

**The October Document**  
**from Militant Kindergarten**  
**by the Center for Especifismo Studies**

“Our individual freedom can only be realized collectively, so we insist on revolutionary militancy which, for us, is a commitment to taking everyone with us to the future we want to see. It’s a commitment to keep the movement going. By militating, we make sacrifices and take big risks. There are both micro and macro aspects to militancy which affect every part of a militant’s life; it’s not just about major events. For this reason, support between militants requires constant discipline and responsibility.”

Today, the culture industry provides an effective outlet for discontents to feel included, but this inclusion is a masked form of assimilation. At the Center for Especifismo Studies, we understand “lifestylism” as a kind of isolation. No matter how radical it may seem, it’s ultimately an acceptable deviation from class society. Living a unique, cool, or carefree lifestyle within the acceptable boundaries of class society isn’t revolutionary. It may pay lip service to liberation, but it leaves most people out. Alternative lifestyles are often only available to those who can afford them: they require both money and free time. So, because our individual freedom can only be realized collectively, we insist on revolutionary militancy which, for us, is a commitment to taking everyone with us to the future we want to see.

Lifestylism isn’t unique to anarchism. In fact, it may be the main, underlying form of political ideology today, when politics is treated like a spectator sport, a fandom, a culture, a brand, or a trend. In other words, in place of politics, all we have are lifestyles. There are lifestylist tendencies on the right, center, and left, discernable by different clothing, ways of speaking, hobbies, preferred television stations, and so on. This commodification of politics alienates and de-politicizes us by obscuring the way to actual political practice. Meanwhile, capitalists profit from “culture wars”, politicians win votes, but nothing fundamentally changes regardless of which political team people cheer for in elections.

It's clear that representstional democracy isn't a form of popular protagonism. It's more like a spectator sport that keeps us distracted from ever thinking for ourselves as exploited workers and tenants, as the descendants of forced oppression and domination. In their game, we aren't part of the action on the field; we're in the audience like passive spectators. This ruling class spectacle is supported by a culture of individualism, consumerism, and convenience. It's designed to keep us far away from the activities which might actually threaten the class system. So, militancy is the practice of finding our way back to politics and forging a collective will that can represent and defend itself. In other words, it's with militancy that we aim to build Popular Power. It's the name for our commitment to political practice.

For us, anarchism is more than theory and ideology, and it's more than a lifestyle; it's an orientation towards action. In Militant Kindergarten, we have developed this understanding of militancy from the verb "to militate". This means that "anarchist militant" isn't simply an identity you can adopt and wear, and it isn't a role which can be performed in isolation. In contrast to this, lifestylist tendencies privatize anarchism and, by doing so, turn it from an instrument into a product in the marketplace of ideas. We defend the view that anarchism is a tool for the dominated classes that must be used creatively to solve real problems or else it loses its purpose.

We believe the dominated classes must be protagonists in their own struggle, so our militancy aims to imprint a strong sense of protagonism on the social level through continuous contact. If we expect people to listen to our ideas, we must listen to and learn from the people we're struggling side by side with. We have to be open to being influenced in addition to influencing, but it takes time to build social force together.

There are a variety of ways to increase social force (i.e. weapons, techniques, machines, education, etc.), but the most important is always organization. In the most basic terms, social force is the result of organization. So, we understand the social level as a place where organization can combine with collective desire and motivation. Short-term goals give people a stable orientation by pointing them to a common project in the disorienting terrain of the social level. The popular organization articulates specific demands that we can "take into our own hands", but importantly, not only "we" anarchists. It's a space where anyone can participate as long as they share the same short-term goals. Still, the social level is spontaneous, and we should respect the dynamics and the risks. This is exactly why having a stronger understanding of our ideas helps us defend ourselves and the revolutionary movement from reaction and oppression.

Since even individualists end up getting "ordered" by stronger forces, we are faced with the choice of either being passively organized by others or actively organizing ourselves, but either way, association is

inevitable. Capitalism and the State already depend on us conforming ourselves to fit their needs, but since we're currently only passively organized in class society, effective resistance will require the addition of an active-collective element to complement mass movements on the social level. Collective demands and wins can gain force, but not always. It depends on the context and the content of the movement; otherwise political engagement only uses capacity and burns people out. This relates to our critique of activism and our defense of anarchist militancy. We have to have our own organizational culture and direction. The political organization is a means of self-defense.

At the time of the revolutionary rupture with this system, political organization and revolutionary culture will already have to be in place to defend against the inevitable opportunism of some individuals. As we've said before, we understand federalism to be the organization of self-management beyond just one place. So for us, struggling together is productive in two ways. It's both about building people's capacity for self-management and about building the community's capacity for federalism. It's a project of self-discipline and organization in order to build "un pueblo fuerte". If people develop their capacity during struggle, they will be more ready to manage society for themselves at the moment of revolutionary rupture.

Ebbs and flows are inevitable. So if mobilization and demobilization are natural fluctuations, we should always be preparing for a new cycle. It's because social movements have highs and lows that the political organization tries to keep the low points from dropping off so far, so fast. Militant Kindergarten is the result of trying to hold on to a high-water mark, but we've also learned from experience that our stories especially need to be told during low points. Revolutionary ideology may be present in a movement, but access to it and resources for it also ebb and flow. This is a problem to be resolved by the political organization from a rear-guard position because meaningful influence is never just a passive activity. This is the importance of a coordinated-gear strategy: revolutionaries need to be prepared for the spontaneity of mass movements and the undulating cycles which follow them.

