet at Danni. These harsh measures ended up polarising many, but no doubt on one side increased distrust with the government also responsible for this planned ecocide. So with a lot more resentment in society and not many other places to channel it, the occupation over the year of 2020 grew to about 150 tree structures, some built with lock-ons, and other “living barricades” such as tri, bi, mono, and sky-pods that held those occupying activists who were willing to literally put their lives on the line for the result of an intact ecological community¹⁴.

As the full force eviction began to happen from the first day of “cutting season” on October 1st¹⁵, it became clear that the police force in their thousands sent to evict activists and protect the interests of state and capital showed little value for the activists’ lives, not as in well-being, of course they trash this all the time, but actual survival. We were aware that our resistance would very likely suffer police brutality, but 2 people hospitalised with spinal injuries from having the ropes that held them cut, having fallen metres to the ground, sent a whole deeper level of threat to our safety. This threat was present in my mind leading up to and in those moments on the walkways which multiple cops grabbed at me. I had a choice to get brutalised or even fall to my death at the hands of an aggressor and their climbing security incompetence, or actively resist whilst sabotaging their agenda for an easy eviction. Setting my boundary via my foot pushed against a cop’s helmet, alerting the brute to stop pulling at my harness was the only thing I could do in that moment that felt right.

14 For an explanation of these types of difficult to remove barricades see *Ecodefence a Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (1985) <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-ecodefence-a-field-guide-to-monkeywrenching> or *Earth First! Direct Action Manual* (2015) https://archive.org/details/direct_action_manual_3/page/n3/mode/2up

15 Referring to the season when some animals are not reproducing and so when their trees can be legally cut down in Germany, their communities made into upheaval during already stressful, and what is meant to be peaceful winter months.

Having resisted, been accused of assault on 2 counts, (cop D111 made a case out of an alleged knee kick during the struggle) and the alleged injury to cops, along with not showing my ID, I found myself the next day having the heavy steel door of prison cell closed in front of me. Although surprisingly, it was actually more comfortable than expected. The room had a water boiler, heater, small toiletoom, television (because of no other passifying activity during covid times), fridge and a window that although behind bars, opened wide. I was also given kitchen utensils, various prison clothes, toiletries and decent blankets. Germany has been known to make its prisons more “humanitarian”, but let no one be fooled that this can in any way cure the disease that is the social oppression these very people building them are causing.

This space and the daily routine, although jarring, I got used to over the next few days gave me a stark realisation. It was not the first time I had been imprisoned. The room, although smaller and very hard to escape from, reminded me of the one room apartment I used to live in whilst I had a job contract that I hated but endured for the reward of the location that it got me. I thought about my graduation from state schooling and a bachelor degree and how those were captive chains to some sort of “secure” future that had been an illusion. I thought about the abusive partner I had lived with in my late teenage years, and how it took a kind school teacher, having caught me bunked off class, push a phone across his desk and invite me to call anyone that could possibly help me to escape. I saw parallels in these situations, and that they were not so different to the lives of many in the outside world. I realised on a deeper level, that what I was against was much more than the prison system itself, it had always been the very concept of imprisonment.

I thought a lot about the key I was holding that would get me out of this physical cage, my identification papers, and how they were a chain holding the oppressed captives in this prison society. How anyone who would want to reappropriate their lives, to claim shelter without paying for it, to claim food, water, energy simply because they need it, would be threatened with a shorter chain or smaller cage. How these keys were being sparingly handed out to migrants after years of getting to and becoming settled in Europe, being managed into the trap that Rastafarian friends refer to as Babylon.¹⁶ I thought about how much I wanted these papers, which act like keys, chains, and cages, put into a fire, and burned with all the rest of the bureaucratic shit that disallows free will.

I thought about my life outside of this physical prison. What had become our base of forest was on the cusp of being near completely destroyed. I had no close family, nor a tight group of affinities, nor any committed partners to go and recover with, no fixed home, no urgent responsibilities, no bright prospects, only to stay some time at a friend’s place, before finding another occupation to continue the struggle for free and wild spaces. Although the lack of many of these things made me sad and my enthusiasm for life in general waned, I saw my detachment as also an autonomous strength; if anyone was going to make the fight for freedom in dis-

16 To read an account of an Algerian migrant who attested that although very difficult, he preferred his life before getting papers, and all the bureaucracy and feeling of constriction that goes with that, see *Incognito* by Anonymous, chapter ‘Getting rid of frustration’ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-incognito/bbselect>

identification, perhaps the universe invited me into this here and now as a person with not so much to lose, most able.

The intensified constriction on my life was perhaps like a seed of wanting for the opposite of all this, buried in a desolate land. And so, I got to work on writing my first open letter for post on the newly created Hessen Prisoner Support blog “Free Them All”¹⁷, and advocate for an inspiring and beautiful alternative that I wished to unfold out of all this desolation.

5. Escalation

Up until September 31st 2020, I had been wishing for a miracle to happen, an investor’s conscience to be so laden with guilt that they would want to pull out; our actions and campaign worth it, so that we would unbuild the structures and leave by ourselves, if we so wanted. But that evening the dreaded information arrived, cutting the track for the highway had been officially announced to take place in the neighbouring Herrenwald forest, ‘Herri’, the following day. From an emergency *Nirgendwo* ‘Nowhere’ barrio meeting¹⁸, 6 of the crew arranged a nighttime hike in the Herri direction to make a reaction to what was happening. Our strategy was practical, with the tactic we knew best, expand the occupation by building defensive structures anywhere on and around the planned track to put further obstacle against their destruction.

After a night of packing, trekking and scouting through the dark, we found what seemed like a perfect spot. It was a part of the forest with much diversity of trees and age, a stream, the threatened by contamination water element we were strongly fighting for¹⁹, and a small road with a crossroads nearby that could be blocked if and when they most likely were now going to come for us. That early morning we tied the first ropes of the barrio that would become *überall* ‘Everywhere’.

However, after people came down from the trees, we regrouped and one person checked the social media channels to see the latest; with which the awful news came through, they were felling trees in the very northern planned highway track of the forest and we were evidently failing to safeguard them. It became clear that I had not adequately prepared myself for this probable catastrophe, as I let out my rage in what must have been a very loud prolonged “Fuuuuuck!!!”. Rage ignited at them for ignoring our, other species and the climate’s dependence on forests,

17 This political statement, and other Danni prisoner letters can be found at the Hessen Prisoner Support blog, <https://freethemall.blackblogs.org/politische-erklarung-brief-von-uwp-eins/>

18 ‘Barrio’ being the Spanish word for ‘neighbourhood’ which described the clusters of tree-houses and creative defence structures in the forest, most in Danni had relationally descriptive place names. *Nirgendwo* was founded from the need of a bunch of activists to put focus on anti-speciesist action, and so it was a relief to live in a community where animal exploiting products were nowhere there welcomed. It’s focus was also on inclusivity, with “No border, No nation, No deforestation” black banner my favourite, and English as it’s primary common language.

19 A quarter of a million people in the area are depending on this area’s threatened ground water.

precious lands that had taken hundreds of years to grow into the magnificence they were, and rage at myself for having naively hung onto the thought that “surely they wouldn’t be so stupid, to cut the branch they and their own grandchildren sit on, the social movement is so strong, that *something* will happen to prevent the go ahead”. But this, how my blind optimism projected things, had not nearly lined up. The money a lot of contractors were making from this project, namely companies such as Deges and Strabag, was too much for them to let go of. They had sold the idea that this highway would save a handful of dear minutes of travel time, that some towns and villages would have less traffic in their area because of it, that companies like Ferrero would be able to sell chocolate faster with a highway on their doorstep, and that the car industry that was created in the high time of German fascism was still in abusive power.

My outburst of emotion proved too much for one of the crew, after a night and following morning of handling the hard news, the stress of climbing and tying ropes into trees, whilst keeping quiet and unseen by nearby forest workers, so I decided to split from the group and leave in the direction of the cutting. One person, who during this time became very dear to me, ran after me and together we walked towards the violation, leaving the others to go back to base and further mobilise for a new barrio. Finding our way by means of the spray paint that marked the outer edges of the planned track, we past the military base²⁰, through thickets of hedge and under tall canopies, feeling continuously lost and found and more acutely aware of the community of beings and life force whose loss was on the cards.

When we finally arrived at the part of Herri forest alongside the road where vehicles used for forest destruction were passing, we assessed an opportunity. Getting onto one of these machines was one way to stop their functioning and at least delay and draw attention to the ecocide. Although the place was infested with cops, and I was conflicted. The opposing parts in me said “do something, do anything” and another part said “do something worthwhile, keep safe”. Sincere comrades know that a rose of victory comes with the thorns of a risky event, but I just wasn’t certain enough of how I would fare dodging these protectors of capitalism, to scale up a vehicle, with just one comrade to witness the outcome, potentially getting slammed to the ground or against metal. How effective would the time it would take them to get climbing cops able to get me down, or just pull me down themselves, and probably without any trustworthy media attention? How readily would I heal from a strike of the state’s thorns? The ideal rose I was imagining was a complete shutdown of the project and not just a very temporary one. We sat somewhere hidden and reassessed, tired but still motivated. We were close to the next *Manwache* or “*Mawa*”²¹ and so decided to keep on going to organise with those who had also showed up for what was now “day X”²².

20 This place is the location of what was one of Europe’s largest weapons factory, that later was proved to have left high toxicity levels of Hexol and TNT which has now by the cutting of the vegetation been released back into the soil and groundwater. Documentary film *49 Problems and My Future is One*, (2022) by Maxi Buck does a synopsis of this issue.

21 Legal structure during a German demonstration where activists can go to without cops having the right to ask for identification papers which could make demonstrators liable to prejudice.

22 “Day X”, a term used to describe the first day of eviction.

As we got closer to what was already severely devastated land we both entered into an emotional breakdown. Eight months after I had first entered and fell in love with this part of the world's movement for Earth liberation, the feeling of our failure was like an ocean crushing down on me. I let myself fall to my knees, we both did, the sight of so many ginormous 18th century year old dead bodies stacked up on the road beyond us. We didn't care that there were cops metres away and irritatingly watching us, maybe the sight of other humans pouring out their grief may have even alerted them to their own undeniably suppressed emotions. Many of us have seen stacks of severed and de-limbed trees, but when the relationship with such beings becomes personal, the reaction is akin to a part of one's own self being severed and served as a product. And then comes the fear, when will people wake up to the effects of the ecological destruction they are causing, which so many are by-standing and instead stand in defiance? When will the annihilation ever stop? Will we ever recover?

After wiping away the mess we were all in, we marched past more cops, being ordered to show the minimum of our identifying ears for potential cameras, before we covered them back up again under our t-shirt balaclavas. Identity checks always make me feel that this is a dystopian world slipping further into subtle totalitarianism, being placed on the edge of what they may deem unlawful and therefore punishable.

The *Mawa* was buzzing, people I had not known in Danni had come from afar and this was just the start. Activists that had been occupying in this side of the forest had set up a barrio called *Im Norden Ok* "In The North Ok". They were far from the central occupation and like their name, appeared to be confident as showed when we went to visit as close as we could, testing the tormenting police lines. Their eviction was underway, as cherry picker lifting platform machines with cops were coming to get them out of the branches as they played and sang punk songs on a guitar, full power. Their vocal belligerence refilled me with admiration for humanity, that came like an antidote to the pure anger I was feeling in the face of habitat decimation and the police that were always protecting those doing it.

There were some that day, and many more after that, that ran and climbed up onto machines, some held up works for full days, some were taken into custody just for trying. For the near 2 months that followed I held back from putting myself at risk of arrest, playing more supportive roles such as painting banners, assisting in constructions, gathering and transporting food and material, passing on information, being emotionally, mentally and physically present for others, keeping the barrio and forest somewhat orderly, occupying structures, shouting at cops and so on. For sure I was fearful about coming into bodily contact with the police, and that fear most likely fed into and intensified the situation when it did happen.

Image is of a 300 metre traverse tied from Dannenröder to Herrenwald, forest to forest across the Glental river and blocking for days the B62 regional road. I and a comrade had the pleasure of occupying the 20 metre high anchor point hammocks, in the crown of the tree on the Danni side overnight. We pulled up delivered forest clay oven made calzones and listened to the party that night made out of the closed road below.



