

Common Space of Organizations

The fourth part of our book was devoted to presenting some theoretical and practical tools that can assist communists in investigating and composing contemporary political struggles—which culminated, in the last chapter, in a discussion of communist investigations. Investigation, in all its different forms, serves to ensure that the content of revolutionary theory, practice, and strategy is not derived from an abstract analysis of the trends of capitalism, but is elaborated from what different concrete fronts of struggle think about contemporary capitalist organization, based on their challenges and political objectives, without losing sight of the horizon of structural transformation of capitalist society. Our entire theory has been constructed so that it can be molded and accommodated to very different ways of doing politics, of organizing conflicts and struggles, of evaluating our enemies and imagining the future. That is why, as we have seen, investigation cannot be a process of sociological observation: investigation involves engagement with practices and organizations, the construction of concrete alliances and articulations, because it is impossible to adopt a communist point of view if there is nothing concrete in common between struggles—and communist investigations serve to highlight, bring to the fore, and represent what is common in revolutionary politics. But the description of the different types of investigation—punctual, procedural, compositional, and formative—remains a theoretical contribution. It is the abstract theory of some of the means by which we can give concreteness to our analyses and to the practical challenges that arise from them. And what we will do in this chapter is take a final step toward the concrete, sharing the story of a particular political organization called Common Space of Organizations, or “CSO.” In doing so, we adopt a much more situated perspective—and invite readers to exercise the contradictory point of view that connects this small experiment to the larger movement to which we belong.

Background

We will present, in some detail, the trajectory of CSO throughout its short existence, spanning a little over two years of activities. Our expectation is that the description of how this collective was created and transformed over time—which profoundly influenced the way we conceived the ideas in this book—will serve as an example for other militants interested in continuing this type of action, whether in their political insertions, by creating similar devices, or even by articulating directly with us. But in order to more easily separate what is contingent and particular to our experience from what could effectively constitute a communist experiment of more general value, it is worth briefly dwelling on the history that preceded the formation of the collective. The Common Space of Organizations is actually the result of more than a decade of political mobilization and intellectual reflection by more than a hundred militants around the world. Its history is directly linked to a collective founded in Rio de Janeiro in 2011, called the Circle of Studies of Idea and Ideology (CSII), and to an international network of communist researchers that has been meeting since 2016 under the name Subset of Theoretical Practice (STP).

In the nearly ten years it was in operation, CSII brought together militants from various cities in Brazil—as well as an international group—with the aim of investigating, based on the experience of different organizations and political orientations, whether there were common problems that crossed the ideological boundaries of the left. Using a methodology inspired by psychoanalysis, the collective met to discuss different political experiences and attempted to recognize patterns and impasses that were repeated in different situations. Based on this analysis, groups were formed – “subgroups” – to think about new collective solutions to these difficulties, which the CSII then shared with other interested political organizations. As the collective grew, some members of the Circle felt the need to create a space for the theoretical systematization of the practice of articulation and analysis that the organization had been developing. This is how the Subset of Theoretical Practice emerged – which was originally a “subset” of this larger organization. In 2021, after several years of difficulty in continuing its proposal, CSII assessed that its way of operating no longer found traction in the social and political environment to which it had access and decided to cease its activities. STP, a research group founded within the Circle, decided to continue operating nonetheless and opened its doors to militants and intellectuals from other political processes and places around the world.

CSII already brought together militants working on very diverse fronts—unions, anarchist collectives, communist and socialist parties, social movements, etc.—but when STP became autonomous, this scope expanded even further. militants involved in many struggles, many of them informal, without fixed organizational nuclei, both in Brazil and in other countries, approached STP in search of ways to elaborate their political experiences and try to extract lessons for future struggles. This long collective work—which involved revisiting political processes, comparing different contexts and their particular challenges, and a highly complex interdisciplinary synthesis—consolidated the foundations of the theory we present throughout this book.

