Communalism and Especifismo

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August 4, 2021

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Communalism, What it is

Communalism is a philosophy and praxis in favor of the means and ends of developing community assemblies with specific kinds of qualifications: those qualifications being practices and processes of horizontality, direct democracy, free association, co-federation mutual aid, and direct action. Horizontality combined with direct democracy means direct collective decision making without ruling classes or ruling strata. Free association means the freedom of, from, and within associations. Co-federation refers to ways of organizing between organizations where policy making power is retained in general assemblies of groups. Mutual aid refers to mutual support and voluntary association to meet people's needs. Direct action refers to direct activity of collectives and persons more broadly– although usually refers to oppositional politics done by people directly. The above practices are the extension of freedom and self-management of each and all on every scale. Communal assemblies in harmony with communalism have the above features as part of their living practices and processes and enshrine such features in by-laws, constitutions, and structure. Such assemblies are communalist assemblies not in the sense that the assemblies and the members thereof all have the specific ideology of communalism, but in the sense that such assemblies have the minimal qualifiers of what constitutes communalist processes and practices.

What communal assemblies do and how they function

Such communal assemblies in harmony with the features of communalism functionally do reconstructive and oppositional politics. Reconstructive politics refers to developing horizontalist and common politics and economics, people powered infrastructure and institutions, mutual aid projects, and other features that should exist according to criteria of freedom of each and all and the means thereof. Oppositional politics refers to opposing hierarchies (institutionalized top-down command obedience), injustice, and arbitrary limits to freedom and using direct action to achieve various liberatory goals. Communal assemblies can create a wide array of sustained mutual aid projects and direct action campaigns. Such communal assemblies pool needs, tools, resources, ideas, abilities, activities, technology, etc. together to achieve common goals through deliberation and collective action. In such assemblies there is open dialogue, a search for agreement, disagreements, alternatives, amendments, questions etc. If full agreement is not reached, then a decision is made through majority vote. In order to be in harmony with communalist practices and processes, any decisions communal assemblies make must be qualified by horizontalist rights and duties, form and content, as well as free association and participatory activity of persons. Such communal assemblies have mandated and recallable participatory councils and delegates that implement various decisions that are made at the communal level by general assemblies. All policy making power resides in the general assemblies. Embedded councils self-manage within the limits of the policy they are mandated by from below. Such embedded delegates and councils are instantly recallable by their respective communal assemblies and co-federations thereof.

In the good place

In a good society, communal assemblies become forms of horizontal political economic governance. Means of production, fields, factories, and workshops would be communalized, all would have guaranteed rights to common means of production, the means of existence, and the means of direct horizontalist politics. Persons and collectives would have access to the means to develop their various social, philosophical, and artistic activities, aspirations, and hobbies. Necessities and luxuries would be free for all and made abundant. When there is scarcity of luxury goods, there would be new plans to meet needs with scarce luxury goods rationed as needed. Communities would get together to make decentralized and co-federated communal and intercommunal decisions and plans to meet people's needs within and between communities and to develop common projects, activities, and infrastructure as expressions of participatory communal and inter-communal life. Communal self governance would become a realm of common freedom: participatory activity of each and all within horizontalist bounds and the means thereof.

From here to there

The process of developing a communalist society is through the strategic prefiguration of communalist institutions and practices via oppositional and reconstructive politics in particular contexts adapted to relevant variables. Such a process consists of meeting people's needs, opposing hierarchies and injustice, building the kinds of organizations that should exist in the future society by including the features of a good society within the means used to develop such ends. Such general practices would be adapted to contexts and relevant variables to achieve short term, mid term, and long term goals. As communal organizations in harmony with the features of communalism multiply, they can constitute a "third sector" to the capitalist market and the state that can be expanded into confederations and gain legitimacy by meeting needs, solving problems, and developing horizontalist power at the expense of hierarchical power. Overtime, this communal sector would develop itself and overthrow hierarchical institutions and institute libertarian communism.

Reasons why

Such communal assemblies can engage in and assist oppositional and reconstructive politics in spheres such as extraction, reproduction of daily life, production, distribution, consumption, community life, and intercommunal life. This makes them flexible and adaptable to specific contexts and provides a non-reductionist approach to where revolutionary activity can take place. Additionally, such communal assemblies are needed for self-management in every sphere and is the extension of the self-management of each and all on the community sphere. For such ends and processes to be developed they need to be prefigured– that is developed in such a way where the ends are as much as possible contained within the means, where groups with communalist form and content continue to develop and multiply such form and content. Additionally communal assemblies can easily assist various groups and projects as part of a social movement ecosystem . It is for the above reasons, and others, that communal assemblies are "keystone organizations" to be developed (to use an ecological metaphor).

