

Project A (presentation)

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I like to cook. I also enjoy playing with my little son and writing political articles. I like sailing boats, swimming, talking to friends and comrades, arguing with people, woodworking, traveling the world, giving public lectures, participating in conferences, painting, drawing, engaging in anarchist political activities and projects, preferably with many people and without violence; I like my work (I currently work in typesetting). I like playing guitar just as much as reading; I like editing magazines and writing books, maintaining the library I created, and finally, I like to devote myself, occasionally, to the advancement of world revolution: the anarchist revolution, of course.

Perhaps you will say, what the hell does this have to do with the subject? Well, it seems to me that this is where we find what Project A means and what it is.

A multi-dimensional project

I'm pretty sure that most of you – and, indeed, all those who have multi-dimensional personalities – have the most diverse interests, desires, dreams, preferences, hobbies, hopes, and plans. It is not one thing only that motivates us and brings us together in this place. And just as Anarchy is not a single thing, such as the abolition of the State or of money, the practice of "free love" or feeding everyone, so our lives and our realities are a rather sophisticated combination of multiple factors.

In this obvious, almost banal fact lies a force, a dynamic thrust, capable of changing our lives as society.

Three different approaches

Therefore, there are different approaches to what I call "Project A." One might be purely political. Another might be an economic approach. A third way might be via "private life." Consider a simple example: a person may be interested in participating in this project because he or she is seeking new forms of anarchist action, strategy, and perspective in order to overcome the current "cul de sac" that the world libertarian movement is facing right now, where very few alternatives are open. This could be a possible political rapprochement. Another possible path to the Project would be for someone who is seeking a better way of working and living: better in the sense of more fulfilling, more creative, more organic, working in community, with a minimum

of authority and alienation, ensuring a decent income, making a living, supporting a family. This would be a possible economic approach. Finally, someone might be interested in changing the foundations of his or her life, wanting to build a more satisfying existence in terms of personal happiness, living in collective groups, establishing better conditions for the growth of adults and children, finding self-actualization as a person in society, etc. This desire for better conditions in “private life” could constitute a third approach, a “private” form.

Balancing the economic, the political, and the private

To give you an initial “philosophical” idea of the merits of Project A, I would stress that this project aims to unify these three starting points, to overcome their contradictions, to break the artificial boundaries between the “political,” the “economic,” and the “private.” The goal is to reach a point where it is impossible to describe any activity that a person is performing as just a “political activity,” just a matter of “making money,” or just a matter of “being happy” enjoying life. Life should no longer be divided up into specific, sharply delimited zones; a living should be a labor that gives us pleasure and the ability to earn our daily bread; it should be a way to change society, to give it an anarchist shape, while providing us with happiness and satisfaction. Project A tries to give equal weight to all these areas, integrating all of these elements into its structures.

“Project A”

The old anarchist dream

As we all know, this idea is nothing new. In fact, it is the synthesis of the anarchist ideas of every period. The anarchist dream has always intended to make work into a creative game, to turn everyday life into a source of happiness, to turn making a living into having fun and “doing politics,” setting examples and creating exciting experiences. Project A, therefore, is nothing but a manual for enacting the first steps of this dream within the concrete realities of the German Federal Republic, today, in the context of the capitalist system. Project A tries to suggest ideas to address problems of everyday life, even in its most boring details – problems of the truly filthy and not at all revolutionary capitalist State that is called “social democracy.” At the same time, this project tries to answer the current question: how can we, in creating such concrete examples of Anarchy, make anarchism attractive and accessible to thousands of individuals, to millions of the so-called “ordinary people,” while avoiding the more frequent traps and mistakes, e.g., reformism, isolation, economic collapse, and many of the other common “diseases” afflicting so many libertarian projects?

The fatal separation in political groups

In fact, the desire to harmonize these three areas – political, economic, and private – is almost universal among anarchists. In reality, however, we find this fatal separation almost everywhere. Usually, today, the “average anarchist” goes to work or study about eight hours a day in a particular location. This is a part of his or her life, a reality separate from everything else. Returning home, he or she lives his or her “private life” alone with the family or community group with whom he or she lives. Another reality, another place. Finally, the individual becomes a “political person” in an anarchist group, union, or circle, often once a week, when it has its regular meeting. It might be a Friday evening, between eight and ten at night. This is the third reality in a third place. Thus, in the usual case, work, personal life, and political activity are totally separate; the boundaries between these sectors are bright and clear. The same happens if a worker is engaged in anarchist activism, as often unions are weak, activists are trapped in the factory, and union activities are conducted outside business hours and places of work, often occupied with issues and goals that are foreign to the individual’s everyday reality.

Isolation and sterility

We think that it is in this fateful separation that we can locate many of the reasons why so many projects and initiatives, and not only those that are libertarian in nature, are so weak, why they fail, why they quickly arrive at situation of sterility, creating their own ghettos of isolation, or simply do not work. Because the situation just described reflects nothing other than the almost total lack of popularity of anarchism, the failure of anarchists to become rooted and gain acceptance in contemporary societies with regard to everyday life in its trivial aspects, in the social context, in the neighborhood, in working life, etc. This deficit is almost universal in all countries and there are very few exceptions, such as – possibly – in some regions of Spain and the U.S. Normally, the anarchist movement tends to hide this defect behind a superficial triumphalism or by turning to historical examples.

Anarchism today...

Anarchists, as a rule, are organized – if at all – in small, ideologically-defined groups, thus ensuring the survival of a culture and tradition of freedom, occasionally participating in social struggles or movements, and being generally excellent critics of society and prophets of the disasters that lie ahead. But what good is all this? What good is a prophet unable to indicate how the disasters can be overcome or how all the terrible paths that society is taking now can be avoided for the sake of future? Anarchists today, and for over 50 years, are not able to give this general response. They are not in a position to point out an accessible and attractive exit from the current conditions. They do not know how to change society on a large scale or how to create new, libertarian social forms for the vast majority of people, as they were able to do, in some parts of the world before the Second World War, with the ideas and practice of anarcho-syndicalism.

...Its crisis and its lack of popularity

But the “glory days” are long gone and cannot easily be repeated, and not in the same way. Contemporary anarchism is not in tune with the times and is not popular. The few current anarchist projects that are exceptions, trying to break out this ghetto, are usually isolated or economically terribly weak or small, or else, if they prosper economically, they easily become reformist. Above all, they are extremely rare.

A sophisticated combination versus “purist anarchism”

Therefore, Project A is a combination of ideas that seeks to overcome this purist, isolated anarchism. We do not consider ourselves to be missionaries or Jesuits of anarchism. We try to mobilize pragmatic, professional, realistic perspectives, uniting them to create a stable basis for politico-social activities and also as points of defense against the system that surrounds us. At the same time, this basis is to give an added impetus to us our dreams, our utopias, our affection, and our anarchist ideals, both in our internal relationships and in the social structures we want to create. These ideals remain the usual anarchist ideals.

The three approaches are equally legitimate

Consequently, the three types of approach are equally legitimate and equivalent for us. We believe personal happiness is as important as political success or making a decent living. Why would we be anarchists, if not for a healthy egoism, in the positive sense of the word? If I am an anarchist, it is not primarily because I want my grandchildren to live better. First, I want to enjoy anarchy in my own life, at least an initial anarchism, in its infancy, in its early conquests. And if, in the process, by living, acting and working in this way, I can create a new strategy for living anarchism that would expand and spread in a virulent manner, giving it a new vitality, a new revolutionary dynamism, what more could I hope for?

Positive egoism

A positive egoism, which is what defines my own happiness, is only possible if the other people around me are equally happy, free and autonomous, which is – in my opinion – the sanest way to justify any “political” work and to promote any social activism. I, personally, deeply suspicious of all those “professional revolutionaries” – even if they call themselves anarchists – who are fighting “for principles,” “for ideas” for “the beautiful black flag” or for other lofty concepts, without including themselves, without changing their own lives, without understanding themselves as part of this change and struggle. If we start to “practice anarchism” in its rudimentary forms today, this must also mean that we can start living in a better, freer and happier way. If we cannot meet this goal, anarchism will never be a way of life and social organization that anyone finds attractive, accessible, and pleasant, except for political masochists and mere theoretical thinkers of a purist persuasion.

Just one alternative among many other possibilities

Project A, however, is intended to be just one of many possible answers to this general dilemma. One answer, which has grown and matured over the course of nine years, and which is based on fifteen years of experience in local, national and international anarchist struggles of the “old style” that we have lived through.

I am afraid that after so many general considerations, you will not yet have even the slightest concrete idea what Project A is. But before I explain the basic details of its structure and dynamics, I have to insist on some details and concepts that I explained previously. Without them, the “philosophy” underlying our project can hardly be understood.