However, as STP developed and formalized this new approach, it began to be sought out not only by militants from past or declining struggles, but also by active political organizations interested in the possibility that the tools developed by STP could help with ongoing impasses and challenges. Faced with this demand, some members of the Subset concluded that it would be impossible for us to contribute effectively to these struggles with the structure we had at that time, since we operated basically as an international investigation group that met virtually. This conclusion is supported by our theory: an online investigation group is organized in a certain way—and therefore can only interact effectively with a very limited type of social environment, in addition to being unable to perceive much of what is around it. Online meetings force us to reduce what is happening in the struggles to distant reports, and the people in STP, scattered around the world, often did not share even the minimal experience of those specific social contexts, which further reduced our ability to perceive what was politically relevant to these organizations. Finally, virtual meetings tend to be very low-cost gatherings for those who participate—all you need to do is turn on your computer and coordinate a time—and this prevents concrete social and political structures from being more present in these meetings, whether in the form of obstacles or opportunities for joint action. In other words, the basic conditions for carrying out even the simplest ad hoc investigation are not so accessible in this format.

This was the main motivation for us to create a new collective, the Common Space of Organizations, in the second half of 2023. Our goal, at that initial moment, was to put to the test

the theoretical work we had been developing at STP, both through the didactic presentation of concepts and through frequent meetings with militants from different political organizations.

November 2023

The Common Space of Organizations began to meet weekly in downtown Rio de Janeiro in November 2023. Its meetings were open to the public and were divided into three types, forming a more or less regular cycle: theoretical seminars, where we intended to debate the accumulated theoretical balance of SPT; "militant inquiries," which is what we initially called specific interviews with militants from different political organizations; and collective elaborations, meetings dedicated to debating with the public how the political experiences we heard related to the concepts of the seminar. At the same time, we made an effort to ensure that the organizations participating in the inquiries returned to subsequent meetings to help us with interviews with other movements. Our intention, still very rudimentary, was that this process could, on the one hand, influence the training of these militants—since they would have access to discussions about the concrete problems of other organizations—and, on the other hand, influence the form of the inquiries themselves—since it changed the political composition of the interviews and therefore the type of interaction possible. We also believed that this connection between militants could lead to new links between the invited organizations themselves.

From the organizational perspective we have developed throughout this book, we can say that the political idea that gave rise to CSO did not emerge from the material reality of the collective itself, but from traits that STP gathered over the years from the "black box" of many scattered struggles in Brazil and elsewhere, through the reports and analyses of the militants and intellectuals who gathered there. Perhaps we could condense the political principle formulated from this material reality as follows: the particular failures of struggles can become common material for those same struggles. Like any political idea, there is a component of refusal here—what we call "anti-social negation"—that is, a rejection of treating the histories and experiences of different political processes as mere cases of capitulation or lack of revolutionary vision. Instead of simply using the social form of this fragmentation, as it presents itself, to confirm the need for each fraction of the

struggles to remain isolated, STP began to argue that something is expressed in this fragmentation that can be the basis for a new communist perspective. But not only that: beyond refusal, the collective developed a political way to begin to move through these fragments—to carry out "social negations"—through the creation of a collective investigation method that would transform the diversity of struggles into motivation for theoretical reinvention and, conversely, a research methodology that would facilitate the coexistence of militants and intellectuals traversed by this social heterogeneity.

If, on the one hand, CSO was able to begin its activities based on this accumulation and the direction it suggested, on the other hand, it took time, for this very reason, to confront the challenges arising from its own material reality. In fact, much of what materially conditioned this cycle of meetings and activities that we mentioned earlier was not clear to us at the beginning. We had a tactic—to hold regular meetings, whatever the cost—an experimental bet—the possibility that, by promoting STP theory, we could produce new combinations of militants and political organizations, just as the Subset itself had begun to do—and what made a difference for us was, essentially, the concatenation between the different meetings we held—seminars, inquiries, elaborations. This simple arrangement allowed for a first attempt to advance and promote political articulations, but the original form of CSO was not very receptive to what was happening with our composition – who built the space and in what concrete way – with our capacity for interaction – because we were concerned with restricting our actions to this previously formulated model – and perception – since very little of the social environment of downtown Rio or the political environment of Rio de Janeiro made a difference to our work at that time.

