A Communalist Assembly Starter Kit

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Communalism

Communalism refers to the means and ends of directly democratic, non-hierarchical, co-federated community assemblies that seek to meet people's needs via mutual aid, oppose hierarchy and domination via direct action, and to build the new world within the shell of the old towards the formation of dual power, revolution, and libertarian communism. It is a praxis that applies universal practices to particular contexts— adapting to relevant conditions and variables accordingly. Communalist projects seek to intertwine reconstructive politics, oppositional politics, principled action, and consequential efficacy– using ethical processes and practices strategically to achieve good short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals.

The Communal Form of Freedom

The cellular node of communalism–the major form of freedom put forward by communalism–is the community assembly. Assemblies in harmony with communalism are community assemblies that are rooted in a form and content of direct democracy, non-hierarchy/horizontality, free association, direct action, mutual aid/commoning, etc. Community assemblies are needed for self-management to exist on the community scale. Community assemblies are places for dialogue and collective decision making about how to meet needs, solve social problems, oppose domination, transform society, and develop collective actions and projects to do the above. Self-managed community assemblies have embedded participatory councils/committees/working groups/rotating delegate roles to implement specific decisions within the bounds of the overall decisions/policies/mandates/protocols decided by community assemblies. Community assemblies can co-federate to develop inter-communal mutual aid and commons, direct action, coordination, and decision making. In such co-federal arrangements, delegates are sent back and forth between co-federal councils and community assemblies where policy making power stays at the lowest level in the hands of community assemblies and participants directly.

*In addition to community assemblies, all (or most all) communalists favor an ecosystem of various self-managed organizations and social movements that use liberatory means towards liberatory ends.

Developing the commons

Communalism aim to prefigure and develop the commons overtime. The development of the commons refers to the development of shared social re/production to meet needs/mutual-aid and related commonly held resources. Commons are managed by those who need and interact with given communities and economic life by community assemblies and their embedded councils. The prefiguration of generalized mutual aid and the commons can look like anything from general and specific mutual aid groups (providing direct goods and services for free to participants and others), community free stores, tool libraries, resource libraries, to communal housing, fields, factories, workshops, recreational facilities, and infrastructure. Prefiguring the commons can help forge mutual interest between people where the wellbeing and thriving of each happens through contributing to the wellbeing and thriving of all. The commons can be developed out of what people pool together and they can also be seized through expropriating and communaliz-

ing hierarchically managed property and then defending such commons from hierarchical forces. For the commons to fully bloom, hierarchical property must be expropriated by popular organizations and social movements. The overall development of mutual aid and the commons can help 1. Meet needs of participants in community assemblies and other social movement groups 2. Help share the social reproduction of community assemblies and social movement groups 3. Fuel and assist direct action projects of such assemblies and groups 4. Help those who are most dispossessed 5. Help multiply and prefigure the contents of communal self-management and distribution according to needs in the process of social movement development.

In a good society

In a good society, politics and economics would be integrated into co-federated, non-hierarchical, and directly democratic communes that have embedded self managed councils and rotating delegates for implementation of communal decisions. People in assemblies would dialogue/deliberate, make direct collective decisions, and make agreements to share labor/work, and take collective action. The embedded councils of community assemblies would self-manage implementation of decisions within the bounds of policies, protocols, and mandates decided by community assemblies. Re/Production would be to meet the needs and desires of people. And accordingly, distribution would be according to needs, desires, and use where all would have access to a cornucopia that is reproduced and developed by shared participatory labor, work, and action assisted by ecological and liberatory technology.

Points of Unity for Shared Processes and Practices

Directly democratic forms are needed for direct collective decision making about what people want to do and about what affects them. Without direct democracy, there is no collective self-determination NOR is there individual self-determination in relation to collective decisions. But direct democracy on its own is necessary but insufficient for the full flourishing of the freedom of each and all; directly democratic forms can be instrumentalized towards anti-democratic, non-egalitarian, and otherwise unfree content. To avoid authoritarian form and content, it is important that assemblies and the decisions they make are in harmony with certain minimal liberatory qualities/practices.

Community assemblies in harmony with communalism have shared processes and practices for political form and content that at least include direct democracy, free association, non-hierarchy, communal self-governance, co-federalism, mutual aid, and direct action. Direct democracy, as in direct collective decision making, is essential for collective freedom. Direct democracy within free association of persons, without ruling classes, and without hierarchical relations, makes it so the form and content of assemblies are not instrumentalized towards arbitrarily limiting freedoms of persons. Communal self governance is needed for self-management to exist on every scale and to prevent the privatization of power over and above communities. Co-federalism allows for inter-collective decision making and cooperation between community assemblies in a way where all policy making power is held by community assemblies and participants thereof directly. Mutual aid is needed for multi-directional cooperation and action to meet the needs of people. Oppositional direct action against hierarchy and domination is

needed to oppose hierarchical rule and meet needs of people through such opposition. The above can be applied to particular contexts in a relatively infinite variety of ways. Self-management (including the substance of direct democracy, free association, and non-hierarchy), direct action, and mutual aid, etc. can exist as points of unity for shared processes and practices within an organization and within and through relevant constitutions, bylaws, decision making processes, rights and duties, programs, and actions of communal assemblies. It is also of course possible for the substance of such features to be included in shared processes, practices, and agreements in relation to processes and practices without using those specific words.

Strategy

The strategy of communalism consists of developing dual power against capitalism, statecraft, and hierarchy more broadly by using communalist means, structures, and processes to develop communalist ends. Communalism involves oppositional politics– opposing hierarchies via direct action through self-managed means. Another dimension of communalism is reconstructive politics and mutual aid– meeting the needs of social movements and people more broadly through horizontal communal organizations, embedded councils/committees/working groups, common infrastructure, and pooling skills, tools, needs, abilities, resources on various scales. It is important to create a form and content rooted in communalist processes, practices, and goals. In order to do so, people must convince others through dialogue and action of various liberatory practices– such as direct democracy, direct action, and mutual aid. A good way to convince people to use such methods is to focus together on common needs, common goals, and common struggles and to use dialogue and demonstration to show that horizontal direct democracy, mutual aid, and direct action etc. can help arrive at various goals people have better than hierarchical means. It is up to participants of assemblies to nourish assemblies with an ethical and effective oppositional content.

Community assemblies and embedded councils can develop oppositional and reconstructive politics at the points of reproduction, production, distribution, extraction, consumption, and community life. Community assemblies can potentially organize direct actions, direct action campaigns, and direct action committees against any general and particular hierarchy within and beyond a specific community or region. Additionally, community assemblies can potentially organize around meeting a whole array of specific and general needs through mutual aid and commoning (the development of the commons and related social relations and community resources). Community assemblies and embedded councils can develop, help with, and participate in many different kinds of oppositional and reconstructive politics. Direct action tactics aimed at specific hierarchies for specific goals can include chains and combinations of occupations of hierarchical infrastructure, full on expropriation of hierarchical infrastructure and land, means of production and fruits of labor, oppositional civil disobedience, picket lines, strikes, blockades, sabotage, boycotts, insurrections, marches, and community self defense. Mutual aid, commons, and shared social re/production of organizations and participants can help fuel organizing for direct actions and be part of direct actions– just as direct actions can meet needs and lead to further flourishing of self-management, mutual aid, and direct action to meet further needs and enable mutual aid to more fully flourish.