“Pamphleteering” anarchism

One of these concepts is what we call “pamphleteering anarchism.” It means that anarchist ideas are disseminated and transferred by means of more or less abstract manifestations: by written papers, brochures, books, speeches, demonstrations, literature, stickers, posters, and graffiti, as well as, on a smaller scale, by video, music and theater. In many countries, and especially in West Germany, anarchists are usually crazed paper producers. Sometimes, when you look at the anarchist press in certain countries, one can easily get the impression that we are on the eve of the social revolution and working in the midst of powerful social upheavals and strongly rooted anarchist struggles. However, we all know that this is not the case. The spread of anarchist ideas by means of publication and the like is certainly necessary to achieve our goals, but it is not sufficient. Very few people “become anarchists” just by reading words, and even if these people come to call themselves “anarchists,” this does not mean that there has actually been any change, either in their private lives or in the society surrounding them. “Pamphleteering anarchism,” no matter how well it is done, can never reach more than 3-6% of the population, for the simple reason that very few people are in the habit of reading. And even if this 3-6% came to us, this would likely be a fatal selection, because we would make anarchism accessible only to those who enjoy reading, study, theoretical discussions and literature – in other words, intellectuals.

The anarchist ghetto

In this sector, only a few marginalized groups of underprivileged, persecuted, and oppressed people enter, in small numbers, for the duration of social struggles. These groups often leave anarchist circles once the dynamics of the struggle and the specific motive for the rebellion have been exhausted, because – apart from the specific motive – the libertarian movement has not been able to create an environment, a solid basis, a libertarian culture in which these people can find a new and satisfactory way of living their everyday lives. This is precisely the current

state of most libertarian groups in most countries. This presents the structure and the dilemma of contemporary anarchism.

The exclusion of “ordinary people”

As a result, enormously large numbers of so-called “ordinary people” are automatically excluded. In the libertarian experiences of the past, these people have only been interested by and committed to anarchism and other revolutionary ideas when these movements have been able to propose ways to solve specific, understandable and non-exotic solutions to specific problems that existed in real, everyday life. Within this framework of values, it is important to introduce another concept: “lived anarchism,” which we would like to oppose to “pamphleteering anarchism.” If the anarchists of the past, on several occasions, were able to propose revolutionary solutions to existing problems and were followed by large segments of the population, this was primarily because these anarchists of the past were able to make their neighbors, coworkers and friends understand what anarchism was and what it meant, insofar as they tried to live it.

“Lived anarchism”

In a number of historical situations, anarchists were no longer those exotic beasts who, at times, even adopted arrogant attitudes towards the “ordinary people,” but were accepted as friends, good neighbors, and co-workers in their everyday social environment. You can still find traces of this ancient libertarian culture in some parts of Italy, Spain, France, Latin America... For these old movements, one thing was obvious: the best preacher is the one who preaches by example. In these movements, propaganda, books, magazines were still very important, but they were merely tools for social change in real life, and not, as they so often are today, enterprises sufficient unto themselves, sucking up what little energies were available to maintain their own existence. And those old comrades were not considered too “fine,” too “noble” or too “intellectual” to come into contact with “these stupid, ignorant, ordinary, average, petty-bourgeois people” of everyday life. They engaged in a long-term task of establishing a libertarian presence, including culture, social struggle, syndicalism, and action. This work, encompassing everything from “trivial” neighborhood disturbances to general strikes to revolutionary riots and the carrying out of a general social revolution.

This is why, in our political analysis, we think that “pamphleteering anarchism” is necessary but should be kept in healthy proportion with culture, living, and real anarchist struggle. Currently, the proportion of “pamphleteering” to “living” could be estimated at 70% to 30%, respectively. In our view, it should be exactly the opposite.

What does it mean to be revolutionary?

We think, moreover, that not everything related to “pamphleteering” or violent gestures is automatically “political” or “revolutionary,” and that everything that isn’t labeled “anarchist” or “direct action” is not automatically apolitical and “reformist.” In other words, selling bread can be as political as selling an anarchist newspaper. It just depends on its political context, its strategy, and the broader tactics in which it is involved.

Populism yesterday and today

Finally, we disagree with those who think that the “populism” of anarchism is a beautiful thing of the past to which we cannot return, or that it is a beautiful feature of life in distant countries where people have a different mentality. On the contrary: we can attest, based on our experiences in small and medium-sized German cities, that “ordinary” people are not stupid, boring, reactionary idiots, provided that anarchists do not remain the arrogant, isolated and provocative sectarians we have been for many years in our political behavior, our social work, our strategies,

and our lives, continuing to believe, as many do, that the “good anarchist” is one who spits contemptuously in the faces of all those who are not the same. We even believe that today, a popular path, based on “lived anarchism,” is possible and, of course, necessary. In this way, social contacts are extremely important as they are, in fact, is much more effective to give people examples rather than printed words. This should not mean, of course, that we want to create a sort of zoo where non-anarchists come to watch the well-educated anarchists, hair nicely combed, dressed in neckties, hard at work playing the clown to win the sympathies of the petty-bourgeois. We do not want to disguise or hide anything. We just want to live what we feel and aspire to make this kind of lifestyle accessible, a source of examples and possible solutions to problems they have in their own lives.

Constructive anarchism

For me, anarchism has always been a form of creative and constructive life. If this is true, and if we generalize that philosophy across our lives and our activities, I have no doubt that these examples will be seen, observed, and followed closely by many people, and not dismissed as something adventurous, exotic, or outrageous that should make people afraid.

All this, of course, still sounds very abstract, and I think it’s time to get into the specifics of what Project A is intended to be and to become. Since time is short, I will have to do this in a very general way. The basic book on Project A is 100 pages long, and the discussion has barely begun. Meanwhile, discussion of the idea runs more than 800 pages with suggestions, criticisms and revisions, and preparations for the Project are in full swing (Author’s note: Winter 1988). So all I can do here is give you an overview of it without going into great detail, trying to avoid the most common misunderstandings and prejudices. (It is very easy to misread this project.)

Possible misunderstandings

Often, people hear a few bits or details or rumors about Project A, and reply at once: “Well, this, we know, is such-and-such...” However, I can assure you that this project is a distinctly new plan, with some old ideas, some new, and some very original, combined and related, planned in a professional manner, and designed with a maximum of fantasy, revolutionary fervor and utopian vision. No more propaganda! Let’s get to the point:

Two basic aspects

We have to look at the Project under two different aspects: First, the microstructure of organization and economy that provides this project with a solid foundation, and secondly, the political dynamics, the course of development, and the perspective that has emerged from this foundation.

The economic microstructure

First, let’s talk about the economic microstructure, without forgetting that it is not all there is to Project A, but only the solid foundation on which everything that goes further is to be built.

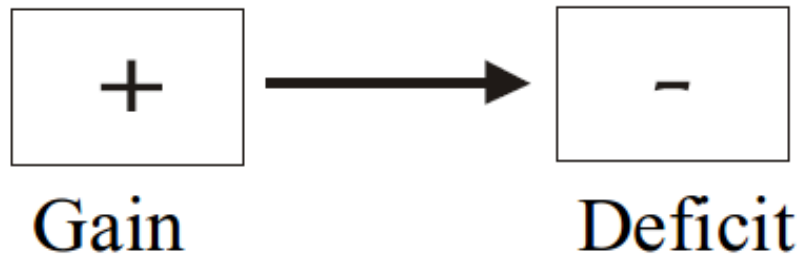
Project for a medium-sized city

Project A, in its initial phase, is a plan of conquest for a medium-sized German city (about 50,000) for a libertarian political/economic/cultural movement in order to make anarchism a popular force, accessible and important to the social life of the city and its surroundings. This attempt must, on the one hand, enable its participants to live a better life, as we said previously, and on the other hand, it must constitute a libertarian political perspective. This particular project, *Projekt A*, was designed for a medium-sized German city and for the specific exigencies of the Federal Republic of Germany, but the general idea behind this project and even some of its details can be easily adapted to any other reality, e.g., big cities, rural areas, or other countries.

The “dual project”

The smallest unit, which is composed by all the basis of Project A, is the so-called “dual project.”¹ The two squares symbolize:

The dual project



System in balance
= Economic basis

Diagram: “The dual project.” Two boxes are arranged side by side. One is marked with a plus-sign and labeled “Gain.” The other is marked with a minus-sign and labeled “Deficit.” An arrow emanates from the “Gain” box and is aimed at the “Deficit” box. Bottom caption: “System in balance = Economic basis.”

The idea behind the “dual project” is very simple. We always try to combine a project that brings in money with another that needs money, that is to say, one project that’s profitable with another that runs at a loss. To put it another way, we might call this the combination of a “commercial” project with a “political” project. However, we can’t maintain this distinction precisely because, due to the mutual relations of all projects within an overall strategy, we want all projects to have a certain political significance. To give one example: in an average city, a political bookstore can hardly be profitable, much less serve to earn a living for the comrades who run it. Therefore, let’s combine this library with a café, a bar, or a club. Because of this combination, this “dual project,” sited in the same building, organized by the same group of comrades, achieves its economic balance and might, if it is run responsibly, even draw a modest profit after paying salaries and overhead.

¹ In other writings, Stowasser compares the linking of disparate projects and areas of life to a “knitting pattern.”

The economic balance

Thus, after covering the deficit in the bookstore with the profit of the café, there is still a profit margin available that can be used for other purposes, of which more later.

