

SOLUTION 275-294
COMMUNISTS
ANONYMOUS

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United Micro Kingdoms

After finding the wonderfully titled book *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, published by the Rand Corporation in 2007, we began to wonder how nations were built and if states could be designed. We explored different ways of constructing alternative ideological systems and came across a type of chart used to illustrate different political positions. There are several variations, but they typically have four points on two axes: left, right, authoritarian, and libertarian. The left-right axis usually defines economic freedom, whereas the libertarian-authoritarian axis defines personal freedom. Based on these, we began to explore an alternative England divided into four regions, each having a different ideology.

Not wanting to visualize the world in a cinematic way, or use pieces of evidence such as flags, documents, and other bits of everyday life, we wanted instead to present the world through one type of object that would allow for comparisons between the different micro-kingdoms. We chose transport. Transport involves not only technology and products but also infrastructure; we could think big but present our thinking at the more concrete scale of vehicles. Vehicles are also highly charged symbols of freedom and individuality. Each vehicle would embody different ideologies, values, priorities, and belief systems—essentially alternative worldviews.

We divided England into four super shires, each offering an alternative to a fossil-fuel-dependent world designed to expose trade-offs: convenience versus control, individual freedom versus hardship, unlimited energy versus a limited population. Next we sketched out four regions and four combinations of technology and ideology: communism and nuclear energy, social democracy and biotechnology, neoliberalism and digital technology, and anarchy and self-experimentation.

The project narrative is as follows: In an effort to reinvent itself for the twenty-first century, England devolved into four super shires inhabited by digitarians, bioliberalists, anarcho-evolutionists, and communo-nuclearists. Each county became an experimental zone free to develop its own form of governance, economy, and lifestyle. England became a deregulated laboratory for competing social, ideological, and economic models.