As community assemblies start developing across different blocks, neighborhoods, villages/towns/cities, and regions, they can work on joint actions and projects as well as form more formal and continuous co-federal structures of community assemblies on various scales. Community assemblies rooted in communalist practices aim towards democratizing and communalizing power, meeting people's needs, coordinating direct action against various hierarchical powers, while developing the commons and horizontal governance structures to replace hierarchical economics and governance structures before, during, and after revolutionary moments. As community assemblies multiply and coordinate on joint actions and joint projects, they can gain sufficient capacity, organizational virtues, collective wisdom, experience, momentum, and legitimacy to contest local and regional hierarchical governments, expropriate hierarchical infrastructure institute community and inter-community self-management as a new form of politics and economics.

In a sense, communalism is to community organizing as syndicalism is to workplace organizing. Syndicalism is rooted in self-managed workplace organizing towards revolution and socialism through meeting immediate needs via oppositional direct action against capitalism and other hierarchies. In contrast, communalism is focused on self-managed community organizing, reconstructive politics of prefiguring the commons, mutual aid, and new forms of decision making and governance WHILE also doing oppositional direct actions against multiple forms of political, economic, and social hierarchies– aimed at revolution and a communalist society and meeting needs of people along the way.

The process of developing a liberatory ecosystem of collectives is done in part through developing community assemblies and embedded councils /working groups of community assemblies. However, it is also through incubating and/or assisting various groups–such as solidarity networks, direct action collectives, mutual aid collectives, popular education organizations, free stores, tenants' unions, radical labor unions, community and worker controlled cooperatives that help social movements, ecological technology projects, a multitude of issue specific groups, etc. These building blocks can collaborate to help each other out mutualistically and create alternative and counter institutions to business as usual. Community assemblies–outside of developing the commons, direct action arms, and other embedded projects of assemblies– can incubate, coordinate with, and help other organizations rooted in direct democracy, direct action, and mutual aid. Such potentially revolutionary building blocks can join to become more than the sum total of their parts in mutualistic relationships. Such an approach can develop and coordinate more fragmented movements and unite them through shared projects and events rooted in practices of direct democracy, direct action, and mutual aid (distinct from getting groups to adopt libertarian socialism as an ideology).

Communalist politics are prefigurative in the sense that such community assemblies and self-managed institutions try to model the world they want to create in their forms, contents, and processes. Communalist politics are also are goal oriented require strategy; the new world does not exist yet and is something that we need to develop out of unfolding conditions to bridge the gap from here to there. The necessary features of communalism (form and content wise) are necessary but insufficient for communalist goals. It is crucial for communalist practices to be adapted and modified according to relevant variables, conditions, needs, and desires. Although it is of course true that instrumental strategic reasoning without due ethical considerations for means and processes utilized can lead to brutality: merely prefigurative approaches–especially ones that don't realize a distance between means and ends, and not just where there should

be consistency between them– can lead to projects with no meaningful attempt to re-organize power and confront hierarchical conditions.

ByLaws/Decision Making Process

Bylaws should be fleshed out as a community assembly develops. A good initial aspect of communalist bylaws is some kind of good-enough decision making process. This can be as simple as follows:

1. Deliberation happens through volunteering to speak and forming a stack. *people in important disagreements should be given due time to go back and forth about their disagreements before returning to stack so they can clarify and argue for their positions. Specific mechanisms for this need to be fleshed out

2. Decisions are made through deliberation. Deliberation includes finding out needs, desires, abilities, relevant variables and conditions, talking about problems, possible solutions, questions, critiques, agreements, disagreements, amendments, counter-proposals, etc. The assembly tries to develop consensus. When there is not a consensus, then the decision is further deliberated upon and then gets put to vote.

3. If consensus is not arrived at, then decisions are made by simple majority–decentralizing decision making and veto power.

4. Part of a deliberation and decision making process includes how such decisions will be implemented and who will implement such decisions. Implementation of decisions is done via free agreement of groups and persons.

5. Committees and rotating delegates do not make policy over and above the assemblies that mandate them. They are to self manage within the bounds of the policies, protocols, and mandates from the community assembly. Committees and rotating delegates are to be subject to immediate recall by the community assembly.

6. Proposals and Decisions must be in harmony with the relevant group constitution/bylaws/rights and duties/or points of unity for process and practice. *such group constitution/bylaws/rights and duties/points of unity for process and pracrtice etc. should be rooted in direct democracy/free association/non-hierarchy/co-federation/mutual-aid/direct action etc.

This can be fleshed out and adapted as needed. Focusing too much on the specifics of decision making processes and bylaws at the beginning can turn people away and also become unnecessarily process oriented at the expense of collective action and goals. However, not having a good enough process can lead to hierarchical and arbitrary power instead of clear horizontal democratic methods. It is important to use sufficiently ethical and practical processes to develop actions and ends worth developing. Having some kind of rudimentary liberatory structure from the beginning for people to deliberate about and modify can help set a project up on self-managed terms– which can be tweaked and fleshed out as needed. It is important to think about deliberation and decision making processes, dispute resolution processes, various delegate positions,

and ways that committees and delegates relate to the community assemblies they are a part of as these kinds of issues will come up relatively soon in the process of organizing.

In self-managed community assemblies, the policies are decided by community assemblies and participants thereof. Embedded committees then self-manage the implementation of that policy within the mandates, policies, and protocols decided by the community assembly. Similarly, delegates would have no policy making power and would serve purely communicative, coordinative, and administrative roles within their mandates. Such roles would be rotated and there would be a fostering of general knowledge throughout the assembly project about how to do various roles. Part of the assembly project is a process of practical education for those involved to find out how to self-manage an organization. People bring their different propositional and practical knowledge to the table and the assembly should serve as a teaching and learning experience for all involved.

Embedded Councils/Committees/Working Groups

When community assemblies vote on specific policies, embedded councils/committees/working groups can be started to then implement the policy. At community assemblies, people can make agreements to share the labor/work needed to implement various policies. Embedded councils/committees/working groups of community assemblies self-manage their own affairs within the bounds of the policies, protocols, and mandates decided by community assemblies from below. The policies/protocols/mandates from below should at least be in harmony with minimal liberatory processes and practices enshrined within the formal organizational structures and rulesets of community assemblies. Embedded councils/committees/working groups can have broad or specific mandates–and depending on the specific decisions and contexts, the mandates should be more specific or more broad. It will make sense to make some committees open to all members of community assemblies (or even non-member volunteers at times!), and to make other committees closed (where only those specifically delegated can join). Sometimes it makes sense for councils/committees/working groups to be made of only a few people whereas other times it makes sense for them to be more populous. Different embedded councils/committees/working groups can bring relevant information and proposals to the respective assemblies they are part of. Embedded councils/committees/working groups are instantly recallable by their respective assemblies. Community assemblies can reorganize embedded councils/committees/working groups at will. Assemblies are also places for participants/multiple councils/committees/working groups of assemblies to coordinate together on joint actions and projects. People can work on multiple councils/committees/working groups and volunteer for, share, and rotate labor/work going into them as needed and desired.