That night as I was carrying reclaimed material from the fallen tree-houses out of Herri to the *Mawa*, I was met by another reinforcing surprise, some of my favourite forest people, the FLINTA*²³ crew, showed up. 5 of those associated with the queer-feminist barrio *Zukunft* 'Future', all with backpacks ready for reoccupation and resilience. Relieved as I was that the cops had fucked off back to their hotels, (sadly not homes and therapy), we orientated ourselves back into the forest to scout a stand of trees that made sense to reconstruct and pull platforms up into. As people got immediately to work, I then laid myself on a mat on the forest floor to rest for a moment, and passed out.

I describe this day because it was the first of many that looked somewhat like this, that for me went on relentlessly for near 2 months, often with the traumatic sound of chainsaws in the distance, and just some days break for a shower, clothes wash and meal with supporters that lived outside of the forest.

Progressively I felt worse in this period. Nobody in power was being convinced by any argument for biodiversity, drinking water, climate stability, natural beauty, or was actually prevented from their ecological destruction by our bodies on the line. In fact our bodies were being injured time and again by the uniformed lackeys that took them off the line. When it came to my own personal eviction, my own body at the hands of an invasive being, all of a sudden my instinct had to decide if I was to let myself be invaded or would I use physical confrontation to highlight what was not ok for me, nor many of us.

The direct action worst case scenarios like being aggressed by a cop, we could have prepared for more thoroughly before this event in my opinion. Like moving more decisively before that even were to happen, and by drilling it into ourselves that to let oneself react towards a member of the state as to any normal human would have has vastly different consequences, because any normal reaction, such as arguably proportionately defending oneself, can be deemed violently

23 Acronym for Female, Lesbian, Intersex, Non-binary, Trans, Agender and * for all others who may find themselves included.

offensive by those that want to suppress us. I knew this, but not firmly enough not to fall into their trap when the going would get tougher than imagined.

And it was a trap, a common one built to deem protesters as violent, uncooperative barbarians so as to discredit and shift attention away from our valid concerns, which they are responsible for, using the media they have great influence triangulated against us. They had already used the accusation of ‘attempted manslaughter’, the first charge they used against me, on another activist who they failed to catch, after their own cherry-picker machine broke a rope that held a bipod structure, which consequently fell on top of it. This was a narrative they had at the ready and they were looking for characters to fill it.

The police videos they eventually 2 weeks before the appeal trial gave us access to, show a camera shot following me, a police officer directs the officer holding it to focus in on me, their choice was made as I left the tree-house. I can add here that this particular tree-house had liquids falling from it, in the direction of cops, on a machine escalating towards it, which also caught attention. So having chosen with many cameras on me, their determination against my free will was set. The arresting officers just had to make their provocations, like bait me and my insecurity at seeing and feeling my world being torn down around me would get ensnared by. And when I did get caught up in this force I see as demonic, his disconnected will of power over others, and I reacted in defence of myself, one can hear an enthusiastic exclamation behind the camera, “*phwaar! Das ganze Programm!*”. The “whole programme” shot that they wanted and which he refers to, reveals very clearly that this was a premeditated case, they wanted to make an example out of somebody to justify their actions. I could have then deescalated, given my ID, probably have received a much lower sentence, but with the entire reality I was experiencing, I chose instead to escalate and make an even bigger case. We choose what example to make out of ourself.

6. No Compromise in Defence of Our Desires

I hate the concept of compromise, because it means to accept something lower than that which one desires in order to find confluence instead of conflict with others; and this giving up of something causes us pain of loss instead of the pleasure of finding a win-win scenario for all involved. Although I knew this before going into prison, I still got entangled in this dynamic coming from a low self esteem. I did not realise the true risk I was taking by giving into an incompatible relationship with a lawyer who I was unable to work with, and the necessity to change it.

My first lawyer was someone who liked to work from their own agenda, rather than creating one with their client, perhaps because they deem these considerations unnecessary and more work to deal with. Whereas I am someone who likes to take charge of such important matters that concern my life, and am willing to put in the work of understanding the situation and creating plans together. Our difference of boundaries meant that we were obviously at odds with one another.

Typically I would call and check in with him whenever I could, which perhaps maxed at once a week,²⁴ and I asked him multiple times to discuss the evidence versus the accusations, how was it possible that I could be kept in prison for what I perceived as an action so harmless on my part? But he did not want to get into this discussion over the phone, wiretapping to infiltrate lawyer-client conversations, although illegal, is still possible, and he very rarely visited me, living far away. He kept responding that it was for “political” reasons, well obviously, and continuously shunned my concerns for how the case would be handled, telling me he was “working very hard for me”, a placation that never fulfilled me, because I knew that to work very hard for me, was to include my best interests, which he just was not doing.

Over the 6 months of detention before the trial, I of course got hugely frustrated with the lack of space for what really mattered to me, the creativity I could bring to the case, and the knowledge I needed to contribute to its success. I got to a point of feeling like I wanted to smash the phone against the receiver when I had to hang up after another demeaning monologue, and although smashing things can feel cathartic, I had no deeper process for resolving the issue.

On one occasion I used my 10 minute per 2 week phone call (which later became once per month with a new asocial social worker), in their office to ring the prisoner support number and communicate my trouble. Seeing that me and this lawyer held different preferences, needs and values, I was looking for what we could do about it. Unfortunately, this prisoner support task fell primarily onto the shoulders of few people who, already active in many other projects, which we later discussed was why my concern was met not with an exploration of options, but was met with a reassurance that this lawyer was “the best around”, they having previous success with other known political cases such as the anti-nuclear movement.

I already felt indebted to the supporters I depended upon to help get me out, so I decided better to endure the incompatibility and compromise on my wish to work with people who I really trusted, who would come to understandings, and be able to depend on each other with a shared vision for a positive outcome. But unfortunately this person was not even interested to read my statements before I spoke them to the court, never mind put on the table, the biodiversity, water concern and climate crisis, reasons which are intrinsic to our well-being and necessitate resistance against our mutual destruction. I am not calling out this person as bad or wrong, just sharing the reality of his inability to meet my needs, and mine to meet his, in being submissive regardless of my preferences.

So instead of putting another task on the table of people who were also recovering from eviction and deforestation, I adapted by remaining grateful for what I had, and believing that although I wasn’t experiencing so much of the lawyer’s hard work then, we would reap the results with me walking free out of the court doors. After all, I would have fulfilled the maximum time they could keep an anonymous person, and how could my grapple, pulling away from a cop be proportionate to the punishment they were threatening?

24 The right to call one’s lawyer whenever one needs, I can testify is denied repeatedly. Inmates are even told they must call during cell open hours which are outside of typical office hours making communication with a relied upon person, that can act as a lifeline to the outside world, very difficult.

When it came to the magistrate's court of Alsfeld, he, along with our 2 lay defenders, who helped him understand the video footage, climbing mechanisms and were activists themselves, argued that the eviction was illegal and therefore what happened between me and the cops should not have lead from that, so I could not be held responsible. They argued that the cops had dangerously taken me down from the tree, with a whole report drawn up by a forester, but this person was deemed biased for their involvement in Danni. They argued that the testimonies the cops gave, how I could not have endangered K214's life as accused, the incoherent colour and type of my hiking shoes referred to as a "dangerous instrument", the irregular dates on the cop's medical certificates versus his statements and such, were all messed up and could not be trusted. They also made a point of the doctor's name on the certificate having been blackened out, with what little integrity that showed. They also fought against the anonymity of the cops who likewise remained people unknown, not giving their names and coming into the courtroom masked up. This element of the defence was not at all mentioned to me beforehand, and so I felt like I was losing my integrity in the middle of the courtroom, as if my team were trying to take away another's sense of security yet require it in the same way for myself. The lawyer of the police showing a smug smile seeing that we were just not aligned so as to together move forward. Here we stopped the proceedings and I with the lay defence and comrade from the forest, came to realise that perhaps this was a moralistic double standard I was opposing, the police have the privilege of greater security and so do not need the safety in anonymity I was requiring for myself and others.

On this point of disallowing dis-identification, I can say that even if I am thought to be part of a "criminal organisation" who could take revenge by having clearer identified targets, it is not my personal conscious intention to take action from a negative emotional space, as I can see this most likely yielding negative results. I would much prefer be patient with my, and the people I organise with's, emotions which naturally incline when we look deeper at a situation, and ideally take action from a higher emotional state, such as inspiration.

Anyway, here is where I learned the German word for "rejected" *abgelehnt*, as that's what happened to most of these arguments by the court. However it was on the day that the video evidence was shown that I really felt the disaster of my compromise. I had read the accusations time and again and felt so angry for such lies they made about me, such lies they make about activists in general, how we're so causelessly violent and thus justify the brutality of the police whilst obscuring the greater violence that is the system which enslaves so many and drives people to defend their needs out of desperation. But what I hadn't realised up until that point, is that in the distress of my arrest, I had experienced a blackout. I sat and watched the video evidence, saw my foot fly towards the helmet of K214, and felt the wave of memory wash over me. I sat there holding my poker-face, honestly not feeling any guilt about the incident at all, but on the inside I was swinging towards this lawyer screaming "why didn't we talk about this?!", because it was only then that it was actually confirmed that they really did have something they could use against me.



Full banner read “END CARPITALISM NOW!” But ironic that this image reflects more the reality of our times. Although those that see through the greenwashing, are coming to realise that more electric cars, nor more public transport and bicycles will save us from climate catastrophes, only loving the planet, by taking it as a part of ourselves will. This means radical protection and restoration.

This vital piece of information about the evidence, for me to make the best decision about what to do as regards the risks I was taking in staying anonymous, a person in prison who threatens the status quo by breaking the chain to any state, was for some reason irrelevant to this lawyer. Perhaps it was because he just wanted to do the job of getting me out rather than paying attention to the bigger picture that is our political strategy. It was such a huge issue for me, such a betrayal of trust, that I felt I could not approach the matter in only the few moments we had to speak to one another between court trials, and decided that it was best to confront it when I got out. But that didn't happen. I was slammed with a 2 year and 3 month sentence, and the shock of having previously thought that this was an empty threat, and that if at all possible surely I would be warned.

It took 6 weeks for this person to come visit me during that grieving period back in the prison, and for this debrief to happen. I was told then that client's usually blame their lawyers when their case does not work out well for them; and that he had asked me when we first met had I done anything “violent” in the incident, to which I honestly answered “no”, coming from my memory that I didn't realise had holes in it. But there was no pointing to these repressed memories that could have been interpreted as violent, no sharing of perspectives about this situation which he and others had access to and I didn't. Apparently to him that one question was enough of a discussion about the particulars of the accusations I had been *literally* in the dark about trying to fathom²⁵. I had to leave the consultation room, his refusal to take responsibility for his part in this enraged me so much. When I came back from the lavatory, he was already packing his things, and thinking he would go on being my lawyer for the appeal.

Thankfully I was recommended another lawyer, who made all our decisions based on informed consensus, whose willingness to educate me on the ways of the law and foreseen

25 To break communication between me and those that came to demonstrate outside the prison, I was placed in a cell far from the outside wall on the north side of the pretrial detention building, meaning that whatever sunshine on my skin I had to get from the one hour outside a day, if there was sunshine to be had.

possibilities I appreciated greatly.²⁶ Over the course of the appeal preparations and to this day I've come to consider this person a friend who made me feel that what I wanted mattered, because she and our second lawyer made it matter to them. I also consider it a relevant coincidence that our first meeting occurred during the days of the massive Ayr valley flood that happened a few hundred kilometres north west from where we were. The news of this local climate catastrophe that killed 189 humans and destroyed their villages, gave eerie significance to the larger work of stabilising the climate by safeguarding land we were embarking on. Coincidentally again on the day of my appeal sentence, nature sent another uncanny warning with snow in April.

I can only choose to see value in this hurdle of a misaligned relationship, and thank it for what it has shown me. Compatibility cannot be forced, nor compromise must be endured, because they are simply a dishonour of one's boundaries. No matter how hard it may be to communicate oneself from inside a prison, with a lawyer who is averse to communicating with the group of supporters in the movement, letters being intercepted by the judge, phone calls monitored by the social worker, visits with an officer sitting 2 metres away and listening, communicating one's needs can be possible. We need not cope with imprisonment, we need to create a way out of it.



Banner translates as “Punishment does not serve the people, but a cementation of ruling circumstances” hung in front of the district court, Giessen city, on one of my trial days. The next door prison was also blocked that day with someone sitting on the roof of a compost toilet, decorated with a banner which said *Scheiß auf Gefängnisse!* directly translating as “shit on prisons!”.