When we say “coordinated gears”, we’re referring to a strategic and political approach to conflict and organizing. There are front-lines and rear-guards in social movements, and both need regular work to maintain them and build Popular Power. Strikes, occupations, and blockades are examples of front-line work. And developing culture, educating, and organizing are examples of rear-guard work. It’s impossible for all the necessary tasks to be performed simultaneously, with equal time and effort from everyone. It’s also not effective for everyone to do everything at the same time, so a coordinated-gear strategy prioritizes the organization of tasks. Plus, we don’t only learn from each other when we share the same tasks; we also learn by listening to the experiences of other people engaged at different sites in the struggle. It’s because their militancy is different than ours that there’s force in our potential coordination and solidarity.

Organizations always face lots of challenges (i.e. entryism from other political tendencies, fascist attacks and violence, opportunism and individualism, romantic and interpersonal drama). It’s impossible to avoid politics by perfecting democratic designs, mediation processes, or revolutionary methods. These “perfect” structures will also come up against weaknesses and limitations. On top of that, consensus decision-making is way too inefficient to address all the needs that will inevitably arise, and rotating roles can be ableist and doesn’t solve everything. But while there’s no universal way of permanently resolving the ever-changing complexities of social interactions, the specific anarchist organization does aim to determine as many factors of its own engagement as possible.

Especifismo is about anarchists engaging on multiple fronts, making commitments that are situated and related to the “conjuncture” of forces on the social level, and simultaneously continuing to organize politically. Leninists seek to resolve the difference between the social and political levels in the program for their political party. Anarcho-syndicalists want to develop revolutionary culture and practices in the union without a political vector. Insurrectionists are committed to certain tactics regardless of whether they make strategic sense or have support from the masses. Especifismo isn’t a merger, a dissolution into

“one big union”, or a dogmatic commitment to a particular form of conflict regardless of the real situation on the ground. Revolutionary practice always has a context. Different sites of struggle have different methods and tactics, as well as different needs and demands. When anarchism becomes synonymous with only one movement or front of struggle, one crisis can become two. Coordinated gears require both independent and dependent mechanisms. This is why the social and political levels should articulate autonomous but coordinated movements.

Our organizations must be constant and dependable supports because we need them to defend ourselves from reaction and repression from the State. The more risk involved the more important it becomes to have clarity and affinity on the political level. However, as we’ve said before, political force is either passive, without effective ways to act against oppressive powers, or active and able to affect conjunctures. This means that the specific anarchist organization exists for a reason, on purpose. It’s an intentionally cultivated context, a station for a certain kind of coordination. It’s oriented by a long-term project and moves toward short-term objectives. The political organization is a space for reflecting on our praxis and asking: how effective is this? and what effect is it having? True solidarity and long-term wins require respect for where people are, knowing that at different times we may have to struggle with them too. On the political level, that struggle to organize will be about building unity, and on the social level, it will be about social work and Popular Power. So, a coordinated-gear strategy will mean moving between those two levels of activity, but it will also mean moving between active and passive modes of participation, public and clandestine forms of militancy, and offensive and defensive positions in conflict.

Our political practice should leave an intentional mark on our relationships, on the space between individual people and places, because while doing work on the social level, there’s also an inevitable imprint of the organization on the militants and of the militants on the organization. In this way, “imprinting” revolutionary values on a movement is like a stamp marking layer upon layer. It’s an effort to

trace, copy, and keep reproducing certain values and practices consistently. This requires struggle and compromise with others. Obviously, lifestylism avoids struggle and can be uncompromising, but this is also true for what can be called “prophetic pretensions” for the future (i.e. democracy by design, utopianism, or scientific socialism) which aren’t dynamic and open-ended enough to engage seriously with everyday life.

Serious engagement implies a willingness to be imprinted on by others. This is as true on the political level as it is on the social level. Political struggle within an organization is necessary because there’s no panacea to building unity. This process refines the organization’s unique perspective, and federalism connects it to other diverse perspectives within a common project. This constant movement between specific unity and federated unity advances popular struggles and revolutionary objectives simultaneously.

We consider long-term objectives to be theoretical because they aren’t certain, and from our current perspective, we can only articulate how we would like things to be. However, it’s important to remember that the political “we” is only one voice among many. In reality, change will not end up being exactly what any one person or group wants. If we want more influence on where things are going, we have to engage more; we have to be more committed and be more responsible for the defense of a certain kind of struggle. It’s also important to remember that opportunistic individuals and politicians are always looking to appropriate the social force of the masses so that it can be repackaged, advertised, and sold back to us. Social transformation is a group effect that doesn’t belong to just one ideological tendency, and the capitalist system doesn’t always reject change. This is why a social revolution can only come from Popular Power built outside of the State and against Capital.

Individuals need organizations in order to resist the isolating forces of capitalist society. Whereas lifestylism is isolated and passive, militancy is active and articulated, making the political organization a multiplying factor for the actions of its militants. Donato Romito from the FdCA

(Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici) suggested that the third thing you should do everyday is ask yourself what you can do for your organization, in order to advance the cause of anarchism. We completely agree and would add that the subjectivity, abilities, and needs of militants should never be ignored. They form the reality we must learn to work within.

There are both micro and macro aspects to militancy which affect every part of a militant's life; it's not just about major events. Support between militants requires constant discipline and responsibility, since even the simplest task requires a collective commitment to see it performed well. By militating, we make sacrifices and take big risks. As we have said before, "commitment and follow through should be as fundamental to anarchist ideology as solidarity and mutual aid" [See: "The February Document"]. Our militancy must always be seen as a choice, not an obligation. It's a commitment to keep the movement going. Many organizations speak of cultivating a "militant style" which is recognizable, practical, and trustworthy, but it's the individuals' self-discipline and commitment which will be the foundation of militant action and social revolution.