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The Situationists and the Right to the City

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Abstract

The Situationists and the Right to the City

This paper will examine the contribution of the Situationist international to the right to the city. Beginning with a review of the contributions the Situationists make to a 'hegelian urbanism' the creative destruction of urbanism is discussed. Using illustrative examples such as Ferdinand Cheval's creation of the *palace idéal* at Charmes-sur-l'Herbasse, Drôme, France, the Dutch architect Constant's unitary urbanism, and Henri Lefebvre's work the understanding of the right to the city, are considered. From this context, the history of the Situationists is developed from the Lettrists, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (IMIB), Scandinavian movement COBRA, and the London Psychogeographical Association. The Situationist's central concepts of the spectacle, *dérive*, *détournement*, psychogeography and unitary urbanism are examined to suggest strategic and tactical interventions for a reclamation of a right to the city. Contemporary discussion of future directions of Situationist informed urbanism are presented for the continuing legacy of the Situationist International's understanding of the right to the city.

Introduction
This article explores the contribution made by the theory of the Situationist International. The initial section provides a history of the organisation, followed by a discussion of its main concepts in the second section. The third section examines the S.I.'s concept of the 'situation', arguing that this undergoes a reorientation towards the construction of situations as political and contested acts, rather than as architectural situations. The fourth section examines the nature and content of these situations and how they emerged from the Situationists' dialogue with Henri Lefebvre. The concluding discussion suggests some of the directions that the Situationists' theory offers by examining their contribution to acts of resistance, creativity and participation, in an assertion of the right to the city. The continuing legacy is considered through an exploration of the S.I.'s contemporary resonance.

Context
The S.I. was established in 1957, bringing together four European avant-garde groups. These founder members would collaborate for over a decade until the organisation's dissolution in 1972. The organisation published twelve issues of its journal, *Internationale Situationniste*, which acted as the central venue for Situationist ideas. 1969 saw the publication of the journal's last issue. The S.I. fused pre-existing groups together, combining elements of thought and significant members into a loose political coalition that would have a fluid and fluctuating membership.

The most significant pre-Situationist International group was the Dada-inspired Lettrist International. This group was mostly composed of artists and poets, and included the prominent members Guy Debord, Gil Wolman, Michèle Bernstein and Jean-Isidore Isou. Their journal *Potlatch* developed a number of positions that were to form the basis for the establishment of the S.I.

During the years 1952-1957, the most fundamental concepts of the S.I. had been conceived and developed, often under the influence of the Lettrists. This group was principally concerned with artistic experimentation, the production of film and the use of poetry to challenge dominant artistic forms of production. Their organisation was a loose coalition of hard drinkers and thinkers that circulated through the Saint-Germain-des-Prés district of Paris (Mension, 2000).

The second group was the anti-functionalist International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (IMiB), with Asger Jorn as its most prominent member. TheIMIB developed a critical approach to the functionalism and industrial orientation of the neo-Bauhaus. Jorn preferred free experimentation in art to address the question 'where and how to find a justified place for artists in the machine age' (Jorn, 1957: 16).

The third organisation, with which Jorn had a close association, was the Scandinavian COBRA movement (derived from COpenhagen, BRussels and Amsterdam), which was concerned with artistic development. The fourth ensemble was the London Psycho-Geographical Society. Prominentmembers associated with this English contingent were Ralph Rumney, Donald Nicholson-Smith (later Debord's translator in English) and T. J. Clarke. All were to leave the S.I. by 1962, when the group underwent a re-orientation in its views on art and politics, but in 1957, a new and critical organisation was founded by the combination of these groups and the collection of significant players.

Held in a small Northern Italian town, the 'Alba Platform' details the grouping and members of this new organisation. Representatives from eight countries (Algeria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Holland and Italy) were

present. These included J. Calonne, Constant, G. Gallizio, Asger Jorn, and Gil J. Wolman. The foundations for a united organisation were laid, and resolutions drawn up for a statement of intent of the newly-founded fraternity.