Digitarians

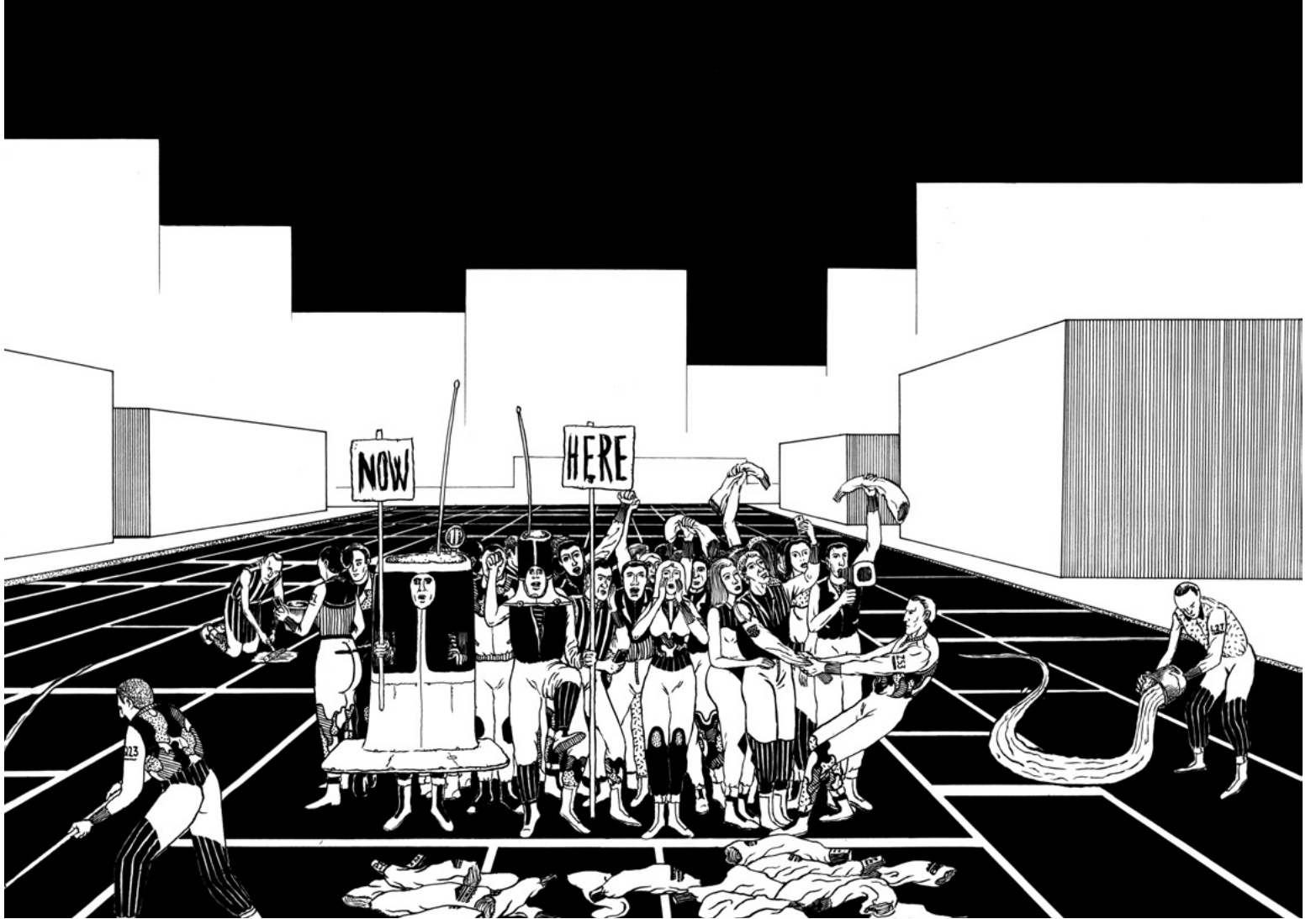
As their name suggests, digitarians depend on digital technology and all its implicit totalitarianism—tagging, metrics, total surveillance, tracking, data logging, and 100-percent transparency. Their society is organized entirely by market forces; citizen and consumer are the same. For them, nature is there to be used as necessary. They are governed by technocrats or algorithms—no one is entirely sure or cares, as long as everything runs smoothly and people are presented with choices (even illusionary ones). It is the most dystopian yet familiar of all the micro-kingdoms.

Their main form of transport is the digicar, a development of the electric self-driving cars being pioneered today. The car has evolved from being a vehicle for navigating space and time to being an interface for navigating tariffs and markets. Every square meter of road surface and every millisecond of access, at any moment, is monetized and optimized. The digicar is essentially an appliance, or computer, constantly calculating the best, most economical route. The dashboard doesn't have speed or rev counters but rather readouts that calculate money-time ratios.

There are priority tariffs and options for sharing journeys while maintaining privacy. Tariffs are calculated according to a P5 index: price, pace, proxemics, priority, and privacy. There is also a sleeper option in which the traveler is put to sleep and sent on his or her way with all vital functions remotely monitored.

Because digicars are managed and controlled by computers, they rarely crash or collide; consequently, their designs are simple and utilitarian. They resemble appliances: cute, charming, basic. The digicar is the ideal solution for a society that promotes freedom of choice and entitlement above all else, even in the face of ever-diminishing resources.

As one might expect, Digiland is made of vast, never-ending planes of tarmac: a cross between airport runways, sports fields, and car parks, dense with markings no human can decode—a landscape exclusively for machines. Clean electric cars mean that distinctions between inside and outside are minimized; roads flow through houses, shops, and factories.



A protest in Digiland. Protestors tear off their digital sleeves in disgust.

Bioliberals

Whereas digitarians use digital technology to manage supply and demand of diminishing resources and to create an illusion of unlimited access for all, the bioliberals pursue biotechnology, and with it, new values. They too want freedom and choice for all, but they want it to last. Massive government investment in biotechnology has led to a society in symbiosis with the natural world. Nature is enhanced to meet growing human needs but people also adjust their needs to match available resources. Each person produces his or her own energy according to his or her needs. Bioliberals are essentially farmers, cooks, and gardeners. Not just of plants and food, but of products too. Gardens, kitchens, and farms replace factories and workshops.

