

Individual projectuality and affinity:

the nature of affinity groups

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Contents

The anarchist individual projectuality	3
The affinity group	3
The emptying of affinity and of affinity groups	4
Final considerations	4

“Projectuality:

starting position that tries to have, from the beginning till the end of the struggle, a global vision — but continuously looking at the changing of necessities — of the elements that compose and characterize it”

(Su gazetinu de sa luta kontras a sas presones #0)

The anarchist individual projectuality

For us to act on life, instead of it being something that happens to us, we need to know what we desire and how to try to attain it, we need to know who prevents us from doing it and who are our potential accomplices in this collective adventure for individual freedom.

The anarchist individual projectuality is born from this reflection and from the will and the disposition to act according to it. It is a question of taking the initiative over life, of acting to break and create contexts, and not to respond to a context. Developing an individual projectuality, the individual acts according to his principles and goals, be it before or after a given situation. That situation, instead of conditioning him to act in a given way, offers him cues that contribute to the development of his own project, according to which he continues to act.

In practice, I feel that the anarchist projectuality is a question of taking the initiative and of being prepared, because you have, from the start, a global vision of reality and of ourselves.

Therefore, we take the initiative because our actions are the beginning of other possibilities, and this beginning is born from the attack on the existent. Besides, this initiative has the essential characteristic of us not waiting for the “time to be ripe” to act, because waiting only brings more waiting. It’s us ourselves that create the possibility of something else. At the same time, to be prepared means to know what we want to do in a given moment, analyzing the elements at play and how, starting from our own principles and goals, we want to act on them. Being prepared results, mainly, from a perspective that we have over reality, a perspective that, very often, takes us into hypothesis, situations, methods, enemies and comrades long before we’re there.

The affinity group

Frequently our individual projectuality joins us together with other comrades in affinity groups to carry on a specific common project. We get together temporarily, and because during our own individual project we found comrades that found us during their own individual project, and in this encounter we discussed perspectives over the reality and over our own surreality, we discussed needs and desires. And in this discussion and knowing we discovered some specific affinity.

The affinity group is, by definition, made up by individuals that share a specific affinity. To know their affinities, the individuals need to know and discuss the ideas and wills of each one of them, and how each one sees reality and how he wants to act on it. It’s a relation of deepening the knowledge among the individuals. And to have this knowledge between individuals, each one needs to know what he wants out of his life, what is the analysis he makes of society and how he wants to fight against it and for that which he wants. Everything begins, therefore, from an

individual projectuality that, when expressed, can discover points of affinity we may have with others with whom we can discuss a specific common projectuality.

The emptying of affinity and of affinity groups

When the common project diverges from the individual project, the affinity ceases to exist, and it's obviously time for the comrades to dissolve the affinity group. If this dissolution isn't done, and the group keeps dragging itself independently of the individuals and/or the individual wills involved, the group ceases to be based on affinity, at the same time that it starts existing for itself, reproducing the kind of permanent and formal relations that exist, for example, in an anarcho-syndicalist union and in the rest of society. And, in this way, everything that initially originated the affinity group is subverted, the affinity ceases to exist and the groups ceases to make any sense.

Frequently, we see comrades forming groups that, from the start, empty the concept of affinity and of informal organization. This is the case of the agglomeration groups (I don't find a better concept) that, taking an activity that somehow was decided to be done (or an organization that was decided to exist for itself), go afterwards picking people up to make numbers and/or to do that activity or to compose that organization. Then, these people agglomerate themselves in this group, having no mutual knowledge between the individuals and/or with no affinity between them. Then, we see the people that constitute these groups fighting each other at the same time they start discovering what each one really wants and how he wants it (and this when they even do these discoveries), while the group stagnates or drags and deteriorates itself, following what was decided from the start. Often we hear calling this kind of groups "affinity groups", even though there's no affinity between the agglomerated individuals, and the concept of agglomeration itself is opposed to the qualitative strength of a common anarchist project of a few comrades, to the deepening of knowledge and to the clarifying of affinities. There is a changing of qualitative relations for quantitative relations, sometimes against the will of some of the comrades involved in these groups that would prefer to develop different relations, but that can't see another way to do the things they'd like to see being done.

I think that the emptying of affinity groups have been growing in more recent years, specially since the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle, in 1999. Nowadays we've come to the point of having "affinity groups workshops", done by activists, where those who show up are invited to form "affinity groups" with people they don't know and/or with whom they don't have any affinity, for example around activities typical of this kind of demonstrations (legal group, street medics group, noise-making group, window-breaking group, etc...). I think it is useless to refer the complete absence of any qualitative and revolutionary element in this kind of workshops, in the agglomeration groups composed in them and in the relations they propose, as well as the fact that they don't have anything to do with affinity or affinity groups.

Final considerations

To sum up, it seems to me that, in different ways, the concept of affinity has been being emptied of its content with the passing of the years, and that in this way it has been losing all its revolutionary potential as the basis of informal organization.

If an individual projectuality developed by each individual doesn't exist, there is the tendency of his individual projects end up being outlined by the projects of the agglomeration group, and of existing a complete and practically uncritical identification with that group. If that individual projectuality does exist but diverges from the projects developed by the group, existing no affinity between the comrades, each individual ends up frustrated, enclosed in projects that say him/her nothing and that diverge from his/her analysis and desires. It is also possible that those individual projectualities exist but that the comrades prefer not to discuss them, for example, because of an attempt to not evidence differences that may put their union in jeopardy, an union that is based, therefore, on the silencing of the individuals. In any case, the individual is controlled/dragged by the collective, just like what happens in the rest of society.

The affinity group, on the other hand, is based on the discovered and developed affinities between comrades that deepen the knowledge of one another. This mutual knowledge, in its own turn, can only reach all its potential if each comrade keeps developing his/her own individual projectuality, his/her own way to look at reality and how he/she wants to act on it, based on his/her own personal desires and goals. In this way, two or more comrades can meet and coordinate themselves in a kind of informal organization that is logically directioned towards action, that emerges from their personal projects and that doesn't exist in time beyond the adequate.

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