26 There was quite some controversy about this change of lawyer. It is clear that there will be division or contrast in the movement as with everywhere else, but especially when old conflicts from situations that happened years before, go unresolved and bleed into new circumstances. I found this infighting as my case was ongoing in court quite annoying and would have preferred folks to prioritise putting their energy into arguing for our common freedom.

7. Let the Flames Consume

On receiving my first sentence of two years and three months, I was in complete shock. I had expected to get out after already nearly seven months imprisoned for what I believed was no real harm done to the other. It was essentially only a case of self determination through anonymity, which showed to be a threat to society as we know it, deemed this serious.

I don't think that anyone living in reality who was either there at the scene, or saw the video footage actually believed that the charges of "assault against two officers" or "serious bodily injury" actually matched up to what happened²⁷. An assault and injury necessitate force, my push with the foot was evidently a gesture with purpose to neutralise his attack, what I in that moment, and all the forest defenders all over the god damn world needed and still need for our sense of relief. I know my own strength, I used to train in self defence which probably allowed such a reflex to happen, appropriate to my own safety. However, results follow from intentions whether conscious or subconscious, thus the real attack and injury was made not on the cop's physicality, but on his and the state's inflated ego, their aggrandized self concept that is out of touch with the rest of the beings on this planet.

Moments before this sentence I felt a terrible foreboding, they had built a case I hadn't believed was possible against me, and judge and jury had gone into privacy to discuss my fate. During this break I communicated to those from the audience that came to visit me at my place in the courtroom, that if it were to be an unfavourable announcement, I certainly would not take it quietly.

When the announcement did come, I regretted not having my German sufficient enough to concentrate through all the fuff that a judge can say, and hear the result I really needed to hear. I only knew that it had arrived because someone had shouted "*Das ist Scheiisse!*" in response. I beckoned the translator to hurry up and tell me what "shit" I was expected to deal with. It seemed like an eternity for him to write down "2,3", and another exasperatingly long moment for me to comprehend that in this part of the world, is how *years* and months are expressed.

I already knew that I had been caught in a corrupt system, that they were using me to intimidate other activists who would choose not to be at the mercy of tyrannical rule, but act on what justice means to them, defined needs and the meeting of them. But I did not expect that this magistrates court would be so foolish to expect the general public, which were hundreds of thousands whose interests lie in resolving the climate crisis and its German complicity, with which many of whom still had faith in the governmental system, to accept that punishing me to such a degree on such shady grounds would go without question, and thus further risk their legitimacy as a "democratic"²⁸ system.

²⁷ To see a full explanation of the event, see the documentary *Ella – ein Dokufilm gegen die Lügen von Polizei und Justiz* (2021) by Project Werkstatt. Although it made an impact on the movement, I was quite annoyed about the lack of communication made with me during the making of this film, which had led to feeling objectified, also about the showing of my identifying hair, and the focus on the state's binary guilty or innocent game in its arguments, with less of a focus on *why* all this happened. <https://freethemall.blackblogs.org/ella-ein-dokufilm-gegen-die-lugen-von-polizei-und-justiz>

I then shot out of my chair, staring the judge in the face, “What the hell is wrong with you?!” was the declaration of rage that came out of me. Although I usually try to get away from the conditioned binary mentality of right and wrong, I do genuinely wonder if they feel a “wrongness” for what they are doing? Or are there personal inner conflicts, as they just follow what they’ve been told is right and may feel inner resistance but ignore or are numb to that feeling? I know that perspectives can get very distorted through life experience and socialisation which leads to instances such as these of state loyalism and violence. A child for example whose parents didn’t see and respect their needs and preferences, and so ‘safety’ becomes found in the world of rules and regulations. “Hurt people hurt people” as the saying goes, a saying that continues to remind me to remain compassionate with others who abuse because they too have been abused, and this has led to the hard wired neural pathways of beliefs that guide their lives.

But these traumas and all the negative thoughts that get instilled into the public through mass media about others cannot go on determining this recurring suffering. People that live from these reactions that get normalised and not conscious response, need to wake up to the choice that each of us have in the matter of how we are affecting the world around us, a world which we all also interconnectedly suffer from. And so I immediately corrected my subjective exclamation to get at this point, “what happened to you?!” whilst gesturing to the side of my head, pushed to at least leave them with a question that might disturb them before they thought they were done with this case.²⁹

I was beckoned by my lawyer to sit back down, as the judge had told that those who would not be quiet would be removed from the courtroom. I could see that the cops were already lurching behind me, their colleagues having carried out the first person to shout protest and hassling another elder who had broken into resistance song. I hated to comply with those that were severely fucking my life, but I did so to maintain connection with those that were in the courtroom for me, those I knew I would then not be present with for a long time.

As those particularly responsible for my imprisonment had left the room, comrades gathered around before I would be taken away. Two of them were already in tears and although I was hard with rage on the inside and did not want to seem defeated by this, I let their grief have it’s contagious affect on me, I was further losing my freedom, the dreams I had about being released, and the nightmare I was facing. The lawyer put a lose reassuring hand on my arm, but I instantly backed away, knowing that we had important things to resolve about the case before I would accept any such gesture.

28 I use inverted commas, because this is obviously not “rule by the people” as democracy is defined. The politicians that make decisions concerning our lives are evidently so disconnected, that they think, speak and act so far from our needs and values that it is illusionary to believe that they are adequately representing us, and by ‘us’ I mean the people, the earth and what we deem fair.

29 During the appeal process the prosecutor tried to denounce me for making such exclamations, claiming it was “contempt of court” of some sort. The sooner society at large can get out of its victim mentality, the sooner we can create mutually aiding solutions to the many crises projected. We are living out the 6th mass extinction, to which there have only been 5 in the past 145 million years.

My whole body ached as I was lead out of the room and down to the police van that was waiting to take me back deeper into the hell of Frankfurt JVA3 that I hated so much. When the door of the dungeon opened and the air hit me, the flames of rage rose again and I screamed to those on the other side of the grill and parking lot who were kept away from seeing me, "I am not alone!!" a reflection to the "You, are, not alone, you are not alone" chant that is so common in Germany when someone gets arrested. I actually don't like and prefer not to use this chant for it's focus on loneliness instead of togetherness, but I was going to be further isolated, and this isolation was the denouncement of my protest.³⁰ Separation goes fundamentally against our human nature as a group species, who need closeness and connection to people we trust. The continuous denial of that most basic need is no less than torturous, an infliction of intense pain.

As the police van pulled out onto the road, it turned right instead of it's usual left on the previous six times, in anticipation or reaction to those that leapt out and laid down on the road for resistance's sake to prevent it. They took alternative roads on the route back to Frankfurt most likely suspecting more blockades, maybe even highway abseiling Danni was known for. They even stopped somewhere outside of town to wait for another riot van escort.

I cried all the way. I cried hysterically and this time with force smashed my foot against the police van cell panels. My distraught crying reminded me of my young child self, and the cruelty felt in losing autonomy for those I relied upon, who preferred that I do what they want to do, such as what is perceived as so benign and necessary as going to school.

On arriving at the prison they did not put me in the holding cell as usual, but drove me straight to the pretrial detention gate were I could see at least 10 prison guards there waiting to subdue me. As soon as the doors opened I let out a speech about how they were all willing slaves to the system, the ones upholding it and complicit in every abuse which happened there, enablers and bystanders to torture and exploitation, their own hell that they choose to endure, day in day out, asking them were they really happy with their lives? Did they enjoy to go home and tell their children about what they did they did for a living, separating others from their families, so as to spend months and years alone? For what? Do they really think this is justice? How long could they keep up the illusion? They tended to tolerate such verbosity to a certain point, I think they find it somewhat interesting compared to the repeated locking and unlocking of doors they have to do a thousand times a day.

I again for the umpteenth time went through the strip search, and felt the negative judgment that is in the air by being seen as a freakish female, one that chooses not to shave body hair in the spirit of rewilding and self acceptance. But this time I let myself the satisfaction when the underwear I had worn that day fell from my pile of clothes as I was leaving the room, and as I picked it up, threw it in the recoiling face of one of the wardens who made her livelihood from my hateful incarceration. When one has such control taken from them, the choice to rebel and reclaim whatever control one can, even though they are still at the mercy of an abuser, can be one of the few ways to just feel a bit of relief.

30 I was really gratified to hear as a positive replacement of this chant my suggestion "we, are, hear with you, we are hear with you" *clap *clap, chanted outside the prison and in the courtroom during my second sentence. By virtue of this focus on unity beyond state imposition, I felt instantaneously better.

But then as is protocol when the oppression gets too much for a prisoner, which in turn makes the guards cautious, I was taken to the high security cell. In which, one is further isolated, on camera at all times (unless crouched under the shelf on the desk), with a tiny useless wall around the toilet area (the image in this area on camera being slightly blurred), the plate, utensils and jug for water plastic and being some of the only loose things I could take my destructive anger out on, which were thrown immediately out the window, along with the rest of everything that has been thrown out and caught on the barbed wire by those that were there before me, a newspaper, towel, cup and TV remote, that for the great pacifier of the masses which is provided in this room in a plastic box on the shelf. This is also the place where I experienced bruises from the guards, when after several days and being repeatedly refused a shower, they dragged me back into the cell. Also the place where I was put when I declared a hunger strike coming up to a decision of my second sentence.

As it was the afternoon of the 23rd of June, the air was hot and being enclosed in a room whose building is made from container type metal sheets, along with all the rage fueled screaming and more front kicks aimed at the door, refusing to let my oppressors silently rest and forget about the oppression they were perpetuating, I felt like my whole world was lava pulsing through my chest. I shouted obscenities and the response I got was "*Machts du Scheisse, hast du Scheisse*", "You make shit, you have shit".

After a while I stopped shouting in consideration for the prisoners around me that also just wanted some peace, and eventually burned myself out, lying on a mattress taken to the floor, as it had got dark and I wanted to escape the bright flood light that poured into the room. I had burned through all the things inside me that made me so angry, cops that lie, cops in general, people that act like cops for the purpose of social control, the whole (in)justice system that is set up to keep everyone enslaved in fear of punishment and in anxiety for a reward of money or status, the disconnected dynamic of assuming things without question, the inability of being attentive and decisive enough to get away from cop K214 fast enough to have avoided all this, and so much more. Feeling the scorched earth inside me I fell again into sorrow and surrendered to the hopeless feeling of entrapment. Then fell further into the anxiety of how I could realistically go on being trapped in this human warehouse.

I didn't eat for days, partly because everything seemed so repulsive, partly because I didn't want to comply with what this system considers normal, partly because I hoped that fasting would help me think clearer. I had just lost my future and continued to be held against my own will. I wasn't the one needing to take all the responsibility for the shit made and had, and all the conditions that lead to my oppression, the rejection of what prison society had to offer was one of the only things I felt in control of.

The next day, along with the protocol of being classed as high security, the psychologist came to visit me, asking the 2 standard questions, "Do you want to harm or kill yourself?" and "Do you want to harm or kill anyone else?" If I did, I wouldn't be telling them about it anyway which would cause myself more surveillance. They gave the go ahead to let me go back to my usual cell, however it being corona times, I would have been there 23 hours a day alone for a quarantined 5

days, as with every court day³¹. So I refused and decided that even though I hate being on camera without my consent, these enablers could turn less of a blind eye to the violence of keeping us imprisoned by having my live image in their offices at all times as a reminder of their complicity in oppression. Plus, being on camera meant they didn't have to open the annoyingly loud shutter every 2-3 hours to check if I was still alive.

Despite being isolated to Frankfurt's second highest degree, (the "bunker" is the next that has no window and straps to tie one to the bed, and was in use quite often whilst I was in this pretrial detention building), my loneliness suddenly dissipated with a slip of paper that slid under the door by a fellow inmate one afternoon. It was the cut out of an article from the previous day's newspaper, the accompanying photograph showed what looked like a black bloc had formed, "Free Ella" written on a massive overhead banner and demonstrators marching behind another stating what was being criminalised – our efforts for a living planet. This message in my hands confirmed that my fury was widely shared. The blackness of the crowd appearing like a sense of rebirth to the meaning inside of me, that we were together now even moreso in this challenge, that the social and ecological movement was growing, this case had stimulated it, we had enormous reason to be on the streets, and that people were learning about the new reality of repression and the world we're struggling for, that for sure in all this negative there is a positive. All that I had been through especially over those days, the fire inside me that burned through everything that I hated, and the sorrow of loss that watered my oppression, had perhaps regenerated a sprout to our intense desire for common freedom and ecological justice.