Although organic, Bioland does not look “natural.” Whole areas of landscape consist of complex knots of tubes, bladders, and pools, as though some unimaginably large animal had been eviscerated and its innards redistributed over the countryside. Large vats of liquid overflow into natural pools carrying nutrients, microbial fluids, products, and waste, linked by streams, ducts, and ditches. The bioliberal landscape has been transformed from rolling English fields and meadows of soft greens and yellows into dramatic multicolored pools of harsh chemical colors reminiscent of twentieth-century nickel tailings. However, these are highly ecological. Nothing is toxic, everything feeds into everything else, nourishing, transforming, growing, mutating—the unleashing of biotechnology on the environment to maximize yield, establish sustainability, and reach some kind of equilibrium free of the

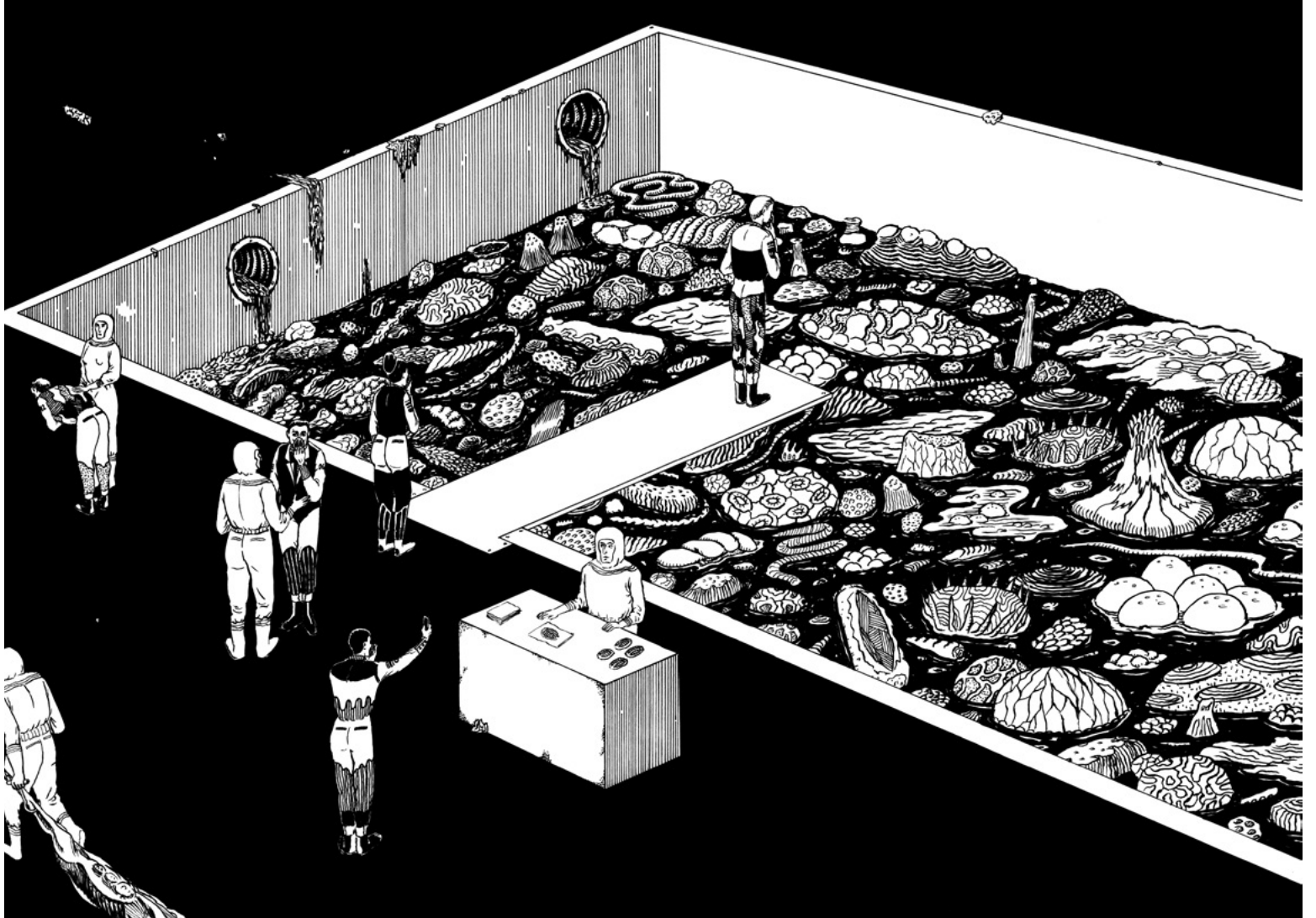
pressures of constant growth on fixed land masses that drove so many pre-United Micro Kingdom policies and dreams. Now, it is wild, inspiring, sublime even. A hellish-looking landscape, but also a heaven on earth.

