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On Territorial Justice, Human Flourishing and Geographical Strategies of Liberation
An Interview with David Harvey, Nanterre (France), 21 November 2011

by Frédéric Dufaux | Philippe Gervais-Lambony | Chloé Buire | Henri Desbois

Image: Chloé Buire
Sound: Henri Desbois

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnz2mo_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-1_news

JSSJ: David Harvey, merci beaucoup! We are very happy and moved to have you here, in Nanterre and to be able to make this interview for the journal Justice spatiale / Spatial Justice. We are going to share the questions, Frédéric and me. And because we are in Nanterre, probably because we are in Nanterre, and secondly because it's one of our main references, and it's also one of your main references, my first question will be Henri Lefebvre, which is not really a question, but the question would be: at the end of your book Social Justice and the City, you say "I have just read Henri Lefebvre, after finalizing the first chapters of the book", and then in the postscript of the book, in the last edition, you wrote this piece "The Right to the City 2008", so the question is: What was the relevance at that time of Henri Lefebvre, and what is the relevance now, as it changes in the way you interpret and use his work?

David Harvey: Well I think, the way I would put it is that Lefebvre, it seemed to me, in the late 1960's, was responding to a situation. When he called the Right to the City "a cry and a demand", he was responding to what was going on. And when I first came to Paris myself in 1976, there was a lot of urban agitation mobilized in various quarters of the city and I think that played a very important role in what happened in 68. But one of the things that happen to thinking on the Left is that very frequently the urban dimensions to politics get left out. There's a tendency on the traditional Left to think about the Factory, and the Workers, and you know, Community, that is something secondary and I had always taken it as being very important to keep a link between what's going on in the Factory, and what's going on in the City, and I think Lefebvre understood that very well at that time and responded to that situation. I think we are in a similar situation today, where actually the conditions of urban life are just as important politically and in some respects more so, because certainly once upon a time in industrialized countries, the traditional working class has been weakened and in some senses much of it has disappeared - it's all gone to China.

So I think that he was responding to a situation. I think we on the Left should also be responding to the material situation around us and pay much more attention. So if the theme of the Right to the City is reemerging, as we see in, say, Brazil, or has reemerged in the United States, it's not because anybody read Lefebvre, it's more because of the material situation. The neoliberal City has become so class-divided and so oppressive for daily life in cities for many people that I think we would be silly not to pay attention to it, and to the degree that Lefebvre responded to that situation; I think reading him again is a way of saying to ourselves that we should respond to our contemporary situation in the way he responded in the 1960's, to talk

about the urban as being constitutive of a revolutionary possibility and look at that possibility very seriously.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnz4ap_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-2_news

JSSJ: And you define the Right to the City as a "precious and neglected human right". How would you elaborate on that? Why "human right"?

David Harvey: Well, because I think, in an emancipated society, that we should all have a say about the direction we are going in, and I think this connection that exists between urbanization and the kind of society we create becomes significant. The way I would put it is to say the question of "what kind of city do we want?" cannot be answered without asking the question "what kind of people do we want to be?", and to ask that question about human possibilities, and the development of human capacities and powers to me seems the right of what Marx would call "the human flourishing". And that is for me a very profound right, which is partly captured in bourgeois conceptions of right, and I think therefore we have to take the bourgeois conceptions and then shift them into this other dimension, and of course to talk however about the Right to the City is to create what I would call an empty signifier. Everybody can claim the right to the City: developers do, financiers do; we have a mayor in New York City, who is a billionaire, who claims he has the Right to the City. So, as an empty signifier, I think it's great because then it poses the question of who is going to fill it with meaning, and whose meaning is it that gets within it, then becomes a fulcrum of debate, and I think for that reason the notion of the Right to the City was incorporated in the Brazilian constitution, it has actually jumped up all over the place. I find groups working on these themes, in Zagreb, in Hamburg, everywhere, they all have slightly different understandings of what it might mean, but that is inevitable; but to point to it as a right is to put it right in the center of bourgeois discourse as well, so it's internal to bourgeois discourse, but it also has a capacity, as somebody like Lefebvre would say, to explode it, and I think that is why I would call it a very profound human right.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnz5gt_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-3_news

JSSJ: Another place is South Africa, which is where I work and this connection between the urban and the factory was really part of the struggle in South Africa against apartheid, and today the question is asked again. But you mentioned New York and the mayor of New York: what would you say of the Right to the City in New York today?

David Harvey: Well, we have an Alliance, which came out of the US Social Forum, back in 2007, on the theme of the Right to the City.

