





J

i read about 'power machine' in 'xerography debt' and i was very interested to read it. when the author didnt reply to my email offering to trade, i was pleased to find it distro'd by microcosm ... it is an account of a squat in emeryville, california which lasted about a year. the zine itself is a very nice product, with a colour printed card cover and an elastic band instead of staples. all in all it's 28 pages (including the cover) and the contents are an assortment of articles about the project. to cut the story to the essentials, the author, hannah potassium, squats the place alone; it is a disused warehouse by the railways tracks in central emeryville and over time more people move in; as is often the case, severe problems over communal issues ensue and hannah loses the plot a bit. you should read the zine, its quite entertaining and it addresses issues which are definitely universal such as the problems of drug abuse, parasites, ownership of squats and non-hierarchical decision-making. there is also some philosophy about why people squat which i'm still digesting. you might think that when squatting in the united states the main problem would be the police since there is no legal basis for squatting, but in this account, it really seems like drunk punks fucked up a place with a lot of potential. the owner was cool, the building was big, but the squatters' internal problems ensured that in the end, the owner turned the building over to the council for demolition. i like hannah's intention to historicise her experience, warts and all, because that is also one motivation for me to make 'using space'. she also wants to learn from the experience ... and that is the important thing, otherwise we are doomed to go round and round, making the same mistakes over and over again.

i also ordered the '949 Market zine' from microcosm, which is about punks squatting some buildings in sanfrancisco for four months. i guess they didnt have it, but they did send instead 'scam 5', which had a two page feature about the project - it sounded pretty nice in that even though it only lasted quite a short time, they put in loads of effort, painting loads of murals and doing concerts where they gave out free food. somehow right now i find the transitory nature of squatting quite annoying, but then the flipside of the situation is that i very much enjoy the challenges and excitement of new buildings. i suppose i don't really want to do a cafe in the same place for twenty years ... (but having the security of knowing we could stay for a few years would be nice!). on this point, it was inspiring to visit a squat called barcelona/copyleft in amsterdam recently. it reminded me of the groene voltage project here in rotterdam in terms of size and ideals, and it was cool to talk to the people who live there .. despite not really knowing how long they can stay, they have really put in a LOT of work (although one can argue that the amsterdam eviction waves do mean that if you don't get evicted in one wave, you know you are gonna be there for another three months until the next scheduled eviction wave - which traditionally takes place on a tuesday, whereas in rotterdam the eviction notice could come at any time) the building was in a pretty bad state when they squatted it and now it looks lovely. the unpainted brick walls are a nice side-effect, but i was impressed that they had unbricked all the windows, installed stairs and sorted out something like eight computers for free internet. we stood on the roof, watching the sun go down and i realised that even in 2007 there is still hope!



#### **introduction:**

**why are they knocking down perfectly good houses in crooswijk rotterdam ? [see cover - cheers san for the foto] and why are they destroying one of the few remaining communities in this fucking city? because money talks of course!! and that's about all we can say on the matter ... all is already lost.**

**oh well. for this issue of using space i thought i would include various writings. these include "the future of squatting ", a small, rather confused piece i wrote for a rotterdam squatzine called 'rotzooi' which discusses among other things the crooswijk situation, a report i found on indymedia about the progress of the maelstrom social centre (now sadly evicted), tips for white guys - a reminder to watch out for hierarchy in meetings and an interesting first hand impression of the ELF squat project in Amstesdam. I hope there's something to learn from all these pieces, hey, maybe even from the one i wrote, although im not quite sure i communicated what i wanted to say...**

#### **using space:**

**issue one - social centres i have visited around europe**  
**issue two - snellinckstraat, a squatted street in rotterdam**  
[apologies by the way for the diagram in issue two, which ended up being nothing more than a black box .. i forgot to draw on the streets!]  
**issue three - this one!**  
**issue four will be about a social centre im involved with in rotterdam called the groene voltage**  
**(<http://centrum.mujinga.net/wiki>)**

***all available for free download at [zine.mujinga.net](http://zine.mujinga.net) and also [zinelibrary.net](http://zinelibrary.net)..***