Possible combinations

There are hundreds of useful and intelligent combinations of double, triple and quadruple projects. You can combine a disco with a cultural center or *ateneo*, a movie theater with a film cooperative, a garden with a food cooperative, a macrobiotic farm with a center of information on healthy eating, a hairdresser with a political club, a popular university with an immigrant assistance center, a printing press with a libertarian magazine, an advertising office with a publisher, a lawyers' collective with a legal aid project, a carpentry shop with a vocational training center, a garage with a center for alternative technological development, a grocery store with a center for third world aid, etc. Or, to give a concrete example: an Anarchist Documentation Center ("Das Anarchiv." that we have maintained for more than 15 years could be combined with a photocopy and stationery store, located near a school. Or, for another example: the typesetting firm in which I work will be combined with an advertising studio (commercial) and an anarchist magazine publisher (political) that we are planning.

Different products and services

Through this combination of dual and triple projects, we want to reduce this damned production of such "leftist," "hippie" or "countercultural" commodities, i.e., the production of folkloric items that are not primary necessities, as do many communities in Europe and America. Instead, we want to cover production and service in all the areas that we ourselves, and also the "ordinary people," need in everyday life. So far we have not found any profession that could not be intelligently combined with other projects, other than work as policemen, judges, landlords, generals, prostitutes, prison guards, etc. – all pretty rarely encountered in the anarchist milieu...

The community of living

Naturally, our goal is not limited to the creation of a series of successful businesses of the "dual project" type in order to assure the lives of a handful of anarchists. What's more, each "dual project" in turn, is linked to a living community. In this, those working in the dual projects and organize, share housing, lifestyle, the "private life," education of children, political activity, recreation, etc. Therefore, in the ordinary case, the collective work and community coexistence of a dual project is identical, working and living in one place. This principle comes to be symbolized by a triangle above the two squares:

So we create "units" consisting of the "dual project" ("political" sector / "economic" sector) and cohabitation ("private" sector). Each "unit" of this type is autonomous in regard to labor issues, lifestyle, mode of production, products and marketing, level of consumption, methods of payment, methods of educating children, all the way down to questions of various beliefs such as being vegetarian or not, consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, the abolition of money, private property, and many other things. In this way we achieve the creation of a vast field of experimentation with different modes and styles of life, work, and action, which are collective in nature without crushing individuality.

Experiencing diversity

Thus we avoid the uniformity, coercion, and terror of a false, authoritarian collectivism without falling into the other extreme of individualistic dispersion. This model gives us the opportunity

to participate in the greatest number of interesting experiments without the need for divisiveness. We can highlight the diversity of a libertarian society, that diversity within unity, i.e.: “lived anarchism.” In our model, a variety of different characters who could not work in the same collective may well cooperate in different “units” or relocate without these differences leading to the dismantling of the entire project, as is common in many collective experiments of recent years. Equally important is the possibility, for ourselves, of learning thereby a virtue that is indispensable for Anarchy: “libertarian tolerance.” We can fight our own prejudices towards the beliefs and lifestyles of other libertarians. Instead of polemicizing against comrades with other beliefs, we can cooperate with each other without forcing one another to change how we live. We can observe, know and perhaps understand each other much better than we do today. Pacifists and militants, vegetarians and meat-eaters, supporters and opponents of private property, proletarian, punk, or alternative comrades, those living in couples and those who practice free love, those who educate their children collectively or individually, those who prefer a frugal lifestyle and those who prefer luxury – all these can, despite their differences, cooperate, learn from one another, and maintain hundreds of useful relationships instead of arguing and fighting amongst themselves in a missionary spirit. Even more: they can overcome their mutual prejudices or change one another’s views by observation and experimentation. Nobody is forced to live according to a certain moral or particular style, no one is coerced into a standard of living and consumption, as long as the various forms practiced are not directly anti-anarchist or out of keeping with a minimum consensus of what we may call a general libertarian ethics.

We are all able to see how things work in the neighboring community and how the comrades live and work in the cooperative or the house of another neighborhood. They might even try out another way of life that may interest them, without committing to it, settling in another community on a trial basis, for a specified period. If they like it, they can either stay on or introduce this way of life to their own community, and if they are unhappy, they can return peacefully, without losing anything.

On the one hand, all of this is a rich field for us to learn libertarian diversity and tolerance, which is essential if we really want to make a libertarian society without violence or oppression. On the other hand, we can show everyone else, with obvious examples, that our “microsociety” is able to live the most diverse forms without the need for uniformity imposed by the collective whole, which can make understandable the anarchist view of the abolition of the State as a leveling artifice; then it would be an experience accessible to and understandable by any “ordinary” person.

No dogmas

Of course, this means that the idea that people who work in a collective should live communally is only an idea-model, not a dogma. Naturally, there will be people who live alone and work in a collective, as well as others who share a living space and work outside of it. We assume that the reality of such a project will not be strictly limited to forms of “dual project,” but will be a much more “chaotic” mix. We only draw up general schemes and avoid making strict new laws or rules of correct anarchist behavior. We believe that the goal of a project of this kind cannot be to live in a uniform way, but to show the evidence and the benefits of libertarian collectivity and diversity. The price of this freedom is the possibility of deviation, abuse, and decay. A little later, we will return to this danger and try to explain how we can avoid or reduce it.

The sterility of many alternative projects

However, even this would not be anything extraordinary. Currently, in many German cities, we find a more or less dense network of small projects and “alternative” communities, partially of libertarian inspiration. The number of jobs created in this alternative network amounts to 30,000, but there are hardly any relations between them (other than purely economic networks), and in this way, all these groups – most of them sterile – remain inert, contributing very little to changing society. Most of them barely able to organize their own survival, which absorbs all their energies. As a result, over the years, they become purely commercial enterprises that differ from the rest of the capitalist market only by the history of their ideas, their ecological mode of production, and their lack of bosses and hierarchies, without being actively involved in other social struggles or political activities beyond the business itself. Therefore, the Project attempts to go much further than what I have so far described as the “units” of the “dual projects.”

Common Links

The first step toward overcoming the isolation of the “units” in the direction of this broader perspective is simply the use of the profits that the “dual projects” generate after covering their necessities and any internal deficits. With this money, of course, we offer aid to those “dual projects” which are not balanced, i.e., so that their constituent projects operate at a net loss. With the rest of the collective funds, we can create new “dual projects” or add a third sector to a “dual project” that is not working well.

Political projects

There is also the possibility of investing this money on things that do not fit into the framework of the “dual projects.” we could, for example, finance a campaign of demands, support a strike, create local centers for resistance, social action, or cultural activities, buy equipment for collective use (bullhorns, video equipment, duplicators, leaflets, stickers, posters...) and thus intervene directly and with considerable infrastructure and financial power in the social struggles of that city. In short: by means of the “common fund” and our own dedication, we could participate in all those politico-social activities in which we are also actively engaged today, but with the difference that we currently lack a solid foundation, an infrastructure of people, equipment, and money, and also a strong collective psychology that is prepared to overcome frustration. I repeat: in Project A, we do not put an end to “pamphleteering anarchism” nor to the politico-social activities of today, but on the contrary, we give them a solid, powerful, and agile foundation, allowing us to intervene much more consistently and with greater satisfaction. Everyone can participate in these fields of politico-social activity: people from different collectives, communes, etc., and local citizens who are not involved in our specific structures. One advantage this has over the current situation, among others, is that our interventions in those struggles could make use of the hundreds of contacts we have through our “dual projects,” enterprises, and services to the population of the city, i.e., the respect that our project has garnered among the people, in the neighborhood, from workers, youth, women... This makes it possible for any politico-social activity to develop in ways that are much more likely to succeed than anything is currently.

The “council”

The politico-socio-cultural field, then, is the broader perspective that has to unify the various “dual projects” and that tends to prevent them from decaying and falling into a spirit of apolitical self-sufficiency. To organize and coordinate this effect, we create a so-called “Council” whose duties are much broader than simply managing the “common fund” and allocating that money. It is a kind of “jurisdiction” or “parliament” of the entire Project A. In its initial phase, this could easily be a full assembly of all the participants, in a structured and regular form. Later, as the Project

grows and acquires more complex structures, this “Council” may take the form of an assembly of delegates, all under an imperative mandate, with a rotation of functions, in which different committees would deal with specific issues and problems..., i.e., a model of direct democracy, like the system practiced in the Spanish Revolution or the early and authentic councils (soviets) of the Russian revolution. This Council must always be structured in a way that would prevent in advance any bureaucratization and any authoritarian and dictatorial structure. The “Council” has no executive powers. It cannot decide; it can only carry out collective decisions. It cannot order any “dual project” to do or not do this or that, since they are independent in their internal affairs. It can only give advice, structure discussions and critiques, and facilitate agreements, compliance with which is always the concern of the various collectives themselves and, ultimately, of the individuals that compose them. In the last analysis, the “Council” cannot impose fines or penalties or sentences; it can only exclude individuals or “dual projects” if all attempts to reach a consensus, an agreement, or a commitment have failed.

Learning mutual aid and discussion

Therefore, the nature of the “Council” is not really that of an “executive body” but rather a place to meet, to talk, to discuss problems, and to seek solutions where appropriate, where information and proposals are exchanged and where we must learn the difficult arts of speaking, listening, thinking and reasoning, mutual aid and mutual understanding. In fact, its proper functioning is a heavy burden for all of us, but at the same time, a challenge. It is an effort to practice that “anarchist democracy,” trying to reach a consensus on major issues and to live with our differences without damaging relationships and without jeopardizing the Project as a whole, forgetting our common goals. The Council is, therefore, one of the more delicate parts of the whole project, wherein we can prove our maturity and our seriousness.