Home (1991) makes a distinction between the 'heroic' phase of the S.I. from 1957 to 1962 and later periods, and sees the latter date as significant in the factions that developed around the artistic Nashist Second International on the one hand, and the political 'specto' Situationists on the other. The 'specto' prefix denotes the regrouping of the S.I Around Debord, the acceptance of his spectacle thesis, and a political focus—as opposed to an artistic focus—to the S.I.'s activities and theory.

The Nashist faction contains the original S.I.'s artistic 'wing', and would result in a de-politicised, aesthetic vision of the S.I.'s original project. Nash was excluded in March 1062. This scission sheds light on the S.I.'s theoretical reorientation, and the 1962 round of expulsions marks it as a significant year. Tensions with Nash were expressed at the 5th Conference of the Situationist International in Götenborg, Sweden, 28-30 August 1061. Kotányi, responding to Nash, stated:

> Since the beginning of the movement there has been a problem as to what to call the artistic works by members of the S.I. It was understood that none of them was a situationist production, but what to call them? I propose a very simple rule: to call them 'antisituationist.' (Kotányi, 1961:88).

The statement against the artistic wing of the S.I. is clear. Their productions, by 1961, were running against the S.I.'s grain. From this conference, a new term entered the S.I.'s lexicon: 'Nashism'. It was used as a critique of those Situationist and broader trends that ranked political concerns below artistic considerations. By 1963, the S.I. was evoking Nashism as a term 'derived from the name of Nash', who was principally known for his attempt to betray the revolutionary movement and theory of that time.

Nashism could be used as 'a generic term applicable to all traitors in struggles against the dominant cultural and social conditions' (Editorial, 1963a:112). Nash was further criticised for pretending to have a relationship with the S.I. (Editorial, 1964b: 141), and for producing 'falsifications' (Debord, 1963: 317). How should the S.I. respond to Nashism? 'We must simply be in a position to destroy them' (Canjeurs & Debord, 1960: 305; Debord, 1971:369). Nash's expulsion marks a reorientation in the Situationist International.

Central concepts.
The early, heroic phase of the S.I. saw key ideas on production and consumption developed. The initial resolutions set out at Alba contained the embryonic versions of key concepts in Situationist political theory. The most significant of these were the spectacle, *dérive*, *détournement*, psychogeography and unitary urbanism.

Debord's (1995 [1967]) concept of the 'spectacle' is defined as unity versus separation, and 'a tendency to see the world by means of specialised mediations' (Debord, 1995: 16, §20). In Debord's scathing critique and analysis, modern consumer society is seen as the accumulation of images and the domination of images in modern life. 'The spectacle is capital accumulated to image' (Debord, 1995: 24, §34). The spectacle is the notion that all human relations are mediated by images from advertising, film and other sections of the mass media, driven towards controlling people's activities and consciousness. The need for the production and consumption of commodities (both material and cultural) is

ensured by the reign of the spectacle, which is the enemy of a directly-lived and fully human life. 'The whole of life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was once directly lived has now become mere representation' (Debord 1995: 12, §1).

People have become divorced from authentic experience, are passive spectators of their own lives and no longer communicate or participate in the society of the spectacle. The dominant form of spectacular commodity production and consumption ensures that people do not engage in self-directed or autonomous activity, but answer the needs of the spectacle. The nexus of images and signs extends across all social relations, and leads to the wholesale 'colonization of daily life' (Hussey, 2001: 52).

For Debord, the spectacle has thoroughly penetrated everyday life. The illusionary and the real, the fragmented and unified experience of modern life, are experienced as something separated, distanced and passive. A highly mediated society loses the direct qualities and experiential conditions that characterised the urban districts in Paris frequented by the Situationists.

The Situationists' act of transcendence developed in the form of the strategic practices of *dérive* – aimlessly drifting through urban environments – and *détournement*, the ironic 'rearrangement of pre-existing elements' (Editorial, 1958: 45). Together, these practices are used to challenge and subvert, forms of cultural expression and the urban environment. They are usefully deployed in a nocturnal, urban environment to challenge the emotional, physical and experiential planning of cities.