Most of the groups that became part of that Alliance for example never heard about Henri Lefebvre… They just saw a situation where working on homelessness, or working against police brutality, or working on any of those things, it was better that people started to work together, and to have a larger kind of program. So the Right to the City Alliance has tried to set up a platform and to articulate a platform for alternative development in the City, and I think one of the issues that they raised, which I think is now very much on the agenda, is the question of who

is the public in public space. When Mayor Bloomberg decides to eject one segment of the public from public space then it becomes clear that this is not public space, and I like to put an association between public space and turning public space into a commons, which is a political place of debate, and one of the things that has happened in most of the cities now is the possibility of finding a public space that you can turn into a commons is becoming harder and harder. The London Occupy movement… I mean there is this Paternoster Square, but it is run by the businesses, it is all privatized, even though the public is allowed in, but there is an authority over it as to what shall transpire, that's why they went to the steps of St Paul's, because while the business community would have thrown them out immediately, the Church was more, had a more ambivalent kind of thing. So one of the issues that the Right to the City Alliance raised was what is the quality of public space in New York City, who defines it, why is the mayor taking certain public spaces like Washington Square, which were places of congregation, and turning them into manicured and sort of almost tourist friendly -but not people friendly- spaces. So the Right to the City Alliance has tried to raise those questions. Last couple of years, it has not been terribly active for a variety of reasons. You know about social movements, they have moments, and then they get into a muddle as to exactly what they are doing and leadership issues rise. So they have not been terribly active in relationship for example to the Occupy Wall Street movement, but on the other hand, this idea of the Right to the City was actually taken out by the Occupy Wall Street movement, without calling it that.

JSSJ: And there is also, there is violence in public spaces. I was listening to the news of Cairo this morning, violence in public space, extremely political, but there is also in some parts of the world, maybe most, some new technologies of control of public space, and that must have an effect…

David Harvey: Yes! And I don't know if you have these things here, in New York City, we have these things called business improvement districts, where businesses actually start to manage public space in which they operate. Now, we have the same thing in Central Park in New York City, that is run now by a conservancy or a consortium of private donors, and they make decisions, so when we want to have a big demonstration against Republican, you know, electoral jamboree, they wouldn't let us into Central Park, because the conservancy said they had spent a lot of money, making the grass very nice, and they didn't want the grass to be hurt! So the rights of the grass actually trumped the rights of the people to assemble. Actually the American constitution, of course, has a right of assembly in it, but the point now is not that the Right of assembly is being foreclosed but what has happened is that there is no place to assemble. So there is a right to assembly and a right to association, but you can't assemble because there is no place where you can do it without going to the mayor, and say "Please Mister Mayor, would you let us do this, or would you let us do that"…

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnz7ou_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-4_news

JSSJ: You were just saying "us" about the social movements, that is: you engage, that is important for you. And to quote you, you said recently: "We have a duty as academics to change our mode of thinking", and on another occasion -it was on Marxist theory-, you said: "There is a necessity to participate, to engage; even if you don't know all of the theory, you know sufficiently that this question of class struggle is fundamental". So, my question is: in your eyes, what is our role as intellectuals and academics?

David Harvey: I think we are bound to be a little bit schizophrenic. To begin with, one of our roles as academics is to keep spaces open inside of Academia, where radically different forms of thought can flourish. And, as I am sure you know, that it is not in itself an easy task: a lot of work has to be put into battling neoliberal orthodoxies and managerial kinds of activities and of course budget cuts, and all those sort of things, so our role as academics is to… as militant academics is to keep spaces open were things can happen. But that always works best, it seems to me, when there is some alliance between what we are doing and what is going on outside of the University. So, one of the things that has always seemed important for me to do is to have one foot outside of the University. I am not an organizer, many of my colleagues who work in this fashion are not organizers, but what we try to do is to use whatever power we have to facilitate some things to happen -conferences, getting together… What we can also do is, I think, help people, if they so wish to be helped. On, for instance, the question of the Right to the City: What might it mean? Can we articulate it collectively? And my view… I would never dream to tell a social movement what it should do and how it should do it, but if they want to talk about what they are doing in relationship to some of the macro-forces that exist in a City and so on, and how to better position themselves in relationship to all of that, then I would always be willing to sit down, and try and help. But I think also, we should really be concerned to produce a very general account of what is happening, so that people have a better understanding of the forces that are being mobilized, and see through some of the excuses that political power typically utilizes. Right now, of course, it is the excuse of the Debt: the Debt means that everybody who is poor has to be poorer. You cannot just say: that is not right, either technically or morally; you can move from that to a more general kind of political rhetoric and a more general political position.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnz96d_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-5_news

JSSJ: Still on engagement: Strategically, how can the different struggles articulate or integrate? You identify on one part classical workers movement struggles and, on the other side, struggles against "accumulation by dispossession" -what you characterize as accumulation by dispossession. Do you think those struggles can integrate? And another question: Can Justice be a unifying motto for this?