Some embedded councils/committees/working groups will be designed to be continuous and ongoing. Other embedded councils/committees/working groups might be intentionally designed to disappear after a specific event, chain of events, or project. Others embedded councils/committees/working groups might be intended to be continuous only but wind up only making sense as temporary or vice versa. Some of these embedded councils/committees/working groups will be more rooted in oppositional politics while others will be more rooted in reconstructive politics–while others participate rather thoroughly in both. By being part of a generalized communal-

ist project and being strategically assembled, multiple councils/committees/working groups and kinds thereof can help the general communalist project and each other.

Some embedded councils/committees/working groups will be of communal assemblies whereas other embedded councils/committees/working groups will be in relation to co-federations of assemblies. Assemblies should be big enough to have multiple embedded councils/committees/working groups, but also small enough to enable everyone to meaningfully participate in deliberation and decision making together. When assemblies get too populous, they can decentralize into multiple assemblies that then federate together.

*Some projects can be incubated within assemblies with the goal of such projects becoming their own stand alone projects over time. Whether a specific project should be embedded within assemblies, incubated by assemblies but eventually distinct, in relations of mutual assistance with assemblies, or separate from assemblies will vary from project to project and context to context. On one level ecosystems of liberatory organizations and movements are needed. However, if different groups do not strategically combine forces to row in a similar enough and/or mutualistic direction, then movements can be limiting their potential and even acting in a way that is less than the sum total of their parts!

Delegate Roles

Although communalism is against any kind of representative policy making, communalism is not against coordinative, communicative, and administrative roles. Such roles should be mandated and recallable and have no policy making power. Such roles should be rotated–so no one person has to do too much work, so no one person monopolizes such roles, and to increase general knowledge of participants. Sometimes it can make sense for some delegate roles to be done by co-delegates. For some examples, delegate roles can include a secretary or note taker position, a treasurer position, a digital outreach coordinator (emails, website, social media, etc), and co-federal delegates to coordinate between assemblies and then go back to the assembly base where actual decisions are made.

A crucial goal of delegates, outside of the functions they are delegated to do, is to organize themselves out of their positions and make sure the torches get passed on– along with the knowledge needed for their roles. This creates function redundancy and resiliency. One way to do this is to stagger the role so the new person coming into a delegate role learns from the prior delegate. Delegates can exist through nomination and self nomination and then a vote (or lack of dissent). Delegates should be rotating rather than permanent. Some kind of spinning role chart (that passes applicable delegate roles in a circle overtime between all members of an organization) or sortition process might also make sense for some delegate roles or tasks to carry out in some assemblies. Such processes can encourage shared labor, shared knowledge of how to do various delegate functions, and encourage people and assemblies to not turn such temporarily held delegate roles into roles permanently occupied by anyone. All else equal: The more the social reproduction of an assembly is shared among many participants–within and outside of specific delegate roles– the more resilient that overall project will be. Additionally, sharing such social reproduction is crucial to overcoming gendered divisions of labor.

Before one starts a Community Assembly

It can be good to start with a core group of people who understand the basic praxis of communalism (although this is not needed). It might even make sense to even start as a reading group to review the basics of libertarian communism and communalism and to dialogue, theorize, and strategize about what it would mean to apply communalist praxis to one's specific location. Ideally, some of the people helping to start a community assembly are well versed in the basic theories and practices of libertarian socialism, communalism, social ecology and/or other philosophies and practices based on features such as "communal property", commons, usufruct, direct collective decision making etc. All else equal: if initial assembly members are not all from identically overlapping social circles, then assemblies will be better able to reach out to others for collaborative projects. For example, if three people trying to coauthor a communalist project each know two potentially interested neighbors the others do not know, and those potentially interested neighbors each know two potentially interested neighbors the others do not know: then assembly members can more quickly multiply to include more and more people within a given locale.

It can be helpful to find people already sympathetic and then reach out to others–that is to reach inwards for the express purpose of gaining capacity to reach outwards to ordinary people with such a project. It is important for community assemblies to be popular organizations rather than ideologically specific groups or "lower common denominator of the left" kinds of organizations. The goal is to reach outwards to ordinary people and fellow weirdos through a community assembly project rooted in meeting needs without compromising on the minimal practices of direct democracy, non-hierarchy, mutual aid, and direct action. The goal is for such liberatory practices to be wielded by people to meet their needs and the needs of others. If there are not as many ideologically motivated libertarian socialists and the like in one's given organizing locale, then one can start by finding a few people sufficiently interested in some of the processes/practices/goals of community assemblies to help start such a project; the chances are that if one searches, one can find some comrades, friends, and neighbors interested in an egalitarian community assembly to meet needs and address social problems through direct democracy and collective action. While one or two people can (and sometimes should) do an initial public call for an assembly to find others, ideally one is working in a group of three or more people to get an initial assembly started.

Before one brings a community assembly to the public, it can make sense to have some kind of pre-drafted idea of the skeletal structure and orientation of the project which can then be proposed to and modified by people who are interested in co-authoring a community assembly project. The structure of assemblies should be fleshed out enough to be coherent, transparent, and practical while being flexible enough to be adaptable and to include a large realm of permissibility within the bounds of the self management of each and all. Although the following will have to be deliberated amongst people and adapted to needs and preferences of participants: having a consistent meeting space ready, some brief skeletal organizational proposals (for example skeletal versions of good-enough and brief decision making processes/bylaws/points of unity for practice), an outreach plan, and some initial projects that are possible (not necessarily to be proposed but more to stimulate imagination and interest) can be useful before starting a community assembly. If people cannot find a more ideal meeting space, then a backyard, a living room, a garage, or public space of some kind can work sufficiently well.

All else equal, It is ideal to plan how a community assembly is strategically introduced to the public. However, the starting point is distinct from its overall developmental potential and is just one of many features to think about when developing a community assembly. It is almost always more sustainable long term for a group to start out moving at a slow pace–working on short-term goals and tangible achievable projects through self-managed processes to build themselves up before they more fully reach out and take on more difficult projects. It is also possible to start a communalist project too slowly– to the point where important moments get missed where it would have made sense for a project to have already been introduced to the public and/or already be tackling larger scale and more difficult issues. No amount of prior planning will be able to exhaustively deal with the turbulence of putting theories into action. However, thinking about how to develop a meaningful beginning and trajectory is far more fruitful than throwing darts at a board in the dark and hoping they stick.

Sometimes it makes sense to start a community assembly around a specific issue or project that people are interested in. Other-times it makes sense to start assemblies to find out what issues or projects should be focused on. Both approaches have pros and cons. Starting with specific issue based projects (related to or not related to already existing movements with momentum) can lead to getting pigeonholed into particular areas that are reductionist compared to the wide array of content assemblies can and should develop. Starting with assemblies to then collectively find projects to develop together to meet needs can be too vague and abstract to motivate people–especially at first. However such a process begins, overtime, both assemblies and specific projects that they focus on need to develop in tandem. There are MANY ways to start self-managed community assemblies and the way a specific assembly starts is less important than how it develops.