The black bloc tactic although now is international, begun in West Germany in the 70s and 80s, and is used in both offensive and defensive protest. All dressed in black, with defining features covered, consisting of comrades who have each other's back, the group is safer from identification, repression and detrimental egotism which can yield affective results.

31 I had 16 days of court in total, and in addition to disciplinary measures that I faced amounted to about 3 months of 23 hours a day solitary confinement; savouring the connection of inmates that would come and speak with me through the cell door when they could, with which risking discipline themselves. I also savoured the yard hour with other inmates in quarantine, those new to the prison, or who also resisted the pressure of the vaccination campaign.

8. The Number One Imprisonment Hack

Prison society, and its act and threat of punishing, intends to coerce the masses to conform to a dominant force's will, by implanting fear, shame and separation. This is done so as to make the masses manipulable for that force's use. But this punishment by isolation and exclusion has an antidote, it is the opposite of what they impose, and one, if not the greatest human need, it is our sense of connection.

Humans are a group species, we need each other just like wolves need to live in a pack or deer in a herd, and indigenous humans who still live in harmony with the earth, a tribe. This forced separation that prison society imposes, with its value for illusionary independence goes against our very nature, we cannot, nor do we innately really want to, do everything by ourselves. Rather our interdependence, the ability to rely on one another and as a group meet collective needs, provides us with a sense of belonging, safety, contribution, closeness, love, encouragement, celebration, the basics of food, water and shelter and so much more. For the walls of physical prisons to eventually come down, that ability to rely and be relied upon, must be recognised and practiced both from the inside, the out and to open passage through every wall that prevents our freedom.

When I first went into the slammer, I was part of a string of Danni comrades. We were 9 at one time in Frankfurt's female* prison. I with 2 others in the covid precautionary quarantine who could spend an hour together outside each day for a couple of days, and the others who had already passed through those 10 days, then split between 2 floors and in addition had open cell hours to strategise their collective case together³². It is usually the prison policy to separate accomplices further, whether into separate buildings or across country into different prisons, or try keep their interactions as apart as possible; but it seemed they did not have the personnel or motivation to work against such an influx of Danni activists, and so we had little-big pleasures like speaking to each other by the windows³³.

It was apparent that the authorities were keen on keeping us tormented inside perhaps for as long as it would take for us to submit our identification papers, using whatever pretext they had come up with. So soon enough came the choice we all had to make in the lose-lose scenario we were in, what Teal Swan, the spiritual teacher and anti-prison advocate has called the "freedom-connection split within humanity"³⁴. Connection being one of the greatest leverages an oppressor can use on another as it being one of our greatest needs, this is the choice all of my comrades made, and thus lost their freedom in anonymity, for the sake of being together on the outside and fighting

32 These folks were a part known as the 'Danni 11', another high repression precedent case, imprisoned for blocking highways by abseiling from bridges with banners. With this they were accused of 'coercion', but evidently a more threatening refusal of social control, by keeping their anonymity.

33 Sometimes we would be distraught to lose our open cell hours because of lack of personnel, but if prison guards woke up and chose not to be a slave to this system any longer, we would all be a lot freer.

34 A highly recommended author and speaker on the subject of emancipation. Here her article on the freedom/connection split, 2020. I also recommend their article and video, *The New Justice System (The Right Way To Deal With Crime)* 2018.

<https://tealswan.com/resources/articles/the-freedomconnection-split-within-humanity-r385/>

on in other ways. I on the other hand, chose to stay and work for the deeper freedom of my ideal world based on trust, freely moving or staying without papers, and with which my case to be known for these causes I was standing for, our natural ecosystems, against their destruction and the climate derangement that destruction lead to. Thus for almost a year and a half I lost much of the connection to those I had shared values with on the outside by choice of what mattered more to me.

Although I do not like to endorse the political-social prisoner divide because we both come from the same system, are creations of this exploitative society and would do better to relate to one another by recognising that, I essentially became the only person that I knew of amongst 300 female* prisoners, who was there for my overt confrontation to the political structure and an attempt to change it. I mention this because the political-social prisoner divide is a false dichotomy used to disconnect us, and to reinforce citizen policing that judges some prisoners as good and right and others as bad and wrong, which perpetuates the justification for imprisonment. I also mention it because at times it was a real challenge for me to be around so many people who lacked an interest for the political situation which ultimately resulted in their imprisonment. At times this different level of awareness and engagement between us meant that I would be compelled to call out my fellow inmates for their Stockholm syndrome, when they chose to converse about disinteresting things like which prison guard was sexier, and sometimes that meant me rather walking rings around the yard alone so as to move, make sure my body kept on living, and putting my attention on things I actually cared about. It also gave me purpose to raise the awareness of inmates towards systemic problems, which alleviated some of their suffering, knowing that what they were being subjected to was far from all their fault as the justice system would like them to believe.

At one point I had to request that those demonstrating on the outside also recognise this semi-false dichotomy that was sometimes disconnecting us on the inside, by requesting them to stop chanting slogans like “free Ella, free the political prisoner!” and instead chant “freedom to all, open up the prisons!”. Total liberation, means seeing ourselves interconnected with both one another’s joy and suffering. Punishment does not transform people out of the harmful dynamics that they are consciously or unconsciously playing a role in. Understanding, consideration and respect for the free will imbued within every conscious being, is what transforms us to embrace the responsibilities we share. Our life paths are not actually so determined as those that impose social order would have us believe, rather we choose out of the potentials we collectively influence and create. With more awareness comes more potentials, and thus greater freedom to choose the consequences of taking steps down these paths of non-conformity. These consequences I believe will one day become natural, where intrinsic motivation will not be blocked by the culture of fear and anxiety produced by punishment and reward.

I was very grateful to know that there were those of a more radical mindset in the demonstrations, that stimulated prison and imprisonment abolition discussions, and distributed such literature to inform others of realities. Such like that the very most of prisoners are actually there for reasons of property, public and private, and very few for overt violence³⁵. I was gratified that at

35 Although this information is taken from the US, we can consider it comparable to every other part of the world that instills the need for possessive property, and enforces imprisonment. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/20/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/>

least my presence behind those walls and my story that was circulating, led to the questioning of the deeply oppressive world many were unconsciously by-standing, and giving way to the opportunity to confront it as a whole. Why focus on one detail, one case of systemic dysfunction, when we can step back, see and transform the pattern?

However, I did have a strong connection with a lot of inmates in pre-trial detention and made friends I will gladly catch up with on the outside. These people made my time in prison definitively bearable. Besides the hour outside each day, most days we had a few open cell hours and would use the small kitchen and common room to cook, eat together, and hang out in each other's cells. With some warmth, genuine compliments, invitation, light curiosity and validation of each other's undeniably painful realities, we gifted each other our energy and listened to stories of abandonment, poverty, abuse, prostitution, drug trafficking, addiction, broken families, domestic violence, racism, marriage to Isis, neo-Nazism, human trafficking and much more. This for me was a practice of unconditional presence with people who did not have the support I did. This meant suspending my judgment, finding a way to relate, and aiming to crumble the walls of our internal prisons. For all the common ground that I found, made me more acutely aware that the traumas and toxic relationships we have had in our lives had already acclimatised us to the dreadful experience we were sharing then.³⁶ I also conceived that truly happy and empowered people do not go to prison, nor feel themselves imprisoned, these two circumstances are just not a match.

I also heard about people's beliefs, dreams, opinions and did my best to maintain this unconditional presence with them and their chosen paths, even if I often didn't agree. These conversations time and time again highlighted to me the dysfunctionality of prison, because people imprisoned need help meeting some of our basic human needs, and taking care of our vulnerabilities. All prison was doing was further traumatising and making them more violent by adding to their unresolved distress; yet letting them integrate the fear of prison so as just to be more cautious in the future. The perspective of what they wanted had not much changed, and as desire usually works stronger than fear, many of those who went back out into similar conditions I saw weeks or months later come back into prison.

Although I was not able to be so open about my personal information, so as not to risk snitch behaviour³⁷, I could offer other information about myself that had even more connecting consequences, like my passion for wild and natural places, the actions of affinities who were calling for my, our, and the Earth's liberation on the outside, the reasons why I think it important to dis-identify oneself in the name of a cause beyond our fearing for our survival egos, and some general likes and dislikes. Having a few English speakers around, as well as being able to communicate in *Portañol* (intermix of Portuguese and Spanish) with the ever-present transient Latina* crew, made interactions somewhat easier and enjoyable. As my German improved with a textbook I was able to

36 Here I echo Kelly Rose Pflug-Back in their article which details a similar experience. <https://crimethinc.com/2012/07/23/every-prisoner-is-a-political-prisoner>

37 Some prisoners can gain themselves lower sentences by cooperating with state by informing on others. Likewise activists are sometimes offered deals of lower sentences if they promise to leave the movement, but by sticking to our values and principals, what actually makes us resilient, prison will thus have a far less traumatising effect.

borrow for some weeks, and general knowledge about life in the prison, I could offer translation and assistance to the constant newcomers and somewhat ease anxieties.

Many letters also came from comrades on the outside to let me know that I was being actively remembered, and they often touched me with kind words. With sometimes photos, artwork and information of how the struggle was going on the outside, a surge of energy would arise in me when I heard “Ella” being called over the intercom to the office which often meant post. I would spend a lot of energy contemplating on how I would respond and these meditations reinforced the meaning of our struggle for me. It was difficult at first to see and accept myself at the epicentre of a web of solidarity, and dealing with the shame of having unconsciously got myself into a position where people felt that they had to extend their energy to my well-being. But the more it was confirmed that what mattered to me, really did also matter to them for common reasons, made being on a receiving end easier, as they let me know that their anger which had been stimulated by this whole case, gave them energy to compellingly struggle on. They attested that they didn’t feel they had to do this, they wanted to do this, and confirmed that my struggle was their struggle, my release their release. The letters that were a bit more intimate, by that I mean written by those that saw into my internal world, because they knew something about me by experience, or from what I had publicly written for the blog, animated me the most. As did the ones written by groups who were gathering for the reason of getting organised against repression. Some also took the opportunity of having their letter read by the judge which was protocol, to let them know what a scandal the judicial system was creating and that the reality of my kidnapping and captivity would have unfavourable consequences for all of us, which on the flip side, my freedom would have favourable consequences for all of us, and I found myself truly honoured to be defended in many ways.

The connections that were created with the movement throughout my whole process were a source of pride. To know that so many would rise up in support of our values gave me the sense of security and courage that I needed. Connection is our primary mean of survival, it can even be considered more important to us than food and water, as connection with other humans, which we are dependent on as children, is how we get our food and water. It is not surprising that many prisoners have gone on hunger strike to protest their severely limited conditions, their agonising isolation and damaging lack of closeness to others. I write this in the wake of Alfredo Cospito’s hunger strike, as many are organising in protest for his, and all of ours, most basic need for connection.



“Resistance is not a crime” Legally yes, consciously violating, no. We are outlaws, differentiated from criminals who do what we feel is right for a better world, not just what we think is right for our separated selves. Solidarity greetings from Hambacher, still occupying since 2012 the primeval forest against Europe’s largest human-made hole and dirtiest energy source, lignite coal.

9. A Number of Other Imprisonment Hacks

The current system we live in is acting quite like a cancer on the body of the Earth. It reproduces itself inconsiderate as to the affect on it's host, to the extent which it will do our planet so much damage that its ability to go on living as we know it, is on a trajectory to cease. This is the reality we are facing, as life on Earth with the climate in derangement, sea levels rising, wars for water and energy, biodiversity loss, multitudes of illness, and soil so degraded that we have an estimated 50 years of harvest left. Humanity is following the potential for it's downfall in Earth's 6th mass extinction, there is only evidence of 5 previous in the Earth's 4.5 billion year existence, we are facing a truly monumental challenge in our lifetime. That is if we keep living out of alignment with our value for a living planet and common well-being. In solving the causes of this disconnection, by finding resolve for our conflicts within, so as to see it mirrored in our relationships on the out, is a suggestion of how we can reclaim our power.