December to February, 2024

Organized in this way, we were able to conduct three initial inquiries in quick succession. We talked to an autonomist collective that had suspended its activities some time ago, a Marxist group that was competing with a more conservative labor party, and militants from different factions of the ruling center-left party. The choice of the initial groups we invited was largely determined by the access we had to militants from these organizations, which guaranteed a certain degree of trust and

tolerance from the guests towards the type of activity we were proposing. At the same time, our assessment of the tensions that could arise due to their different political orientations was, at the time, that this expressed CSO's effort to deal with the internal contradictions within the left in Brazil. We did not consider at that time that, by connecting these organizations, even if only occasionally, through our inquiries, we were also weaving CSO itself into this fabric of relationships—an effect that we later discovered was important to take into account, as other groups began to question whether, by listening to militants with political orientations with which they radically disagreed, we were not taking the side and positions of these organizations.

The first three inquiries followed the format of the specific investigations we described in the previous chapter. We scheduled meetings with militants from these different organizations and devised a procedure to help us guide the conversations so that they would not be restricted only to the representations that individuals make of the struggles in which they are involved. Our method consisted of a few simple guidelines:(1) Never invite just one person to talk, as the presence of multiple accounts from the same organization already helps to separate what is in the realm of personal impressions.(2) Avoid inviting leaders, public figures, or militants who are accustomed to presenting their organizations, as this increases the chance that guests will think along with us about their struggles.(3) Invite militants who participate in an inquiry to participate in an interview with another organization, as this helps to prevent the interviews from merely reproducing the perspectives of the groups involved.(4) Invite an organization that participated in an inquiry to a second follow-up inquiry, as this also contributes to understanding the organization's journey beyond the individual experiences of its militants.

It is worth noting that only one of the invited organizations—the autonomist collective involved in the struggle of outsourced workers—had militants who participated in other organizations' inquiries, and this was also the only organization at that time that returned for a second inquiry. This was, at least in part, because one of CSO's coordinators is part of this collective – and because, we believe, this was the only one of the three inquiries where the investigation took the form of an effective political exchange.

In retrospect, the initial interview method we used was too schematic and too concerned with ensuring the production of investigation that was of exclusive interest to CSO itself, since it allowed us to connect the interviews to the themes of the seminars and the discussions of the collective elaboration meetings. Virtually nothing in this process was thought out based on the interests and needs of the invited organizations – that is, we did not yet understand that investigations are essentially a form of connection and that their ability to produce new knowledge and insights is actually a consequence of this. The only exception was really the inquiry with the autonomist collective: at the time we made the invitation, the group was no longer active, and the opportunity to organize a reunion and elaborate a little of its history together with other interested people ended up being useful for the organization itself, which decided to resume its activities a few months later.

Even so, the inquiries contributed greatly to CSO's progress. First, because they served as fodder for the collective discussions we had, demonstrating that the theory developed by STP really allowed us to approach the reality of these struggles in a different way, recognizing their differences and limitations without having to choose one organization as the representative of the "real" political point of view and the others as processes guided by false premises. That is, it was becoming possible to navigate between these different militant perspectives, understanding how they were affected by different social and political compositions.

Secondly, we also realized that the construction of a collective space where it was possible to share different political experiences was in itself of great value to those who were there. Both the seminars and the collective elaboration meetings began to revolve not only around the inquiries, but also around the militant experience of the people who regularly participated in the CSO meetings. This space for exchange served both to identify other invisible aspects of the material reality of the struggles—recurring problems, forms of suffering in activism, failures that required new ideas to be worked out, etc.—and also became an important source of questions about CSO's own actions.

March to August, 2024

What was happening, without CSO organizers realizing it, was that the material reality of the organization itself—with its conflicts and also unexplored possibilities—was beginning to affect the space, demanding a profound reformulation. In the first months of activity, the collective organized itself with the aim of ensuring that its regular meetings took place, holding additional coordination meetings to agree on the division of labor necessary to make this happen. This form of organization conditioned the type of interaction that CSO was capable of producing, both with the struggles and with the people who frequented the space, and the way the collective perceived its environment. For example, we were concerned with inviting militants, but we did not consider how organizations understood this invitation—since there was no concrete plan for working with them—and we did not consider the participants in the regular meetings as members of the collective—since they did not have access to any forum for deliberation or strategic evaluation of CSO: for us, they were the “audience” of the meetings.