Even the vehicles are radically different. Bioliberals regard the use of huge amounts of energy to overcome gravity and wind resistance to be counterproductive and primitive. Faster is no longer better. People travel in extremely light, organically grown, biofueled vehicles, each customized to its owner’s dimensions and needs.

The bioliberal car combines two technologies: anaerobic digesters that produce gas, and fuel cells that use the gas to produce electricity. Bags of uncompressed gas cannot compete with the efficiency of fossil fuels, a fuel based on millions of years of preparation compared to one that takes hours or days. The resulting cars are slow, bulky, messy, smelly, and made of skin, bone, and muscle—not literally, but in abstracted forms. Wheels, for example, are powered individually using jellylike artificial muscles. The vehicles are non-aerodynamic, big and unwieldy, suggesting that a very different logic informs their design, one that is absurd from today’s perspective.

Anarcho-evolutionists

The anarcho-evolutionists abandon most technologies and concentrate on using science to maximize their own capabilities through training, DIY bio-hacking, and self-experimentation. They believe that humans should modify themselves to exist within the limits of the planet rather than modifying the planet to meet their ever-growing needs. There is a high number of



Digitarians visiting one of Bioland's more extreme attractions—experiments in "beautiful rotting."

trans- and post-humanists among anarcho-evolutionists. They essentially take evolution into their own hands. Very little is regulated; citizens can do as they please as long as it doesn't harm anyone else. The anarcho-evolutionists have little trust in government and tend to self-organize. Citizens' rights are based only on trust and agreement between individuals and groups.

The anarcho-evolutionist's world is a world without cars. Their transport is either powered by humans, wind, or genetically modified animals. The vehicles are designed around the principle of organization without hierarchy. Sociality and cooperation are more important than speed and competitiveness. The anarcho-evolutionists travel in groups, each doing what they are best at, and each is responsible for a bit of the vehicle. The bike is not as many would expect—a collection of independent bikes—but a very large bike (VLB) designed for traveling long distances in groups, pooling effort and resources. Traveling on abandoned motorways, it is gently steered by leaning, each person knowing from experience and practice just how much is required of them. The elderly, young, and weak are carried along by the others and are experts at singing and telling stories to entertain and motivate the cyclists.

The family, or clan, is the most important social unit. Families evolve around particular forms of transport using a combination of genetic modification, training, and the passing down of knowledge and skills from generation to generation. A distinctive physique is associated with each clan, and is a matter of pride. Cyclists have well-developed thighs, balloonists are tall and willowy, and so on.