Whilst in prison I remembered the *Radical Remission* study³⁸, which narrowed down 8 common traits in hundreds of people that managed to survive cancer. Essentially it gives sound advice for living a life conducive to fulfillment, and has been a tool that kept me somewhat sane when dealing with life's impediments to freedom. I have listed and reflected on them here so as to assist creative pathways out of imprisonment.

Purpose

I believe that we all came into this life with a reason or many, somethings that we wanted to experience, and that the adventure of life is about lining up with those reasons which bring us joy. The only reason we do anything in life is because we think it will make us feel better, and so for me, intending to bring about the truth about my case and awaken people to the system, I decided to protest it all and essentially occupy a cell, until I felt the satisfaction of having done so.

I thank those that made the documentary that described with the footage and reenactment of the scenario that brought me to prison.³⁹ It was screened in over 100 places on the anniversary of the attack on Danni, resulted in thousands of views, expanded awareness and questioning of norms and strategy. After that, quite a few of the letters I received reported on recognitions people had had about the judicial system and social control at large. For instance, many attested that the ruling class are obviously not here for our common benefit, but here for their private own, with which they need to provoke fear and illusions to sustain their control with the narrative of 'protection'.

38 For more information, visit the study or search the book by Dr. Kelly A Turner at <https://radicalremission.com/> This information of healing factors I found through the Documentary *Heal*, (2017) by Kelly Noonan-Gores. Diet and exercise have since been added to the list.

39 Although I agree with the critic that the documentary *Ella – ein DokuFilm gegen die Lügen von Polizei und Justiz* (2021) by Project Werkstatt does not so much go into the reasons of why I was protesting and then imprisoned, but focuses largely on guilt or innocence, a debate that serves the dominant system and its culture of fear, and not the transformation we want, it primarily widely publicised the truth of what actually in this incident happened. May this also be a lesson that cameras at demos photo-capturing or videoing events will not protect us from repression, but raise the awareness and thus motivate for change.

Receiving this feedback brought me a lot of relief that a wider collective consciousness was forming on the effects of state narcissism, and the dangers of living in parallel realities.

My sense of satisfaction peeked during the second trial, on the day in which cop K214 changed his testimony and said how this documentary had caused him to “remember” what had actually happened, that he had secured himself twice, as every climber and every kid in a climbing park is trained to, and so there was no risk of falling to his death, that being a major factor that influenced my first sentencing. People need not have their intelligence insulted, so although the cop did not overtly own up to his very apparent lie, and was just continuing to lie to save face and protect state interests, there was still account taken and an acknowledgment of falsehood, which also made headlines. Although this change of statement did not result in me getting released from prison, my continued captivity did wake people up to the state’s continued lack of commitment to truth and acting on it, and hence it revealed their true colours with an agenda of control matched with the abusive tool which is identification papers. Having this internal purpose to contribute to the consciousness about the reality of these matters, made waking up a captive everyday somehow tolerable.

Emotional Awareness

Emotions are our internal guidance system, unlike thoughts they cannot be argued with, which come to us as information through feelings. They are a form of energy like everything else in this world, which organises itself through frequency, wave and vibration. It is perfectly understandable that people experiencing oppression are going to find themselves feeling emotions of a lower vibration, fear, nervousness, shock, confusion, reservation, sadness, devastation, longing, anger, boredom and so on. Negative emotions always indicate an unmet need, so it is important that we pay attention, valid these feelings which may come as sensations, because they have reason to be there, anyone experiencing the reality that we are experiencing would feel this way. Then figure out what is the message they are sending, the direction of the need we must go in. Society at present takes advantage of people’s numbness to their emotions because it makes them easier to manipulate, adapting them to stressors without the thought to change them. Being able to feel and sense what is actually best for us can be one of the most revolutionary tools in our toolbox. Being constricted feels emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually abusive, every time I remade the choice to dis-identify and remain in defiance, I was aware of these negative emotions, and it was a pain I accepted.

Raising Positive Emotions

Emotions exist on a scale from low to high, which can be climbed as soon as we admit to where we are and make our decisions based on where we want to be, a more positive and imaginative projected place than where we find ourselves. Each being has an innate willingness to heal, and just by being present and allowing these feelings we can trust that we, part of the universe that is guided by desire in evolution, will naturally flow in the direction of thoughts and ideas that when acted upon will make us feel better. However, passing through anger in order to get to a sense of engagement, peace, happiness, compassion, is not currently such a socially acceptable emotion,

never mind in a prison context where more punishment is usually the go-to answer for expressed negative emotions such as extreme sadness and anger. So be careful, but know that anger is a necessary step on the scale because it is empowering, a burning of the unwanted, and a higher vibration than the sadness that is inherent in being stuck in the unwanted, and the false belief that we cannot change our circumstances. With this power we are like flames, by acting upon our desires, we can create the lives we want in the ashes of the world we don't.

A Sense of Empowerment

The most unique thing about this repression case was that, stored safely on the outside, was the privileged 'get out of jail card' which I could opt for whenever I wanted, my hated for all its colonising exclusiveness, burgundy passport. For the sake of de-legitimising this discriminatory and unconsensually dominating document, I refused to submit it and consciously chose to stay in prison to protest it. Having the knowledge that borders don't protect us, they just make countries and continents seem like larger prisons, with citizens/inmates inside signing up to one's own captivity linked to an address, a job, all the societal standards and all the information that help the police find us if governments want to repress us, made me choose to refuse it all. The police, nor governments keep me safe, they threaten and corrode my well-being with their upholding of judicial systems based on misguided reward and painful punishment. Instead, the affinities around me are the ones that keep me safe, they point my attention to where I lack it and take me as a part of themselves, as I them, and together on a basis of mutual aid we create the world we want, and destroy the one we don't.

My sense of power in prison came from my inspiration for lives lived without these administrative bars of our cage, and so my pursuit in dismantling the false sense of necessity for these papers. To see the collapse of borders and the abolition of identification papers in my lifetime is a potential, contributing to a foundation for a future without them, and signaling to the universe that what I want instead is a world based on trust, brings me a sense of power in amplifying that potential.

Social Support

The previous chapter dealt a lot with this aspect, that relationships are the fabric of life and a sense of closeness and connection within them is a key to feeling safe and therefore free. But what about when that fabric tears, or is torn by the institutions that are also simultaneously creating and destroying the world around them?

One of my closest friends in the prison was very much one of the most vibrant people there. She was super genuine and friendly with everybody, always finding something to joke about, would openly give amusing descriptions of the sexual fantasies she was having, amidst the lack of males. Her joyful presence was nothing less than medicinal to me. But despite this high energy, she like so many others there, was a mother, and desperately missed her little boy. Like me she chose not to suppress her emotions, but often let the damn break inside mine or another's cell, outside of the guard's watch and further repression. It was clear to see that the stupid laws we were subject to were creating her own hell in this disconnection to her son, who frequently asked during phone

calls when she was coming home? She restored his disturbed sense of security to the best of her abilities, but he was growing up fast whilst indirectly being subject to the cruelties of the world.

Laws and moralities are very different to consciousness, in that someone does what they think is best either from the inside of their heart, or the outside of social standing. And these laws and moralities created a lot of shame for my friend by people in her outside social circle, who condemned her for taking a 500 gram of cocaine risk across the Atlantic, a substance that compensates for the disconnection many moneyed Europeans feel. How she wept and regretted and had nightmares about this experience being used to take her son away from her.

Something I found significant about symptoms that arose for her, which was the same pain that many prisoners suffered from, was that it occurred in her back. I believe that there is a mind-body connection with every illness. The spine is there to function as a structural support to the rest of the body, but without so much of a structural support in her social circle, nor much in a modern prison where most people are fearful, egotistically focused or uniformed oppressors, this physical body part acted as an indicator to her non-physical mind in distress.

Of course the medical facility was not at all useful with this. They once even spat at me “why should I help you criminal!?” when I observed the lack of informed consent and stated its necessity, just to give you a general idea. The cure for a structure that holds the body, I believe is to be held by a support structure in the collective mind. Or perhaps more accurately said, to be held with unconditional love, what a lot of folks in prison have lacked in their lives.

Herbs & Supplements

I am highly skeptical of the pharmaceutical industry and their profit margins that are sourced in people’s illness, and so their lack of motivation to actually cure those illnesses but instead perpetuate and exacerbate them. On finding that those in the medical facility at the prison were somewhat open to herbal medications and supplements I pursued what I could to benefit from the healing powers of plants. I was able to receive prescriptions for St. John’s Wort for a lifted mood, a b-complex supplement for blood, brain, immune, energy and hormone health, a sleep and nerve tea that contained valerian root, passionflower herb, melissa leaves, peppermint leaves, yarrow herb, licorice root and chamomile flowers, and a digestive tea that had chamomile flowers, peppermint leaves and caraway.

I also used what I knew about herbs that are ubiquitously found and useful. In the yard with its patch of grass, there was lots of plantain, good for wound healing, digestion and anti-inflammation, clover for hormones and its sour flavour, yarrow for menstrual health, daisies for anti-inflammation and circulation, dandelions for respiration, liver and stomach, shepherd’s purse for menstruation and digestion, a patch of wild rocket for blood and its peppery flavour, and two tufts of horsetail for re-mineralising teeth. One would have to pocket these outside of the watch of officers, who would think we might try to poison ourselves or others (which would take a lot of pocketing for a dose high enough). Upon release I found that another past prisoner has compiled a book of the 10 most commonly found herbs in a prison yard or any yard to support those inside.⁴⁰

40 *The Prisoner’s Herbal* by Nicole Rose, and their project to support prisoners and organisers against state violence can be found at <https://solidarityapothecary.org/prisonersherbal/>

You also may imagine my upset when the summer months came and every couple of weeks this small meadow would be completely razed by a noisy lawnmower and horrible reminder of chainsaws. I once tried to approach the groundskeeper to speak for the habitat of plummeting insect populations, but before I had a moment to even open my mouth he had already anticipated my known defence of nature, just said “no” and walked away. I later learned that not one patch of grass, no matter how near or far prisoners could interact with it, was cut in suspicion we might hide unpermitted objects in it. One of the 2 young trees that grew in the yard was a glorious cherry blossom, just having sight of some of these plants made me feel better. I volunteered to water them during the concerningly dry summer months (which I wouldn’t have needed to do so much if they just let the grass around to preserve its moisture). I imagined a time when the prison buildings might be repurposed, there would be a hole driven through the outside wall and a hammock that would hang in between these trees, underneath a meadow allowed to fulfill its purpose. Perhaps a place to compost our conflicts.

Intuition

Intuition is our inner voice which tells us what to do, where to go and what is best for us. Those that have an inner voice that was respected and encouraged during childhood tend to have one that speaks loud and clear. Those of us with primary care givers such as our parents and teachers that did not heed the importance of boundaries, allowing for our preferences, desires, needs as individuals with a defined sense of self, have to practice moreso to hear that inner voice that has gone quiet with the lack of attention. I used to keep a daily meditation practice where I would just sit quietly, breathe, let all the nonsense ‘shoulds’ and ‘shouldn’ts’ settle to be fossilised, and with more clarity of what was real for me, be mindful of this in daily life, and open to support from the world around me as it showed up. Prison can also be a scary place, although in the German prison I was in, I did not experience any violence from inmates more than unphasing ‘bitchiness’. But when I did come across such cases like disturbing snitch behaviour, I intuitively went directly to those inmates I saw as keeping themselves safe close to the hand that feeds, who on a deeper level were vulnerable, and intervened with questions like “what is the purpose of you telling them that?”, “What is your outcome wanted with informing on others?” and got to some real needs like inclusion, communication, appreciation and self expression.

Spirituality

As I understand, we humans evolved on this planet so as to both create that which we want, and integrate all that is in resistance to what we are wanting. These are two polarities, to desire something and be moving, and to be okay with what is and be still. Life is an infinite adventure of discovering what is true for us in the now, and being present, and to project forth our ambitions for the future, simultaneously able to hold both those aspects, as with positive and negative, conscious and subconscious, presence and absence, allowing and resistance, as both parts of our being. There will never be an end to contrast, but a perpetual and infinite creation and integration process.