But the material reality of our organization quickly began to make itself felt. The first conflict that began to arise from the materiality of this process concerned the difficulties that maintaining the collective's practice posed for the organizers. Ensuring that weekly meetings were held in an easily accessible location became extremely laborious, creating increasing tension for the coordinators of the space, who were responsible for the various tasks necessary to continue the activities. The tension between survival and political life had already manifested itself, in fact, since the beginning of ECO's activities—which is why the collective had been sensitive, from the outset, to the need to collaborate with the transportation costs of invited militants, for example. But it was around March 2024 that CSO decided to respond to this problem in a more structural way, creating a partnership with an investigation institute: in exchange for some financial resources – which would help us with the rent for the space, transportation and food costs for the meetings, and a small allowance for the coordinators – the collective began to hold monthly meetings, separate from its regular activities, such as book launches and presentations of the work of the institute's researchers. This agreement was certainly only possible, under the terms in which it was made, because a member of the coordination team worked at this institution, so that this partnership did not bring additional constraints to our organization. The agreement, in this sense, established a “fence” – it placed a monthly CSO activity under the control of another organization – so that it was possible

to avoid intensifying the coordinators' work regime – that is, a fence that allowed us, at the same time, to avoid expanding the “margins” of money and work on the time of activism, determining what we could and could not do collectively.

If the material tension between the world of work and activism brought up a new problem for the organization—which responded to it, at first, without much inventiveness, and in a provisional manner—another tension that arose at the same time received a more striking treatment. As we have already mentioned, the importance of exchanges between regular participants in the space, which became increasingly central to the evaluation of what we were doing there, called into question this initial perception that there would be a small group of coordinators concerned with disseminating a political idea developed by STP and, apart from that, an audience interested in debating theory in light of the inquiries. In contrast to this conception, a small autonomous political community began to form within CSO, based on the confidence that it was possible to share militant experiences and learn from them. And it was up to the organization, at that moment, to figure out how to make room for this new development, even if it meant rethinking the political content and strategy that had guided us until then. In organizational terms, it was becoming increasingly clear that we could use a “frontier”—a common boundary, shared by both sides of the divide—to overcome the asymmetrical and unnecessary fence that separated the group's active militants from a supposedly passive public. Based on this, we added a new regular meeting to the organization's calendar, dedicated to evaluating our activities and planning next steps together with all group participants—these were the first seeds of CSO as a true collective.

These two transformations need to be considered together. The institutional partnership had alleviated the tension between work and activism for the coordinators, who were thus able to devote more time to the tasks necessary for maintaining the meetings, ensuring the existence of this collective space, which was increasingly appropriated and built by its participants. Not only that, but since CSO's political composition included these interventions in economic life, the group was also aware of the need to include this dimension in its collective deliberations—which, in turn, conditioned the type of discussions the collective was able to have and the ideas it was able to formulate. In this way, the community that was forming there shared not only reports on the

difficulties of interaction between organizations and their enemies, but also experiences about the obstacles that the reproduction of life poses for those who engage politically—a rare type of collective elaboration, but one that is crucial for us to effectively understand how our struggles are concretely rooted in the social world. If, from this angle, the two changes reinforced each other positively, on the other hand, they also created a new contrast. After all, while CSO began to recognize itself as a larger collective, composed not only of the initial coordination, but also of other people interested in building that organization, it also produced a new internal difference within the group—between those who received financial assistance in exchange for taking care of the collective's more "invisible" tasks, and the larger group that jointly thought about the political dimension of CSO. This division in the organizational composition was discussed and recognized, but it also produced new effects on the group's ability to intervene and perceive the social and political world around it.