#### **contact:**

**[spaceman@mujinga.net](mailto:spaceman@mujinga.net)**



**ps if there are other people making zines about squatting and social centres, please pass this zine on to them. i would lurve to make some more links!!!**



# Thoughts on the Future of Squatting

There are estimated to be about one billion squatters worldwide. Just to get that figure into perspective, we are talking about one squatter in every six persons. Robert Neuwirth suggests in his book 'Shadow Cities and the Urbanization of the World' that by 2030 there will be two billion squatters, or about one squatter for every four persons and moreover, he reckons by 2050, there could be three billion squatters, or one squatter for every three. Basically, we're taking over!! In a review of the book, Jamais Cascio concludes that "Inevitably, the cities of the future will be built by squatters".

Well, despite concentration of wealth and other faults of capitalism leading to more empty buildings and more squatters, right now it's possible that squatting might actually get banned in the Netherlands. I don't really think this will happen, especially since the four

largest cities have gone so far as to write a letter declaring that squatting is good for the local culture, but it could still happen. In Rotterdam, one political party (PvdA) wants to make it a byelaw that buildings should be required to stand empty for two years before they can be squatted (at the moment it's one year). Their aim is to make squatting more difficult, but would that stop squatting?

Well no, obviously not, because there would still be empty buildings but the Dutch are generally quite a law-abiding bunch of people so certainly less people would squat. I mean, people tend to take the path of least resistance. Squatting is an accepted part of culture here. It is easy and often works, so many young alternative people do it. It works so well that there are also "anti-squats", buildings where people are housed to prevent the place being squatted

In these paralysed times, lacking attack, the State has taken advantage to strengthen their acts of vengeance and death against rebels, and to repress any chance of offence, subversion and freedom. This project hopes to make a small contribution to reversing this situation, through opening up a space without negotiation where all aspects of this oppressive system can be analysed, criticised and attacked.

So we hope you will help to support this project in any way you can. Some suggestions are placed below, but do not feel limited by them.

- \* Finding out what we need from our wishlists, which we will place in the building and on Leeds Indymedia.
- \* Coming to the events that interest you and coming down to help cook for the café when we are open.
- \* Bringing us any Infoshop materials you think appropriate (i.e radical/anarchist books, zines etc. you no longer need so we can build up a library).

Maelstrom is located in the Old Post Office, Hyde Park Corner, Leeds, LS6 (opp Piana's Pizzas).

<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/leedsbradford/2004/11/300990.html>

---

Maelstrom got evicted a few months after this post was made, and they discussed making a zine about their experiences. I haven't been able to track it down yet, but i would definitely be interested to see it if someone knows about it....

## MAELSTROM - THE STORY SO FAR

Maelstrom is an info-squat based in Leeds. We are entering our fourth week in occupation of the building, which we have made our home and collective project. In an attempt to launch discussion, criticism and action against surveillance, new technologies of control, prisons and the panopticon society, we have hosted over the past three weeks talks and discussions on the theme of what we call the 'Surveillance' or 'control' society. Subjects covered have included nanotechnology, biometrics, new repressive laws, security culture, CCTV, ID Cards, the draft mental health bill, the prison society and prisoner support.

We consider it very important at moments such as this to create a space where we can confront, analyse and develop new strategies of action against the projects of the System, and to extend and deepen criticism of the control-society and those who are its architects. This process seems especially necessary to us in the contemporary context.

We have also had workshops on subvertiseing, squat electrics and a squat skill-share, also pirate bingo and an ongoing café run on a donations basis, as well as acting as a space where others can hold their meetings.

We are now opening for weekly events, such as a reading group on Tues nights, café with film or discussion on Weds nights and subvertiseing on Thurs nights. In addition we will have irregular events on other days and evenings. We suggest you keep an eye out on Leeds Indymedia or the posters on the front of the building for more info on these.

(apparently now Camelot are importing this idea to England).