David Harvey: I think such struggles can come together. I think, from experience, it's not hard for political power to divide and rule, so we are constantly faced with the difficulty of maintaining a non-divided front against political power when political power is very much about that housing question, and that something else question… So I don't see any reasons in principle why those two struggles cannot be merged. But in practice, it's often difficult to get them together. I think it's actually not so easy even to create a functioning and powerful Right to the City Alliance for example. I think it is rather difficult. But I don't think we should let those difficulties stand in our way. To be honest, I don't think historically we've really tried. I had some trade unionists that said to me the other day: "Maybe instead of organizing workplaces, we should think about organizing the whole city." And they ask this question: "How do you organize a whole city?" And I suddenly realized I had not really thought about that very much! But then when you look historically, you see that there have been historical moments when the city has got organized even though there were various factions within it. The Commune of Paris is the obvious example, but we have other examples in the United States, the Seattle general strike of 1919,

which was essentially a Commune in Seattle. And, most recently, the example of facts that fascinate me a lot is El Alto in Bolivia. I look at this and say maybe we should be thinking about organizing on the basis of a whole city. And, of course, one of the motives of that is, what the Occupy Wall Street people have been arguing for, is a city that is not based on the levels of inequality that we have now. So therefore, one of the claims one would make is that justice, social justice in the city, is a very important claim and part of what a Right to the City Alliance should be about and part of the aims of organizing a whole city should be about.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xo7dj9_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-6_news

JSSJ: You suggest to create "new spaces from which new political processes can start" and to "strategically occupy spaces to develop a political means to counter the dominant forces which are surrounding us". It's almost a program of organizing the city. So how do you practically envision this and do you think that the present social movements embody this?

David Harvey: I don't really know quite how I envision it! I think part of my objective in putting that idea out there was a bit like a trial balloon as we might call it, to see what people would think about this. But what we have often seen in the past are networks of community action. There is an interesting book for example about what happened in Italy at the beginning of the last century, and how political spaces opened up, called "Houses of the People", which where community activist centers were a lot of decisions were made about political strategy and it is from there that support was mobilized for the factory councils. The writer of this is saying: "We know a lot about the history of the factory councils but nobody has looked at the relationship between the factory councils and what was going on in the Houses of the People." And the Houses of the People again were action centers, which had links and all sort of connections to the factory councils. And to the degree that movement came powerful at all is partly because of the links between the factory councils and the Houses of the People. And I noticed in Argentina there were all these recuperated factories which are now worker-, not owned, but worker-managed, and nearly all of them have actually transformed themselves from being merely factories into factories and community centers. So when the original owners, as Argentina came back into the economic play, came back and said: "We want our factories back!" or "We want the machinery!" or something like that, the whole community turned out and said: "No you can't!" And if it had only been the workers, they would not have had that power. So I think that these spaces and what goes on in these spaces are very important politically. And the protection of the recuperated factories in Argentina has a lot to do with that link between the factory and the surrounding neighborhood. My understanding of that is, well, those are the kinds of forms of organization that we should actually start to consciously construct as a political force: we not just defend factories but we actually start to make movements to take over more factories through these mechanisms. I feel that having like a geographical strategy of this. A geographical strategy that is about liberating spaces within which certain activities can be constructed in an alternative way is perhaps one of the ways to go. For instance in Baltimore, there is a group called the Baltimore Workers. They are not a trade-union group but a rights organization. They took out a large piece of the center of the city and they drew a line around it and said their target was to turn this whole space into a liberated space in which everybody had a living wage, where exploitation was going to be much much reduced. And so they're campaigning in a territorial way rather than about a particular factory or a particular sector of the economy. It's a

territorial kind of strategy that they are using. And every now and again, they turn up and they surround the whole kind of area and they do demonstrations around the outside about labor conditions on the inside. They have of course developed a great body of literature now, of accounts of what labor conditions are like inside. So they are being militant in that kind of way. So I think there are strategies, geographical strategies that can be utilized.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnzd29_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-7_news

JSSJ: You are talking about "geographical strategies" and my next question was on geography: Space, place and environment are very central in your analyses. I won't ask you if you are a geographer because that is not the question but to quote you on the crisis: "The geography of the crisis is fascinating." "Just to track the geography of all of this is very important." So how do you articulate then place, space, in a Marxist perspective? Why are they so crucial to understand our world and the present crisis?