The potential impact

In our sketch, the “Council” is symbolized by a new figure:

If now you try to imagine that this entire scenario is to be installed in one of these medium, provincial-type cities with political, cultural and economic weaknesses, perhaps you can understand what a considerably subversive dynamic resides in this model. This structure can spread (like a cancer – a benign cancer, of course!) or implant itself (like a mafia, our enemies will probably say) in order to slowly build up its structures, gaining power and influence in this city; before the local and provincial authorities really understand what is happening, our structures are diffused, are implanted, defending the positions they have conquered, when these exist, or creating them, if they do not exist.

Youth as “second generation”

Now try to imagine what would happen if, in addition, we “hijacked” the youth of this city... This we tried, creating numerous apprenticeships... And this at a time when unemployment is one of the worst scourges of the people and especially the young! The parents of these young people could hardly argue against these “bad anarchists” and maintain their prejudices if precisely these anarchists got their sons or daughters jobs. And for those young people who, having grown up for two or three years surrounded by and enrolled in our projects, started an apprenticeship in one of our enterprises, this form of “anarchism” is nothing exotic or strange, but is totally normal, totally commonplace. They have already come into contact with this alternative lifestyle many times, in our youth centers, in our clubs, in our cultural groups, in our rock bands, or in our cafés. And they could see perfectly well that a job in an anarchist collective means living and working

in more conditions that are freer, more pleasant, more satisfying, without leaders and without being exploited by anyone, participating in decisions themselves.

These people constitute the “second generation” of our project. They come directly from the chosen city and grow up directly within “lived anarchy.”

The population cannot ignore our reality

If you allow these perspectives, along with many others, to sink into your imagination, and if you risk a glance into the future, then after about ten years, an average family in this medium-sized city can hardly ignore our presence and this new reality. Any given family, day after day, will have the most diverse contacts with our different projects, initiatives, and activities. Sooner or later, they will be obliged to adopt some stance toward us. And the possibility that this stance will be more positive than negative is incomparably greater than in any of the circumstances faced by anarchist activities currently. Thus, for the first time in many decades, we would have the possibility of finding large parts of the population openly sympathizing with anarchist life, work, activity, and proposals. This could become a realistic possibility in the first five to ten years after the start of the Project.

The possibility of broad sympathy

We do not think, however, that this possibility is our ultimate goal. Obviously, it is only the beginning. It just means preparing the ground, laying a solid foundation on which offensive and defensive struggles can be organized and developed, with at least a realistic hope of finding support among the local population. This is what we mean by “breaking out of the ghetto” or “recreating popular anarchism.”

Individual perspectives; changing careers; traveling

With all these political considerations should not forget the individual perspectives. Naturally, in the initial phase of the first years, there will be little rest and much hard work. We do not have the slightest illusion about that. But in later years, within the structures that have been established, each has the most exciting and satisfying possibilities for their individual plans and prospects, such as changing jobs every few years and working in different fields, participating in different political, cultural, and recreational activities, combining the three basic points – work, personal happiness and political activity – without having to make further distinctions and separations between them, taking extended trips without fear of losing jobs and social contacts, developing personal relationships of affection, love and solidarity within a vast circle of friends and companions, growing with one’s children in a better environment, sharing a range of community establishments, equipment, and facilities that a single individual could never own (except for millionaires), and, finally, developing and implementing more exotic and utopian personal dreams.

Example of an “exotic” project

I want to give just a very personal example of such a dream: I have always dreamed of making a trip around the world in a big sailboat. As an individual, perhaps I could achieve this by working hard and spending all my money and energy on this one dream. But this would automatically mean that I could not simultaneously be active in the anarchist movement, nor could I realize half a dozen other dreams and projects that I consider important. In Project A, however, once it has attained some stability, this dream could very well be made real, becoming a “dual project.” we could buy, prepare and equip a boat, using the “common fund” and investing the labor of our own hands, using our own means of production, e.g., workshops, tools... Then this boat would be used for a period of two to three years to earn money, by carrying tourists in the Mediterranean,

for example. In that way, the money invested is amortized; in the process, this ship feeds two or three comrades who, at the same time, gain experience in navigation.

World Propaganda Travel

This boat would then be equipped with an international bookstore with the most interesting works, exhibitions, a small offset printer, camera equipment, slides and video, radio station and other means of propaganda tools in order to launch a worldwide tour anarchist propaganda, fraternity, passing through all ports in the world where libertarian groups, communities, environmental initiatives, and related anti-military. All this would be done with a big campaign that could be done under current motto and international such as disarmament, internationalism, anti-nuclear... Thus, we could easily achieve a global public attention comparable to the campaigns of Greenpeace and Amnesty International (possibly working with them), especially if we combine our journey with spectacular direct actions relating to the theme in the course of our voyage. During the trip, we could organize, in coordination with comrades in the ports of call, activities such as cultural events, film festivals, rock and folk concerts, parties, theater, filming, publication of brochures, newspapers, and leaflets... In this way, we would do a splendid job of disseminating libertarian ideas in many countries, linking groups and individuals from different places, and demonstrating that anarchism is an international movement capable of organizing international campaigns. We could invite comrades to encourage the people in different places to join the crew for a season, thus creating an international collective. In the ports, we would invite people to come on board, participate in festivals, conferences, lectures, events, films, etc. The crew could be refreshed, by air, for example, when it reached the Caribbean, changing over, making another year of tourism for raising funds, continuing their journey, and so on.

The end of artificial separations

If we now imagine a single moment of this trip by boat, can we define it as making money, enjoying life or making a political mission? It's all of these at once, and it would be impossible to differentiate between the three sectors. That is what I meant when I spoke at the beginning of overcoming the artificial boundaries between the economic, the private, and the political, and it is only one example from among all of those planned as part of our project.

Pragmatic and professional... Dreaming and loving

Thus, the existing general philosophy behind Project A is simply to achieve political, moral, and economic stability by combining these three elements in an intelligent and sophisticated way. In so doing, we attain an internal and external force that will make it very difficult for them to discredit, criminalize, ridicule, or even ignore us. This strength will give us, on the other hand, the possibility of winning the sympathy of the people, just in the course of living Anarchy. In this framework of values and strategies, we do not hesitate to admit that we will be pragmatic and professional to the extent necessary, nor we are ashamed to admit that we will be sensitive, dreamy, gentle, and loving in our internal relationships. Project A is a utopia for realists, a vision for pragmatists.

Relying on this power, combining these three basic aspects in every detail of our work, we think we can establish this strong base and stable environment.

Where is it today, in the anarchist movement?

Critiques

Well, what is all this for? Is it not an excuse for a few decadent anarchists to add a political justification to the comforts of a good life? We think not. If anyone has understood Project A in this way, they have not understood anything about our ideas and probably very little about

Anarchy. Of course it is not only legitimate but necessary to make a better life, and if you can make a living and spread “lived Anarchy,” so much the better! The critics who tell us that we cannot achieve anything within this system, that it is impossible to take root and corrupt capitalism from within, that in non-revolutionary times little or nothing can be done... all their criticism in the end boils down to one question: Is there life before the revolution? We answer this question decisively in the affirmative.

Reformist or revolutionary?

On the contrary, is it not the case that the eternal lamentation of the “bad times,” of the people’s lack of interest in revolutionary concepts, of the impossibility of change under these circumstances, etc., is nothing but an excuse for one’s own inactivity, for a lack of ideas, and for fatalism? Think about it...

Revolutionary affirmation

But could it not be, on the contrary, that Project A serves no purpose other than to alleviate the ills of capitalist society? Could it be anything but a vast cooperative business, tolerated as long as it operates within neutral areas of society, where it cannot cause harm? Is there not a great danger that this whole structure would be fully integrated into and digested by this system? Does it not finally come to be a pillar of support for a rotten system, which is what allows it to survive and to perform social tasks in hidden corners of society, where state structures fail and do not work, making the system’s contradictions more bearable for people? In a word: Is Project A reformist or revolutionary?

We give two answers:

1. The danger of co-optation undoubtedly exists, but we think we can counter it.
2. Project A is fully revolutionary.

Confusion about the revolution

I want to clarify this position:

The question is, naturally, what we mean by “revolution.” There is much confusion about this and many strange concepts proliferate. We understand the term “revolution” in the original, etymological meaning of the word: for a society to *re-volve* or begin anew, giving rise to a profound and not a superficial change, overthrowing a system and replacing it with something better. This concept says nothing about the form of the revolution: whether it is to be achieved by barricades or leaflets, violently or peacefully, by the working class or the intellectuals or by just anybody, by frontal and direct opposition to the system or creating another system that replaces the old, by means of unions, affinity groups, collectives, etc. In fact, Project A adopts a posture of neutrality towards the different concepts of revolution, past and present. We have no specific preferences and do not claim to know the one true way to “the revolution.” We are not prophets, and we refuse to preach whether the revolution must be made one way or another.