Thus antisquat companies like HOD, Alvast and Ad Hoc are doing pretty well, since there are lots of empty buildings and there are lots of people who want to live in them and pay a lower rent than for a "normal" house. But there is a catch - if you live anti-squat, there are quite some restrictions. To explain further what exactly antisquat is, there are companies which get paid by owners of buildings to find people to live in their empty properties and thus render them unsquatable, since they are in use. What then happens is that you have big commercial buildings in city centres with only one or two people living in them. Nice for them perhaps, but is this the best way forward? Despite living in what can often be a large building, the renter is not permitted to have parties, let others use the space, have pets or have people sleeping

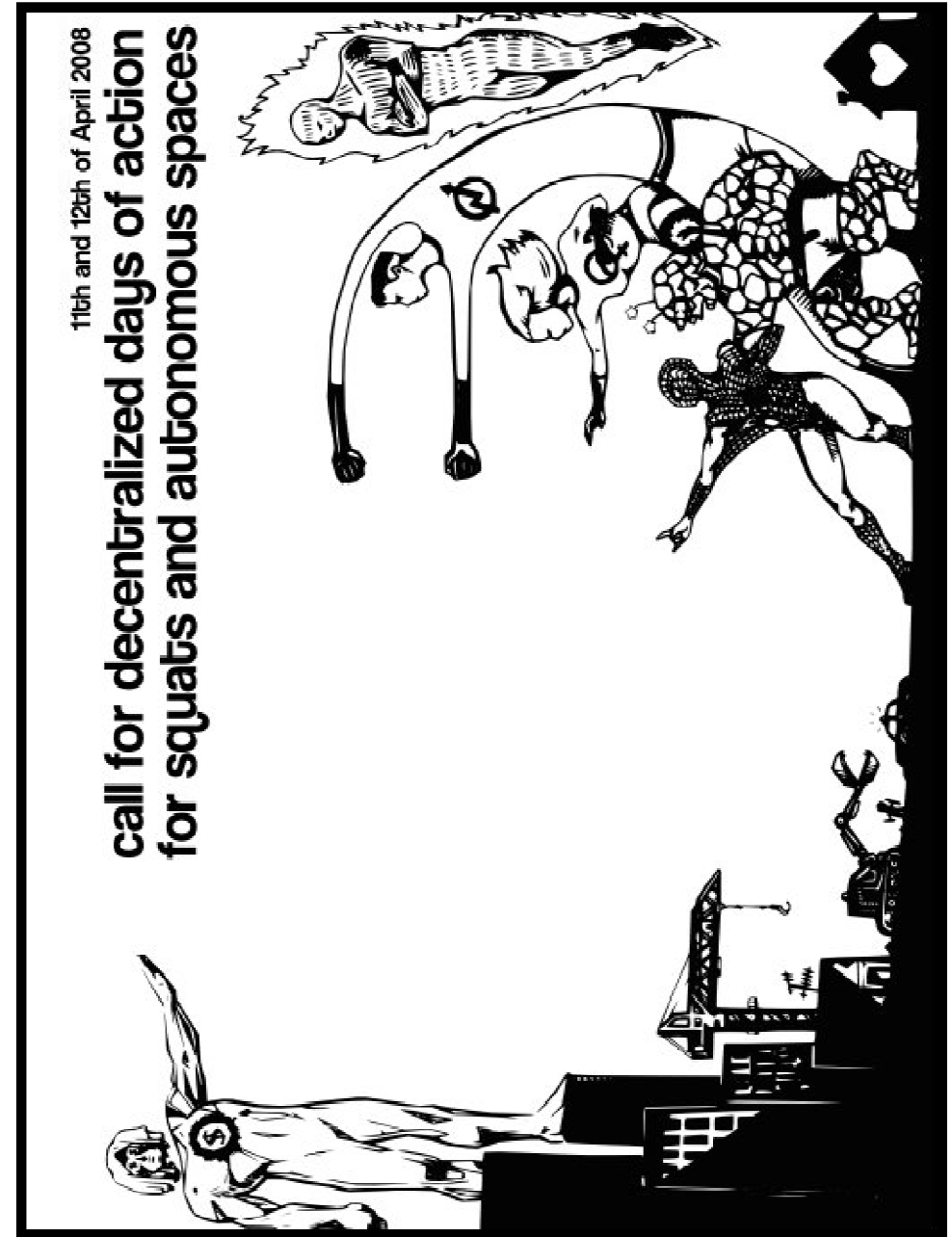
over. Fair enough in a way, the owner doesn't want the property trashed. But one reason i squat is to use spaces, rather than letting them stand empty. A building rots when it stands empty. It leaks, bits fall off, it gets mouldy. You can even say that living in a building keeps it in a good condition. So why then do antisquat companies get paid for people finding to live in them under pretty stringent rules? Well, they found a gap in the market and have exploited it very well. Good little capitalists at work. And at first sight, it might seem that everyone wins. But actually if you live antisquat the renting company gets to have a key for your front door and can come in at any time. And they're the only ones making money from the deal.

