

Trust for Action;



What if we seek an understanding of trust that sees trust as something that is a gradient, rather than something that is present or absent?

If we develop a qualitative understanding of trust we can begin to build networks, affinity groups and crews that are much more daring and effective.

I have stopped asking myself *if* I trust some one and have started asking myself, *how* I trust someone. Based on that I have respectful boundaries that I maintain based on the ways in which I trust my friends. There are a few major concerns that I like to evaluate;

Could this person be a cop or informant, *not* do they seem like it? If I have I been presented definitive proof that someone isn't then I can bring them into the fold. If I haven't seen that then that doesn't mean I don't fuck with them, it just means I maintain a boundary with them.

Is this person a snitch, would they snitch if they got caught?

Would they betray me?

Will they crack under pressure? What kind of pressure?

Does this person have habits or tendencies that will cause personal conflict?

Does this person understand my wants and needs enough to care for me, do I for them?

Do I and this person have communication styles that allow us to solve problems and listen to each other?

Would I smile from a jail cell, knowing my presents inside the cell allowed them to be outside? Would they do that for me?

Peoples motivations are crucial to understand how to be trusting of them.

Its not a matter of a friend having the right motivations or wrong ones. If we are honest, all of us hold a mix of altruistic and selfish motives. But understanding what motivates someone will help you anticipate how they will act. It can also help you make boundaries within your friendships of who you can trust with different projects. Some common motivations:

Wanting to be seen as cool, or wanting to participate in a social hierarchy

Wanting to wield power

Guilt of privilege

Wanting to feel accomplished

A deep feeling of what “should” be

Understandings of “duty”

Being someone who has had a first hand experience with what you are fighting.

Revenge

Spite

Protecting people/community who they love

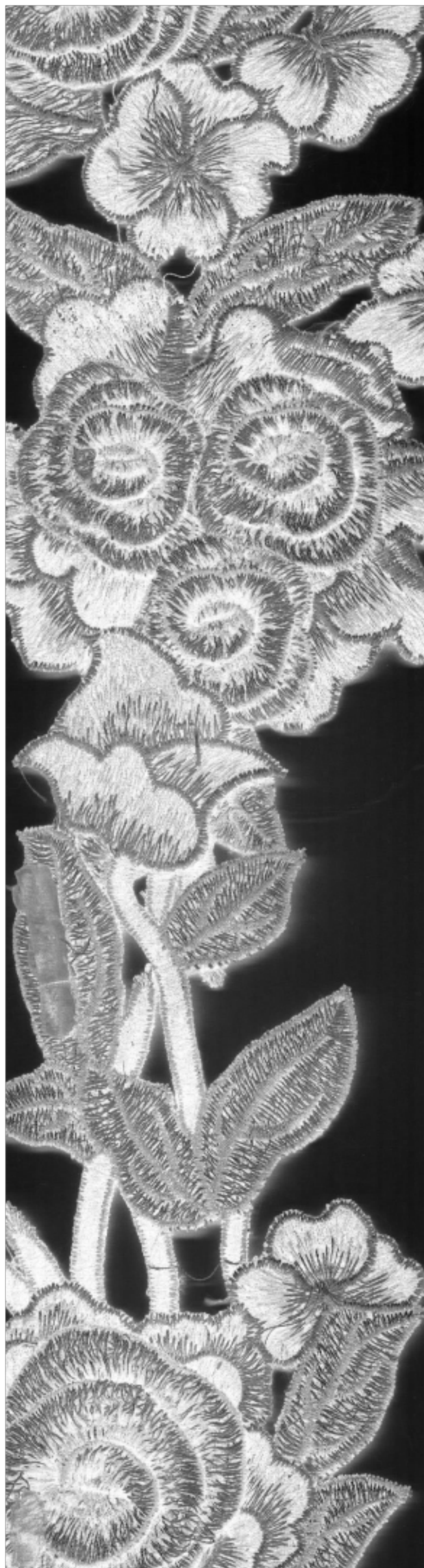
A desire to attack, or to “fuck shit up”

And thousands of more reasons

If you understand someone's motives then it helps you graduate and nuance a level of trust with them. For instance, working with someone who is mostly motivated by social reasons, (how their actions change the way people around them see them) then it would be foolish to work on them with something that must remain clandestine, because they would be motivated to share details, however they could be especially motivated by more public campaigns. Conversely working with someone who wants to wield power in a coalition or large meeting setting could be bad, but in a smaller setting could be easily mitigated. Keep in mind as the space between someone's wants and needs and their life change, they will change too. It is also incredibly important to know what someone's relationship is to their motives, do they change from day to day, do priorities grow or change, what did they used to do? Do they still do it? How fast do they move through interests and friends?