Research/Community Mapping

Questions like "how do we reach out and organize with the unorganized/the non-ruling class/ordinary people/fellow weirdos?", "what committees and projects should we try to develop?", "what collectives already exist that we can work with on various levels?", "how do we spread popular education initiatives?", "how do we keep our eyes on the prize of transforming society while engaging in intermediate steps?", "how do we link short-term and long-term goals?", "which projects should we focus on given current conditions and our current levels and limits of capacity?" "how do we reach out without sacrificing what should be minimal goals we have and minimal practices we use?", "how do we use our collective capacity in a way where we become more than the sum total of our parts?" etc. are just some of the many important questions one should be asking oneself and others when organizing a communalist project.

Community assemblies can include various kinds of self-managed grassroots social science research that can help inform decisions people make. People starting or otherwise participating in community assemblies should try to map out who potential participants and supporters are. People can do continuous inquiry to find out the political/economic/social compositions of the non-ruling class (and segments thereof) and the ruling class. Forging a living map of local political, economic, and social life can help with general assembly functioning. People can do continuous inquiry to find out problems people face and aspirations people have. Assemblies and committees and co-researchers can utilize many methods such as: already existing data and research, local history, trans-local history, ethnography/participant observation, surveys, oral

history, workers' inquiry and community inquiry, sociological statistical methods, ecological surveys, etc. Such community produced social science can be as fleshed out or skeletal as assemblies, committees, and participants want it to be and can be done with various social movement researchers. Such a process, aside from providing relevant information for decision making and movement strategy, can help generalize practical social science and research methods to assembly members (which can also help people make wiser decisions). Far from social science methods being beyond the grasp of ordinary people, they are methods people can utilize to assist social movement action. Relevant unfolding political, economic, social, and ecological variables can be compiled and shared with assembly members and the public as needed/desired. Such data combined with various kinds of local knowledge people have can help inform decisions people make.

People starting a community assembly should try to map out various forces opposed to such a project. It is important to be aware of who the local ruling class are, which right wing, liberal, and authoritarian-"left" organizations might be obstacles, and to research potential for police and state repression in one's area and generally. People can also research various pressure points of relevant local and regional hierarchical systems to help think about potential ways action can be applied by popular movements to such pressure points to achieve liberatory goals.

***Research and community mapping should be adapted to specific projects, actions, and goals and integrated as part of deliberation in assemblies and embedded councils.

Outreach

Outreach can be done in a plurality of ways. Different methods will make more and less sense to utilize depending on the scale of the assembly or assembly project being promoted (as well as many other relevant variables). Word of mouth, face-to-face , and one-on-one interactions and communication are very important. One-on-one outreach can also be done via one-on-one text invitations. Door-to-door approaches are underused and very effective at reaching out beyond the already existing left. People can do word of mouth, flyering, and handbill outreach for assemblies, actions, and events at public and semi-public spaces, apartment buildings, residency blocks, workplaces, community institutions, parks, libraries, farmers' markets, various sub-cultural spaces etc. Flyering is important–whether or not one lives in a city that has a culture of flyering for events. Bus-stops, streetlights, cafes, walls throughout cities, etc. should be flyered thoroughly when trying to do public outreach. It is important for flyers to include relevant information about the organization, some explanation of what a given event is, as well as the time and space location of the event, and where to find more information. Handbill flyers can be made to pass out to people at various political, countercultural, subculture, and common spaces, workplaces, apartment complexes, every day events, and while people run into people throughout their everyday travels. Handing out handbills and flyers to many people and/or creating flyering teams and work parties can help make such processes enjoyable and shared. Announcing an event during announcement sections of groups that are fine with announcements for other groups can also be fruitful. Potlucks and Block parties can also be good ways to do outreach and build community as part of a community assembly project. Some people and groups that are pillars of the local community can be especially important for reaching people. The internet is an important tool as well–but has many limits. Text message groups, social media events, and internet groups can be

used to reach out to people and do in-reach but they should not be relied upon at the expense of face to face organizing. Having an internet presence of some kind will often make sense for community assemblies to do outreach, spreading practices, and forging ties of mutual support between other groups (although such assembly projects will sometimes have to be or want to be more incognito). Having an encrypted group text-chat can be an important tool to utilize for in-reach and coordination. Even though community assemblies ought to be secular and include freedom of and from religion: reaching out to left leaning religious congregations can be an important part of outreach. Outreach through mutual aid, direct action and shared participation in social struggles is indispensable. Do not underestimate the potential of collective action and projects thereof to help build community for further actions. People with specific problems they are facing and/or people who are sympathetic to such a directly democratic community project and grassroots ways to meet people's needs are likely to be the first people who join. But if community assemblies can effectively address people's needs and desires then others will join overtime.

If various social movement groups already exist, then one can do outreach to those social movement groups that are likely to be sympathetic to self-managed+reconstructive_oppositional community assemblies. Various building blocks of freedom in one's own locale can include: a local radical union branch, a local issue specific social movement group, a local libertarian socialist group, a direct action group of some kind, a mutual aid group of some kind, movement oriented cooperatives, ecologically oriented groups, etc. However, it is crucial to reach outside of the already existing leftist and radical population– and to do such outreach to other social movement groups wisely in a way that is respectful of the groups one is doing outreach towards.

Many people are not initially radicalized (as in activated to get involved in transformative politics that get to root problems and solutions) by going to meetings, but by participating in direct actions. Many people are initially radicalized by mutual aid projects instead of direct actions. Many people are initially radicalized through popular education rather than through any of the above, etc. It is often when people deepen their understandings of activities within the processes of direct actions, mutual aid projects, and popular education that people often see the importance of going to meetings, making collective decisions, and doing the activities that make popular organizations, direct actions, and revolutions possible.

Initial projects to start

Exactly what projects to begin with can be tricky; there is no silver bullet answer that will make sense across all contexts. It is ultimately for participants to decide. One way to start community assemblies and projects within assemblies is to host issue specific forums and assemblies where specific social problems are deliberated about in depth to find an action plan from there. People can even start community assemblies in relation to particular social problems that local or regional social movements are already focused on (although overtime, it is crucial that long term community assemblies do not get pigeonholed into single issue organizing. However, short-term issue specific community assembly based organizing can have its merits as well). Alternatively, people can start with a comunity assembly to find out what issues/social problems/needs to focus on. One function community assemblies are able to do particularly well is prefigure the commons (means of existence and production held and managed in common and accessed freely according

to needs). However, to meaningfully develop the commons on a large enough scale, the means of existence and production must be seized and defended from hierarchical rule. In order to meet the needs of people, oppositional politics is needed down the line (if not initially).