What i want is for a government body to find people to live in buildings for free and look after them.

Maybe im too idealistic .... of course it is true that some people are irresponsible. Some squatters (for reasons good or bad) do break deals and/or trash places. And in all the palaver, the sensible middle ground has been lost, unfortunately. Buildings have to be used. The society we live in does not provide adequate music venues, kindergartens, social centres, bars and infoshops, so we have to squat places and reclaim them for ourselves. In England in big cities, it's ridiculous ... in every estate you see the old pub boarded up and closed down.

Now if you squat somewhere in Holland, you have a lot of legal rights (established on the principle of huisvrede/ domestic peace) so once you are inside and have the lock on the door, the owner has to take you to court in order to evict (or send round the heavies). Normally it is not a good idea to take a contract, because this hands the

advantage back to the owner in that then you agree to be out at a certain time, but context is everything and sometimes a contract is a good deal. For example, we squatted a warehouse on an industrial estate in northern Rotterdam. We signed a contract which basically made an antisquat deal but with far better conditions for us. We could live there with them paying our bills until they sold the building. We were the effectively caretakers of the building and (with 24 hour's notice) we allowed the estate agents to show prospective clients around. In the end, we had to move out after only 6 months, because they sold the building (and they really did, its now a culinary wholesale depo). So in a sense it didn't work out so good for us, but in terms of the building, things worked out really good. It was used by us and kept in a good state, it wasn't burnt down or teknopartied etc etc.



# Tips for white guys

This creates an internal organizing culture that is alienating for most people. Developing respect and solidarity across race, class, gender and sexuality is complex and difficult, but absolutely critical - and liberating.

9. Be aware of how often you ask people to do something as opposed to asking other people "what needs to be done".
10. Think about and struggle with the saying, "you will be needed in the movement when you realize that you are not needed in the movement".
11. Struggle with and work with the model of group leadership that says that the responsibility of leaders is to help develop more leaders, and think about what this means to you.
12. Remember that social change is a process, and that our individual transformation and individual liberation is intimately interconnected with social transformation and social liberation. Life is profoundly complex and there are many contradictions. Remember that the path we travel is guided by love, dignity and respect - even when it is bumpy and difficult to navigate.
13. This list is not limited to white guys, nor is it intended to reduce all white guys into one category. This list is intended to disrupt patterns of domination that hurt our movement and hurt each other. White guys have a lot of work to do, but it is the kind of work that makes life worth living.
14. Day-to-day patterns of domination are the glue that maintains systems of domination. The struggle against capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism and the state, is also the struggle towards collective liberation.
15. No one is free until all of us are free.

*Originally taken from:*

<http://www.ebfnb.org/fnbopsmanual/tipsforwhiteguys.html>

This is the sensible middle ground i believe, but we had to force it by first squatting.

Now what i am saying here goes against what some Dutch squatters think, because they say that you have far more rights when you are squatting. That may be true, but im trying to be realistic. Squatting the building puts you in a good negotiating position, i am not arguing against that and of course a lot of the housing corporations (for example in Rotterdam de Nieuwe Unie, Woning Bedrijf Rotterdam and PWS) are complete money-obsessed liars who will do all things, both good and bad, to get what they want; surely we have got to get to a future situation which gets away from the present insanity. Yet those in power are difficult to persuade because they are rich from carrying out precisely these sorts of scams. It would take a sizeable change in the

balance of power to make much noticeable difference in the functioning of this society, but dammit, why not let buildings be used? Empty buildings are a disgrace - and there's a lot in Rotterdam! The crazy thing is that there's also a lot of people who want to live in them, but they're stuck on 6 year housing lists and all the houses for sale are really expensive. Neuwirth makes basically the same point in his excellent book, but he is talking about about majority world squatters. He spent two years living in four squatter neighborhoods: Rocinha, in Rio, Brazil; Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya; Sanjay Gandhi Nagar, in Mumbai, India; and Sultanbeyli, in Istanbul, Turkey. As he says, "The true challenge is not to eradicate these communities but to stop treating them as slums - that is, as horrific, scary and criminal - and start treating them as neighborhoods that can be improved.