Drift, change, chance, encounter and adventure underpin the Situationists' techniques for integral activity on a human scale. These techniques are linked to psycho-geography—the study of the physical effects of the geographical environment on individuals' emotions and behaviour (Editorial, 1958: 45)— which were mapped using collage, poem, photography or prose.

The final Situationist contribution is the concept of 'unitary urbanism'. This perspective of action in the environment is defined 'first by the use of the ensemble of arts and techniques as a means of contributing to an integral composition of the milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior [sic]' (Editorial, 1958: 45). The environment is explored and challenged, using various strategies and techniques in order to highlight the spectacle's dominance and to provide alternative ways of using and living in the environment. It goes beyond architecture, art, urbanism, scientific investigation and the specialised mediations of experts such as town planners, artists and sociologists. Unitary urbanism is a new form of urbanism that combines acoustics, food, drink, architecture, poetry and cinema into a superior construction, to enrich everyday life in the city. Unitary urbanism is 'in close relation to styles of behaviour' (Debord, 1957: 23). It allows and demands the possibility of creating new ways of living and working within urban environments that are guided by human need and the passional qualities of people as a pre-condition to a sense of belonging.

In 1958, Debord and Constant attempted to pull together the principles of unitary urbanism, but the inherent tension between their views is apparent. On the one hand, Constant appeals for a 'striving for a perfect spatial art' and the joining of 'artistic and scientific means' for a 'complete fusion'. Debord's focus is different, demanding a unitary urbanism 'independent of all aesthetic considerations', as a 'result of a new kind of collective action' based on a revolutionary praxis (*I.S.* no.2 [1958]: 31, quoted in Sadler, 1998: 121).

Constant's resignation from the S.I. in the summer of 1960 was a result of the tension between these two visions of unitary urbanism (Sussman, 1989:179-80; Raspaud & Voyer, 1972: flyleaf). By September 1961, the Fourth International Conference of the Situationist International would found a central council and propel the quest for creative expression in a different direction.

Constant's project for *New Babylon* was flawed from the beginning. This was a large-scale utopian vision, based on the possibility of constructing a new city guided by the concepts of unitary urbanism. He worked from the perspective of a *flâneur* (Sadler, 1998: 123; Tester, 1994), celebrating the free-floating and bourgeois circulation of commodities—an anathema to the Situationists.

There was an implicit technological determinism in his work. He was impressed by the post-war reconstruction of Paris, where mechanised technological environments emerged, and celebrated 'building technology' and the 'great public building' (Sadler, 1998:125). In this way, Constant's mega-structures create a totality under one roof, but one that reproduces the same alienating conditions of the given urban landscape. They may have been big and futuristic, but they lacked a critical coherence and were not commensurate with social practices.

These mega-structures became the overly-rationalist and functionalist decorated aircraft hangers of which the Situationists were so critical. Sadler (1998: 148) makes asimilar point when he suggests that Constant was 'a situationist adopting a solution that originated in the muchmaligned Le Corbusier, pioneer of pilotis (grids of supporting columns) and deck structures'. Functionalist architecture is smuggled back into the work of Constant. In addition, Constant suffered from the reproduction of a mechanistic metaphor—a by-product of cybernetic culture—for the working of *New Babylon*. Constant conceives of his new city as a machine working on the emotions of its inhabitants (Sadler, 1998: 148).

By 1960, the relationship between Constant and Debord was clear. Constant was called the ex-Situationist, and described as building 'models of factories, agreeing to construct a church and integrating the masses into capitalist technological civilization' (*I.S.* no.6 [1961], in Knabb 1989: 373, n113).

The problem for Constant was that while he was working at the intersection of art and architecture, the Situationists were working at the intersection of politics, art and architecture. Sadler (1998: 158) makes a similar observation, suggesting that Debord is a 'leftist theorist attracted through his romanticism to the cachet of the avant-garde', while Constant is an 'avant-gardist attracted by the fervour of the left'.