In political terms, however, none of these transformations was as striking and consequential as the one that began with the two subsequent inquiries conducted by the collective. In early 2024, CSO coordinators began meeting with a militant linked to a soup kitchen located near our collective's headquarters. This solidarity kitchen, which is part of a large social movement, is one of dozens of similar initiatives scattered throughout the country. Unlike what happened with the first three specific investigations—when we started from personal contacts we had with militants—here there was no prior link between us, and the original justification for the contact was the possibility of helping the militant publicly expose a situation of exploitation involving app delivery workers, a sector where he had also worked for a time. For the first time, the need to think of the investigation as a political exchange became explicit – but what was initially designed as an exchange between support for the complaint and an interview with the militant for CSO soon changed in character. And here, the functioning of the solidarity kitchen had a crucial influence. For different reasons, solidarity kitchens are staffed by both cooks and other militants in the movement, as well as volunteers, which means that there is already a common practice of receiving visitors and involving third parties in the daily work of organizing and producing meals. Thus, instead of the exchange we had proposed, our contact suggested that we visit the kitchen and help with daily tasks before conducting the inquiry.

At that point, we had begun to review the role of inquiries in our meetings, and the invitation to visit the kitchen was therefore very welcome, serving as a basis for this reformulation process. We formed a rotating group that once a week took part in the kitchen renovation effort and also helped with the preparation of the meals—and we continued this practice for a few months, even after conducting the interview with the movement's militants. It was not only our first “procedural investigation” – as we now call this type of more lasting articulation, subject to the mode of struggle of another organization – but also an example that allowed us to begin to better understand the limitations of the interviews we had conducted up to that point.

In addition to our work with the solidarity kitchen, we organized a second inquiry during this same period with the autonomist collective with which we began our activities. Over the past few months, relations between CSO and this collective had grown closer—in fact, other members of our group had joined this organization on a permanent basis. The collective had resumed its activities since the beginning of the year, working with outsourced workers from different public universities and collecting their complaints on a website and in a newspaper distributed in these same workplaces.

After a few months of working together, we invited some militants from the collective for a conversation, which also played a crucial role in this process of reformulating our investigations. If our engagement with the kitchen and with the autonomist militants taught us the value of procedural investigation—its ability to bring to light other aspects of organizations, while allowing for concrete articulations based on the sharing of work and common challenges—the contrast between these two experiences was also very useful in indicating a possible limit to this type of investigation.

The process of struggling alongside the autonomists resulted in an extremely productive conversation, where ideas developed in STP and CSO were able to help in the analysis of organizational dilemmas and strategic challenges of the collective without implying the group's submission to ideas external to its practice. The conditions for this to be possible were quite

specific: after all, there were CSO militants in the collective and there was also an affinity between the groups due to their shared interest in using the workers' inquiry as a political tool. Continued coexistence, coordination in the field of composition, and the sharing of political technologies all contributed to making possible a detailed discussion of the paths and missteps of the struggle with outsourced workers. The procedural investigation with the cooks and militants, however, culminated in a very different interview: we realized that much of what we were learning in our weekly work with them did not appear in what they told us during the interview, and the way we formulated the lessons and ideas that emerged from that practice was also not recognizable to the movement's own militants. The feeling that we were "seeing from the outside" what was happening in the kitchen had not only persisted but deepened.

The contrast between the two investigations made us realize that there was a difference between simply taking on tasks from another organization and effectively learning to see social reality from their political perspective. The productive side of both inquiries led us to differentiate between "punctual" investigations—the interviews—and "procedural" ones—where there was coexistence and collective work – while the contrast between them helped us distinguish what would be the scope of "compositional" investigation – where collective work creates common situations and objectives that serve as the basis for a common perspective among the organizations that are involved. This component was present in the case of the collective, but not with the cooks and militants of the social movement. Even with this qualitative difference between the forms of articulation we were building, it was very significant for CSO to have been able to facilitate, for the first time, an exchange between other organizations. During a protest against a businessman who threatened to fire workers from the university cafeteria, the kitchen offered to send meals to the workers, students, and militants gathered by the autonomist collective. It was a one-off exchange, without the need for any greater ideological alignment, which allowed the action to take place strategically at lunchtime – and also a political exchange that would never have occurred spontaneously, given the differences in orientation and composition of the two organizations.