Especifismo and Theoretically Specific Libertarian Communists groups

What is especifismo? Whereas communal assemblies–and other kinds of groups like radical unions– are designed to be popular organizations with common processes and practices, theoretically specific libertarian communist groups are a distinct kind of group that serve a distinct function. Social movement groups and popular organizations (such as but not limited to communal assemblies) should have some kind of shared processes and practices and goals, they should also reach out to and be comprised of common people en masse irrespective of if they have some special sauce libertarian communist ideological litmus test. Unlike social movement groups and popular organizations, theoretically specific groups are made out of people who have a sufficient degree of tight-knit theoretical unity. Members of such theoretically specific groups function as an "active minority" within social movements.

The major purpose of such theoretically unified libertarian communist groups is to do social insertion: that is to create and participate in social movements, social movement groups, and popular organizations in and out of the workplace (such as community assemblies, mutual aid projects, unions, tenants' unions, issue specific social movements, etc) in such a way where members of such theoretically unified libertarian communist groups help to develop and assist liberatory processes and practices within social movements and popular organizations. Within social movements and popular organizations, members of especifismo groups advocate for practices of self-organization, direct democracy, federalism, direct action, mutual aid, class struggle, and opposition to hierarchy more broadly. Such libertarian practices are spread within social movements and popular organizations through deliberation, persuasion, and demonstration. Such practices can be developed in new organizations starting from scratch or through joining already existing organizations and helping to cultivate the already existing libertarian thrust of such groups towards their own goals. The goal of social insertion is to spread such libertarian socialist processes and practices and not to get any particular person or group to proclaim any specific ideology– however in the process of spreading liberatory practices and giving reasons for them various corresponding theories will likely spread to people and become more generalized.

Especifismo groups are places for like minded organizers and militants to produce, reproduce, deliberate and strategize about theory and practice more broadly. Especifismo groups engage in political education and propagation of libertarian communist theory and practices. These groups require a high degree of collective responsibility on the part of participants. Specifics in regards to especifismo groups and how they function can be found in FARJ's "Social Anarchism and Organization".

Why especifismo

If libertarian socialists merely organize with libertarian socialists, then they will lose contact with the broader population they need to be reaching. If libertarian socialists merely join social movements without advocating various libertarian socialist practices that can be used, then social movements can easily drift into being susceptible to reformist, unstrategic, liberal, and leninist tendencies and opportunists. If libertarian socialists merely join social movements and try to spread ideas and practices in mere individual ways, they will be far less successful than

a well thought out coordinated effort. And if theoretically specific libertarian socialist groups try to control social movements and popular organizations from the top down, then such specific groups sacrifice their own principles and will reproduce hierarchical organizing. In contrast to authoritarian vanguardist conceptions, especifismo groups and especifists put their activity towards the self-organization of movements and organizations.

Differences between especifismo and other organizational dualism

Especifismo is a tendency initially developed by FAU in Uruguay building off of already existing organizational dualist tendencies within anarchism. Especifismo is a living praxis being developed on multiple continents. Especifismo is distinct from other kinds of organizational dualism in its advocacy for and conception of strategic unity rather than mere tactical unity, through its polished conception and strategy of social insertion, and through having a broader conception of groups to organize with and relate to far beyond radical unions.

Communalist Especifismo

Communalist especifists combine both communalism and especifismo: That is they are in favor of communal assemblies as popular organizations before, during, and after revolutions and they are in favor of joining especifismo groups to help develop such communalist assemblies as well as other kinds of liberatory groups. The two praxes combine through social insertion in relation to community assemblies: both through starting communal assemblies and helping to develop already existing community associations into ones that use a cluster of liberatory practices. Additionally such communalist social insertion means developing community assemblies within or connected to social movements to help achieve the goals of social movements when that makes sense in specific contexts.

Part of what distinguishes communalist especifismo from classical communalism is the emphasis upon the distinction and need (or more moderately desirability) for both theoretically specific libertarian socialist organizations and popular organizations as well as social insertion for purposes of revolutionary social change. Without the distinction between theoretically specific and popular organizations, it is quite possible to form a group that tries to do the functions of both yet functionally does not fulfill the functions and aspirations of either (a problem some organizational dualist tendencies are consciously responding to). Part of what distinguishes communalist especifismo from especifismo is agreeing with the most salient features of communalism such as the notion that communal assemblies in harmony with the features of communalism are "keystone organizations" to be developed before, during, and after revolutions. Such a communalist orientation is not essential to especifismo despite overlap between especifismo groups and communal assemblies. Communalist especifismo does not and should not mean a reduction of especifismo groups to only interfacing communal assemblies: merely an additional emphasis upon communal assemblies as keystone organizations to be prefigured and developed before, during, and after revolutions (for ethical and strategic reasons). A communalist especifismo group would be composed of people who agree with especifismo and communalism and who are actively engaged in trying to develop such a revolutionary project.

Endnotes

Bookchin, Murray. *Social Ecology and Communalism.* AK Press, 2007.

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Usufruct Collective. *Communalist Especifism.* 2019

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Communalism and Especifismo
August 4, 2021

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