Reconstructive mutual aid projects of various kinds are sometimes ideal projects to start with. They are usually lower risk than oppositional actions (not that "low risk" is the only thing to take into consideration). Mutual aid projects use horizontal organization to meet people's needs via cooperation, multi-directional assistance, and collective action. Such projects lead towards mutual flourishing of persons involved in an organization while disproportionately helping those in poverty and otherwise most in need. And reconstructive mutual aid projects do the above while using and multiplying horizontal forms, participatory organizing, with communistic content. Additionally, mutual aid projects are generally the most agreeable possible projects! And such reconstructive mutual aid projects can be great learning experiences for those involved. Despite reconstructive mutual aid projects sometimes and even often making sense as the first projects community assemblies start, there are many good first projects that community assemblies can start and no uniform formula for what problems should be tackled first and what projects should be started first.

Oppositional direct action against domination and exploitation most always involve more risk than mere reconstructive mutual aid projects– although the two can and should be strategically combined as part of action and chains/spirals of actions. Additionally, collective direct action in opposition to domination includes the use of self-management and mutual aid among participants as part of the processes through which it happens. Direct action committees of community assemblies meet needs and solve social problems through opposition against specific hierarchies. Community assemblies can forge direct actions, direct action campaigns, and direct action committees against specific and general hierarchical governments and businesses, politicians, cops, capitalists, bosses, landlords, etc. Direct action projects can start out more modest and escalate as needed. Overtime, federations of community assemblies and direct action committees thereof can develop enough capacity to expropriate and communalize means of existence and production. Community assemblies can manage such commons and can also form self-defense committees and coalitions to defend the commons against hierarchical forces. If assemblies do not develop an anti-hierarchical and class struggle character, then they can become resigned to merely creating small pockets of mutual aid within the bounds of a hierarchical society. Community assemblies, in the mode of existing in a hierarchical society, must be oppositional against domination and exploitation if they are to meet long-term needs of people.

Because of various conditions such as urgency, needs and desires of people, strategic openings, wanting the assembly to start with an explicit class struggle approach etc: direct action against domination sometimes makes the most sense as an initial project for community assemblies to organize around. In other time space locations with different social relations, general and specific mutual aid projects and community infrastructure development more broadly might make more sense as initial projects to start. Given the nature of hierarchical society, both reconstructive politics and oppositional politics are needed to address social problems. In the context of existing within a hierarchical society: However a community assembly project starts, it should eventually do both reconstructive and oppositional functions while also finding ways to strategically combine such functions in specific actions and projects.

When starting out and down the line: fundraisers, potlucks, and block parties can be ways to build community, spread social movements, promote important causes, distribute pamphlets/lit-

erature, develop relationships, and create spaces for informal dialogue (and are relatively easy to do). Skill-shares, reading groups, and popular education projects can help generalize and deepen theoretical and practical knowledge and serve as gatherings for reflection that can help further organizing efforts.

One of the strengths of community assemblies is their potential to do a lot of different types and sub-types of activities. However, this can also be a strategic weakness of community assemblies if this is not utilized well; if community assemblies are taking on more projects than they can handle, they can wind up squandering effort in many projects that do not have enough capacity for any of them to bloom. Inversely, "planting many seeds" can allow some to blossom. Finding ways to strategically row the communal ship together in a strategic way requires adjusting how many projects an assembly takes on overtime as well as which projects an assembly project takes on.

Where to start: Block by Block, neighborhood by neighborhood, or beyond?

One way to start community assemblies is going block by block to organize specific blocks and neighborhoods into block assemblies and neighborhood assemblies. Another way to begin such a process might be to organize a broader city/town/village wide assembly project of some kind and then decentralize into smaller scale assemblies as people join and capacity allows. While there is no one size fits all approach, a neighborhood scale (or something similar scale wise) is often a good "goldilocks zone" to start with as the neighborhood is sufficiently intimately scaled while including people beyond a given block. Some blocks are so dense, that they are practically a neighborhood in themselves! Some blocks, neighborhoods, cities/towns/villages, and regions can be particularly important and strategic to focus on due to political, economic, and social compositions of people there. People can start or join community assemblies wherever they are and wherever they go. Common needs, common struggles, common desires, and common values are different bridges that can lead towards community assemblies that utilize communalist practices towards communalist goals.

Short-Term vs Long-Term

There is an important urgency to change the world and therefore we must take our time with these projects and build them in a generative way. Developing goods kinds of organizations, relationships, cumulative experience as collectives related to wise collective decision making and implementation, achieving the short-term and mid-term goals that can lead to popular support for long-term goals, etc. can take time. Revolution towards utopia is a long term goal. One can not expect a community assembly to be successful overnight. There will be many failures along the way even when using some wise practices. How community assemblies and participants adapt to such failures can determine whether or not they continue and blossom. Giving up at every significant roadblock ensures that an organization will not sustain. Although more periodic kinds of groups that only exist for a few months or a few years can do a lot of good actions within a specific community or region (through their activity and the indirect influence): organizations

that continue onward many years beyond their initial jumping off point, that are ethically prefigured, that meet needs, and that strategically use oppositional and reconstructive approaches can potentially arrive at long term sustained goals and even revolutionary goals. Groups that do not last as long can also help to plant seeds of actions, ideas, and organization that ripple out beyond their more immediate impacts.

Community assemblies should aim to bridge short-term, mid-term and long-term goals together. By achieving short-term and mid-term goals through practices of self-management, direct action, and mutual aid: not only do needs get met, not only does the given community assembly gain more capacity and legitimacy from people, not only do individuals and collectives gain wisdom to reconstruct self-management and to oppose hierarchy, but additionally: the methods of freedom themselves become popularized within and beyond specific communities. Developing sufficient capacity for abolishing hierarchical rule and replacing it with co-federally organized self-managed communities connected to common means of existence and means of production takes time. Mere short-term goals without long-term goals are insufficient to transform society. Mere long term goals without short-term and mid-term goals provide no bridge to get from here to the good place. There is a degree of patience that is needed for any grassroots long term collective building process related to social transformation.

Frequency

There is no uniform answer as to how often Assemblies and committee meetings should meet. Monthly, or every other week, or weekly + as needed can be good options for assemblies and committees. Ideal frequency depends on the conditions, needs, abilities, and desires of participants. Assemblies, committees, and participants thereof will need to choose frequencies that make sense for them and their contexts. Assemblies need to both be functioning and consistent while also meaningfully open to all who want to meaningfully participate as full equals. This means assembly frequency will need to move slower than the people with the most time on their hands and/or people with relatively boundless energy for such a project. People working jobs full time and/or taking care of other people informally should be taken into consideration. Those who want to and are able to contribute more to assembly projects can help in between assemblies and committees in various ways while still keeping assemblies and committees moving at a pace where everyone who wants to can contribute with equal formal deliberation and policy making power. Many people volunteering just a few hours towards meetings and action in between meetings on monthly, or biweekly, or weekly intervals can go a long way.