The project is not “the revolution” but its precondition

Project A is not the revolution, but a series of preliminary and necessary steps toward it. Project A only attempts – to the extent that we are planning, preparing, and producing the solid foundation upon which the revolution becomes a possibility. We want to build the framework in which there is some assurance that, after a possible exceeding of the old system, there will be embryonic, functional and virulent forms of another, better system ready to replace it.

Pacifist, no; peaceful, yes

In Project A, currently, we have anarchists of all kinds: pacifists and militants, syndicalists and philosophers, workers and theorists, ecologists and pragmatists, and the majority do not belong

to any definite trend. Equally diverse are our concepts of how it happened and made a revolution. But we are united by a strong consensus that any desirable revolution would have to involve as little violence as possible.

Revolution and insurrection

Two concepts that should not be confused are often mixed up: *revolution* and *insurrection*. An insurrection is a revolt, a riot, a spontaneous contestation that might be able to bring down a system. This does not mean that an insurrection automatically turns into a revolution. History offers experiences of all kinds: there have been insurrections that only ended up installing new dictatorships, there have been revolutions that triumphed without an insurrection and insurrections that were able to give rise to a successful revolution. Anything is possible. However, in the popular imagination – and in the anarchist imagination – the concept of revolution is closely linked to that of insurrection. They are often used as synonyms.

Phenotype and genotype

This view is not only wrong but harmful, because it leads to misleading results. In fact, those who think that everything violent is automatically revolutionary and everything peaceful automatically reformist, just take into account the *phenomena* of things. They attempt to characterize the inner nature of an event while taking into account only their outward forms. You can't judge the contents of a can without looking inside. In Project A, we speak of "phenotype" and "genotype," two terms borrowed from biology. The "phenotype" means the outward appearance, the surface presentation, the shape of an event. The "genotype" is the inner development of the same event, the direction that it will take, its quality. Consequently, we are very careful about judging whether social movements are revolutionary or reformist when we see only their surface forms of action.

Chicago, 1886

For example, were the anarchist workers of Chicago in 1886 revolutionary or reformist? Well, according to the judgment of some of today's young German anarcho-purists, they must have been mere reformists. What were they fighting for? For the eight hour day! Thus, they had the same purpose as Germany's reformist trade union, the DGB. Such a view only takes into account the "phenotype" of the movement and "forgets" that those workers were participating in a strategy with revolutionary goals and fought for the improvement of their living conditions, better wages and reduced working hours, not as an integral part of the system, but as a first step to overcoming that system. The demand, as a phenomenon, can be reformist or revolutionary, depending on the context of the struggle and the perspective that is involved, i.e., the "genotype." The Chicago workers developed their struggles within a popular movement, with a good, solid, and solidary organizational structure, as we try to create it (in a form appropriate to our society today) in our project. In short: the "genotype" of the struggles of Chicago was revolutionary, even as the "phenotype" of some of their actions, viewed in isolation, may seem "reformist."

Spain, 1936

Or take the famous Spanish example. It's really amazing that so few anarchists understand that the Spanish revolution did not begin in 1936, but some forty years earlier. What was the CNT doing for all these years? What was the International doing in Spain before the creation of the CNT? Not only those well-known heroic attempts of general strikes, riots, insurrections and expropriation, but at the same time, a whole series of "reformist" things: creating and installing their unions, setting up schools and stores, worker and agricultural cooperatives, workshops, cultural centers, printing presses for books, cultural and philosophical magazines, forming struc-

tures in the neighborhoods, fighting for bread, jobs, higher wages, reduced hours, decent working conditions, and more.

The everyday task

In other words, this package also did all the quiet, basic work, that continuous, everyday, boring, dirty work, frustrating and difficult in spite of all its little steps, classically “reformist,” and, from a “phenotypic” point of view, identical to the work performed by any social democratic, liberal or christian-democratic party today, or even as the Catholic Church does in its social mission. But only on the surface. For the CNT was preparing itself at the same time to take the factories into its own hands, to revolutionize agriculture, to organize distribution, to implement libertarian communism. It armed itself for when it would come time to overthrow the reaction, and finally triumphed, if only for a few years. Without this foundation of a “reformist” phenotype, a “people in arms” would never have appeared, and those who took up the gun would have been a few crazies, totally isolated and without the slightest chance of winning. If you look at the average activity of any ordinary CNT nucleus in any year between 1906 and 1936, you will find just such a reformist “phenotype.” However, we all know that the CNT was extremely revolutionary. A contradiction? Not at all! When we take into account the “genotype,” the essence of Spanish anarcho-sindicalism, we understand that within its totality, everything changed its value: then, even those acts of reformist “phenotype” are part of a process of revolutionary “genotype.” Both concepts are mutually dependent. The CNT made several improvements, minor alterations, before ’36. But none of them had ever changed society in a radical way. On the other hand, the pure and heroic gesture of insurrection would not have succeeded as it did in ’36 if the CNT had not created this stable foundation with its ongoing work in small “reformist” steps for all those previous years.

The “secret recipe” of the Spanish Revolution

That is the “secret recipe” of the Spanish revolution and other few anarchist revolutions that briefly achieved success: the anarchists of yesteryear did not consider themselves above dealing even with the little everyday problems of their contemporaries and of themselves, in order to propose, at the right moment, a radical solution that could then be followed by the so-called “masses.”

One must prepare for the crisis of capitalism

The strategy of Project A follows the same philosophy: we do not know how and when that “right moment” will come. A state system could fall into crisis very quickly and unexpectedly, almost always due to outside factors and not because of our social agitation. No one can predict today whether a revolutionary situation in Germany may be tomorrow or in twenty years. But we must be prepared, well prepared, to respond properly to a situation. A power vacuum like what appeared in Spain in July 1936 does not necessarily lead to a libertarian revolution. One can easily fall into the other extreme: a fascist dictatorship or other such filth.

Overthrow the trust in institutions

So the best way to prepare is to create solid structures, to allow many, many people to have the most diverse experiences of lived Anarchy, to make them see that self-management is possible, to make them lose all fear, respect, and trust toward state institutions, to enable them to take their destiny into their own hands at the right moment, and to give them courage. And this courage in themselves is gained through many small experiments, increasingly large each time, experiments that we can begin to make today. Of course, the Spanish revolution would not have triumphed with only these small steps, without the workers taking the guns from the barracks

and breaking the resistance of the rebel generals. That was not a small step, but a large one. But it happened because the workers were prepared for this; they had learned in advance! Nonetheless, they were not professional militarist-revolutionaries, but simply workers in struggle. And after two or three days of open warfare on the streets of Barcelona, these same workers knew exactly how to organize their factories without bosses and how to organize the social life of an entire country. Because they had prepared well for this! They had the basis, the sympathy, the solidarity, and the confidence needed to win and achieve this profound revolution. They had no problem intelligently combining elements of the “reformist” phenotype with others of a “revolutionary” phenotype.

The myth of violent struggle

This is the right path to achieving the revolution, and I think that this is the reason why many of the comrades of Project A are not one hundred percent pacifists. The thing is that they do not glorify violence or see it as a value in itself. The problem, unfortunately, is that in the historical mythology of revolution, the struggle and the insurrection come to be glorified, the rest forgotten.

The analogy with anarcho-syndicalism

In Project A, we want not to forget “the rest.”

We began by taking a first step, and we think that even if it looks “reformist” to some, it is truly revolutionary. Anyone who re-reads the historical discussions that took place when, at the beginning of the century, the new idea of “syndicalism” entered the anarchist movement – for example, the famous Amsterdam Congress of 1908 – will also see that, at that time, many purist anarchists argued that any kind of syndicalism would necessarily be reformist. They also took into account only the “phenotype” of anarcho-syndicalism and forgot its “genotype.” In reality, anarcho-syndicalism has been, to this day, the most successful libertarian current. But we do not live in the thirties; all we want to do is to make a contemporary response to our present reality.

This concept of revolution is capable of resolving the apparent contradiction in the history of revolutions: why the same efforts led to different results. Why did a heroic uprising, for example in Germany, Italy, or the U.S., fail, while another equally heroic uprising succeeded elsewhere, for example, in Spain, the Ukraine, and Argentina? The most important reason is the fact that what is sufficient for the triumph of a revolution is not the degree of heroism and dedication in and of itself, but its contours: the stability and level of the foundation from which the revolt emerges.

The “imaginary line of resistance”

Every revolution has to deal with what we call the “imaginary line of resistance.” This line is composed of two factors: the resistance in the minds of people who fear a revolution instead of desiring it. The tactical end of each revolution must be to weaken the line of resistance, to perforate and eliminate it.

Punctures and constant work

This can be done in two ways: to perforate and destroy it with continuous punctures or to weaken it and thus overcome resistance in the public mind. Obviously we cannot ever overcome this line in the minds of dictators and capitalists simply by good arguments. Therefore, uprisings, riots, general strikes, etc., i.e., the “punctures” will most likely be necessary at certain times. This means perforating the “line” by means of a direct struggle. On the other hand, we can never overcome the “line of resistance” in the minds of those people whom we want to “liberate” by using force and insurrection against them. Therefore, the task of undermining this “resistance in the mind” must be made with models of “lived Anarchy,” by giving examples, by creating virulent counterstructures, thus making the revolution something that more and more people want rather

than fear, with many small experiments that give them the courage and knowledge to achieve it. This means, therefore, that both forms are necessary and that the task of anarchists should be to maintain the least violent form possible.