After 1962 and a round of expulsions, the Situationists took on a more directly political orientation, and the artistic focus was significantly reduced. Constant's architectural vision was castigated for its 'technocratic concept of a situationist profession' (Editorial, 1963a: 113), and its distinctly heroic vision for the construction of architectural situations.

The later regrouping of the S.I. would modify the use of situations to a more human scale, built into everyday life and having a much more existential understanding of the use of art and culture. This should counter any readings of the S.I. that attempt to suggest a perfect and seamless line of transition throughout its existence. There are lines of continuity, but there are also significant ruptures, scissions and re-orientations.

The S.I.'s contributions of unitary urbanism, *dérive*, *détournement* and psychogeography all lead to the construction of situations, as 'a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambiance and a game of events' (Editorial, 1958:45). The playful and directionless adventures of the S.I. constitute a challenge to dominant forms of behaviour, life and experience.

If there is one central concept to be gleaned from the Situationists, it is to be found in the group's shift from an early incarnation of constructing artistic and architectural situations towards 'the construction of situations' in a much wider political sense. What does emerge is the S.I.'s focus on the 'city' and the notion of urbanism in the construction, use, engagement with, and right to the city. Their vision, mechanism and critique was pre-figured in the celebration on earlier attempt to apprehend and construct the right to space. McDonough (2009: 3) suggests 'at its core, what we find on in the twenty-odd year articulation of Situationist writing on the city is the outline of what we might call a Hegelian urbanism'. He argues the S.I. did not see the city a physical container or 'an assemblage of structures and routes, of functions and interrelations' but rather the 'space constituted by and constitutive of the drama of self-consciousness and mutual recognition' (McDonough 2009: 3) central to Hegel's thought. At its heart, the S.I. has a dynamic expression of alienation not just of the self but of the self from others a capitalist refashioning of space 'into its own décor' (Debord 1995: 121) and writing in to the physicality of the city a reified alienation. The city is conceived as a site of alienated labour and passive consumption that the construction of situations can challenge. The city was 'reformulated as the locus of potential reciprocity and community, the crucial special stake of any project of radical transformation' (McDonough 2009: 3). The model of a challenge to this functionalism and modernization of 'fixing' alienation was the fantastic architecture of Cheval.

Le Factuer Cheval.
The Situationists had an ongoing admiration for the Palais Idéal du Factuer Cheval. Hussey (2001: 107) suggests this is the 'bizarre edifice of stones, broken glass and seashells' (Goytisolo 1990: 123) which the local postman Ferdinand Cheval had built for no apparent reason in his hometown. However, Cheval was clear that in his early forties he found his 'stone of escape' that was the first element in his construction of the impossible and ideal palace from the everyday and 'to hand' materials on his post round. Part Gaudi cathedral, part Temple of Angkor, part grotto (Hussey 2001: 288) the construction became was an established mecca for the Surrealists and a 'self-built marvel of a Situationist icon (Sadler 1998: 75). Within the 'limits of a single individual's means', Cheval 'had expressed the imperious human need to shape one's environment, to create surroundings that speak of and to oneself and create a realisable dreamscape. The Palais Idéal prefigures a range of themes and motifs that would be so central to the Situationists' thought and practice.

The celebration of Cheval is closely connected to the S.I.'s and particularly Debord's relationship to Henri Lefebvre. The urban sociology that developed around Henri Lefebvre in the early sixties at Nanterre is a formative influence on a number of notable individuals, the most significant of these are Debord.