General Practices and Particular Contexts

Community assemblies can be started in a variety of ways. Different approaches of applying general practices make more and less sense in different contexts. The general minimum features of communalism are necessary but insufficient for their application to particular conditions. The cutting edge of communalist praxis deals with applying the general practices to particular contexts and creating strategic content to achieve liberatory goals (accompanied by tactics appropriate for such strategy). This is where praxis can get especially tricky and where general theory and approaches fail to be a sufficient guiding path–as necessary, desirable, and important as

they can be. Community assemblies can adapt to various ecological, social, political, economic, historical, cultural, and technological contexts while still retaining the essential features of communalism. But the only way to forge a path from where one is to a good society is by organizing together with people using liberatory processes/practices to solve political, economic, and social problems and co-create collective decisions, actions, and projects to meet short-term, mid-term, and long-term needs. Within the bounds of the minimal features of communalism, communalist projects are a constant "choose your own adventure". To create an assembly with strategic content, people must wisely adapt to relevant conditions, general and local knowledge, emergent variables, needs, desires, political/economic/social composition of people, etc. Whether existing in the mode of opposition against hierarchy or in the mode of a free society: community assemblies must wisely adapt to new relevant variables in order to flourish.

Community assembly projects will be different in different places despite retaining general lower common denominators. Even though there will be surprising similarities about how to wisely apply general practices to particular contexts: Wisely applying such practices in Oakland will be different than applying such principles in New York City, which will be different than applying such principles in Jackson, Mississippi, which will be different than applying such principles in rural Vermont, which will be different than applying such principles in Kobani, or Cheran, or Mexico City etc. And specific locales are not static places but constantly in motion and in relation to other places. Even within a relatively brief time period, the best ways to apply communalist practices to various particular contexts might significantly change in one or more important ways! While there are certain general features to ethical and effective community assemblies and commons: there are many good-enough+ ways to develop such politics/economics/social relations.

Shared conditions, processes, practices, and goals vs shared ideology

Community assemblies are rooted around meeting the needs of people (participants and others) rather than everyone in such an assembly having a shared ideology. Community assemblies consist of people with differentiated and shared conditions. Community assemblies, in the mode of opposition against hierarchy, are made out of the broad non-ruling class. Assemblies can make not holding a formal position of domination and exploitation a prerequisite to joining. People have shared needs for: self-determination, for good social relations, for access to means of existence and production and the fruits thereof, for living in a world free from hierarchy and ecological destruction. Despite the vast array of differences people have with each other, such common conditions are related to what would be needed for each and all to flourish. From such common needs for flourishing, we get certain universal features related to the self-management of each and all on every scale and the means thereof– including non-hierarchy needed for such freedom of each and all, self-management on the community scale for such freedom of each and all, sufficient continuous mutual aid to meet needs of all through generalized reciprocity, as well direct action and opposition against hierarchies to arrive at a world without them.

Not having sufficiently coherent form or content can create incoherence to the point where the assembly subverts its own liberatory features. A way to round out an assembly or a collective without making the group based on shared ideology is to have libertarian and egalitarian pro-

cesses and practices embedded in the structure, constitution, bylaws, rights, and duties. Such an approach is rooted in shared processes/practices/goals while being radically distinct and serving qualitatively different functions than a shared ideology approach. Agreements about shared processes and practices and goals can exist within an organization without ideological prerequisites. While making various good ideas, premises, theories, etc. popular within social movements is important for developing wise content: one of the goals of a communalist project is to reach out to people beyond ideologically and theoretically specific lines.

To join a community assembly in harmony with processes, practices, and goals that are in harmony with communalism one does NOT need to be an ideological libertarian socialist or communalist. In fact, a community assembly requiring agreement with a communalist ideological and theoretical line would defeat the purpose of having practices of direct democracy, non-hierarchy, direct action, and mutual aid wielded by communities of people to meet their own needs and the needs of others. It would be unnecessarily alienating to most everybody if a community assembly required everyone in it to be a libertarian communist to join. Rather than making the belief system "communalism" or "libertarian communism" a prerequisite to joining a community assembly: It would make more sense for the assembly project to in fact meet people's needs through direct democracy, direct action, mutual aid, and developing the commons. Various practices in harmony with/endorsed by libertarian socialism/communism/communalism can flourish within social movement organizations without such organizations being ideologically and theoretically specific groups. Various liberatory practices can be features of social movement organizations from the inceptions of such groups and/or iteratively developed overtime within organizations as people agree to them. Communalists need to find ways to communicate and popularize communalist practices and have them enshrined within the structures and contents of community assemblies without unnecessarily alienating people– and without making adherence to communalist ideology or libertarian communist ideology a prerequisite for joining such assemblies.

People join social movements and are introduced to them through many ways: protests and direct actions of various kinds, mutual aid projects, giant movement waves, invitation and awareness about issues through neighbors, coworkers, friends, kinship, and strangers, experiencing and/or seeing suffering and illbeing locally and around the world, having a vision of a good or better society, through some specific issue they are passionate about, being influenced by specific ideas, thinkers, research projects, current and historical political tendencies, etc. Usually people join social movements through some mix and match of the above (as well as other reasons and entry points). There is no one size fits all approach to how people get involved in social movements. Common conditions, and/or desires and/or principles can develop into organizations and shared processes, practices, and goals. Most everyone has at least a particular issue they care about and/or at least a value/notion of what is good for people (such as freedom, equality, justice, wanting wellbeing, happiness, and pleasure to flourish, wanting needs of people to be met, developing a society where virtues, virtuous practices, and the means thereof flourish, having a society with good rights/duties etc.) that if wisely thought about would be better actuated through a cluster of liberatory processes, practices, and goals that are in harmony with a libertarian socialism/communism/communalism. The above can be a bridge towards root problems, root solutions, and grassroots social movement organizations.

It is important to note that there are many people who will join community assemblies and other social movement organizations only if such organizations can sufficiently demonstrate that they are effective at meeting people's needs. Quite reasonably, a lot of people will want to see

that organizational forms and meetings are connected to practices and content that are helping people out before they deem such forms and meetings as worth joining and participating in. It is often multiple reasons and multiple factors and multiple entry points that lead people to being more continuously involved in social movement organizations. As people join social movements, people will generally realize that being more effective, getting stuff done, and fully participating includes joining or starting organizations, attending meetings, making collective decisions, and sharing in the implementation of decisions. Community assemblies are one such organization people can form or join but they are not merely one form among others (for multiple reasons such as but far from limited to 1. their prefiguration being needed for the thriving of commons and community self management which is needed for the self-management of each and all on every scale AND because 2. community assemblies can do large arrays of oppositional and reconstructive politics). People continue to be in social movement organizations for many reasons such as: when social movement organizations are effectively and continuously achieving goals and meeting needs, where there is shared deliberation, decision making, and implementation between people, where there are enriching formal and informal relations between participants, and when the organization is self-reproducing and sustainable to be a part of overtime.