The moment in which I chose to surrender, after everything, to change course, give my identification papers and get out, was an intense decision for me. I would sit by the window, when I finally got a cell with a view of the moon, and wish for guidance from the greater world so as to resolve this inner conflict. Having contact with the sun, the breeze I could catch, feet on the grass, essentially the elements, brought me back to this feeling of a spirit that runs through me, has done before my incarnation and will do so after. Eventually I took my fear of potential further and worse state oppression for myself and others, simply owned it as part of me, saw myself as both part of a stream of consciousness and a linear heritage, and went with that in the direction of what I most wanted in this time, to be on the outside with those that I cared about. I let go of being averted to oppression, nor attached to any outcome, just one with what is, in the contrast that is life.

Diet and exercise are in addition to this list. Chapter 11 deals with diet, but to speak about exercise is to speak about self discipline. I had a yoga routine that helped to keep a state of movement and flow with the breath in a small space. Unfortunately a yoga mat was not allowed, so I had to either test my stability on the mattress or with a blanket on the floor. I also had a radio to accompany any other workout. Other than that, Frankfurt JVA3 offered a measly one hour a week trip to the basketball court, the only place where we were officially allowed to run for ridiculous insurance reasons. Many people often went to the medical facility most likely linked to their lack of exercise.

Ultimately those that survive personal cancer make great radical changes and commit to their lives with a sense of authenticity. Socialisation has fragmented us to which we have become inauthentic, with aspects of our consciousness split in protective and vulnerable parts, and therefore dissatisfied by not living our true selves. Healing is very often the opposite experience of what we've been through, so putting ourselves back in touch with our truth, incorporating into our thoughts and behaviours these suggested ways, are hacks to the societal and ecological ills we are entangled with and see mirrored on the outside. For a profound shift to happen, these hacks need to be let make a profound shift in us.

10. Being a Vegan in Prison

Anti-speciesism has been a pillar of my everyday activism for what had been almost 9 years when I entered prison. I was compelled to adopt this approach particularly because I want to extend compassion and reduce suffering to all beings on this planet, and vouch for total liberation as much as I am capable. I was certain that I would continue to do that inside no matter how harsh conditions got.

Like identifying myself, refusing participation in the oppression of other animals was a daily form of resistance to the entire system that sees sentient beings as objects, there to be used regardless of their best interests. Being the one vegan out of 1300 prisoners at Frankfurt JVA I was very much in the minority, this I choose to interpret as an opportunity for those around me to come

into contact with the alternative to what they were socialised to think of as normal, necessary and natural. I found purpose in informing when they inquired about my refusal, that it was a way of life far more conducive to optimal human health which has the physiology of a herbivore; for the health of the planet, which has limited resources that have a limited capacity to regenerate themselves; but most especially for the animals who want to be free to live their own self determined lives just like we humans do. “No one is free until all are free” was a mindset of integrity and intrinsic value I aimed to impart.

Although the conditions I met in this prison were harsh. My letters to the kitchen stating my needs went largely ignored, the only information I got back from officers was that it was not in the law that they had to serve a vegan option, which was unlike the amount of times a week they had to serve meat or a non-pork option for Muslims, past prisoners having legally fought for what they wanted with a limited perspective. The stress of enclosure and prison life matched with a trolley that came to my cell everyday with the smell and the sight of cooked corpses, chicken menestrations and bovine lactations, whilst sometimes all there was for me was dry potatoes, or brown bread with margarine, a substance I still don't like, or a coloured glucose-fructose syrup called marmalade, with some greyish powder I later learned was a processed coffee, did not lift me so much out of misery. The “coffee” seemed to confirm that I was living out Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

I tried to keep myself strong by remembering the story of the imprisoned Tibetan monks who gave such gratitude for whatever slop they were given, that their prison guards actually commented on how much healthier they seemed in comparison to themselves, showing that the power of positive thoughts has precedence over the power of our physical food. I tried to practice this by just taking a moment to be grateful for all that I had and all the energy that went into it, to the fellow prisoners that cooked it, the people that grew it, those that transported it,⁴¹ the insects that pollinated it, the earthworms that tended the soil, the weather that nourished it, the smells, textures and tastes that were what they were, and which could have been better but also could have been worse. I knew there were some prisoners in the kitchen that cared and put effort into the craft of a meal with what they were given. However, I am no master of positive focus, and I did see my physical condition deteriorate over time being immersed in the lack which is inherent in prison life, which was disheartening.

One day the stress of all too many unmet needs got too much. I was distracted at the moment when the server was filling my bowl and even though they had been aware of my all plant preference in daily refusal of all other, her robotic hand poured milky sauce over lettuce leaves, the only thing besides bread I was given to eat that day. Communicating with so many people still complicit in the slavery of other species can be a strain at the best of times, this time, I was done with being compassionate and grateful, using the soft power of persistent calm refusal, instead I let myself react to the daily substances that disgusted me so much, intertwined with the whole horrid

41 I would actually prefer if all businesses chose not to supply and profit from prisons in protest of imprisonment. If prisons were to cease to function in this, or any way, and could come to an end once and for all, I and I'm sure many other prisoners with this vision, may have supported a boycott for ultimate abolition.

exploitative system I had to live under. I slammed the door behind me, picked up the desk chair and threw it against the wardrobe, whose door broke right off. I received a handful of days discipline meaning that I'd be further isolated by having open cell door hours with other prisoners taken away. Emotions that call for the respect of boundaries are seen by prison society as something which must also conform to their dominating wishes. I preferred to lose the connection with others for the sake of emotional expression, and deal with the painful consequences of expressing these inner truths in one way or another.

On another occasion that I received discipline after a build up of occurrences which I protested the infuriating and stupid conditions and conduct of guards, for such things like not being able to take the drugs test, as much as I didn't like having my cell raided as a consequence of my pissing muscles that just would become uncooperative, and officers therefore 4 times a year presumed I was positive, I was brought to the office of the pretrial detention unit boss, where waited the JVA3 women's* prison head as well. They both were evidently unhappy that repeated discipline was not quelling disturbance, and went on to tell me that classic line that "officers are just doing their job". "That's what the Nazis said in the Nuremberg process" was my reply, to which there was almost uproar, gasps and declarations that what I was saying was illegal, such offense from a historical fact was taken. The concentration camps were far in comparison from today's prisons, but the enclosure of today's oppressed, a whole lot (of which I perceived about a third of pre-trial detention) are racialised Roma and Balkan people, bear similarities we cannot deny. We are living among those that bear the inter-generational trauma of fascism, and those that perpetuate it. Even during my first trial, other headlines were stating how in Frankfurt, a police group chat was exposed which propagated fascist ideals and included child pornography, with which of course a slap on the wrist was handed to them and years in prison to people like us who do crimes that hurt no one.

Finally after months of nutritional neglect one of the more sympathetic prison guards gave me an idea, which I hope could assist any other anti-speciesist vegan person who finds themselves in prison. I told my deficiencies to the doctor we could apply to see once a week, and although I had to argue my case with someone who was trained to prescribe medication rather than get to the root of a problem, they finally got out a form made for people with dietary needs and made me allegeable for 250 grams of fruit and vegetables as a daily alternative. This meant the relief of being able to make a salad every other day, and from the prison store delivery, add vinegar, olive oil, nuts, beans and spices that I could buy twice a month, and also some dark chocolate to keep me sweet. I must say thanks to those who gave me financial support, as on principle I decided not to contribute to the prison system by accepting work in the laundry, kitchen, cleaning or sewing, but prioritise my energy for meditatively replying to letters and connecting with a lot more people who were of my ethics.⁴²

42 A tip on receiving financial help is to have it sent by a willing individual, as some organisations that support political prisoners such as the Rote Hilfe are deemed a "criminal organisation" and are blocked "for our own good". How ironic coming from a state institution that tries to get us to conform to their will by condemning and threatening us with a degree of torture by entrapment and isolation.

I mentioned in the beginning that my requests were “largely ignored”, this is because over my year and a half I did actually notice a change in the products they would give us for later in the evening with our hot meal of the day, which vegan, did increase in frequency. Perhaps my letters finally made sense to those who made the orders; perhaps friends that worked in the kitchen who made solidarity requests had influence; perhaps the steadily growing consciousness in Germany of why to eat plant based made it easier to diversify away from the same stuff that was served up every week; perhaps people who knew of me and my case in the prison sympathised for what was an obvious unjust captivity and made allowances for that, who knows, but things did improve.

Of course I continue to advocate for prison demolition not reform, abolition as regards past slavery can be interpreted as reformist. But whilst we transition to a society that can easily get it's needs met, without reward or punishment to force compliance, we must do whatever we can to make the lives of those caught in this disastrous system more tolerable, by nourishing hearts and minds with letters, chants, literature and all kinds of support they need, as well as bellies with food that can give them high energy to keep on track towards their release.

11. “Well, Why Are You An Anarchist?”

This was the start of a discussion Bruno Filippi had with his shadow one evening as he lowered the text he was reading⁴³, and a self reflective discussion I am reopening now, as I think anarchy as political philosophy needs re-conceptualisation so as to progress and heal from the wounds of authoritarianism.

Anarchy from ancient Greek is generally defined as “without rulers”. This I see as honourable as it means we are all at liberty to consider and decide what is best for us, both collectively and individually. But anarchist groups largely define themselves as non-hierarchical, most demonise authority and many political groups in general vouch for equality. However, the re-conceptualisation I am putting forth is that we must see that hierarchy and authority are not inherently bad and wrong in themselves. Like everything in this polar reality there is a positive and negative expression, and I want to make clear that it is the shadow side of these realities we need to exalt from, otherwise we will continue to be held back by our traumas, negative thinking and toxic relationships that are inherent in the denial and rejection related to authority.

The negative expression of hierarchy and authority like most of our traumas we got to know in childhood with our primary authority figures, our parents, teachers and such. In a society which is still very unconscious of the fact that we do not really own anything, we are just spending time in relationship with that person, place or thing, we felt ourselves under the controlled possession of the people we depended upon. We were socialised to do what they wanted, without consideration for what we ourselves as unique beings with our own preferences, desires and purpose for being wanted. In this process of needing to stay safe with those we got our needs met

43 *Life in the Cracks, A Novatorean Essay on Creating Meaning From Nothing on a Hopelessly Dying Planet*, Friedrich Rural Lucifer (2015) quoting Filippi, *The Rebel's Dark Laughter* (1916-1918)

with as children, we split from those parts of us that did not get us their approval in order to stay close, we lost our true essence, ability to trust and sense of defined self. This pattern of molding children instead of letting them blossom, has evidently created a lot of aversion to authority figures, which get passed into adulthood. This has disabled us to see the positive aspects of hierarchy and authority which we can choose to recognise in people that use their positions of power instead to benefit the world around them, and to show respect where respect is due.

Hierarchy and authority are naturally occurring phenomena, some people are better in some ways than us, we are better in some ways than others, and for this, although on one level we are made up of the same energy, we are not equal. Some people have had the privilege of growing up around people who can teach them skills in construction, some people around others who could teach many languages, others who have the life experience of surviving war and ability to speak about the need for peace. We all have gifts or qualities to be shared with the world, some of those abilities are even born from trauma, as the world has many gifts and qualities to be shared with us. This is what makes life, with the beings around, interdependent.

Some people have even reached mastery in becoming the best in their ability. A master being another concept that does not essentially mean that there needs to be a slave, but rather other autonomous beings that appreciate superior skill. I believe there is something for everyone to become their best at whether the world values it yet or not, these privileges just lie conscious or unconscious. Knowing what we can achieve an excellence at gives us a sense of empowerment, it is up to us to use these powers to the world's advantage or detriment, meaning those higher of hierarchies lending hands to those lower and wanting to climb. It is up to us to self-regulate within ourselves, and as affinity groups with the free will in any given moment, not the predetermination endowed on us by society.

This 'self' I refer to, is also open to re-conceptualisation within anarchist circles and the world at large. What if it were true that everything in existence came from one source energy which projected itself in different forms, such as humans, trees, beetles, rocks, smartphones, roads etc? What if everything we saw as other than us was just another part of ourselves projected from that same energy in a different way? I cannot tell anyone the true nature of this universe, just ask others to consider this concept of oneness, that on a level which transcends ego by perceptually dis-identifying, there may not be any separation, and the possibility that what we do to others, we also do to ourselves in the bigger picture. If this were true, it would make more sense to regulate ourselves with more consideration to the needs and values of others, and whether we perceive them as animate or inanimate, they may be another fractal of the larger 'self' we effect and are effected by with their own free will.

