

# We're Living in a Ruin on Hurricane Sandy

Welcome to the new normal, or whatever.

Hundreds of blocks of the world's most powerful city in the dark, patrolled by the National Guard, lit up with bonfires, and smelling of filth. Cars floating down Wall Street. The planet's economic capital underwater. Gowanus Canal sewage in your Red Hook bedroom.

@MichaelBloomberg @RockawayTaco got a motorized tie rack at sharper image <https://t.co/mF1PqNiB> #looting

*Was it just yesterday that you were jumping puddles in your 7-inch heel club shoes to grab a cab to the dinner uptown following that packed and sweaty hot art opening in Soho, wow it was like the best of the 90s in there.*

*Really now, it's rather fucking cold, dark too. My phone's about to die. Nobody's answering my texts about meeting up to find some light and heat and grab a shower somewhere. I have a headache. It's 9pm. I'm tired, I just want to sleep. No internet, no TV shows. Outside it's dead, too quiet, creepy. Everyone else got out of the blackout zone. They're partying in their hotel rooms at the Marriott Times Square. I'm alone. Nobody knows when they'll get the power back. There's enough water in the tub for another birdbath and two more flushes. I've eaten one bag of potato chips too many today.*

We are told the crisis is a matter of  
ECOLOGY  
ECONOMY  
ENERGY  
...

Too bad the real crisis doesn't come subdivided and nicely partitioned like newspaper section headers.

And sorry but the question of whether Paula Broadwell's husband asked *The Ethicist* what to do about her affair can't make us forget what the hurricane revealed: that we are living within the decline of a civilization, the implosion of its mode of managing the world. Not a crisis of the economy, but the collapse of an entire civilization. Or as the manically positive *Grist* was forced to admit in the aftermath of Sandy, "There's not much else to say. At this point, we're just doctors taking a fading pulse. Or, I suppose, tracking a rising fever."

***path A***  
***or how can this organic***  
***hothouse tomato from***  
***Mexico be so bland, so***  
***tasteless, so industrial?***

We are at a historical crossroads. On one side there's a management machine to sustain itself in its last throes, trying to keep itself from turning into a zombie long enough to have time to cut out its sexy sustainable vampire biodiesel baby. Designer oyster beds installed around Red Hook to absorb storm surge. A seawall beneath the Verazzano that would increase Rockaway storm surges by several feet. Save NYC to the edge of its oyster belt, drown the rest! Wetlands to fringe lower Manhattan. Green roofs to cool us down and soft & smart infrastructure to tie the citizen as informant to the open-source platform of trash & disaster self-management.

It's not hard to see what the climate resilient city is gearing up for, like when you know your relationship's over but you keep trying til the bitter end. Let's take a trip together, let's change things up, let's make this work! But fuck baby, it was over a long time ago. We saw it in Fukushima, the Gulf Coast oil spill, and again here in New York: 'man' and his mastery, surrounded by a landscape of objects, the edifice upon which this world has been built, is already a systematic failure.

Or like Mr. Silva said to James Bond, "You're living in a ruin."

**HOPE, FAITH, CHARITY,  
OCCUPY SANDY, SUP BITCHES! OR  
BE THE CHANGE THEY WANT TO SEE!**

*And now in the ruins of the annihilated city on Martinique a new guest arrives, unknown, never seen before – the human being. Not lords and bondsmen, not Blacks and whites, not rich and poor, not plantation owners and wage slaves – human beings have appeared on the tiny shattered island, human beings who feel only the pain and see only the disaster, who only want to help and succor. Old Mt. Pelee has worked a miracle! Forgotten are the days of Fashoda, forgotten the conflict over Cuba, forgotten "la Revanche" – the French and the English, the tsar and the senate of Washington, Germany and Holland donate money, send telegrams, extend the helping hand. A brotherhood of peoples against nature's burning hatred, a resurrection of humanism on the ruins of human culture.*

The key to reanimating this corpse of a society is us. All sides know this, from Chris Christie & the NYPD to Occupy and the homebrew & pickles squad.

A blight of the city's crème de la crème, smothering rotting bodega hell holes and colonizing like mold. Here's a name tag. Yes, Gortex. No, we already canvassed that street, like twice. Aid for residents, entertainment for volunteers? Good karma for individual groups unified (atomized) by NGO-style logo gear? Check!

Without us, the cleanup after the Sandy and the coming attempts to make the city a green dystopia won't work. If you've walked through the 15-story housing blocks where the hallways have turned into latrines and where it seems like the next logical step is to send in body bags, you got a little taste of what they have in mind for our future.

