

Extract from **Internationale Situationniste** at **Context XXI**

(http://contextxxi.org/the-question-of-organization-for.html)

extracted on: 25 April 2024

Date of this contribution: September 1969

The Question of Organization for the SI

■ GUY-ERNEST DEBORD ■ POINT
BLANK (TRANSLATION)

1. Up until now, everything for which the SI has been known belongs to an age that is fortunately over (more precisely, it can be said that this was the “second period,” if the activity that centered around the supersession of art from 1957 to 1962 is counted as the first).

2. The new revolutionary tendencies of current society, however weak and confused they may still be, are no longer restricted to a clandestine scope: this year they are appearing in the street.

3. Parallel to this, the SI emerged from silence, and in strategic terms it must now exploit this opening. The vogue that the term “situationist” has achieved here and there cannot be prevented. We must act in such a way that this (normal) phenomenon serves us more than it hinders us. To me, “what serves us” is indistinguishable from what serves to unify and radicalize scattered struggles. This is the SI’s task as an organization. Beyond this, the term “situationist” could be used to vaguely designate a certain age of critical thought (and it is no mean feat to have inaugurated this), but where everybody is only engaged by what he does personally, without any reference to an organizational community. But as long as such a community exists, it will have to succeed in distinguishing itself from whoever talks about it without being a part of it.

4. Concerning the tasks on which we already recognized each other previously, it can be said that we must presently concentrate less on theoretical elaboration,

which is to be continued, and more on its communication. Essentially, we must emphasize our practical relationship with what appears, while immediately increasing our possibilities for intervention, for critiques, and for exemplary support.

5. The movement that is beginning primitively is the beginning of our victory (in other words, the victory that we have been supporting and pointing out for many years). But we must not “capitalize” on this victory, for every affirmation of a moment of the revolutionary critique calls for the requirement that every coherent organization must know how to lose itself in revolutionary society. In the current and forthcoming subversive currents, there is much to criticize. It would be very clumsy if we were to make this necessary critique while leaving the SI above it all.

6. The SI must now prove its efficiency in a subsequent stage of revolutionary activity — or else disappear.

7. In order to have the opportunities of attaining this efficiency, we must recognize and state several truths about the SI that were certainly true prior to this; but, in the current stage, at which “the truth is verifying itself,” it has become urgent to make it precise.

8. Since we have never considered the SI to be a goal in itself, but as a moment of historical activity, the force of things now leads us to prove it. The “coherence” of the SI is the relationship, directed towards coherence, between all the theses that have been formulated, between them and our action, as well as our solidarity on many, but not all, of the questions about which each of us

must engage the responsibility of others. It cannot be a kind of mastery that is guaranteed to anybody, because this person would then gain the reputation of having acquired our theoretical bases so well that they would automatically glean an exemplary line of conduct from them. It cannot be a demand for an equal excellence of all on all questions or operations, and even less can it be a recognition of such excellence.

9. Coherence is acquired and verified by egalitarian participation in the totality of a common practice, which simultaneously reveals mistakes and supplies remedies — this practice requires formal meetings to arrive at decisions, the transmission of all information, and the examination of all stated failures.

10. Currently, this practice demands more participants in the SI, taken from among those who affirm their accord and display their capacities. The small number of members has been selected very unjustly up until now, and it has been the cause and the consequence of a ridiculous over-estimation “officially” accorded to all the members of the SI simply by virtue of that fact, when many of them had in no way given proof of any minimum real capacities (i.e., the exclusions that have occurred in one year, Garnautins or Englishmen).— Such a pseudo-qualitative numerical limitation exaggeratedly increases the importance of each particular stupidity while supporting it at the same time.

11. Externally, a direct product of this selective illusion has been the mythological recognition of autonomous pseudo-groups, gloriously located at the level of the SI when they were merely feeble-

minded admirers (and, briefly put, were necessarily dishonest slanderers as well). It seems to me that we cannot recognize any group as autonomous unless they are engaged in autonomous practical work, nor the lasting success of such a group unless they are engaged in united action with the workers (without of course having such action fall below our “minimum definition of revolutionary organizations”). All kinds of recent experiences have shown the recuperated confusionism of the term “anarchist,” and it seems to me that we must oppose this confusionism everywhere.

12. I submit that the possibility of tendencies concerning diverse preoccupations or tactical options must be admitted into the SI on the condition that our general bases not be put into question. Furthermore, we must advance toward a complete practical autonomy of national groups, to the extent that they will be really able to constitute themselves.

13. Contrary to the habits of the excluded people who inactively pretended in 1966 to attain a total realization of transparency and friendship in the SI (it was almost embarrassing to judge their company to be boring), and who, as a corollary, developed the most idiotic jealousies, lies unworthy of grammar school kids, and conspiracies as ignominious as they were irrational, and all of this in secret — contrary to their habits, we must only admit historical relationships among us, (i.e., a critical confidence, the knowledge of each member’s possibilities or limits), but only on the basis of the fundamental loyalty demanded by the revolutionary project that has been defining itself for over a century.

14. We have no right to be mistaken in breaking with people. We will have to be mistaken in matters of adhesion, and more or less frequently, at that. Exclusions have almost never marked any theoretical progress of the SI (on such occasions, we have not arrived at a more precise definition of what is unacceptable; indeed, the surprising thing about the Garnautins is precisely linked to the fact that it was an exception to

this rule). Exclusions have almost always been responses to objective pressures that existing conditions reserved for our action. Thus, we run the risk of having this reproduce itself on higher levels. All kinds of “Nashisms” could reshape themselves: the only question is whether we are in a position to destroy them.

15. To accord the form of this debate to what I believe to be its content, I propose that this text be communicated to certain comrades close to the SI or desirous of taking part in it, and that we solicit their opinion on this question.

April 1968

Note added in August 1969

These notes of April 1968 were a contribution to a debate on organization that at the time had to begin. Two or three weeks afterwards, the occupations movement, which was certainly more agreeable and more instructive than this debate, forced us to set them aside.

The last point alone had been immediately approved by the comrades of the SI. Thus, this text, which obviously has nothing secret about it, was, properly speaking, not even an internal SI document. However, toward the end of 1968, we found that a truncated and undated version of it had been circulated by several leftist groups, to what purposes is unknown. Consequently, the SI decided that the authentic version had to be published in this review [Internationale Situationniste].

When our discussion on organization was able to be renewed in the fall of 1968, the facts progressed very swiftly, and the situationists adopted these theses, which were confirmed. Reciprocally, the SI knew how to act in May in a manner that suitably responded to the demands that these theses had formulated for the immediate future.

At the moment when this text is receiving wider distribution, I think it

necessary to add precision, in order to avoid any misunderstanding on the question of the relative openness demanded by the SI. I have not proposed any concession here to “common action” with those semi-radical currents that are already in a position to be formed, and especially not the abandonment of our rigor in choosing the members of the SI and in the limitation of their number. I criticized a bad, abstract use of this rigor, which could lead to the contrary of what we want. The admiring or subsequently hostile excesses of all those who speak of us from the viewpoint of unwanted and passionate spectators cannot be answered by a “situ braggadocio” that would help spread the word that the situationists are marvelous people effectively possessing everything in their lives that they have expressed, or simply admitted, as a revolutionary theory and program. Since May, it has been seen what magnitude and urgency this problem has assumed.

The situationists do not have a monopoly to defend, nor any reward to anticipate. A task that suited us has been undertaken and maintained through good and bad, and as a whole, correctly with what is to be found here. The current development of the subjective conditions of the revolution must lead toward the definition of a strategy that, starting from different data, should be as good as that which the SI has followed in more difficult times.

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