

Not in the high office, but on the roofs

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I sometimes take some roles which could be considered roles of ‘authority’: as workshop-giver, as organizer, as someone with a PhD, ... So in the following I want to explore how I (want to) take these roles, and in general how I want to relate to the world.

I do not want to be an authority in the sense of someone who tells others what to do. Instead, I want to enable people to find their path.

So I do not want to be a leader as a guide in front telling where to go. Instead, I want to be at the back motivating people, showing a map so that they can find out where they want to go.

I do realize this is a continuum however: a map constraints options and highlights others, and if you know a map and the terrain, people will come to you asking where to go.

But I do think that most problems pertain because people don’t know how to solve them, not because of bad intentions. A lot of advocacy groups think we should simply ‘inform the people’ (on a certain political issue). I don’t think so, as a problem won’t simply disappear because we know about it. Instead, we should think about how we can tackle the problem. Often the people in these groups don’t know how to tackle it themselves, as the only thing they can come up with is to inform more people about it. When you realize this, the asymmetric relationship between the ‘informed activists’ and ‘uninformed masses’ disappear. Mental health plays another huge role – often people exhibit bad habits (towards themselves or others) because they can’t find the mental energy to do otherwise, not because of bad intentions.

Now, I neither want to be naive in that conflicts don’t exist or that people cannot have opposing intentions (views, values, goals). Though sometimes seemingly opposing goals can work together with enough out-of-the-box thinking and creativity, which can show an unknown path. And conflict can be valuable, voltage is what can keep the current running.

So I want to spread knowledge so that people can find these out-of-the box solutions, to spread empowerment so that people find the courage to make their own path. This all relates to the saying “learn someone how to fish, instead of giving them fish”, though it goes further. And I don’t want to say I know and feel it all, far from. I’d want this to be a two-directional thing, so that we can create (hyper)cycles strengthening stuff to go closer to a solution, a better world, a better self.

So I feel my position in this world right now is on the roofs, with a bird-eye view over the city. This might seem pretty close to the high office, but it’s a completely different context. One in which you look over the city to design it to your will, and where you stay inside your office,

no matter how big it might be. I however jump from roof to roof, taking different perspectives, connecting, not locked up inside one cluster. Though also not completely belonging. Sometimes struggling with how to do. Because I do see things, and want to do something with it. I want to have an impact on the world, not just be a shadow that fades. But I want to do so without ending up in the high office, without forcing the world to my wish. But I think it is a mistake to think having impact in this world is a zero-sum game where you can only take this impact from someone else, who then loses impact. No, I can have impact by letting others have impact, who can then strengthen my impact.

So from my roofs, I want to leave something behind here and there to help things. If I see quarters that are separated, where people have to take a long route just because of a little wall in between, I want to create short-cuts by showing this path. So that people can also climb this wall, or smash it down, whatever they wish. So that people learn they can find and create new paths, and by this create their city.

Maybe also providing building material so that people can build their own routes. To create the medium, the pheromone, for stigmergy to happen, so that the ants can find the shortest way to the food. And not building a route to the food. Maybe putting signs of where things are, not signs forbidding certain routes. Or maybe only provide the material to put these signs. Maybe not, I don't know, maybe I'm already getting in the high office with these last ideas.

But I know to interact with the world, I should get off the roofs from time to time. The struggle is to do so without ending up in the high office. As going inside is the easiest way down. Though I should not worry too much, they won't accept me their in the high office jumping in through the window.

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