Lefebvre and the Situationists.
Their friendship lasted from 1957 to 1961 or 1962 (Ross 1997: 69). However, their relationship was a turbulent, acrimonious and torrid affair. A love story that ended badly (Hussey 2001: 138). Lefebvre in an interview in 1983 suggests their relationship is a delicate one and one he cared very deeply about (Ross 1997: 67). Lefebvre outlines the preceding movements (COBRA) and Constant's

relationship to his notion of the everyday. He suggests that the basis of the understanding between the Situationists and Lefebvre was around the notion of 'moments' or 'constructed situations', although Debord deemed moments too abstract (Hess 1988: 215). The idea of new moments or situations was already there in Constant's 1953 article *Pour une architecture de situation* (For an Architecture of Situation). The architecture of situation is a utopian impulse towards transforming society and creating something absolutely new. The vehicle for establishing this new architecture would be the theory and experiments in unitary urbanism. The idea was that in the city one could create new situations by, for example, linking up parts of the city, neighbourhoods that were separated spatially (Lefebvre quoted in Ross 1997: 73). However, after 1960 there was a great movement in urbanism and the establishment of the urbanism code from 1961 in France. At this point the Situationists abandoned Unitary Urbanism and wound down, if not abandoned, *dérive* experiments. Hostilities between Lefebvre and the Situationists fully broke out after a week at Navarrenx. After co-authoring a text together Lefebvre asked for it to be typed up. His version of events is that, afterward, the Situationists accused him of plagiarism (a paradoxical position for the Situationists). The final split came from two directions. The first is the contentious issue of plagiarism over Lefebvre's work on the Commune that he states was a joint text but he only used a small part of this text in his book on the Commune. The second direction was over the dissolution of the *Arguments* group and its journal. Lefebvre suggests Debord advocated *Internationale Situationniste* taking the place of the *Arguments* journal as the latter had lost its revolutionary zeal.

Debord's reproaches Lefebvre, 'I'm used to people like you who become traitors at the decisive moment' (Debord quoted in Ross 1997: 79). Lefebvre suggests that the Situationists' abandonment of unitary urbanism and the adoption of an opposite perspective, seeing urbanism as an ideology, accompanied this acrimonious dispute. The Situationists were no longer interested in constructing architectural situations of destructive creation but became engaged in constructing situations of creative destruction. Kaplan and Ross (1987: 2) acknowledge that the Situationists interpreted Lefebvre's concept of everyday life but rejected his ideas on moments in preference to situations to develop empirico-utopian experiments around this notion. It is to everyday life and empirical scientific enquiry that the discussion now turns due to the contribution of Lefebvre for the Situationist International.

Lefebvre represents the most sustained engagement with the concept of everyday life at both an ontological and epistemological investigation. His aim was to uncover the site and method of the reproduction of the social relations of production in his revolutionary critique of everyday life. Lefebvre's development of this line of investigation and its link to the central Marxist category of alienation was spawned in *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (1947). Ball (1987: 29) suggests the book resonates with the echo of peacetime hope of the reordering of economic energies away from a war economy to leisure and consumption. However, the continuing relevance of alienation for Lefebvre tempers any over optimistic, one-sided or uncritical conceptualisation of the everyday. The book was received 'without a murmur' and represents the uncomfortable relationship Lefebvre had with the French Communist Party (P.C.F.). Two further volumes on everyday life followed (Lefebvre 1962 and 1981). These two works firmly located the everyday in modernity and fruitfully provided the intimate links that can be made between an historical epoch and concrete social practices (Poster 1975: 244-246).

The everyday is defined by Lefebvre as 'that social experience which is left after all specialised activities (paradigmatically labour) have been removed' or