Likewise we would benefit from the dispelling of the myth that anarchy equals chaos, as it is so often misused as a synonym. Polar opposites are a reality, and so we must restore that meaning with every autonomous zone, every reclamation, that anarchy actually equals both chaos and order, it is an embrace of life's contrasts. Hence we know what freedom is against imprisonment, togetherness against loneliness, happiness against sadness, black against white, love against fear, and if we can further the practice of holding space for both the seeds of negativity

inherent in the positive, and seeds of positivity inherent in the negative, we can integrate one within the other in a world where many worlds are possible.

Anarchy, with its core intention for liberation, needs to communicate that although we are without any one leader, which makes us safe from egotistical decisions that are misaligned with a group's intention, we are *all* leaders with a purpose to lead, and we have the ability to encourage one another's potential to contribute to the transformations we wish to bring. We can witness the unfolding of this potential that our primary authority figures resisted because of their limited perception of everything having worth, depending on it lining up with its reason for being. We have the ability now to discover that worth has a lot more to do with needs and values, which cannot go on ignored, our survival as a species quite literally depends on it. But also our *thrival* as a species beyond that depends upon this recognition of multitudes of value too. We have suffered a lack of not being accepted for who we are, and an imposition of who society wanted us to be. To heal from that we must embrace who we are and surround ourselves with those that can unlearn the moralistic judgment of good and bad, and also accept and see value for what now makes us who we are.

Experiencing freedom in this sense more holistically is my purpose for aligning with anarchism. It rests with me and all others who affiliate with anarchism, or not, but wish to take a responsibility for the well-being of social movement, inclusive and conscious of legitimate authority, flexible hierarchy and polarities that make the world diverse and awe-inspiring. To live in anarchy there is no such will to imprison anyone, property will be looked back on as another form of imprisonment and unfulfilled purpose, all universal basic needs will be met or in the process of closing those gaps. We will open up the prisons, which I believe can happen in my own lifetime, and the people that may be a danger to others will have the care and help the old society denied them. This because a new society has expanded its capacities by putting its energy into the driver of evolution, needs and values.



Although I love subvertising as it takes back space from consumer society and gives it to public awareness provoking questions, I found this piece although hilarious, problematic. "A hit would have been deserved, but unfortunately there was none. Climate activist Ella since a year jailed because of police lies". Whether attempt, or an assault that hits, which was speculated a lot from the video footage, it is counted as nearly the same under German law. The word "deserve" needs to be abolished from our language as it perpetuates punishment and reward thinking, rather than desire and fulfillment of motives. Also, I prefer the term eco/environmental activist/green anarchist because it puts people in touch with what they know and care about, trees,

mountains, oceans etc which will regulate the climate if we allow them. The climate and the 1.5 ° global warming limit is too abstract and imbued with fear to motivate people.

12. Value Results, Time is Elusive

In English “doing time” is another way of saying “being in prison”. However, time is perceptual, and does not matter a fraction compared to the amount of energy and the results we get with the matter. Focusing on the results I wanted rather than how long I had to wait for them, made me see the amount of time I had until the next trial as just a potential to manifest something.

The sentence that was handed to me from the appeal trial became only reduced from 2 years and 3 months to 1 year and 9 months, meaning that I had 4 more months inside the slammer before I could step back out into the world and enjoy what would be the autumn with my friends. The judiciary had still found me guilty of resistance, assault on police and dangerous bodily injury, and without letting outcomes determine my well-being, I had to accept this failure of not being released as a stepping stone on the way to having resistance to ecocide and self asserted anonymity one day widely respected.

My lawyers Waltraut Verleih and Eva Dannenfeld had already predicted continued imprisonment days before by interpreting comments judge Dr. Nink had given, and had gently broken this bad omen to me. This news that my freedom would be put even further on hold made me drop back down into my chair of the consultation cell. I digested the information and further decided it was up to me to give this experience constructive meaning, as this case although not what I desired, was part of a much larger work in progress.

When the moment did come again where the judge broke the news of my appeal sentence, and went on saying things that only served him and those he is loyal to, which I had not much interest to listen to after weeks of trials, my head dropped into my hands. I was so tired of all this superficiality, and the continuance of deflecting from the real violation; a slaughtered forest, replaced with raw materials stolen from the earth, in order to expand the machinery of twisted economics, with humans driving to and doing shitty jobs, escaping from them, on holiday regretting that it's too short and having to go back to shitty jobs.

But beyond the glass that separated me from the public audience, I heard sound that brought my head out of my hands to look in their direction, which brought a smile of amusement to my being. People had raised from their seats, were singing a medieval resistance song and stomping their feet. They became so loud that no one could hear the judge above them, and went on louder and fiercer intermittently shouting protest when told to stop, and although some were carried out of the room by cops, the singing that went on relentlessly meant that the judge just couldn't go on, he stopped his speech short, got up and left the room. Again I was reinforced by solidarity that meant that although I was suffering, we were suffering in rage together. The confirmed lack of willingness to tolerate the abuse meant that this time on returning to the prison condemned once again, I just went back to my cell and continued to work, by burning my thoughts onto pages, about the best way to get my, interlinked with all of our freedom.

Over the coming weeks, me and my lawyers thought of and tried every senseful way to get me released and keep my anonymity, my unallegiance to any state and defy their voyeurism, this included offering a deposit of money. But after what became 1 year and near 6 months, a disappointing trial result, rejection of everything that was not their illusion of control, and

exhaustion from prison life, I was finally left with 2 options; finish the 3 months, then avoid police checks, and then having reason to detain and identify me again. But of course I was going to continue with my political life, I like anyone want what I want which cannot be so easily unwanted. I had been considering to leave once and for all Germany with the bonds I had there, what the state most probably wanted, this departure from a land of hostile rules and expectations, in case they continued to hound me as a target. Or, the last resort which had always been, forfeit my identification papers, deal with the probable probation conditions and be conscious that they may be keeping a closer eye on me, something they could do still but less easily without this legal identification.⁴⁴

This legal document that humans and no other form of nature administers, that permits some members of our species to cross imposed borders and access some necessities, this document that states my legal family name, where I took my first breath, how many times I've been round the sun, what binary gender I was assigned according to my sex, what nation deems me its citizen, pressed with a photograph of my face, a paper that can expire, get lost, stolen or show up red and have my freedom denied for whatever arbitrary reason and such more, are all factors that make me separable from those around me, punishable and therefore, this being a cautionary tale, controllable. The dis-identification I made to all these I, me and mine factors is a rejection of their ill will to manipulate my life, an objection to that associated instilled fear which defines the war between oppressed and oppressor, a protest to the torment of control.

Their fearful equating of our freedom, with their perceived lack of security, is obviously very limiting to humanity at large. How do we achieve a win-win scenario, with those that are traumatised by the freedom without consideration they experienced in childhood, with people that were supposed to love and understand them but rather ignored, denied, rejected and disowned their best interests? How can we find a way, not just our way or their way, but a third way we may not have even thought of because we have been so used to living in parallel realities, ill-considering what could actually make them safe, and what could actually make us free, and actually begin to live in the same reality? How to unblock one's inner resistance, one's detrimental beliefs so as to evolve in a common direction? The 'why' we already have, life although I appreciate it, could be so much fucking better than this.

To abandon the system of future orientated punishment and reward is an absolute burning necessity. Ruling with the use fear and anxiety is something future generations will look back on and explain as reason for our stunted evolution and ill affect on the rest of the planet. Replacing this system with one focused on needs and desires, a quest for results and a forgetting of time in the process of joyful creation is what this text invites you, to practice now. The worsening ecological and climate crisis will not wait for us to wake up, it will continue to brutally shake us, and moreso third world areas into a new devastating reality.

44 It was also questionable could they have known all along who I was but were just leaving me there to enact their intimidation tactic. Just like they left a Hambacher forest activist in prison for 7 months although they had found out within the first few days of their arrest who the person was. This goes against the law, but of course laws are there for the ruling class to enforce subservience, not to regulate themselves. This unlike anarchists who set intentions with which we would preferably organise our world.

During the period of the 3 months of retrial, around this time when it became apparent that they would keep me in prison, I received a letter from someone I had a bond with born through the forest. They said some kind things that moved me, and spoke of their adventures to wild places and other zones of defence, which all stirred the sense of belonging in me. Although I had my focus on this political ideal of a borderless world where people could move and act freely, without documentation like a collar with a leash to a dominating entity, my focus on a future where people would have committed to taking others as a part of themselves and have therefore developed trust, the evidence of such a world did not become apparent from my case. From people that acted in solidarity to a big extent, more trust solidified our bonds, but not with the ones responsible for a horrendous amount of the damage on this planet.⁴⁵

I felt a disappointment because perhaps I myself, did not lay out my vision as a clear intention for my case. Simultaneously just wanting to get out and therefore keeping low key the anarchism that my anonymity suggested was perhaps not worth the caution. Perhaps the revolutionary struggle could have dug deeper to the roots of our common oppression. Perhaps I had not been so adamant on abolishing the victim/hero narrative of me, versus the villianisation of the state, and therefore the manipulative pattern just fulfilled itself again with my renewed condemnation. I felt the longing with this particular moving letter for my people and these places that I missed so much that at this stage, in a wider lose-lose scenario, I had to again intuitively confront my priorities.

The sense of grief permeated within me and spilled out into tears that fell onto the page. My case had not released so much resistance and gained an allowance for anonymity, and entrenched in a society that does not see us as nature defending itself, I would not live like a bird or a butterfly, able to easily traverse borders without the paperwork that really should stay as woodland. Nor had the case won an acquittal, nor my immediate release that we were intending for. I was still trapped in this time-space reality where a year and a half dedicated to this cause, with the inability to communicate on these matters so freely, felt like a stepping stone on which I had slipped and crashed into rocky water. I had lost this time with my comrades in manifesting something else on the outside of this prison, just one of societies worst manifestations.

I rolled over and over the question of what to do then, until and beyond the cell doors opened and I could speak over my predicament with some fellow inmates, who had come to take seriously my strange strategy of anonymity and release. Most were quite shocked that it had come to the point of me quite honestly considering surrender, but they could very well understand a day in Frankfurt JVA3 could feel like a year, and 3 months, although I could pass through it, finding ways to keep my mind, body and spirit active, and stick to my principal of refusal, it could be a time and an energy potentially worth far more in the outside world.

45 In case you didn't know, Germany is also invested in mega-projects such as the 'Train Maya', projected to divide indigenous and highly biodiverse lands in south and east Mexico. They have invested in 'green' wind turbines in wild and forest fire devastated landscapes of Greece, as well as in Europe's despicable border regimes, such as Frontex. They are intent on mining brown coal from one of Europe's largest carbon emitters until 2030. They are one of Europe's largest exporters in weapons, and oil and electricity dependent vehicles.

“For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”⁴⁶ was an adage that rung in my mind. Although I knew it all along, I was convinced that a good smashing of that house in the form of a public awakening to the state’s not so hidden agenda with a stimulated reaction to that, was a result worth giving up a part of my freedom for. This much to some extent had happened, hundreds of people came to demonstrations outside the prison and court, some even organised a soli-bus to travel cross country from Leipzig and Berlin, so many connections were made, intersecting of the movement from anti-ecocide and pro-system change into anti-imprisonment and pro-anonymity, into acting in the name of a cause, cautious of egotistic and individualising action. The trial had stirred up the meaning of true justice for many who came into contact with the struggle, confronted with a clear case of injustice which brought in the legitimacy of the whole system, and questioned the faith of many who then had to open up possibility and imagination for alternatives. Even my own faith which I knew to be very little, but still enough there to be lost in the awakening to the fact a fair trial would not come, because fairness is just not a fundamental value to drowsy rulers in the present system. News from visits and letters told me that much awareness was raised to the topic of self determination, autonomy and aid that’s mutual, through discussion and soli-actions from groups that saw themselves in my position. For all this and more I was more than satisfied, I was truly honoured and grateful.

It was also an inspiration to hear about so many other forest occupations against ecocidal projects that had sprouted up around Germany and beyond during the year 2021, namely in Lützarath, Fecher, Grüne Lunge, Heibo, Moni, Besch, Alti, Kasti, Dieti, Bahnhöfs Wald, Leinemasch, Nora 219A, La ZAD de la Colline, a simultaneous sprout in Atlanta, US, at the Weelaanee forest, and for sure lots of other initiatives that I don’t even know about. The seeds from Danni were truly sown, and even though a result of this giant eviction was that many people had trauma and repression, to hear that folks were still encouraged to expand the struggle for forests stronger than ever, was super gratifying.