September to December, 2024

Although we learned a lot from the process with the solidarity kitchen—which continued after the unsuccessful interview—and from the feedback inquiry with the autonomist collective, the articulation that really consolidated the idea of a third type of investigation was the one we undertook with another political organization. Since June, CSO had been approaching a very old political movement with a national reach, which is mainly organized in the outskirts of large cities and in small towns, seeking to build networks of cooperation and self-organization that they call “popular communities.” We had some prior contact with a few militants from the movement, but we knew that, due to the radical and silent orientation of the organization, a one-off investigation would not be possible or even interesting. However, the movement had recently begun to build a community in the city center, and this made a more continuous approach feasible, along the lines of the procedural investigations we were already conducting. We began to attend the movement’s activities—both in the downtown community and at state and national meetings—always following the principle of submitting ourselves to the mode of organization of the struggle with which we were involved. But here the process took a different turn, as the new group that the movement was forming in the city center was experiencing particular difficulties. It was a new experiment for this organization: most of its communities had a very strong foundation in their places of residence, which facilitates the creation of bonds of trust and collective work—something that does not happen in the same way in a chaotic area in the urban center of a metropolis. Because of this, our work with the movement and this new community took on a different aspect: we were not only offering militant labor for a struggle, but helping it to think about itself under new conditions.

It is very important to mention that a fundamental principle of this organization is popular protagonism – its social composition is almost exclusively made up of precarious workers, and its principle of self-organization places the movement’s base at the center of all decision-making and collective construction processes. Here, CSO’s political composition may have helped us find a way of working that respected the form and strategy of this political organization. As we have seen, CSO was at that time undergoing an internal division between a coordination team that carried out the tasks necessary for the continuation of the space – agenda, publicity, dealing with the owner of our headquarters, practical contact with other organizations, etc. – and the newly formed

collective, which was engaged in inquiries, strategic deliberations, and joint evaluation of our actions. This meant that we already understood the political value of the work necessary to reproduce a collective space—and it was through this same path that we consolidated our articulation with the downtown community, taking on tasks of organizing meetings and facilitating the participants of this group to gain time to increasingly appropriate the movement, its method, and the collective that was forming there.

Working with this movement consolidated a series of practical and theoretical novelties for CSO. Above all, it helped us understand the difference between procedural and compositional investigation, as it was not just a matter of collaborating on specific tasks, but of jointly facing challenges that had yet to be solved – common impasses that could creatively guide our political exchange. The investigation process with this movement was also the first that did not include a specific inquiry at any point—no interviews or formal conversations with militants convened by ECO—but was carried out through a series of different types of articulations: joint experiments, shared political technologies, popular inquiries of interest to both organizations, etc.

In parallel with the process with this movement, CSO was also beginning to build another relationship, with a network of political articulations centered on the territorial struggle. Unlike the movement mentioned above, this network of articulation already conceived its political task in terms of a seam between extremely diverse struggles – encompassing peripheral organizations in the urban context, quilombos, settlements, and indigenous territories. This type of action, involving groups and struggles so different from each other, was also accompanied by a unique vision of how to combine different political traditions in a process of revolutionary composition. Interested in learning a little from their experience, we initially invited some militants working in Bahia to a conversation in Rio de Janeiro about their political perspectives, and from these conversations and interactions, a different type of interaction between the organizations began to emerge. A crucial novelty here was the role of CSO in bringing this network closer to the popular movement with which we were already involved.

In conversations with the militants from Bahia, we gained some understanding of the challenges of the process in which they were involved, and from the perspective of these impasses, an exchange with the popular movement began to become an interesting possibility. In strategic terms, both organizations considered it crucial to establish new links between the peripheries of large cities and autonomous territories in the countryside, and both thought of these links in terms of material exchanges, collective work, and the distribution of production. There had even been rapprochements between these organizations in the past, but without continuity. We then took it upon ourselves to bring this proposal to the movement and help organize an activity that would enable a new strengthening of ties—which took place a few months later in Bahia. From December until today, we have continued to support this articulation, which has unfolded into other activities since then.

At the same time, we began to visit the territory of one of the militants who visited us in Rio de Janeiro, a settlement in southern Bahia, as well as some national activities of the network of territories. This effort at interstate coexistence also led us to reorganize CSO internally, as it required a new approach to the financial resources we had—now mobilized for conducting investigations—and an even greater degree of involvement from the members of the collective. It was the first time that the process of compositional investigation—that is, focused on common problems—led our group to undergo important internal transformations.

