

The specific anarchist group

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What is a specific anarchist group?

The term 'specific anarchist group' could be defined as a formal anarchist organization that seeks unity in their theory, outlook, tactics and action. It strives to be heavily involved in larger social movements, pushing their militancy and advocating their independence from co-opting forces, such as the state, capital and the authoritarian/reformist left.

How is it different from other contemporary anarchist groups?

Differing from many contemporary North American anarchist groups, it sees clearly defined, explained and agreed upon structure as necessary for effective action and equitable power distribution.

Rather than individuals within the group having little shared outlook, working on separate, smaller projects and making efforts without coordination, the 'specific anarchist group' attempts to bring together militants that have a strong level of agreement and direct their activity in a concerted fashion.

It does this to maximize the potential for effective action and to prevent burnout. The whole or majority of the group carries out activity, instead of relying on a few individuals, as is somewhat common in looser, more informal groupings.

How is it similar to other contemporary anarchist groups?

Throughout the history of anarchism, there have been many examples of groups that followed these principles of organization. More recently though, the platformist, *especificista*, and some anarcho-sindicalist currents come the closest to our conception.

Platformism gets its name from the *The Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, a pamphlet written in 1926 by a group of Russian and Ukrainian anarchists in exile. It attempted to address the failure of anarchists during the Russian Revolution, which they chalked up to disorganization.

Some of the platform's key points include

Tactical Unity – "A common tactical line in the movement is of decisive importance for the existence of the organisation and the whole movement: it avoids the disastrous effect of several tactics opposing each other; it concentrates the forces of the movement; and gives them a common direction leading to a fixed objective."

Theoretical Unity – "Theory represents the force which directs the activity of persons and organisations along a defined path towards a determined goal. Naturally it should be common to all the persons and organisations adhering to the General Union. All activity by the General Union, both overall and in its details, should be in perfect concord with the theoretical principles professed by the union."

Collective Responsibility – "The practice of acting on one's personal responsibility should be decisively condemned and rejected in the ranks of the anarchist movement. The areas of revolutionary life, social and political, are above all profoundly collective by nature. Social revolutionary activity in these areas cannot be based on the personal responsibility of individual militants."

Federalism – “Against centralism, anarchism has always professed and defended the principle of federalism, which reconciles the independence and initiative of individuals and the organisation with service to the common cause.”

It’s effects were not felt for many years after its publishing. Outside of a few French groups in the 1950s, there weren’t any organizations who directly identified with the document. This changed in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the emergence of NEFAC and others around the world. Today it is a significant current in the North American and European anarchist movements.

Especifismo emerged in South America separate from the influence of platformism. In the 1950s, the Federación Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU) was the first to promote the concept, which has been summarized as:

The need for specifically anarchist organization built around a unity of ideas and praxis.

The use of the specifically anarchist organization to theorize and develop strategic political and organizing work.

Active involvement in and building of autonomous and popular social movements (which is sometimes is called ‘social insertion’)

Today there are a number of organizations in South America which identify with this current, such as the Federação Anarquista Gaúcha and Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro. As these groups establish ties with each other, others have popped up in a variety of South American and Central American countries.

Anarcho-Syndicalists have also often found the need for their own political organizations. In the past this sentiment has expressed itself in what has been called ‘dual-organization syndicalist’ groups such as the Turin Libertarian Group of 1920s Italy or the Friends of Durruti of 1930s Spain. Both saw their involvement in the unions to battle more moderate elements and the bureaucracy.

Today, the Workers Solidarity Alliance and numerous International Workers Association affiliated groups follow in this tradition, although their scope has expanded from mainly concentrating their efforts within the unions.

How does this look in practice?

Ideally, the specific anarchist group would be made up those who share agreement on a number of key issues on organization, tactics and politics. The group should serve as a space and structure for members to strategize, discuss, plan and educate themselves.

If not already involved in wider movements, this should be done in a concerted effort. This effort will not be to seize positions of decision making power, such is the strategy of much of the authoritarian left. Instead, this effort should be to create an anarchist pole within the movements, to advocate widening and intensifying struggles that come up and to fight co-opting forces that try and steer things in a reformist or reactionary manner.

Further Reading

Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft) www.anarkismo.net
Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis libcom.org

Our Conception of Anarchist Organisation by Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro anarchist-platform.wordpress.com
Especifismo: The Anarchist Praxis of Building Popular Movements and Revolutionary Organization in South America by Adam Weaver nefac.net

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