# Tips for white guys

## who are working for social change and other people socialized in a society based on domination...

They don't need to be knocked down and built new, because in most cases this will only produce housing that is not affordable to the people who are living there." This has a lot of resonance with Rotterdam, where for example WBR (Woning Bedrijf Rotterdam) are destroying a whole neighbourhood in Crooswijk. This is an area where there is still some sort of community existing. There's a lot of old people who lived there their whole lives and people are friendly when you pass them on the street. Apparently in World War 2 there were streets where the Germans didn't dare go. But now WBR wants to "renovate" with its Nieuwe Crooswijk plan. There is resistance, but perhaps the battle is already lost and all we can do is slow the process (more info in Dutch - <http://www.crooswijk.com/>). WBR was a social housing corporation and now is simply going for the money. They want to demolish houses

which are perfectly good in order to build a tower and whack in all the old Crooswijk residents, then knock down their old houses and build new ones, which WBR will then sell off to yuppies. This sort of regeneration really is no good. That a social housing company can do this simply shows how wrong our society is getting.

Lets leave the last word to Neuwirth: "...there's a difference between property and possession. Property turns land into a commodity: people own land not to use it, or because they need it for survival, but simply as an investment. Possession guarantees personal use and control rather than profit. For Proudhon, property, not money, is the root of all evil..."

This article was inspired by Robert Neuwirth's book, *squatting in Rotterdam*, the antisquat controversy in Holland and writings on <http://www.worldchanging.com/>

1. Practice noticing who's in the room at meetings - how many men, how many women, how many white people, how many people of color, is it majority heterosexual, are there out queers, what are people's class backgrounds. Don't assume to know people, but also work at being more aware.
2. Count how many times you speak and keep track of how long you speak. Count how many times other people speak and keep track of how long they speak.
3. Be conscious of how often you are actively listening to what other people are saying as opposed to just waiting your turn and/or thinking about what you'll say next.
4. Practice going to meetings focused on listening and learning; go to some meetings and do not speak at all.
5. Count how many times you put ideas out to the group. Count how many times you support other people's ideas for the group.
6. Practice supporting people by asking them to expand on ideas and get more in-depth, before you decide to support the idea or not.
7. Think about whose work and contribution to the group gets recognized. Practice recognizing more people for the work they do and try to do it more often.
8. Practice asking more people what they think about meetings, ideas, actions, strategy and vision. White guys tend to talk amongst themselves and develop strong bonds that manifest in organizing.



# radical textz - free and online!!

## **cracking the movement** -

<http://www.thing.desk.nl/bilwet/Cracking/contents.html>

a book about the amsterdam squat scene in the 1980s.  
very inspiring!

## **poker without cards** - <http://www.greylodge.org/gpc/?p=558>

a weird sort of robert anton wilson sort of book

## **prole** - <http://www.prole.info/>

"pamphlets and online texts for the angry wage worker"

## **queer zine archive project** - <http://www.qzap.org/v4/>

## **rupture zine** - <http://www.randomartists.org>

a tekno zine coming out of london

## **tazine** - <http://shockraver.free.fr/tazine.htm>

an italian tekno zine

## **using space zine** - <http://zine.mujianga.net>

this very product!!

## **voices in the tangled wilderness** - <http://tangledwilderness.org>

nice stuff for free download, including the super happy anarcho fun pages

## **zine library** - <http://www.zinelibrary.net>

over 500 political zines for free download!!

## **0 cent distro** - <http://www.trashcapitalism.vze.com>

more zines for free!

# *The Yin and Yang Of The ELF Experiment*

It's been a while now, since the Elf building in Amsterdam was evicted - 2 years or so. Still the stories remain, the project has a cult status in the global movement.



The founder of the project, the guy that cooked up the E.L.F. concept, feels the time has come to look back, evaluate the project and reveal some inside stories on the experiment.