My priorities did shift in this time, they became more about the wish to maintain and strengthen the connections to my people, in support of other parts of nature defending themselves. This desire surpassed my political ideals that I felt I had gone to the limit of my heart and soul for in this strategy. The decision to stay anonymous was very much a personal decision, although I had taken as I saw it in the best interests of the movement as a whole. This time I insisted that some comrades help me make this final decision, remembering that this was not just mine, but a shared strategy which we were all somewhat responsible for how to play it, no matter what role we were in. My predicament was passed around and discussed in some of the political space that we shared. Although news of my low mental health also got leaked into those conversations and no doubt influenced, the answer that came back went something like “you made the point to the best that you could, come out and be with us”. It took a long time for me to feel the strategy I was taking as truly collective, when I had asked before responses came like “it’s your decision, we don’t want to influence” which annoyed me, because I’m able to make my own decisions, I just need support in

46 Quote from Audre Lorde, delivered as part of a speech and an essay published in her collection *Sister Outsider* (1979).

considering the options sometimes. But this time it felt direct and fair, and I agreed, being together was what I most wanted.

I made the call to show my ID on the Wednesday and was out 3 working days later, Monday, May 9th. I was told I had 20 minutes to pack my things, which were more or less ready and waiting to go. The majority of the money that remained in my account was taken for property damages, much much more than what one would estimate a broken door lock to cost, but as we well know, “don’t trust any cop”. I had called my lawyer’s office secretary as soon as I got the news, thinking that within an hour I would be processed out of there and sitting on the street, hoping not to be waiting too long before someone could come pick me up. But when I got to the final gate and looked out the window my jaw dropped, there was a crowd of 25-30 people there to welcome me. The news of my release had actually got to them before to me, and all managed to drop what they were doing to gather and celebrate, which we then did with members of the inter-regional resistance band *Lebenslaute* who broke into music and dance, before we headed to someone’s nearby garden for drinks, chats and finally being able to hug one another again.

Everyone seemed so beautiful, the sun was shining, the summer’s flora was so lush. That evening I submerged myself in a lake and had a long swim, and later I sat by a fire and had a phone call with my mother, for the first time in a very long time. She said she was proud of me, although admitting to having a hard time really understanding me, but was glad that I stuck up for what I believed in, and that her whole family had rejoiced in seeing me give the bashed ego the cops had coming to them, which made me laugh in remembering my roots.

I don’t know can giving a bashed ego result in states and corporations taking a step back, assessing a situation without the filters of right and wrong, but through the lens of genuine need and desire, and stop pulling at the ties that keep us safe. My hope is that they can breathe in someone else’s dream, simultaneously their own truth too, and breathe out the toxic waste that is the legal injustice system, and its inner and outer eco-systemic exploitation. My faith in this social and eco-justice, or in other words, healing fervently beats on.

Afterword

The struggle for anonymity and ending ecocide goes on at a higher frequency. In 2022, 3 activists were imprisoned for 4 months for blocking the processing of coal from a German mine. “Carl” and “Ralph” both remained anonymous until the end.

In France in 2022, activists were anonymously imprisoned for 2 months with the charge of property damage in reaction to the relentless evictions that were happening in their city and beyond. They were transferred to a migrant detention centre during this time and spoke of the drastically harsher conditions there compared to the prison. Similar treatment has been inflicted on anonymous activists in the gold mining region of Greece in years past, and many more cases than I can mention here.

Activists all over the world are taking security culture more seriously, preparing themselves for a worst case scenario of going into prison, whilst intending for the best case scenario of their transgressors stopping the abuse, and receiving the justice that actually transforms the conditions that have led to this abuse, so for it not to happen again. In affinity groups and in general, the potential of going to prison and what would we do then seems to be spoken about more confidently, integrating whatever fears, shame or illusion of separation we may have with those we very much trust. This means thinking about what would the most affected people want in a given scenario, considering questions like “if I was to go to prison for x amount of time or for this reason, would you stand by me?”, imagining material that can be sent in and out of prison, the characteristics of a campaign for their release, what legal structures are there willing to assist, and how would they envision potential outcomes before an action? What outside responsibilities might an incarcerated person need help with looking after? How to take care of the incarcerated’s family who might call the authorities and give the name of their child they are missing? What are people’s limits, how much repression could we imagine taking? Is there a point up until we may be willing to stay anonymous and when, in what circumstances would we surrender as a group who may have trouble communicating with each other locked up? Preparing letters and answers to these questions stored on tails sticks or just in people’s memories just in case⁴⁷. Activists are also focusing more on best case scenarios, co-creating those, in regeneration of the positive expressions of ourselves, our visions, transformative justice, self organised spaces and a deepening of appreciation for the natural environment which hosts us.

My case at present is still open in revision, which is like a second appeal phase that goes through all the mistakes that my lawyers have pointed out and have advocated for the lifting of these charges. Although working with the law does not give me much enthusiasm, but to imagine an ideal situation and all the possibilities, I like to envision the ecocide of Dannenröder forest to be recognised as the atrocity it is by the state and public-private companies, all the folks who have suffered repression because of this atrocity to have their convictions nullified. It would be marvelous for us all to be compensated for the unjust harmful treatment, and our trauma compensated for. Sure, it would be fantastic for the A49 highway to be unbuilt, and the forest, this fragmented habitat, to be restored and begin to grow back together again, this and all the hateful social and ecological unjust projects to be ashes in the wind. For radical changes we need to think ambitiously, allow space for the imagination which stirs our passion and prayers, also known as wishes, to be answered.

Since my release I’ve spent many nourishing moments of quality time with comrades, friends and meeting the many people who were involved in the campaign without knowing me, but knowing about my ideas. However, life experiences have amplified in ways for me, loneliness has felt all the more horrible after so much time alone in a cell. I have been dealing with insomnia, breakdowns, aggravated confrontations with aggressors and those I perceive as passive bystanders, especially male socialised people who do not show understanding, and comrades who triangulate and evict other comrades from the struggles that need us all. I continue intending to transform my

47 Tails is a portable operating and storage system that protects against surveillance and censorship, usually stored on a USB stick. www.tails.boum.org

stressors. I'm still challenged with the ability to feel fully safe in strong, trusting relationships and affinity. I have wondered in anxiety could I still risk being a match to prison life again, contemplating on defected happiness and empowerment when I've felt so frozen, or with an urge to run, or whether to choose a battle. Governments are building and expanding more prisons with which repression is rising, these thoughts are harrowing to me, but not enough to prevent my participation in what I believe is revolutionary adventure. Building skills and community is an unending and often fruitful practice. Likewise on this starker wavelength, experiences of connection and integration have felt all the more wonderful.

My commitment to earth liberation has only gotten stronger. I was intent from the get go of my release that I wanted to be back in foresty landscapes and did so. Months after, I ended up being evicted from the Nora 219A occupation in the ancient Carpathian forest that is endangered by extreme logging and a local economy that delusionally dependent on ecocide. I did not bring my ID with me to the cop station and again pushed the boundary for anonymity there. During our stay in Polish custody they told us that items they had found at the occupation were being kept in a warehouse for investigation, but in reality we found out some days later, police but also forest guards, border guards and fire fighters and whoever else present and responsible for the eviction, had trashed almost everything, including the small secluded camp where my identifying document was hidden, and had sent it in skips to the regional waste incinerator. How the universe works in mysterious ways?

Gratitude

I would like to thank everyone! Those of the housing squats that I lived in whilst writing *Imprisonment is for Burning*. For their commitment to deconstructing the world of property, and creating the one of positive ownership, in which we all take care of what is ours, whether it be inter-personal conflict, borrowed laptops or barricades to put up at the end of the night. The spirit, ease and challenge of living as part of an occupying collective, always reflecting each other's light and shadow sides, brought me sense of belonging and purpose, much love to all of you.

Likewise to all the people that supported me throughout these cases of repression, especially Danni. There is a saying that goes, "if you want to find out who your true friends are, go get yourself a prison sentence". I had poor grounded certainty of who would step up and support me when I first found myself inside, I just believed that enough of us from the nucleus that was Danni shared the common values of truth and consistency in the common struggle for a self determined world, and would rise to the call. Much more than what I expected stepped up, and awe-inspired me time and time again on this journey, with noisy demonstrations, beautifully crafted letters, and solidarity actions such as traveling to Paris with a banner I had long ago made to ask would the Zapatistas put out a solidarity message, which they amazingly did in a stunning video message⁴⁸. And getting one of the first letters to me, which took 7 weeks in arriving, to share

48 <https://www.ya-basta-netz.org/zapatistische-solidaritaet-mit-ella-freeella/>

Indymedia news that forest destroying machines had been destroyed by fire as an act in solidarity with the Danni prisoners. Many communicated thoughts, reports and actions transcended me from weary and loneliness, to fulfillment and vibrancy. Solidarity really does fortify the core of one's being, whilst simultaneously tearing down the walls that separate us.

I thank all the print collectives that have introduced me to their machines and have taken on *Imprisonment is for Burning* enthusiastically, the collectives that have welcomed me into their spaces to explore these topics, and those curious and motivated that have partook in these rounds. I thank the woodland, the trees and paper this is written on, these "fascist killing machines" this work is printed with, and the folks that have generously hosted me on this journey to share some lessons that have been imprinted on me.

I also want to pass thanks to all of my opposition in this story. It was widely quoted from one of my court speeches that I would pour a tea for the prosecutor, the public-private company CEOs, the cops, and whoever else for this matter doesn't like me, and with which offer for us to come to an understanding, the only way out of suffering. To then with cups, not overflowing with one's own delusion of knowing what's best, speak honestly about our needs and values which when we look deeply tend to be in common. They haven't yet taken me up on this offer, so I leave them with this communiqué they can read with their own tea in their own time, whilst the world continues to confront them with issues they have a responsibility to be taken for. I thank them for providing me with the contrast of the imprisoned and fucked up world I do not want, with the wild and free world that I do, the ability to speak viscerally about this contrast so perhaps others won't have to.

And lastly, a thanks to you for reading this work that begun as a jest and then a reoccurring stimulus from the people I was enclosed behind high walls with. I hope that this craziness that served me so directly will serve others through an accurate telling of this story. Your consideration to use and share the story as a resource, to further understanding of imprisonment, the reasons to dis-identify, the reality of where we are as a social-ecological movement, with perhaps participation in closing of the gap towards where we want to be, is all tremendously appreciated. If you have just picked this up out of curiosity, I am glad that it has found its way, and I trust, if you are open, that it is a relatable experience. I promised myself that prison and all my traumas would not just take away from my life, but they will add to it and the sharing of this story is already doing that. Ultimately my wish is that this work can continue in contribution to the movement which opens every jail cell, the smelting of every fearful key, and most of all, the forging of every love laden relationship.



Left: Solidarity from the “wolvens” at Nora219A, whose queer-feminist occupation was one of the safest places felt in Poland, comrades there had told me. It was evicted after 20 months, as the government plan to continue their ambition to devastate 30% of it, habitat stolen from wolves, bison and bears among many other stunning creatures.

Right: “We are not all, we are missing the prisoners” Sharepic for manifestation outside the prison on the anniversary of my arrest with music and speeches. On the anniversary of the first trees felled in Herri for the highway, they projected the first documentary detailing what happened onto a wall facing the prison, which some of the prisoners could see over and join in. Although I could not usually hear clearly the speeches, I was able to recognise some voices, hear songs not found on the radio and differences of languages including Spanish. Inmates would be by the windows cheering in response, spirits raised moreso when it was about prison system in general, than just an imprisoned comrade’s story. Multiple times I corrected inmates that these demos were for our common freedom, not just my own.

“Freedom for all prisoners”
Receiving photos (if the one is allowed) can be one of the most heartwarming experiences inside, and a reason for inmates to deepen connections to one another by sharing them. Likewise humour is a great medicinal, share jokes with those imprisoned! Be a light beam, a firework, into a dark place.



This photo was found on the *Wald Statt Asphalt* “forests not tarmac” website. This organisation that was formed out of Danni and continues resisting against new highway constructions, their materials and apparatus, across Germany and beyond, primarily supporting forest occupations. The situation still escalates with more evictions, one comrade now imprisoned from the “Heibo” occupation against gravel mining, charged with arson on police vehicles.

FREEDOM FOR ALL!!