Communalism and Ideologically and theoretically specific libertarian communist groups

If sufficient common ideology exists between people, people can form and join ideologically and theoretically specific libertarian communist groups distinct from social movement organizations. Such ideologically and theoretically specific libertarian communist groups can help to create multiple kinds of social movement organizations rooted in direct democracy, mutual aid, and direct action (not shared ideology). Additionally, members from ideologically specific groups can join social movement organizations (such as but not limited to community assemblies, labor unions, and student organizations) and help spread direct democracy, mutual aid, direct action, and opposition to hierarchy etc. within social movement organizations through dialogue and demonstration. The above approach is rooted in "organizational dualism" and what has been called "social work and social insertion" by the especifismo tendency of organizational dualism. Such an approach aims towards the self management of popular organizations and social movements as opposed to taking a hierarchical vanguardist approach. It can be useful if community assemblies are initially forged by some members of (sufficiently ethical and strategic) ideologically and theoretically specific libertarian communist groups– or otherwise if members of such ideologically and theoretically specific groups join community assemblies and help spread liberatory methods to help assemblies achieve their own goals. The kinds of ideologically and theoretically specific libertarian communist groups that are best situated to help communalist projects flourish are ideologically and theoretically specific groups that closely align with the communalist tendency within libertarian socialism.

Opposition to patriarchy, racism and oppression

Given the goals of abolishing class relations and racialized and gendered divisions of labor and power– as well as racism and patriarchy more broadly as well other forms of domination and

bigotry– it is crucial for community assemblies to prefigure egalitarian relations. Social reproduction of assemblies should be a shared endeavor and not something that falls along gendered and racialized lines. Equality of formal power, equal rights for all, free agreements between people to share labor/work getting done, and the cultivation of a culture that opposes domination, exploitation, oppression, and bigotry help create conditions conducive towards prefiguring a world beyond hierarchy and maximizing participation of people. Issues related to particular forms of domination and oppression drastically affect some people more than others. Without addressing such issues meaningfully, no one can live in a fully free and egalitarian world. For ethical reasons of developing freedom, mutual aid, solidarity, care, and cultivating a knowledgeable and ethical society: Community assemblies must be/become organizations that are rooted in non-domination, non-bigotry, as well as opposition to domination and bigotry as needed. Doing so helps create organizations worth joining and inviting people into and helps increase overall participation in deliberation/decision making/implementation. Assemblies should be meaningfully inclusive and cosmopolitan places where people who face various kinds of oppression are welcome, given full equal power and freedoms, are free from harassment and discrimination, are treated as full persons, and where issues related to specific forms of domination and bigotry can be meaningfully addressed.

*While assemblies and co-federations thereof should be maximally cosmopolitan spaces where everyone has equal formal power, people facing specific forms of oppression can caucus as needed to help assemblies address specific issues they face.

Grievance processes

When people have grievances about assembly processes and functioning, such grievances can be addressed through assemblies. Through due process, deliberation, and direct democracy (within the bounds of non-hierarchical rights/duties), free agreement of collectives and individuals, decisions can be made about how to resolve such grievances. When people have grievances and disputes with each other, then they can use direct dialogue and if needed/desired agreed upon mediation processes to meaningfully resolve the dispute or at least come to a mutual agreement about how to move forward– which in some cases could be agreeing to leave each other alone. Mediation can be done in multiple good-enough ways by facilitators and by circles of people. When someone admits they have violated the freedoms of others, they can agree to enter a restorative justice/transformative justice process of some kind rooted in repairing harm caused (to the extent possible) and stopping causes of harm in the future. Some good books about the above issues include “Fumbling Towards Repair”, “Come Hell or Highwater”, and “The Little Book of Restorative Justice”. Having wise grievance processes is important; organizations that fail to come up with sufficiently good-enough ways to deal with grievances leave a power vacuum for arbitrary and hierarchical rule to potentially fill.

What might inhibit Communal Assemblies

The following are some issues that can inhibit community assembly projects. The following are obstacles that need to be understood precisely for the reason that they are possible to overcome through wise collective action. The inhibiting factors of community assemblies will differ

from region to region over time and space. However, many of such inhibiting factors are common to assembly projects in many different contexts.

State repression can try to destroy such movements. When people break unjust laws struggling towards grander horizons of freedom, armed forces of the state and other reactionary forces try to quash such rebellions. While the following is an obstacle that has been overcome time and time again: capitalism and paying money to live can make it difficult for people to organize together and coordinate time and effort. Capitalism and statecraft cause a lack of public space to organize in. Lack of access to robust common infrastructure more broadly makes it difficult to do many collective projects people would otherwise want to do– limiting mutual aid and direct action efforts. Even when full revolutions within cities and regions are successful (or if people have managed to evade the state and build autonomy external to where hierarchy can reign): due to the dynamics of statecraft and capitalism, state and capitalist institutions tend to invade places to transform land/resources/labor into resources that serve specific goals of competing for profit and power-over others. It is common for movements that have autonomy from state structures to be attacked by external hierarchical forces. The world market also makes it difficult to carve out a sufficient niche outside of its logic. Internally communistic societies engaging on a world economic level will have to deal (or find ways to not deal) with prices and markets and a broader interstate system (and will often be inhibited by such forces from developing the full extent of communistic content they may strive towards).

Racism, patriarchy, and other forms of oppression and bigotry are inhibiting factors that make it difficult to build relationships and trust to work together on common issues and issues that drastically affect some people more than others. Racist, patriarchal, and oppressive behavior inhibit the kind of egalitarian relations needed for a project to be worth fighting for. Such issues exist both within the wider society and within social movement circles. They minimize participation in social movements, inhibit solidarity between people, AND eviscerate ethics and wisdom of social movements to the degree they flourish.

Lack of sharing labor/work leads to less organizational resilience and often leads to recreating gendered divisions of labor/work/action. All else equal: The more organizations and movements are self reproducing, with collective agreements about policy and sharing implementation of decisions (including the reproduction of daily and social life going into all continuous organizing), the more organizations and participants thereof will have capacity to achieve liberatory goals overtime.

Lack of sufficient co-federation of community assemblies can lead to community assemblies having insufficient capacity to meaningfully meet needs of people and challenge hierarchical power. Sufficient co-federation can enable assemblies to take on more and more ambitious reconstructive and oppositional projects. Without sufficient co-federation, community assemblies are at best pockets of freedom making the world a better place. But for community assemblies to be revolutionary, they need to be multiplied, populated, co-federated, coordinated, and nourished with wise content by participants.

Different genres of political tendencies can negatively affect the development of a community assembly. Some brief examples: Far right wing, and fascist formations inside and outside of the state will be particularly violent towards egalitarian social movements that confront hierarchical power. While the less extreme right wing variants and the far right have various porous membranes between them and points of convergence, the less extreme right wing will tend to attack anti-hierarchical social movements via support of state power, right wing politicians and policies,

support for capitalism, and support for cultural conservatism. There is of course TINA, "There is No Alternative", a prevailing theoretical and practical orientation that inhibits any radical critique of business as usual. Liberal wings of business as usual have fundamental commonalities with right wing politics–such as support for capitalism and the state as well as agreements on many key policies and goals. Liberal, left-liberal, and ostensibly leftist political parties have an array of activists and institutions that spread electoralist approaches to social change and means and ends of representative forms of rulership. The tendency known as "Social democracy" (scare quotes intentional) has a statist and electoral orientation at the expense of social movement autonomy from the state. Leninist organizations may try to enter into social movement organizations to restructure social movements into hierarchical forms aimed towards state socialist revolution, or they may otherwise try to subsume social movements to the ends of their hierarchical party formations, or perhaps even try to subvert such such a project altogether! Electoral and revolutionary Statist approaches to socialism have not historically led to socialism but instead have led to specific forms of hierarchical political and economic rule. Fortunately, egalitarian cosmopolitan community assemblies aimed towards meeting the needs of all scare away people with the worst kinds of politics while uniting with MANY ordinary people in a given block/neighborhood/village/town/city/region/etc. who are not 'card carrying anarchists' along the lines of self-management and non-hierarchy! But of course non-hierarchical forms of organizing are not sufficient for wise and strategic content; If wise and sufficiently radical content does not yet exist within the assembly form despite some formal shared agreements, then best to cultivate such content through dialogues, actions, forging relations with people, and helping people out.

