

Towards Communalist Especificism

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Communalism

Communalism is rooted in the development of horizontalist democratic community assemblies. Communalism is a “revolutionary political theory and practice, deeply rooted in the general socialist tradition” that would not just seek to create cooperative relations but forms that “confront capital and the basic structures of state power”.¹ Communalist assemblies have bylaws, bills of rights, and structures that embody terms of practice rooted in libertarian socialist principles. Such principles include but are not limited to Non-hierarchy, Direct Democracy, Co-federation, and Ecology. Community assemblies – and co-federations thereof – make policies that are then implemented by participatory committees and delegates that are mandated by community assemblies and recallable to community assemblies. Embedded committees and delegates within horizontalist community assemblies do not have policy making power over and above community assemblies.² Communalist assemblies have decision making processes rooted in deliberation, and cooperative conflict, and direct democracy to come to collective decisions – while respecting what should be the rights of persons and collectives. Communalist assemblies would additionally aim towards needs based distribution. Such community assemblies could create embedded committees and auxiliary collectives, while also planning direct actions and mutual aid projects, while additionally helping with popular education. Communalist assemblies – and co-federations thereof – would link up together to do both oppositional and reconstructive politics at the points of extraction, production, reproduction, distribution, and at the point of the community sphere. Communalist assemblies would also prefigure such assemblies as forms of governance to exist in a post revolutionary society – rather than merely forms to bring about a revolution or merely forms for after the revolution.

Especifism and Communalism

Communalism and especifism are both libertarian communist tendencies. They share an ethical, organizational, and strategic orientation in regards to direct democracy, anti-hierarchy, federalism, distribution according to needs, and revolutionary politics. The focus both tendencies have on libertarian governance (rather than no governance) prior to, during, and after revolutions place both tendencies firmly in the organizational branch of anti-state socialism. Despite encompassing a majority of anarchism’s history – and the majority of anarchism’s victories – the most organizational branches of anti state socialism are not considered anarchism proper by a significant number of anarchists and non-anarchists alike.

Especifist praxis is rooted in,

1. The need for specifically anarchist organization built around a unity of ideas and praxis.
2. The use of the specifically anarchist organization to theorize and develop strategic political and organizing work

¹ Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Communalist Approach.” <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-to>

² Murray Bookchin, “The Communalist Project.” <http://social-ecology.org/wp/2002/09/harbinger-vol-3-no-1-the-co>

3. Active involvement in and building of autonomous and popular social movements, which is described as the process of “social insertion.”³

The specific unity of ideas especificist groups have contain libertarian socialist dimensions that platformists share such as theoretical unity, tactical unity, federalism and collective responsibility. However, that agreement with platformism does not mean complete agreement to everything written in the original platform – which was written in regards to a very specific revolutionary context involving military action.⁴ Furthermore, especificism has made advances compared to traditional platformism in regards to its theory of what the relationship between ideologically libertarian socialists specific groups and broader social movements should be – in part by going way beyond relationships of ideologically specific libertarian socialist groups to labor unions into a broader conception of organizations and social movements against hierarchy.⁵ This makes especificist groups well suited to have strategic relationships to community assemblies and daily struggles in and out of the workplace. Such a relationship of especificist groups to community assemblies is something that has already developed in practice by especificists.⁶ Furthermore, especificism is in favor of a strategic orientation to get from here to a libertarian socialist revolution based on common analysis, shared theory and social insertion rather than mere tactical unity.⁷