Both the process we initiated with the popular movement and with the territorial articulation network had yet another crucial impact on CSO, as both organizations were already thinking very deeply – guided by a wealth of accumulated experience – about elements that we were only beginning to explore in relation to contemporary communist tasks. With a history of more than fifty years of commitment to the role of militant investigation and the Maoist “mass line” as ways of keeping the struggle aligned with the rhythm and interests of the people, the popular movement helped us to review and clarify what is really at stake in investigations and their role in rooting politics in material reality. In turn, the challenges faced by the coordination network have not only transformed our understanding of the role of territorial struggle today, but have also greatly

enriched our vision of how political construction based on material interdependence can help connect struggles that are thought of in extremely different ways.

These two experiences thus became the first cases of "formative" investigations at CSO, where our joint action was not only focused on specific common interests, but also helped to form a shared communist perspective, since the dimensions of investigation, articulation, and revolutionary construction were already part of the political thinking of all the organizations involved.

January to June, 2025

After a little over a year, CSO no longer resembled the original organization. We began our activities in November 2023, using a cyclical model of three types of meetings, coordinated by a group of three or four people, with the primary objective of disseminating the theoretical framework developed by STP to a diverse audience and, secondarily, of promoting indirect contacts between other political organizations. However, as the investigations took shape and developed into effectively constructive articulations, it no longer made sense to define our work agenda in this way. A first important change was the proposal to create a new cell of the collective in São Paulo, as well as to encourage the creation of others. Since the middle of the previous year, when we began to coordinate with national movements and struggles, our field of action had already begun to expand beyond Rio de Janeiro, which justified a constant presence in other cities—also motivated by the interest that other people began to show in the collective. To accompany this process—and also to facilitate coordination with new organizations—we decided to write a text that would condense the history of CSO and explain the working method that guides our organization. This text—initially a 30-page document!—became the first version of this book.

Throughout the first half of 2025, the São Paulo CSO group also began to meet regularly, seeking new militant connections and advancing the more established contacts we already had. In Rio de Janeiro, we replaced the “seminar” format meetings with readings and discussions of the book

manuscript, discussing each chapter collectively, while also deepening the bonds we had built up to that point.

The need to reorganize ourselves to better follow the investigations in which we were involved—a process that began in the second half of 2024—led to a series of changes in CSO's internal structure. We created a national forum for strategic decisions involving the collective's interstate activities, and we reworked our relationship with the investigation institute that supported the Rio group, both to ensure the autonomy of our organization and to facilitate the involvement of all CSO members in this partnership, since it involved the transfer of resources and therefore the material reproduction of the collective and its participants. The division that had been established between the Rio coordination and the other members of the group—due to financial support and the existence of a space separate from the coordination—began to be rethought, leading to new internal structures as well.

Finally, CSO's relationship with SPT—which remained active throughout this time—also underwent an important change. Throughout our activity, there was a growing demand – both from members of the collective and other interested parties – for a space more dedicated to investigation, which could also help clarify details of the theory we developed in the Subset and later in CSO itself. A proposal then emerged that this demand be addressed to STP itself, which already functioned as a space for theoretical investigation and could take on the additional task of mediating the approach of people interested in our theoretical vision, or even interested in creating new cells of the collective – in Brazil or elsewhere – and who could begin this journey in dialogue with the investigation group. The Common Space of Organizations, which had emerged as a small experiment of the STP, now became the general organization, of which STP was an important “subset.” The unanimous approval of this transformation led STP to change its name to “Common Space of Theoretical Practice” to better integrate CSO.

In this brief summary of our activities, we emphasize some key moments that profoundly influenced the changes and developments that the collective underwent. But it is important to note that virtually none of the investigations we conducted—with the exception, perhaps, of two of the

first three “specific investigations”—were actually completed. Many of them had long-term developments and today comprise an ecology of articulations of varying degrees of involvement that we continue to build. We have also left out of this summary other political exchanges and processes that are still ongoing, due to the need to be concise in this report.

Investigating the Common Space of Organizations

But what is the Common Space of Organizations when viewed from the point of view of other struggles? This is not a rhetorical or innocent question. If our organizational theory is correct, then we have much to learn when we consider the interaction between CSO and other political groups from their different perspectives.