Raising the level of the base

This can be achieved by being active in two areas: first we have to raise the level of the base from which a revolt may rise. This is the “solid foundation” I referred to so frequently earlier. Secondly, we have to weaken the resistance in the minds of people. It is in these two fields that Project A wants to start working now. We teach only one possible way; anyone can do similar and analogous things.

This is the place of Project A within the schema of the revolution. Project A is not “the revolution,” nor is it intended to be such, but it is a necessary preliminary step.

Creating a rich libertarian culture in everyday life

What we want to accomplish within the next ten, twenty, thirty years is precisely to create a vast libertarian culture in everyday life. In the diagram above, this would be the gray layer, the level of case 2, the base for the revolution, which in turn can feed on the same base. In this picture you can easily see that an identical effort of revolt, starting from a weaker and lower base, does not even touch the “line of resistance” in the course of its brief duration, much less penetrate it. We all know – especially in Germany – this dynamic from the small local militant struggles of the last twenty years which failed precisely for lack of an adequate base and each time fell back to zero. They started from a very low level, when the line of resistance that had to be pierced was still very thick and strong.

An identical effort, however, by acting in a constant and repetitive manner, may well pierce the line of resistance, if it starts from a high and stable level, which – in its turn – has already weakened this line of resistance. And if the holes are repeated and made frequently, we will have what is, by definition, a revolutionary situation, and if the penetration is perpetual, we have the revolution itself. The Spanish Revolution actually started from a very high level and had to punch through a very weak line of resistance on the part of the system and very little in the minds of many people. And this was precisely the result of forty years of continuous work, dedication, and a vastly disseminated libertarian culture. This is exactly what we want to create with our Project A.

The “negative identification” with the state

Let me illustrate this theory with a simple experience, which, probably, you can share on many occasions: Nowadays, most people are unenthusiastic about the State or even less so about the government. They have what we call a “negative identification” with the state. It’s easy to get any person to agree with you on the following judgments: that the government is a mafia, that the State is criminal, that taxation is theft, that officials are corrupt, that the authorities are a bunch of arrogant bastards, that the going rates are tantamount to blackmail, etc.; many anarchists believe, consequently, that these people are also anarchists in the bottom of their hearts and also want to abolish the State. These anarchists simply forget the other side of the coin: the same people are afraid of any revolution and would quickly agree that the State, nevertheless, is also a kind of insurance, which pays pensions and unemployment benefits, builds schools, roads and hospitals, maintains a certain order, and, in principle, prevents you from being assaulted and robbed at knife-point... “Nevertheless,” people often say, “things are not that bad, and if the State disappeared, they could be much worse.”

The fear of revolution

Thus, they don't want any revolution. They have something to lose, and what we want to offer is very nebulous: they have never had a lived, tangible, accessible experience of it. Where should these people find confidence that they could build a better future? This "negative identification" with the state of today is probably much more difficult to overcome than the blind nationalism and irrational chauvinism of the past. That's why you can no longer convince people merely with some well-structured arguments that make them understand their discontent nor by some other exemplary action; only concrete examples can convince them that things will get better if we take them into our own hands.

Our first concrete steps

Well, I think I have said enough of dreams and theories. In so doing, I have drifted far enough from that German city and the gray reality in which we are living now. The important question that now arises is how do we go from "now" to the "tomorrow" I just described? And what are our concrete steps? What is the schedule that we want to follow?

Chronology

The chronology I will try to give you now must be in a very short, abbreviated form. It has much to do with the special administrative and technical details of the Federal Republic of Germany, and I will try not to get lost in them because the reality in each country is different. Therefore, little can be generalized from this owing to different national realities.

The "preparatory phase"

For us, a very good preparation of the Project is of great importance. Most of us came from and have remained active in the German anarchist movement for many years, so we all know how quickly time passes and the ease with which the years slip away. We do not want to waste time due to poor or hasty preparation or with premature nonsense. Our motto in this regard is very simple: "We are in a great hurry; that's why we are preparing very slowly."

Let us form a group

After publishing the book we defined the "preparatory phase." This is where we now stand [authors note: see the introductory page on the current situation]. During this phase, certain things have to be achieved: we have to get to know one another, not just by writing letters and exchanging political ideas and opinions but also as persons, in our lives and in our characters. We have to form a group in the broad sense of the word: politically, economically, individually, and psychologically. These different processes take time.

Professions

We have to find people in the right professions, as defined either by title or by self-taught skills or completing on-the-job professional training, and with the trades that they wish to realize in the future project.

Discuss the concept

We have to form small groups which will form the future "dual projects." We must raise the money necessary to purchase equipment, buildings and land, once chosen the city. We must return to critically discuss the content of the book "Das Projekt A," which is nothing but a general proposal, in order to change it, to complete it, and to develop a new concept with which all of us can identify.

We have to get to know one another in ordinary and extraordinary situations. To do this, we visit one another, organize meetings and rallies, camps and trips, plan small, temporally-limited projects on which we collaborate, and so on.

Structure

We need to organize an entire structure of national, regional, or professional gatherings where we hold discussions, make decisions, work out details, and plan the next steps. We must create an uncensored bulletin for internal debate, critique, and information where all can express themselves. We need psychodynamic sessions and games to learn to open up to one another, training ourselves to be sensitive and understanding to all. We have to analyze the potential flaws and risks of our project and develop counter-strategies. We must anticipate and weigh the possible rejection and repression. All this and much more belongs to the “preparatory phase.”

End of preparations

This phase is not defined by time but by quality. This means that this phase does not end after a certain time, but at the moment we are convinced that all those needs have been met and that there is nothing more to discuss but that conditions are ripe to begin. Once we have found the right people in the right place, gathered the money and professional skills, found the right city and developed the Project in the right way, according to the sense of the group, we begin.

Finding the right place

An adequate city must be found during the preparatory phase. We have designed a kind of list of criteria with a system of evaluation. These criteria cover aspects such as the ecological environment, urban quality, the prices of houses, buildings and land, political and cultural activities, presence of other social movements, political and administrative structure, economic strength, structure coexisting with industries, utilities and commerce, distance to other major urban centers, agriculture and handicrafts, the possibility of collaboration with other projects and more local alternative. In a second step, we create “patronage” for the cities favored and proposed by different partners, thus reducing the number of candidates again. In a third stage, after further reducing the number of cities, we send “spies” to the remaining sites in order to live there for a while and get the most information and impressions. At the same time, each group member has the opportunity to visit these cities in person. Finally we take a joint decision in accordance with the results, hoping to find the city that is more or less “optimal” for us and our specific project.

Archgroup and pioneering groups

Meanwhile, the clarification process in the most diverse groups have made progress, so that we can create what we call the “archgroup,” i.e., people who are already fully convinced and ready to make commitments and obligations. Until now, the presence in the group has been completely free and has not carried any obligations. Now, however, there are commitments of all sorts, freely entered into, moral, legal and economic. Each group can unite its components according to their view and we believe that, in cases where there are large investments of money, it may even sign legal contracts to avoid an eternal fight in the event that the politico-moral commitment fails.

Commitment

Recall, however, that each “dual project” is autonomous in setting its structures and that, with respect to the Project as a whole, there is only a moral obligation. However, as the experience of many alternative projects of the past twenty years, it seems appropriate to establish in advance how a group is dissolved in case of a dispute; the conventions should be established while the group is fully in harmony.

Economic fundraising

Another process to be undertaken during the preparatory phase is to gather the monies needed for investment. In principle, each collective (dual project) needs to prepare itself. This will probably be done in a very conventional and traditional way: working and saving money, getting credit, contributing existing capital (savings accounts, selling property, etc.), obtaining loans from fam-

ily and friends, organizing solidarity campaigns, cashing in current or future inheritances. Others may help initially with material goods such as computers, vehicles, machinery, land, houses, experiences, etc. Additionally, we can sell solidarity bonds, organize concerts for the benefit of the Project and create a sort of support group among supporters, friends and comrades outside the Project who can make donations. Moreover, from the beginning, we will open a joint checking account, in which everyone who is currently interested or a future participant will contribute a fixed monthly fee on their own behalf, according to their economic situation.

This money, little at first but accumulating as it is nourished by many small donations from month to month, is not to be used for or by any specific “dual project,” but will be pooled.

Our common housing

The first sum is “symbolic” of our collective unity, and should be used just after the start for benefits for all, whether as a general emergency fund or to buy equipment that we need. This common fund and its administration is the beginning, the embryonic form of the “Council” described above, and in this form, this “Council” can begin working before the actual startup. As I said, then this fund will be fed by the profits that each “dual project” generates. It will thus be one of the preventive measures which we overcome the various crises that most surely suffer in the process of the first months and years.