When yours truly was asked to write an article about the Elf, the killing of Gijs and Fred, and what not, it was a difficult thing for him. His friends said: "It's time for the truth to come out". Btu knowing that the truth has always two faces, the question arose which face to show. And knowing that faces are always masks, the matter became academic; Those that have eyes to see, they know. The rest, they believe. But we love animals:

Even though we know that the wolves know, we like to explain to the sheep. So that they may become wolves one day.

For those who don't know the story: The Elf was a squatted building, being occupied by a group of people that were determined to set an initiative, an experiment in positive squatting. The place we occupied was a 200 rooms office building on the border of Am\*dam centre. At the culmination of the experiment, the building was inhabited by people of 27 different countries, living in a global community. There was a magic restaurant (people paid what they could/wanted to/afford to into a magic hat, out of which the shopping was paid for the next day), a chai-shop, a budget dormitory, studios and art spaces, a grow-room producing sweet marijuana and other shamanistic medicines, a a chai-shop and a Skylab, where 24-hours parties were held on a regular basis. Shamen came to organise rituals where big groups of people would get together, sing and talk to spirits. 3 months after the opening, the owners of the building took the squatters to court. The owners won and the squatters were convicted to to have to leave the building within a month. The squatters refused to go and stayed for 2,5 more years before finally being thrown out.

Now what was exactly the idea behind the Elf ? Well, let's be honest: The Elf initiative was designed to act as a front-store to be able to run a big building. Yours truly had a quite long experience in running big squats. Out of experience he knew that managing a big place like that, it would involve huge bills, that could never be carried by any private person. On its regular turning, the Elf was paying about 10.000 euros every month in bills, various costs and volunteers pocketmoney. An official body was essentially needed to carry those bills. Preferably a foundation (= a not-for-profit organisation with a good purpose as its official goal). Looking for a nice official goal for this foundation, yours truly meditated for a few months. Finally he saw the light and cooked up a nice goal :

And Gijs and Fred ? They were 2 of the early day members of the collective. Gijs was the painter, Fred the musician. They were loved by the collective for their uniqueness and their willingness to help people. Gijs used to be the transport guy; With his van he drove around anybody that needed things to be moved, For about 10 years he supplied paintings and decos to decorate the new squats that yours truly had opened. He was as close as family could get. Fred used to be a cool vibe all the way. And now they're dead. Got stabbed together in some vague hotel bar, having some vague arguments with some vague people, the day before newyears eve.

We've cried a river and have thrown a fat party to send them off to heaven. We will miss and never forget them.

Nasty stories like that keep showing us how important it is to share love with our friends, enjoy life while it's there. Live it to the max and when the time comes, make sure you've lived something and have not spent yours days dreaming about things you could have done. And yes there are powers of the light , balanced by the powers of darkness. Which one you connect to is up to you and you only. And karma is real, as real as the paradox of life: Some things you will only get by letting them go.

Will the Elf come back? Who knows. Besides, it has never been gone. It has just transformed. The idea behind it has lived as long as people have been on this planet. What's in a name, it's all in the game. Next experiment might have the same or a different name, but it will be about the same thing.

Love, light, transcultural unity.  
An alternative to the so-called official society.

Written by Ton, light child/ego asshole,  
initiator of the E.L.F. experiment.

become a legend. Those who were there still talk about it quite a lot. It was hot it was cool. It was sex, drugs and rock&roll. Or more accurate, it was love, drugs and trance music. And besides the dramas and the hard times, friendships and deep connections between people were made that will hold for life. Once family, always family. Although yours truly has done many a big squat, the Elf was the most special thing that ever happened to him, not by far compairable to all the rest. I will never forget the circles we made, holding hands, never forget the people that burst out in tears of happiness, the strong feeling of love and unity that would roam through the corridors of that concrete building.



Never forget the fighting and the making up, brothers and sisters breaking each other down on house-meetings but embracing each other at night and smoking a joint together in the chair-shop. I hope one day to forgive myself for all those times i screamed at people because i could not make my point with love and patience. Will never forget my beautiful girl-friend Sharyn, angel Sharyn, that jumped from the roof of the Elf. Because she couldn't handle getting divorced from her husband and loosing her 2 little daughters for life, while i didn't realise that and had taken off for a few weeks to Guyana to set up an interesting gold business. Man, the Elf was the best, the worst, but for sure the most intense thing i've ever experienced.