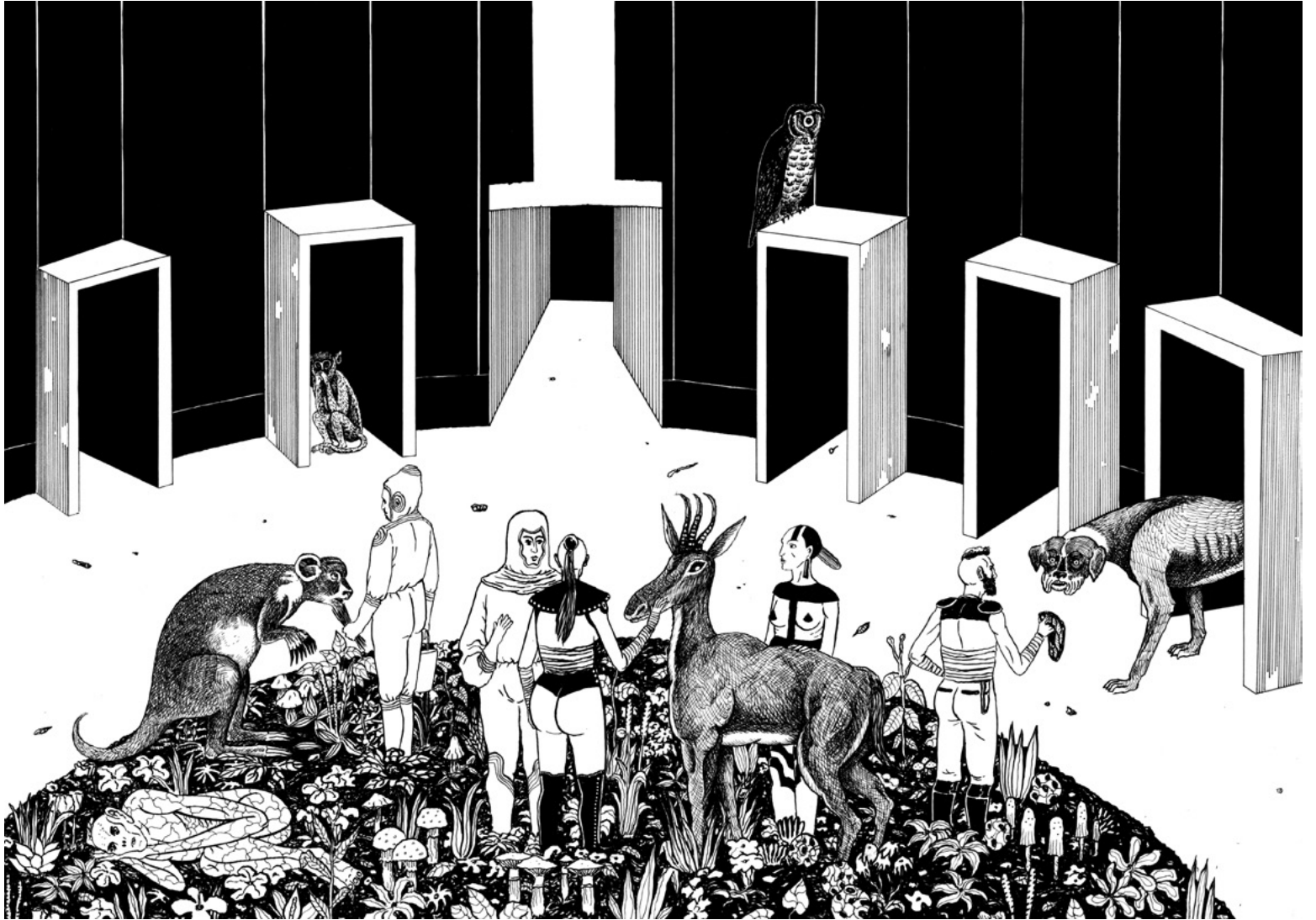
As well as modifying themselves, anarcho-evolutionists have developed new forms of animals to satisfy their needs: the hox is a mix of horse and ox, a hybrid animal bred to move heavy loads and pull carriages, while the pitsky is a combination of pit-bull terrier and husky, designed for pulling smaller loads and personal protection.