Financial independence from the state

We all agree that we want to keep the size of debts and loans as small as possible and that no project should depend on government or semi-governmental subsidies and grants, which are very common in Germany, Scandinavia, Australia, etc. This decision is not so much a moral as a pragmatic decision. We have no difficulties accepting money from the state (because after all, it is money that comes from the people, and we would make better use of it than, say, the army), but we want to avoid our project depending on the state and becoming subject to all kinds of pressure and blackmail, as has happened with many projects in Germany.

Any subsidy will therefore be, for us, an extraordinary amount, but each project must be conceptualized so that it can also exist without this kind of “support.”

Where to find people?

The last major issue related to the preparatory phase is as follows: where and how to find the people who are needed to begin the Project?

A project for everybody

Obviously, the first “recruitment” will take place through the dissemination of the book. These people come mostly directly or indirectly from the anarchist movement. This is not necessarily an advantage. Project A is not defined as a project for anarchists. On the contrary, it is defined as an anarchist project for everyone. We have in this regard another very simple motto: “Any person who really wants to live this way and shows it seriously is sufficiently anarchist for us, no matter how they define themselves.” We want not to slap labels on people but to evaluate them as people. Certainly, no authoritarian character will feel at home among us and within these libertarian structures. What we want to achieve from the beginning, to create structures open and welcoming to all, especially for those “ordinary people” whom we wish to convince. Recall what I said: in the initial phase we deploy our “pioneers,” and by the “second generation” we find and recruit them from the local population.

Avoid sensational advertising

Still, we do not doubt that this project will start with 80% anarchists. This is because we are careful to avoid all advertising and tabloids. We do not want to unnecessarily alert the police, the

courts, or the local authorities, the banks, the administration, or the press, television, etc. Otherwise, they could easily mount the specter of a “dark anarchist conspiracy” that could hamper our way even before it had begun, causing the failure of the entire project. Therefore, the book and other information is not transmitted or by libraries and publicly, but person to person, via libertarian networks existing in Germany. I don’t mean that it is a secret or paranoid project, but that we want to reduce the risk of premature and damaging publicity.

Avoid weakening the anarchist movement

The danger that this project will weaken other anarchist projects and organizations by pulling the best militants away from them is relatively small, since Project A especially interests those anarchists who until now did not have clear perspectives or were not satisfied by the work that they were doing.

Balancing the group: the “selection” process

Therefore, we are trying to create a balance, to achieve a harmonious group. We will openly admit that the process of forming the “archigroup” is a process of selection. The process is one of “mutual” selection. There is no authority to decide, but we all decide together through an everyday process of meeting and sharing experiences. Those who fail to manifest the necessary seriousness and interest will not find other comrades to form a dual project with them and thus will exclude themselves by their own lack of confidence, seriousness, and maturity. In this respect, Project A is not open to “all.” We are not liberal but libertarian. We take the principle of free consent and social contract as seriously as anyone can.

Warning

For this reason, we continue to make a clear warning to all enthusiasts of weak will who may cross our path: this project means hard work, and it requires discipline, dedication, enthusiasm, realism, and perseverance. It is not a hobby but, for most of us, a lifetime perspective. It is a project for dreamers, but only for realistic dreamers. Consequently, we have published a sort of “ideal” description of the composition of our group.

Mutual sympathy: youth, women, children, and elders

First, we are looking for nice people who won’t bring their frustration, aggression, or indifference to the Project. We need people who are optimistic without getting lost in blind enthusiasm. The criterion of “mutual liking” will probably become extremely important in the first contact, perhaps more than theoretical affinity for one another’s political ideals. It would be dangerous if most of the members were very young. Partners of sixteen or eighteen are easily excited by a concept, but after a few months or years, they feel a great need to change, to see other parts of the world, to have other experiences. It would be irresponsible to subject them to moral pressure to stay and fulfill their commitments. On the other hand, if they departed in large numbers, this could quickly jeopardize the whole project. Of course, this is a risk we run generally, and age is not the only risk factor. In reality, there are some positive exceptions. We just want to make sure the average age of the members is balanced, and of course younger and older people will be involved. On the other hand, the people we are looking for must bring some political and working experience.

The “ideal” participant

A person who has never suffered a political defeat, who is easily disappointed by the initial frustrations of the Project, will lose all hope. And we have no doubt that we will experience many frustrations and occasionally suffer defeat... A person who has suffered past frustrations without becoming pessimistic and bitter would be ideal for our project. Another concern is the balance

between women and men, which is usually in bad shape. We strongly hope that this project is capable of providing women with every opportunity for self-fulfillment and well-being and of making it possible even for men to become good “feminists” in the best sense of the word. In fact, there is already a group of women who are developing their own activities. We also want to integrate many children into our project, because a free and libertarian education is one of our concerns for the future. A project without children is a dead project, a project without a future... Finally, we want to create places where older people can live with dignity. This is not the place to describe the many plans we have in this direction, but, after all, we all know that we will be tomorrow’s old and none of us wants to grow old in those inhumane and undignified conditions common to modern welfare states. In addition, an aspect that led to these considerations is the shameful way in which the anarchist movement, which calls for a high humanitarian ideal, often lets its own senior comrades live and die in deplorable conditions.

In short, we are looking for skilled, experienced, middle-aged people of libertarian tendencies, able, if possible, to contribute both materially and ideologically, who are realistic dreamers, possessing some ability to cope with frustrations and the necessary amount of enthusiasm. Introducing these criteria, we prefer to grow slowly for a higher quality group. These conditions, which may seem somewhat rigid, are actually open to exceptions, which can be made by any “dual project” or by the Project as a whole. They are provided mostly for the composition of the “archigroup” and early “pioneer groups,” which face a hard and difficult situation in the initial phase, requiring all energy to go toward establishing the Project and defending it against the first attacks. In later periods, once the Project is solidly installed, we can reduce or waive all of these conditions.

“Problematic” support groups

We even think that the Project can take on a great function of integrating groups of people who are marginalized or who face certain problems, such as drug addiction, alcoholism, mental disabilities, and so on, incorporating them into various collectives.

Infiltration of the site

The first step toward the chosen city, of course, will not be for an invasion of anarchists to flood the town on some given day. We settle little by little and start to install those projects that are essential by virtue of their technical or infrastructural necessity. We also want those comrades who are currently among the ranks of the unemployed to be the first installed. Meanwhile, other, smaller projects that are already under way will continue to wait, as will those comrades who are still working in their former high-wage professions, so that, if necessary, they can provide financial and moral support during the first crisis that the “pioneers” may suffer. These, in turn, can find local housing and land suitable for those who are waiting. Thus we effect a kind of “infiltration” which may last approximately two years.

Security

In this way, we avoid giving a major “shock” to the local population, which may feel invaded, at the same time that we establish a kind of economic security at the outset. Having completed this “infiltration phase” with three, four, or five waves of settlement, Project A really begins to be a political factor, openly on the offensive. Having overcome the first problems and crises, we have the time and dedication needed to go out in public and openly present a social, political and cultural alternative.

And that closes the circle. What we want to develop and happen from that point on is as I explained above.

Changing the concept, if necessary

These are our basic ideas for the launching of the Project. Of course, the specific situation of the locality should also be considered: if projects that we want to install already exist there, we can change our plans or even try to compete with the existing projects; it depends if we can get along. On the other hand, if we see lacks and necessities that we had not previously considered, we can change our plans and mount other new projects. Additionally, before we begin, we want to reach all kinds of “alternative” people in the city, to gather their opinions on our plans and perhaps to gain their support or even their membership in the Project.

Expansion of the Project

Attracting people of conscience

A network spanning the whole country

Obviously, our ultimate goal is the infiltration of a small city, to act subversively there in order to create a sort of anarchist island.

...Our ultimate goal, however, is for the spirit of Project A, its essence, to spread and grow. We want to be contagious in all respects. We want to encourage this process on both the local and national levels, thinking at the same time of a not too distant future that may even see interesting possibilities for international contacts and cooperation. Locally, we want to expand quickly to the suburbs, to neighboring towns, to the entire region, to other nearby cities. We do not first create new “dual projects” and subversive nuclei ourselves, but encourage sympathizers whom we have gradually gotten to know to create their own political, cultural, and economic initiatives. We will quickly establish trust with the people of the region, and we can encourage them, lending our moral and material aid to their efforts to accomplish the Projects that they find worthwhile. Furthermore, we think that in the first phase, our way of life and action will be more attractive to “alternative” and “progressive” people than to “ordinary” people. If our models actually work, we think that this will inspire many of them. Thus, Project A starts to grow and spread around the city. Nationally, we naturally want to maintain close and brotherly relations with all sorts of libertarian groups and individuals, even encouraging similar experiments or adaptations of the same methods. It is likely that the discussion of Project A, during its preparatory phase, will generate not a single project A, but projects B, C, and D in different parts of Germany, Austria or Switzerland. But even if this doesn't happen, we think that our experiment, by not failing, may generate some excitement and inspiration in the libertarian movement, which then will try to mount similar projects in their cities, following our example. We think we can speed this process by supporting a magazine that informs people about the Project, doing public relations work, receiving visitors, and inviting the curious. Thus, over a period of ten years or so, we will cover all of Germany with a more or less dense network of projects or initiatives. Each one of them, like ours, will also diffuse itself within its own region, making this network increasingly dense.