Social insertion has a very advanced and practical understanding of the relationships between ideologically specific organizations and social movements. Especificists center their strategy of social change around a mutualistic relationship between specifically libertarian communist groups and a broader social movement. As the Black Rose Federation article “Building a Revolutionary Anarchism”⁸ describes and prescribes: There should be dual membership within specifically libertarian socialist organizations and within popular organizations. Doing so puts libertarian socialists in contact with broader populations than merely themselves. Within such movements, libertarian socialists should advocate for practices of horizontalist democracy, direct action, anti capitalism, and class struggle to further the goals of social movements – as well as argue for such positions when they are minority positions as active minorities furthering libertarian socialist practice. Especificist groups are in favor of popularizing libertarian socialist practice in large part teaching by demonstration. Such a process can help make libertarian socialism relevant to the lives of people struggling towards liberatory goals of various kinds in class struggle and daily struggle in and out of the workplace. Such a process can combine revolutionary organizing with popular organizing. Especificist groups and libertarian socialists – and various groups centered around such theory and/or practice – should help social movements by enabling them to access their greatest strength: the capacity of thousands of people acting (which can be better unleashed through direct democracy). Hierarchical organizations inhibit participation from people involved, whereas directly democratic organizing can give people more ways to participate meaningfully. Without a class struggle perspective, social movements wind up making the wrong alliances and not engaging in the kinds of oppositional actions that are needed for revolution – defanging the

³ Adam Weaver, “Especificismo: The Anarchist Praxis of Building Popular Movements and Revolutionary Organization.” <http://blackrosefed.org/especificismo-weaver/>

⁴ Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro, “Social Anarchism and Organisation.” <http://anarkismo.net/article/22146>

⁵ Adam Weaver, op. cit.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Colin O’Malley, “Building a Revolutionary Anarchism.” <http://blackrosefed.org/building-a-revolutionary-anarchism>

social movements and disempowering membership. Libertarian socialists need social movements to ground libertarian socialism in popular movements and amongst the working class, the dispossessed, and oppressed more broadly, to learn organizational skills, to develop better praxis, and to minimize the disconnect between libertarian socialist milieus and the general public. When doing so, it is important to not unnecessarily go against the tide – libertarian socialists should find the already existing common values and practices within popular organizations and social movements and then work to develop that already existing libertarian socialist and anti-hierarchical thrust.⁹ Furthermore, the goal of social insertion is to unite people in the social movement along such libertarian socialist practice – not necessarily getting any specific person or group to proclaim any specific ideology. Specific popular education collectives can help supplement especifist groups, communalist assemblies, and broader social movements in spreading good praxis, in part through popularizing good theory through critical deliberation.

Communalist assemblies (rather than mere community assemblies) are popular assemblies in the community sphere that also have a coherent form and content – that at least follows from minimal libertarian socialist principles in conjunction with a community sphere. However, such communalist assemblies are distinct from Especifist groups. Communalist assemblies do not necessarily have a shared ideology between individuals even though they necessarily have a shared terms of practice between people (which can be expressed in bylaws, bills of rights, structures, short term and long term programs of groups, or even points of unity for practice, etc.). Such practices are of course theory laden, and can be evaluated by theory. Furthermore the overall content of such processes are given a better lived content by the popularization of good theories, propositional knowledge, and practical knowledge. Communalist assemblies are designed to be much more inclusive and popular organizations compared to especifist groups – although especifist groups should seek popularity within the terms that make them ethical and effective without sacrificing their coherence to a false unity. Through having an explicit theoretical unity, especifist groups have a distinct function spreading a specific praxis within social movements by helping to assist and develop coherent popular organizations, taking a radical stance to further more immediate goals of social movements and develop their liberatory dimensions, while also aiming towards long term vision of libertarian communism.

Communalists want community assemblies as revolutionary forms and also want the economy to be politicized – that is for the means of production to be put into the hands of co-federated communal assemblies that have embedded participatory councils that implement decisions within the mandate made from below (where all policy making power resides). Especifists are often, but by no means always, working with or in favor of communal forms of freedom that are either identical to or similar to the ones advocated for and practiced by communalists. Especifist groups have been more pluralistic than communalists in regards to the forms of economy and keystone revolutionary forms that they advocate. Often times especifist groups organize with and/or favor anarchosyndicalist formations and workers’ councils – but other times they might organize with and/or favor commune formations (and sometimes especifist groups will work with both or either). Although working with such revolutionary formations – communal assemblies, anarcho-syndicalist unions, and workers’ councils – can make sense towards developing a revolution, a modest appeal for communalism would be that the communalist political economy should be developed overtime because

⁹ Adam Weaver, op. cit.

1. Without a communalist political economy power is privatized over and above direct communities into segmented fields that make decisions over and above people affected by such economic matters
2. Self management within egalitarian bounds should be in every sphere including the communal sphere which necessitates a co-federated communal economy
3. That our means should be consistent with or conducive to such development.