accounted for (Ball 1987: 30).   In this way the everyday is not simply a counterpoint to the activities of capitalist production. To highlight the relationship between the everyday and alienation, Lefebvre draws a number of distinctions between *la vie quotidienne* (daily life), *le quotidien* (the everyday) and *la quotidienneté* (everydayness). Lefebvre asserts that daily life has always existed. However, the concept of *le quotidien* (the everyday) defines the entry of daily life into modernity (Maycroft 1996: 5).   Everydayness stresses the homogenous, repetitive and fragmentary nature of everyday life whilst the everyday has ceased to be a subject (abundant in possible subjectivity) to become 'an object' (object of social organisation) (Maycroft 1996: 5). It is alienation that allows a critique of the everyday. Ball (1987: 30) suggests this is because the everyday is 'put into contact with its own radical *other'.* This can take two forms. The first is as an eradicated past or a pre-capitalist or so-called 'folk' culture. The second is as an imagined future of utopian projection. The everyday then is at one and the same time scorned as a current existing state but holding within itself the possibilities of future liberation and a naming of the place where alternative social forms might be organised. The result of this inquiry into everyday life 'is a sort of contrasting diptych, where the first panel represents the *misery of everyday life*...the second panel portrays the *power of everyday life*' (Lefebvre 1971: 35). The second affirmative diptych of continuity, permanence, adaptation, and creation is what Lefebvre (1971: 37) refers to as '*something extraordinary in its very ordinariness'*. This is seen in Lefebvre's discussion on the festival, the right to the city (Lefebvre 1968a) and his views on the Commune as possible challenges to the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption.   This conceptualisation proves favourable as,

> This society's rational character is defined as well as the limits to its rationality (bureaucratic), the object of its organisation (consumption instead of production) and the *level* at which it operates and upon which it is based: everyday life (Lefebvre 1971: 54).

This definition has the advantage of being *scientific* and more *precisely* formulated than any others and it owes nothing either to literature or a 'social philosophy' above social reality. Lefebvre (1971: 64) suggests the great event in the last few years after 1960 was to produce a programmed society in its appropriate urban setting. It was not enough for the 'bureaucratic society of controlled consumption' to sub-divide and organise everyday life, but it has become functionalised. The expansion of urbanism and the destruction of old towns have led to a *cybernetized* society. Land is allotted, through efficient apparatus according to specific ends, thus deepening the division and organisation of everyday life in urban environments. 'Cyberneticians, the un-elected, unaccountable, specialised elite of technically and functionally, rationalised bureaucrats are heavily implicated in the increasing bureaucratic control of everyday life connected to the Americanisation of consumer products and mass-production of standardised goods' (Lefebvre 1971: 67). The argument put forward sees the connections between Lefebvre's assessment of Americanisation and the S.I.'s political critique of post-war France around everyday life.

One realm that Lefebvre identified as holding the possibility of a critique of everyday life is 'in and through leisure activities' (Lefebvre 1991: 29). However, leisure is not uncritically accepted as forming an authentic point of existence. Leisure in post-war France had become increasingly commodified leading Lefebvre to conclude it had become a key component in the reproduction of capitalist relations (Lefebvre 1977: 9). Lefebvre was critical of the passive nature of leisure pursuits.   For example, cinema held the possibility of cultural enrichment but opened avenues for commercial exploitation and servility to constructed attributes.

To further develop his critique of everyday life Lefebvre developed his epistemology. Arguably, Lefebvre was caught in the post-war trend of empirical social science. In his teaching he would advocate observation as the primary medium for understanding and apprehending urban landscapes. 'Observation and curiosity of the world in which we live is the basis of intuition, questioning and critique and transformation. Becoming a real sociologist begins with observation' (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 15-16). However, towards the end of his life and still concerned with issues of everyday life, he had developed a method of 'rhythm analysis' (1992). The epistemological orientation is focused on linear and cyclical rhythms that unfold temporally. Rhythm analysis is the struggle for the conquest of time within time itself (Lefebvre 1986). Moreover, it is the concept that interweaves total, uniform and quantifiable linear time with qualitative rhythms in everyday life (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 31).