Many of the people who have passed through our collective, either individually or collectively, participating in one or another isolated meeting or reading some written material, have concluded that CSO was a space for investigation or theoretical debate. In fact, our open meetings rarely result in political action, as we mainly act on the activities of other organizations, and often include rather abstract discussions—as during the collective review process of this book. This view is similar, in part, to the initial impression we made on the social movement responsible for the solidarity kitchen. In our early exchanges, we were repeatedly treated as social science academics, interested in learning about that struggle for the purposes of investigation and theorization. Our detached interest, without any openness to recruitment by the organization, our willingness to talk and learn about the experiences of the militants—all of this certainly contributed to this impression. It is true that the consistency of our joint work in the kitchen, as well as some subsequent coordination processes that we helped to build, eventually changed this perception, but it remains relevant because it is a common and understandable way in which CSO is perceived by some struggles—especially those that have become accustomed to being the subject of master’s and doctoral theses in the humanities.

From the perspective of the popular movement we worked with, this perception that we were academic observers did not take hold, and our political objectives were taken much more

seriously—certainly because of this movement's previous experiences with other communist groups. On the other hand, the social composition of ECO—mostly teachers, students, health professionals, and liberal professionals—placed us in the camp of "supporters" of the revolutionary struggle, that is, a collective whose influence must be carefully controlled so as not to interfere with processes of popular self-determination. Here, even more than in dealing with the solidarity kitchen, the decisive factor was concrete work—and more than that, the ability to demonstrate in practice our collective's willingness to respect and follow what the movement's base decided as its orientation.

It is interesting to contrast this perspective with that of a forum of autonomist struggles with which we had some exchanges. Here, the perception we conveyed—perhaps in contrast to the "diffuse" way in which this forum is organized—was that we were a small dogmatic political party, interested in reconciling and managing all struggles through a far-fetched theory. It is useful to compare these two views of CSO, as the popular movement was also concerned about the possibility that a collective, external to its bases, would disrespect and distort its forms of struggle. However, from their point of view, the concern stemmed from the socioeconomic composition of our group—which could lead to a silent power imbalance—and not from bad faith or political duplicity, while the forum of struggles—whose social composition was much more similar to ours—perceived our interest in a common construction as veiled political "entryism."

Even more interesting, perhaps, is the way we appear to the network of territorial struggles. CSO meets in large cities and is composed almost exclusively of salaried workers. It is also a predominantly white group. The contrast with the reality of the struggles of indigenous peoples, quilombolas, and peasants could not be greater, which makes CSO almost indistinguishable, at first glance, from a group of foreign tourists whose presence is costly for their hosts. We mention this contrast not because of its supposedly derogatory nature, but because it is impossible to discover the place of one organization alongside another without considering what does or does not make a difference in this interaction. And if, on the one hand, this indistinguishability between CSO and other white groups in the city may close some doors, or at least make common

construction very delicate, on the other hand, it is a trait that can serve as "camouflage" when articulations need to sound more harmless and superficial than they appear.

It is clear that this quick kaleidoscope is composed only of clues that we have collected along the way—and we can learn very little about these different perceptions of CSO without considering the forms of interaction and composition of each of the struggles in which we are involved. But even as a caricature, it is important to consider our history from these other perspectives, as they are not—with few exceptions—distortions or interpretations in bad faith. It follows directly from communist theory that a political organization reveals different aspects of its structure when in contact with other political forms—just as it also follows from this theory that this contrast can be the source of experiments, technologies, and inquiries capable of transforming our forms of struggle. It is impossible to tell the story of CSO without considering how our organization responded to these different perceptions of ourselves, which often helped us to review and broaden our horizon of action, while also pointing out blind spots and “black boxes” that we need to learn to deal with.

In our brief history, CSO has linked up with organizations and struggles that are much longer-lasting, deeper, and more intense than the conflicts we face directly in our collective. It often happens that our organization perceives itself, in the mirror promoted by this contrast, as a small part—tiny and incidental—of a huge field of battles and historical challenges in the struggle for collective emancipation. But if this sudden reflection, which gives us a measure of our size, may perhaps even hurt our vanity, on the other hand it situates our smallness in the infinite sky of the communist adventure.