Identity reductionism fetishizes identity by abstracting identity related issues from political economic hierarchies they are entangled with, caused by, and not reducible to. Identity reductionism further obscures issues related to identity through not noting the complexities of people– the differentiation within subject positions, the commonalities between them, the fact that positionality and oppression do not inherently lead to any specific ideology, political position, or virtue, etc. Class reductionism obscures the way social reality, social problems, and social solutions are not reducible to economics and class relations. Class reductionism obscures the multidirectional causality of politics, economics, culture, and social relations in favor of a one sided cartoonish picture. Both identity reductionism and class reductionism inhibit an understanding of both social relations and individuals and get in the way of praxis accordingly. Ideally, community assemblies and participants wisely address issues related to politics, economics, culture, and social relations without falling into vicious forms of reductionism.

At times, pragmatic concerns can cause some people towards instrumentalizing long term-goals, liberatory organizations, and liberatory features of organizing to achieve short-term goals. Such an approach is a dire error. Instead of falling into such a MERE short-term focus at the expense of good-enough processes and practices: Community assemblies can embody and utilize general communalist processes and practices and adapt them to particular contexts to achieve short-term, mid-term and long-term goals. If community assemblies and other social movement organizations do not find ways to meet short-term goals and mid-term goals, then they will likely be unable to achieve long term goals of revolution and social transformation. Community assemblies should be both prefigurative (in the sense of building and reproducing the kinds of organizational relations that are being aimed towards) and strategic (in the sense of being oriented towards short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals and trying to arrive at them out of dynamic unfolding conditions rather than merely prefiguring good process/structure). The strat-

egy of community assemblies should be in harmony with good-enough processes, practices, and goals rather than at the expense thereof.

The development of a culture of sharing, caring, thinking, mutual aid, and trust are crucial to the flourishing of social movement organizations and functions– and developing a good society! A lack of sufficient sharing, caring, thinking, mutual-aid and trust between people will inhibit liberatory activity. There are an array of other relational-virtues that could be included in the above list thereof. Liberatory social movement organizations will characteristically create solidarity between participants, generalized reciprocity, and webs of friendship. And as important as friendship is in organizing and outside of organizing, such assemblies should not devolve into a mere politics of friendship. People do not have to be friends with one another to treat each other well and work meaningfully together politically on shared goals through shared processes and practices.

And community assemblies can be inhibited by decisions made by community assemblies themselves! This can happen through decisions that go against what should be essential features of the group, lack of strategic and/or tactical content, lack of good relations between persons, lack of prudent vision (such as short-term goals at the expense of long-term goals), not reaching out to people, not engaging in sufficient reflection, research, and education as part of movement work, not having good enough structure, not sharing social reproduction, not rotating delegate roles etc. No matter how good the form of an organization is, it does not necessarily entail good content. Even if good formal qualities and good shared practices are carried through within the content of an organization, the content itself might not be strategic and generative towards short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals.

Is the Assembly the best place for you to start?

All else equal, It is easier to start a community assembly when various liberatory social movement groups and liberatory cultural dimensions already exist. Inversely, community assemblies are also very helpful for developing the very institutional and cultural shifts that make them and other social movement organizations easier to develop! Community assemblies can be a great project to start even when there is not already a broader left social movement ecosystem. When no other social movements meaningfully exist within a given locale, a community assembly can be an ideal or good-enough organization to start with. Given the wide array of content community assemblies can potentially do, they can be a form that gives rise to particular actions related to meeting specific needs and helping to solve specific social problems. A social movement ecosystem is not a replacement for community assemblies and NOR are community assemblies a replacement for a broader social movement ecosystem. There is no uniform order of operations for which organizations, committees, and actions to develop. Not only does context vary but there are usually multiple good enough options (even as some might be significantly better than others given goals of meeting needs and social transformation).

Learning from history

Fortunately, when starting a community assembly–or some other kind of social movement organization– we do not have to completely reinvent the wheel: Looking through history, we

can find many ways community self-management, direct democracy, direct action, and mutual aid have contributed to well-being, happiness, and freedom. There are ways social movements have been successful or approximately so at arriving at liberatory goals as well as ways that social movements have failed, have been too one-sided, or have otherwise been inhibited from achieving their most liberatory goals by external forces. There are important lessons we can find throughout the history of human freedom and attempts at striving towards it. Knowledge of self-managed revolutionary movements such as Rojava, The Zapatistas, anarchist regions in the Spanish civil war, The Shinmin Prefecture, Makhnovia, and the Morelos Commune are helpful for thinking about bottom-up social transformation. We can glean the various lower common denominators and particularities of each of the above revolutionary movements and see what aspects of the above revolutions make sense for us to apply in our specific contexts. The history of communalism is also far more broad than communalist projects influenced by the historically constituted libertarian socialist revolutionary history; a more transhistorical communalism includes many communities and commons throughout history across many cultures, regions, and continents in varying social/ecological/technological contexts. The broader history of freedom also includes the myriads of ways people have formally and informally practiced mutual aid and generalized reciprocity throughout the ages AND the history of people engaging in practices of their choosing (given they do not inhibit what should be the freedoms of others). The history of freedom also includes the broader history of people rebelling for more freedom and equality, issue specific social movements, the history of syndicalism, the broader history of socialism, anarchism, the left, and beyond.

It would be foolish to not glean gems from revolutionary history. However, this can only be done well through critical investigation of history– including a critical evaluation of one's favorite revolutions and societies in history. A critical historical inquiry would try to find anti-liberatory dimensions even in the most liberatory of organizations and movements as well as strategic and tactical blunders made by various revolutionary groups. The goal of such an inquiry would not be to do an unfair rejection of the most positive elements of past social movements. Such an inquiry should avoid the kind of non-critical cheer-leading that inhibits us from seeing ways specific and general projects can do better according to good ethical criteria. When looking at various organizations and movements in history we can ask questions like "How did they start? What was their development? What were roadblocks they dealt with? Where were they successful? Where did they miss the mark because of their own blunders? How did they make decisions? How did they share labor/work? How did they achieve short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals? What forms of struggle and organization were there? How did they reach out to people? What were some of the main internal disagreements?," etc. A good analysis of history will help people remix the right practices from history and adapt them to specific contexts as new, unique, and uncharted relevant variables emerge. And as important as it is to learn from history, the answers to current and future problems have not been exhaustively answered by the past.

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