The influence of Lefebvre on the Situationists is undeniable and a similar contradictory relationship in terms of empiricism underlies the Situationists' analysis. On the one hand they represent a theoretical view that is the antithesis of empirical enquiry. The aphoristic style (particularly of Debord), a focus on emotional ambiences and experiential qualities had been persuasively linked to dark or gothic (noir) romanticism (Löwy 1998). On the other hand, their major techniques clearly demonstrate an empirical orientation. The whole project of psychogeography was an attempt to map areas of the city. It may not have been the God's eye view of functionalist planners but theirs was definitely an empirical cartography written through experiments in behaviour. It still retained an observational bias, even when tempered by the mapping of emotional ambiences. Moreover, the city was seen as a laboratory for experimental *dérives.* The 'scientistic' undertones sit uncomfortably with the emphasis on experiential qualities in challenging the dominant zoning of cities. However, the Situationists might have an empirical focus but this does not suggest they are empiricist in the Anglo-American and positivist sense. The similarities and family resemblance is to Gaston Bachelard (1968, 1985). Bachelard stressed the discontinuity in rational and scientific thought and regarded scientific rationalisation of experience as '*un rationalisme ouvert*' involving a dynamic 'rapport' between subject and object. He was opposed to the idea that thought is a reproduction of reality (or a reflectionist theory of knowledge) or an *a priori* rational construction. He held that knowledge affects the known object and vice versa which repudiates the separation of theory and praxis and that we only know what we try to change. It is this epistemological stance that has the greatest resonance with the Situationists.

For Levebvre (1996 [1968]: 147), the right to the city is a 'cry and demand' for 'the need for creative activity, for the *oeuvre* (not only of products and material goods), the need for information, symbolism, imagination and play'. It 'manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit' (Levebvre 1996 [1968]: 174). Lefebvre contends that the right to the city is the right to the *oeuvre*, the collective totalities of social relations and activity that makes up a city, 'to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property)'. The capturing and creation of the city's *oeuvre* is the Situationists' project.

Harvey (2008: 23) argues that the question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from questions of what kinds of social ties, relationships to nature, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is more than individual liberty and access to urban areas but is a right to change ourselves by changing the city and a collective power to reshape the process of urbanisation. Arguing from his perspective that cities have arisen though the absorption of

geographical and social concentrations of surplus product from capitalism's perpetual search for profit. The Second Empire of Paris, the Haussmannisation of the Paris' urbanism (Harvey 2003), 1940s suburbanisation of the U.S. and destruction of New York to the building of Dhubai's architecture of excess, to contemporary China's Klondike land-grab.   Harvey draw's on Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution* which predicted not only that urbanization [as a fix for surplus production] was central to the survival of capitalism and therefore bound to become a focus of political and class struggle, but that it was obliterating the distinctions between town and country through the production of integrated spaces across national territory (Harvey 2008).

So what does the preceding discussion contribute to right to the city?
The Situationists provide a panoply of techniques to engage with and redefine the city. The mapping of emotional ambience, the hidden and neglect corners and alleyways challenge to the dominant zoning, control and surveillance of city. The artistic, creative and political engagement of change, subversion, high-jacking the pre-ordered elements of city life recreates the everyday urban experience. The reclamation of public, city space from planners, administrators and cyberneticians is an important aspect of the Situationists politics. For the Situationists, the everyday in the city was the arena to be mined for experiments on new forms of living, ambience, 'structures of feeling' or a new sensibility.   A utopian demand for the possible impossible and taking dreams for reality provides a contemporary sense of belonging as a change in the city is part of the assertion of the human right to change oneself. The creation of situations as transformatory moments in human experience and urban geography, as a political struggle to life in city and a generalised awareness of the future possibilities of an urban utopia.

The Situationists' values of communication, participation, self-realisation through chance, encounter, play and giftgiving provide alternative sets of values, which can guide and inform this creativity. The construction of situations drew these values together with a desire for different organisational arrangements in order to achieve equal power relations, greater democracy and informal communication. Contemporary cultural politics and certain artistic and political aspects of independent, DIY cultural production may form a vanguard of different and experimental forms of behaviour, values and organisation of which the Situationists would be proud. Theory, the S.I. retains a vital currency of which the last has not been heard. At a time when the spectacle is at war with itself, it is time, in Debord's (1995: 154) words, for a Situationist dialogue to 'take up arms to impose its own condition upon the world'.

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