**path b (plan C?)  
...like the only real  
option anyways. Or,  
is fighting the best of  
all possible options?  
Yes!**

*There is this grid, eyes closed, I can sense it, smell it with my nostrils. It is one with you, you are nothing without it, not even a spark of life. You must feel the grid around you; here, between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere, yes. Even between the land and the ship. You're right, we need to just shut up and grasp ridiculous amounts of power. Seize the grid. Backyard turnip farming in the morning, skyscraper trimming in the afternoon.*

So the historical crossroads. Down the second path, there's an exit strategy that doesn't shed a tear for a society whose chief accomplishments include getting us into this hell in the first place. Sandy's showed us that we need a break with this way of life that is bringing us down with it. In short, we need revolution, and we need it now.

But any 21st century revolution will have to be materially organized for survival, to make the break habitable. So when they say relocalize everything, make communities resilient, WELL THEN, let's take this to its fullest conclusion: a cutting of ties, delinking from the flows that more often than not hold us hostage. Post-Sandy we've gotten a chance to experiment with some of the material skills we're going to need to do this. Reestablishing contact. Testing out what it means to make a life together.

Just as importantly, we saw how quickly economy and government unravel. So from now on, when the Bloombergs and Obamas (especially Michelle you gullible idiot) tell us get prepared and get out there and help, they're calling us to go to war, to become partisans, to take over.

**WEAPONIZE YOUR CONSTRUCTIVE HABITS, OR  
WANT TO TAKE HOME SOME TOMATOES I  
PRESSERVED? SURE DUDE BUT I NEED LIKE 5000 JARS.  
COVER ME BRO!**

The artisanal crowd, volunteer medics, DIY nerds, and occupy techies have been out in force after Sandy. In spite of Bloomberg's compliments, there's something seditious about this drive to make stuff and learn things. Whether its pickling, hacking, growing, or fighting, each unveils an ugly truth about the way we live. Each hits the raw nerve of alienation, disarmament, and denied interconnection.

Within a certain arrangement these skilled bodies could be made counter-revolutionary, networking with the NYPD and city to get the economic and social engine of New York up and running. But the power that we have to bring things back to normal shows us that we can also do the exact opposite.

The combined power of bio-intensive rooftop farmers, small arms aficionados, maladroit weltschmerzners and hack & mod freaks is more than enough to get us through a two-week blackout, but at a more intense level it could constitute an entire offensive territory. And one that has no interest in being a spare tire for an empire in ruin.

**REQUISITION/C\*\*\*\*\*/THAT WHICH CANNOT BE  
NAMED OH SO YOU LIKE TO COMMUNIZE THINGS  
DO YOU?**

Thank god we aren't going to have to build everything we need; we'll be able to take that shit. One could call it a lot of things –looting, pillaging, profaning, requisitioning, commandeering– but we think it's most appropriate to call it communizing. This means dismantling the apparatuses that govern our lives and setting their means free. AKA we aren't going to have to burn down all of the schools. We can use the former classrooms for meetings, the ELA textbooks for fuel, and the cafeterias for feeding our block and beyond.

During and after Sandy, so many of us have communized spaces, needs, and resources. More importantly, we've communized our lives, putting in common things we only thought of as our personal property or properties. The volunteer efforts overflowed their boundaries and so many have chosen to extend the practices from the time of disaster to the post-disaster. Why? Because it was fucking better than normal existence. Better than work, better than the commute, better than the performance we call our personal life.

No wonder the city has had to force a distribution center in Staten Island off of the street and into a basement: it's a form of life that is counter to everything as it now exists.

**SEE YOU AT THE CROSSROADS. A WINDOW OF  
OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS NOW! ANSWER THE DOOR,  
KISS THESE SWEET SISTERS OF FATE YOU IDIOT!**

*.....You are at a crossroads, to the left is a boulder next to a deep green pasture. On top of the boulder there is a hut, sized for gnomes. To the right is a path that rises up into the mountain's clouds, a rocky path with hollow wind rustling dead branches and the distant screams of eagles. To proceed hit (L) for Left or (R) for Right.*

Choice A, you side with the forces of order like the hipster cleanup crews during the London Riots and help prop up a system so obviously in shambles, drop a LOL pose beside a humvee #sandyrelief, regretting your despicableness too far after the fact to do anything about it. Or perhaps much sooner, you look at the Post and see the NYPD say, "All the volunteers [Occupy Sandy in Red Hook] were potential witnesses." Is that what we are, choice A? Snitches indicting forces more powerful than the chumps that walk a beat?

Choice B, you become party to an exit strategy from a society on the brink, building for a break, building for revolution.

The death of contemporary civilization constitutes a fact. What we need now is to make a decision: To decide for the death of this civilization, and then to work out how it will happen. There's nothing more to say. Everything has to be destroyed, everything is to be remade. An insurrectional process must be built from the ground up.

*After scoring 48 points in a victory over the Lakers in Game One of the 2001 NBA finals, Allen Iverson was asked if it was "realistic" to think that Philadelphia could beat Los Angeles. "Yeah it's realistic," he responded, "it's real life."*

You're at the crossroads partisan. Choose your own adventure.

**warmly,  
your friends  
@BuildTheParty**