Towards Communalist Especificism

Especificism is in favor of interfacing with leftist social movements in a productive way as illustrated in the above section. A communalist especificist group would also be in favor of that approach while viewing communalist assemblies as keystone organizations to be developed alongside a plurality of other organizations. Such communalist assemblies would be keystone organizations for both ethical and strategic reasons: an ethical reason being that developing communalist assemblies is necessary for egalitarian self management in every sphere, and some strategic reasons for such an approach are that such assemblies are radically flexible to working on oppositional and reconstructive politics in every sphere, are able to be especially mutualistic towards other liberatory collectives and projects, and that such assemblies can prefigure such ethical ends through ethical consistency of means and ends in conjunction with strategic content. Communalist assemblies could help broader social movements in regards to specific issues and struggles with both solidarity actions and capacity while in turn gaining members from expanding social movements. Such an expanding membership in communalist assemblies would fuel communalist assemblies themselves as well as other liberatory social movements communalist assemblies become in solidarity with. Communalists and especificists should enter into non-communalist yet liberatory social movements to advocate for practices of direct action, direct democracy, opposition to hierarchy, and class struggle which would help with maximizing overall participation power of people involved in movements – and qualifying such participation through good terms of practice – to further the liberatory goals of social movements and potentially add support to such movements with solidarity from communalist assemblies. Furthermore, communalist assemblies would unite various struggles connecting them to a general (insufficient) solution of developing horizontalist community assemblies.

Within broader social movements, communalist especificists would advocate for liberatory issue specific struggles as well as developing community assemblies as parts of social movements, as well as direct action, direct democracy, class struggle, and anti-hierarchy within such social movements – which should include but not be limited to communalist assemblies. This would generalize good praxis and strengthen the practice of broader social movements through advocating for interfacing with communalist assemblies as well as a plurality of other bottom up organizations when it strategically makes sense for the goals of specific social movements (given such movements and means are ethical). The communalist assemblies would be popular anti-state political organizations rooted in libertarian socialist practice on a community scale and the communalist especificist groups would be ideologically specific and tight knit advancing libertarian socialist practice and communalist practice within social movements – which would include community assemblies and a plurality of other organizations. Communalist especificist groups would

be in large part instrumentalized to establishing, catalyzing, and helping communalist assemblies and other bottom up projects become self managed, co-federated, and strategic.

There is a distinction between community assemblies and communalist assemblies. Whereas a community assembly is merely an assembly on a community sphere, a communalist assembly has additional qualifiers on top of being an assembly on the community scale. Communalist assemblies have a structure and strategic orientation that is qualified by libertarian socialist practice. Communalist especificism would in large part exist to help community assemblies flourish into communalist assemblies through social insertion.

Especificists sometimes call the level of ideologically specific organization that they are involved with political and they often call popular movements social movements.¹⁰ This is distinct from the way communalists would use the term political. For communalists, politics refers to city management – and libertarian socialist politics would entail egalitarian participatory forms of community governance. Politics can be contrasted to statecraft through the state necessarily being hierarchical and politics potentially being non-hierarchical. There is nothing in city management itself that necessitates a ruling class. In this sense, communalist organizations are anti statist forms of political organizations (that have some specific qualifiers for them to be communalist assemblies and not merely community assemblies) that can be a part of and in relation to yet distinguished from mere social movements without adjectives. Social movements can include a plurality of organizations from communalist assemblies, to workers' councils, to affinity groups, to direct action collectives and networks, mutual aid collectives and networks, popular education collectives, etc. Communalist especificists groups would practice development of social insertion within social movements more broadly, and also practice social insertion within community assemblies more specifically. Using the communalist categorization of politics, Especificism is of course political, as in related to politics, but so are social movements. An alternative categorical framing for Especificist groups is to say that they operate on an ideologically specific political level which is not equivalent to a political level more broadly as in relationship to city management – or the political level more specifically as a potentially non-hierarchical public sphere for communal deliberation and decisions about city management.

¹⁰ Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro, op. cit.

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