Anarcho-evolutionists use exaggerated facial expressions and an extended range of sounds. And they thoroughly enjoy rhymes and onomatopoeia. Inspired by animal sounds, they sometimes modify their vocal cords. Warning sounds for their vehicles are also made by people, mainly out of sheer joy and exuberance. There is a constant acknowledgment of others through micro-sounds, almost like acoustic winks and nods. An incredible range of sounds is produced—super-fast as well as slow, stretched noises, all used to express qualities our language rarely manages to achieve.

Communo-nuclearists

The communo-nuclearist society is a no-growth, limited population experiment. They live on a three-kilometer-long nuclear-powered mobile mountainous landscape that crawls from one end of the country to the other, straddling two sets of three-meter-wide tracks. It travels at four miles an hour, never stops, and is made up of carriages. Each carriage is twenty by forty meters, and there are seventy-five of them. The environment surrounding the tracks, like a demilitarized zone, is fully naturalized, a sort of nature paradise to be enjoyed by nature-loving communo-nuclearists from the safety of their train.

The state provides everything. Citizens depend



Bioliberals visiting an anarcho-evolutionist zoo lab.

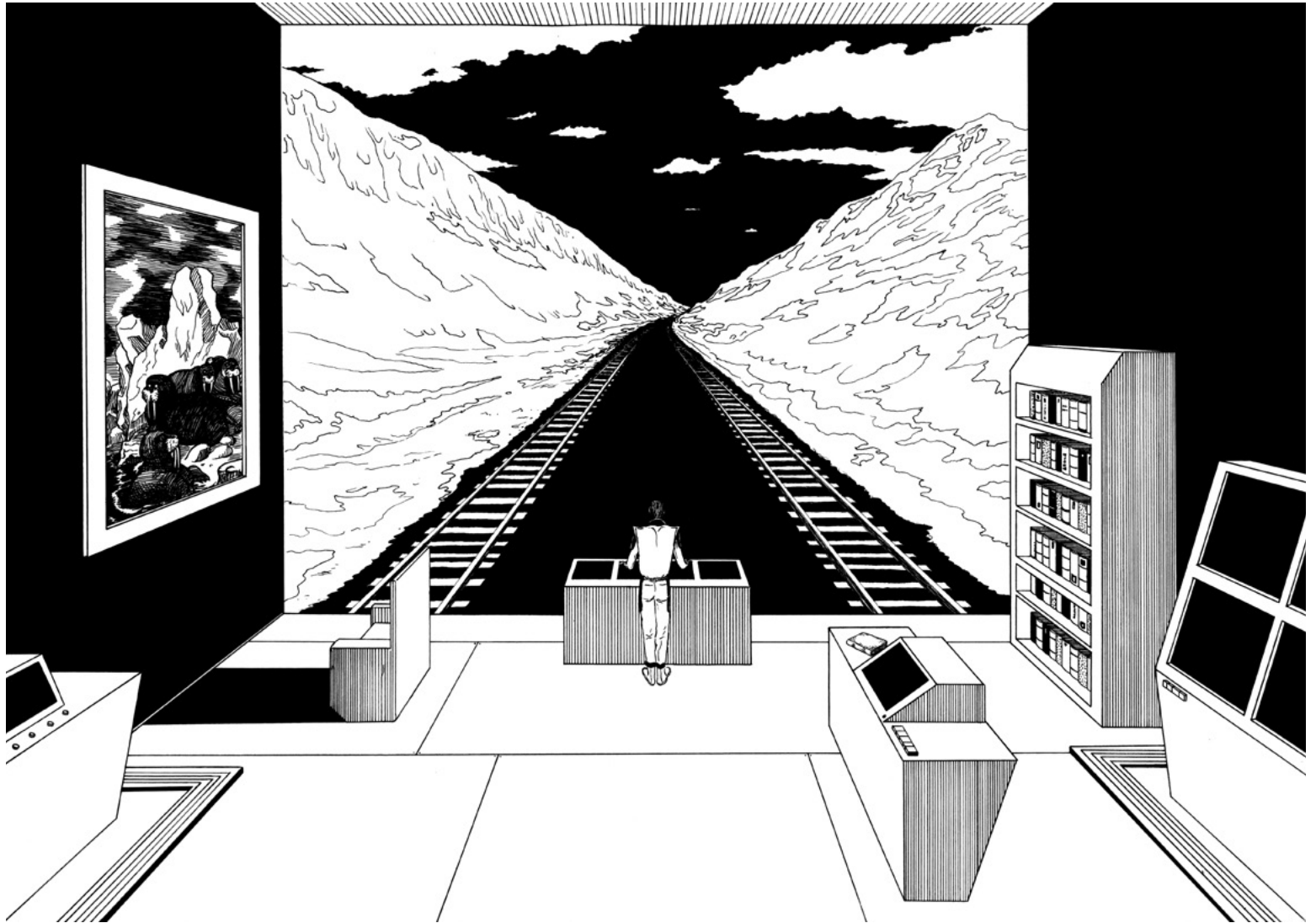
on nuclear energy for their continued survival. Although they are energy rich it comes at a price—no one wants to live near them and they are under constant threat of attack or accident, even though their energy source uses a relatively safe thorium reactor. Consequently, they are organized as a highly disciplined, mobile micro-state. Fully centralized, everything is planned and regulated. They are voluntary prisoners of pleasure, free from the pressures of daily survival, communists sharing in luxury and not poverty. Like a popular nightclub, there is a one-out one-in policy, but for life.