Intimacy & Trust

A large part of trust is being able to anticipate people's actions. To intimately understand someone, so you have little doubt what they will do in a given situation. Trust is not a binary, I have friends who I trust with one thing, but not another. Being close and knowing each other's past experiences and trauma, knowing people's dislikes and strengths, all contribute to tightknit trusting relationships. Having intimate knowledge of someone can be invaluable when deciding when to fall back or escalate. How does someone deal with anger? If your friend just got punched are they the type of person who will be in shock for a second? Put your body between them and other threats till they focus again. Or are they the type of person to react with a blind rage? If it makes sense, fall back and focus on your soundings because you know they aren't. * To trust someone you have to know how they act when they are scared, when they are angry, how they deal with pain. You have to know what contexts they excel in, what contexts they struggle in. Intimate knowledge of someone can be crucial, there have been times I've had low moral and felt ready to give up, friends intimate knowledge of things as trivial of my sense of humor proved tactility invaluable.



Affirmative Trust

We need to come to understand our trust of people not as a lack of red flags, or transgressions but rather as a process of building a relationship. Trust doesn't come from a friend never doing anything hurtful, sketchy or stupid. It comes from their reaction and actions after. A friend listening to your feelings and incorporating and acting on them into their life builds a tremendous amount of trust. Accountability is a foundation of trust. But it is also crucial to check friends who do things that make you feel unsafe, weird or otherwise strange. If you can really trust someone, they will listen and react sensitively. A cop or someone trying to manipulate will be less likely to act in an accommodating way. Most people have something horrible internalized, most of us were socialized by foul constructs and hierarchies. When these things rear their head we should not be surprised. Rather we should understand moments of hurt as inevitable, not in order to sweep them under the rug and move on, but as opportunities to show commitment to each other. An acci-

dental transgression in a friendship, for me, is crucial part of vetting. Perhaps my version of being jumped into a gang. It opens space to demonstrate commitments and emotional fortitude and maturity that I consider crucial to deep trust.

Trust vs security culture

In NYC there have been many occasions where a lack of "trust" has stopped people from communicating, coordinating and getting together. People ask, "how do we build trust" which I think is the wrong question. The function of spokes councils, coordinating meetings, debriefs and coalitions is to connect groups of people or individuals who don't know each other. The notion that you could trust someone who you barely know or have never met shows a fundamental misunderstanding of concepts of trust. Rather than asking how we build trust the question should be, how do we work together without *having* to trust each other. The answer is good security culture, good tactics, and a little bit of forethought. For example you can

have a spokes council and all agree to roll in separate affinity groups to a march. You and your affinity group could plan an action that requires more numbers than you have, before the march kicks off you could tip other affinity groups the least information possible to allow them to safely act in an informed way. This includes risk level, and scouting information, and number of people committed to action. If you want to organize a debrief of an action that went well or poorly, reach out by saying it's a meeting for "people who want to share thoughts about the action" not a meet up for people who were there. At the meet up ask that people don't use names and don't say things which implicate anyone. Rather than saying, "it was great when we pushed through that police line and I am so glad Janice brought those umbrellas", say "I heard people pushed through a police line with umbrellas, that's pretty interesting"

We have to think of ways to communicate and organize that make us resilient to cooption, snitches and infiltration. Not only get together if we are 100% sure we aren't infiltrated. Again never talk about anything illegal you or anyone else has done, or wants to do. Be aware of what questions you ask, and don't ask for details or names of people. Give people space and let them come to you, don't push folks, be sensitive and change the topic if someone seems uncomfortable. Actively try to avoid knowing about others criminal activity. If you are at a demo and your friends are blocked up, give them space, don't follow them or watch them from a far.

Trust is not the same as friendship. Understand that trust is extremely rare, (and it should be). You are not entitled to someone's trust. No one is entitled to your trust. Friendship and intimacy is not about unconditional trust but rather a precise, dynamic and sensitive understanding of how your emotions tendencies and motivations intertwine with others.