The E.L.F. experiment.  
The E stood for Exploration and Evolution (is why we did it),  
The L stood for Love and Light (is what we did it with) and the  
F stood for Filaments and Frequencies (is how we spread it).  
Yours truly typed up the idea on a paper and spread it amongst his friends in the Am\*dam underground. Which was pretty fucked at that moment, by the way, because repression by the Dutch state was hard in those days (Holland was trying to make a good impression to the EU and was coming down hard on anything having to do with with autonomy, alternative, underground and the free use of drugs) and the Silo, one of the last strongholds of the underground, had just been evicted and the friends were screaming for a new place.



And so the Vlaardingenlaan no. 11 was squatted by a group of 22 people. What followed after that was a new-age saga of love and light, but also hate and darkness and what not...  
The building was a dream: Fairly new, a working elevator, sliding doors, a fancy reception, flat roof, a big space on the top floor to party in. *[apparently it was the old Belgian embassy! ED]*  
A few weeks after the squatting, the E.L.F. foundation was founded. With the official goal to stimulate and spread the powers of Love and Light in the broadest sense of the word. The foundation was run by 3 Dutch guys who shared a vision: to organ-

ise social, cultural and art activities and to throw fat parties. Everything on a non-commercial basis, but still generating enough money to put aside. So that if the building would be



evicted one day, there would be autonomous funding available to continue the project. Who knows, to maybe buy or rent a building one day and never be evicted anymore. And the experiment was very successful: From all around the world, people came to visit and stay over for a while. Things were going so well that the foundation succeeded to feed around 20 volunteers, offer them free housing and enjoying their enthusiasm in helping to keep the building clean and vibrant with good energy.

Somewhere down the line, though, problems started to arise. The building attracted more and more people without any income at all. That was quite understandable because in the Elf you could eat in the Magic Restaurant every day, even if you had no money to put into the Hat. The building was centrally heated, there was always a corner where you could crash and always a friendly person close by to share his/her joint with you. More and more rooms got occupied by brothers and sisters for whom the monthly donation of 100 euros to pay for the water, the electra and the heating gas was a too big amount of money to put up. And so there came the day when about 30 residents of the house held a meeting. They agreed that the foundation was making piles of money and lots of profit and decided that from now on, no one would be obliged anymore to put up the 100 euros a month for their room.

The parties would bring in enough money to pay for all the bills, was the general opinion. At the time of this meeting, the financial person of the foundation happened to be out of the country for a week and so the foundation office was occupied by a group of people that demanded the safe (in which

the Elf savings were being kept) to be opened. The foundation chairman (yours truly) did not feel at all to go and fight his own friends and housemates and handed over the safe key. In the safe there was about 7000 euros.

From that moment on, the Dutch people of the foundation felt the control of the experiment slipping away from their hands. They stepped back and started to push the people of the house to start a union that could take over all the bills.

But although the unity in squatting the safe was strong, it took the same group of people close to a year to start their union. In that year, the bills were taken on the personal names of some of the members of the union-to-be. Also during that time, a big Dutch organisation that helped big squats to get government subsidies and assist them in finding legal buildings, decided to step back also. Because they noticed that things were getting out of control. And because they found out that out of the 100 steady residents of the building, maybe 3 to 5 persons were legally and economically able to contribute to a legal building of that size. The union-to-be-founded found itself with the responsibility to keep paying the bills or have gas&electra cut off. Suddenly, the parties that used to be an extra, became a necessary thing to keep the bill-collectors happy.

By the time the union was finally founded, the authorities decided it was time to clean out the place. A new trial was started to force eviction. This time there was no more delay possible. When the eviction came, the new union found itself with no one cent in the bank to finance a new big project and the people that had taken the bills on their names found themselves in debts for thousands of euros. Several other buildings were being squatted by different groups of the original collective but none of them succeeded to really hold ground and in a few months time, the whole Elf thing fell apart and spread out over the globe.

All this was more than 2 years ago now. The Elf initiative has