International perspectives

There are also some mature ideas for making “the Project” into an international phenomenon. First, we might serve the many contacts that already exist with the international libertarian movement, informing them, inviting them, and encouraging them to develop similar concepts, adapted to the realities of their countries. Of course, this is not a matter of starting a new ideological trend but of spreading some basic ideas, such as breaking out of the anarchist ghetto, winning popularity and trust among the population, trying to unite the political with the private and the economic, etc.

Adapting the ideas

It is clear that an adaptation of Project A, which was designed for the realities of Germany, will be very different in the U.S., Spain, Turkey, Australia, and Uruguay, for instance. While in Spain we will probably have to seek a union of militant anarcho-syndicalist struggles with everyday life, the creation or development of a libertarian labor movement is still a future goal in Germany. In Turkey, no doubt, the land question will play a more important role than in the U.S., and in Australia, the Projects would likely be strongly influenced by the existence of large communes in the countryside. But these are differences of “phenotype.” as for the “genotype,” this could well provide for solidarity and international cooperation. In Germany, to achieve this international diffusion, we have the great advantage of migration. Through the ties that, for instance, Turkish, North African, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian migrant workers have, we can create nuclei in these countries. Similarly there are opportunities in Eastern Europe, for example, East Germany or Poland.

Particularly in countries with no libertarian tradition or movement, such as Morocco or Turkey, we believe that economic models with a libertarian basis (e.g., cooperatives) have many advantages over mere anarchist propaganda of the “pamphleteering” kind, which will almost automatically be illegal in these places. By contrast, we can establish strong and direct political, economic, and cultural ties with countries where there are strong libertarian structures such as Spain, France, Italy, USA, and some parts of Latin America. We believe in an intensive exchange of comrades, living and working for a time with different groups in different countries.

International campaigns

We are perfectly equipped to organize solidarity and informational campaigns to support direct struggles taking place in foreign countries. Finally, we can import and market the products of libertarian cooperatives or self-managed workshops to be sold in Germany, using the sale of these products to disseminate political information on the specific conditions of its production and distribution. Here, again, is an example of linking politics with economics... But these are all plans for the future, once our project has been installed and stabilized.

Spreading a “virus”

Our main goal therefore is to convert the Project to a social reality and to spread the “virus” over the whole surface of our country. Thus we give a new impetus revitalizing the libertarian movement and bring a lot of people to the libertarian lifestyle and culture, i.e., “lived anarchism.” This could easily be a major new strategy of anarchism, which might well be supplemented by other existing strategies such as anarcho-syndicalism, anti-militarism, ecological control, pacifism or local militant struggle.

Opening a new front

If you like, we can speak of opening a “new front” in the fight against the system, a “front” that is very complex and difficult for our enemies to define and fight because it is an completely legal area and a subversive dynamism that is difficult to detect. This subversive dynamism combats the state in the minds of the people, generates experiences of self-management, creates embryonic forms of counter-society, and gives many people the spirit and encouragement they need to oppose the system directly. We are quite convinced that, through the spread of our many popular experiments, many people will lose their confidence in the state and, to the same extent, gain confidence in their own abilities. We do not believe, however, that all these people “infected” by the libertarian virus will automatically become convinced anarchists.

“Positive” tolerance

Nor is it necessary for them to do so. But we do believe that through this procedure, many “ordinary people” will have at least a realistic chance to reach what we call a “positive tolerance” for the anarchist ideas and ways of living and acting that will replace the “negative identification” with the State that we previously described. This is the first step. For anarchists, at least in Germany, this first step means nothing less than an opportunity that has not existed for fifty years. If in our city, for example, 30% of the population sympathized openly with us, this “positive tolerance” would constitute a base of support that anarchists haven’t had in decades. And this “positive tolerance” could become a source of active and direct support in any particular conflict that might arise.

Synthesis

In summary, with our project, we

-
- break down the current society;
-
- learn about, experiment with, and create embryonic forms of a new society;
-
- teach models of self-management to the population;
-
- ridicule and fight against State institutions, making them redundant by providing substitutes for them, weakening and crumbling them;
-
- create newer, better structures that are accessible to all, and
-
- in the process of bringing all of this about, make a modest but happy life for ourselves.

Entering society instead of withdrawing from it

We do not want to create a “new world” outside of capitalism, isolated and self-sufficient, as proposed by the German anarchist Gustav Landauer, for example, before the First World War (although we are close to Landauer in some other respects); instead, we want to produce active, virulent, subversive nuclei within society in order to overcome capitalism. We know perfectly well that true self-management and a real libertarian society are not possible within capitalism. But this must not lead to fatalism and ceasing to build new embryonic structures that are capable of breaking down the system even if, initially, in seemingly small and unimportant areas.

We do not withdraw, we enter. We attack the system in multiple ways, at multiple levels, both above and below ground.

Avoid military conflict

We do not necessarily attack where the system is extremely strong and well prepared, but in those areas where it is weak and does not have counter-strategies ready. Consider, for example, a stupid strategy, attacking the state-capitalist system in open battle on that very field where it finds its classical superiority: military struggle. Not only would we lose this battle because of our incredible inferiority of strength, experience, and mentality, we would also have to sacrifice our anarchist ideals to become a paramilitary apparatus.

Depriving the state of the people’s loyalty

We prefer first to beat the State in the popular consciousness, then within social realities and through the offensive, subversive direct action of the people. We want people to disengage from all allegiance to the State, taking their destiny into their own hands.

Let me now ask you a simple question:

What nation can resist such a movement for long?

World revolution

So ultimately our final perspective is none other than world revolution. An anarchist world revolution, of course. Perhaps it would be a revolution a little different from the classic clichés and images of heroic struggles on barricades, of snipers and exploding bombs. But it would be a revolution, with a realistic chance that it would give birth to a libertarian society. It would be a revolution that we can start right now. And it would be a revolutionary process which, incidentally, offers a satisfying life to those who engage in it.

Weaknesses of the Project

This, of course, sounds a little euphoric. We are enthusiastic, of course, if not euphoric. But we also see many weaknesses in our project. In the book, there is an entire chapter about them. In the discussion, we are sure to find others. The key weakness is likely to be human nature, its subjectivity. I think we will have many problems that arise from the most varied and irrational human emotions: absurd behavior, animosity, jealousy, abuse, hatred, competitiveness... Human beings are not mere “factors” operating within an approach, however “brilliant” it may be.

Another weakness is the danger that the Project will be integrated into the system, the danger of embourgeoisement or selling out. The various forms of repression are another weak point, which concerns us, because we do not think the system will remain indifferent to our attempts, once it understands the danger they pose. And there are many other weaknesses that I cannot list here...

Reducing the risks

But we think that the obstacles must be overcome and that problems should be solved. We won't overcome them with lamentations. Our overall strategy with respect to these weaknesses is to eliminate them in advance, in the preparatory phase, as much as possible. When creating our internal structures, we take all of them into account, planning in such a way as to prevent their development or at least reduce the risk of these hazards overwhelming the Project. Finally we think that by keeping these dangers in our minds, in a large group, we may recognize and resist all kinds of deviations and disruptions. Of course, even with all these “filters” installed in our structures, there remain many obstacles, but we have enough courage to face the rest.

Experimentation, danger, and hope

We can only reduce the risks, and there are no guarantees about what will happen. But when has there ever been a revolutionary attempt that was assured of success? Of course it will still be very experimental, but we face the risks and hope for success on a realistic basis.

And... do you know any other alternative? I do not see any. All of our lives are risky, experimental, marked by hopes and dangers; however, we do not commit suicide. We struggle. We want these risks, experiments, dangers and hopes no longer to remain in the hands of others. For my part, I prefer to take my chances in my own hands.

Bakunin put it another way:

“Those who demand the possible can never achieve anything. But those who demand the impossible at least achieve the possible.”

Thank you very much for your attention and patience.

A note about the author

Born in 1951, Horst Stowasser was active in the movement for about twenty years. He had his first contact with anarchism in Argentina. He studied agronomy and languages, working many

years at the Popular University, especially among economic migrants. He published numerous magazines and libertarian publications, including the journal *Impulso* in Spanish. Entering the CNT in 1973, he took on the most varied projects in Spain and Germany, participating in several conferences and plenary sessions of such organizations as the AIT and IFA, as well as other international meetings. He was one of the leaders of the CNT in Germany and one of the first members of the FAU, leaving it in a fraternal manner after making some critiques. He created the anarchist archive and library “Das Anarchiv,” the only anarchist documentation center in Germany, which has been in existence for more than ten years. He has written half a dozen popular books and pamphlets on anarchist themes and continues to work on conferences and public events on libertarian topics.

In 1985, he served a prison sentence for “insulting the army” which had a vast echo in the libertarian press. Currently [in 2004], he works as a photocompositor in an “alternative” firm. In 1990, he went to live in Neustadt, one of the places where he began work on Project A, part of the WESPE Group.

[Translator’s note: Stowasser died in August 2009 in the city of Ludwigshafen am Rhein.]

Anarchist library
Anti-Copyright



Horst Stowasser
Project A (presentation)
1986

<http://www.enxarxa.com/biblioteca/STOWASSER%20La%20utopia%20es%20posible.pdf>.

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