Inhabitants live inside the mountains, which contain labs, factories, hydroponic gardens, gyms, dorms, kitchens, nightclubs, and everything else they need. On the mountains are swimming pools, fish farms, and bookable huts for periods of isolation.

Although inspired by 1950s, '60s, and '70s dreams of space colonies, older United Micro Kingdom dwellers see echoes of early twenty-first-century Dubai, on tracks. The train allows two very different sides of their collective psychology to flourish. At times it is a hedonistic playground, a very loud and vast mobile pleasure paradise announced in advance by a slow thumping sound, like a party cruise boat on the Thames. But mostly, like the 1930s Californian homesteaders, it is a community seeking isolation on the edges of civilization, away from the detrimental effects of the Anthropocene. An ecological wilderness similar to demilitarized zones has emerged along its route, where an absence of humans means an abundance of wildlife, and rare species can thrive. Anyone who gets too close is zapped with a noise cannon. Their survival

requires extraordinary discipline, but to maintain mental well-being in such a confined environment, diversity is accommodated as much as possible.

Communo-nuclearists have a refined sensitivity to different shades of reality: possible and impossible, imagined, actual, virtual, and so on. There are many occupations related to this, falling under the general title of Reality Constructor, which includes reality designers, reality producers, new reality finders, and reality fabricators (bottom-up and top-down). These highly valued occupations help the community transcend the limits of their train reality. They are not exactly escapists but they do push fiction to its limits. The highest ranking of these occupations is the Connoisseur of Unreality, a role dedicated to the materialization of truly impossible objects, objects like those found in Borges's story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," which are made from a combination of sounds and visual qualities, or impossible colors lying beyond human perception, or even extreme mathematics and phenomena related to quantum physics. To communo-nuclearists, a description of an object is equal to the thing itself. Much of their time goes into articulating ever more precise definitions of impossible objects and developing strategies for their materialization while dreaming of adding new subcategories to Alexius Meinong's taxonomy of objects. Most fail, of course, but it is the attempt that is valued most of all. If physical space becomes available then a new object can be imagined, made, and stored in their famous Lending Library of Things. On the train, everything is shared and used as needed.



Communo-nuclearist control room, viewing platform, and library.