David Harvey: Well because the material manifestations of a crisis are always located. And if you look at the locational patterns and also the movements… I mean a crisis that started in the real estate markets of Southern California, Arizona, Nevada, Florida; you know it is a highly localized starting. And of course other areas of the world, like the Spanish property market, the Irish property market… So it was highly located.

So if you want to explain the crisis and where it came from, you have to go and look very specifically about the conditions that were pertaining in those particular locations, which most analysts don't do. But then you have got to say how it moved from that location to somewhere else. How was it that a crisis that was going on here suddenly created a crisis in some Norwegian municipality, you know, because they had invested in collateralized debt obligations and suddenly they have no money because it bankrupted. How did it spread around? And with what consequences? And the consequences in, say, the Norwegian municipality, were that they could not pay their bills, they had to lay off teachers and they had to sort of reduce services and so on. So again, the impact was very specific, which means then that the political response has to be different there than it was where the crisis originated. Then what you have to do is to start to think about the connections. How it spreads and why it spreads in the way it does and what the political responses are? A friend says that the Chinese responded to the crisis in a very different way than anybody else because the crisis hit them in a very different way. For them it was the sudden collapse of the export sector which created the difficulty. And they had 30 million people unemployed and what were they going to do? That was their problem and this was not the initial problem in Southern California. The crisis changes its nature as it moves from one place to another. And because it changes its nature then it seems to me that the nature of the political response also has to change. If you think of this in terms of, say, militant Left strategies, I think the Left has to understand that it can't have a blanket response to the crisis. It has to develop very specific ways of thinking about how the crisis operates in this particular place and why it takes the form it does and what the political response might be, the Left's response, and see that in relationship to the responses which are occurring elsewhere in the world.

So, for me the kind of space-place-environment, that sort of way of thinking, is terribly important to understand the processes of capital accumulation, the general kind of processes of

uneven geographical development and the uneven geographical development of political responses. So we would not expect the same kind of political responses in, say, a Norwegian municipality as we might expect in Dubai when Dubai World goes bankrupt, you know, this is two different kinds of situations, even though they are linked in terms of the nature of the crisis. So developing much greater sensibility to these questions of how crises and how capital accumulation works through uneven geographical development and through the logic of space-place-environmental configurations is to me a very important aspect of what I, as a geographer, might be able to contribute to the understanding of crisis formation and political action.

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JSSJ: That connects to the question of what we could call –if we can call something like this, what we could call "spatial justice". We use this notion as a title, and we use it as the beginning of a debate between some people who would say there cannot be any just space, there can only be a just society with effects on space and so on. You don't use the notion of "spatial justice", but you use "territorial justice". What would you say about that? Is it a useful notion? Can it be efficient? I think, how we see it, it is about interaction: the social having effects on space, but also space having effects on the social.

David Harvey: The reason why I stay clear of using a concept like spatial justice is because I also have the question: What is space? And, you know, this is where the Lefebvrian distinction between material, conceptualized, lived but also for me, the distinction between absolute and relative and relational… I would then ask the question: in which of those dimensions is justice being considered? So I think for me it gets too muddled if you call it "spatial justice". For that very reason, I mean, I could imagine a situation where you could look at a material thing and say: "Well, OK, this is materially just" but if you look at the conceptual and the lived, it would be totally unjust. So you could have justice here and injustice somewhere else. And also in terms of relationalities, and so on… So that's the reason why I stay clear of talking about spatial justice.

Now with territorial justice, I have a very clear idea of what I mean because societies do get organized in territorial configurations. And it can be free standing communes or if we think of radical anarchists' view of what might be… But as one of the critiques of these idea of Murray Bookchin that you should have free standing libertarian communes put it, the difficulty with that is that nothing whatsoever is going to stop this commune from becoming extremely rich and this one from becoming highly impoverished. And, unless you have some principles of redistribution between the territories, then you get into an end. By the way, you see this in… I was reflecting the other day about what is "common" about the Common Market. And if you use a traditional notion of commons and start to think about it, and then you look at the way in which this territorial injustice is emerging within the structure of the euro configuration, you see a kind of a critique of… a certain form of territorial injustice emerging which can be very clearly stated and understood. So I don't mind using "territorial". But I think the objective of having "spatial justice" in general strikes me; that is the reason why I go away from it but I do argue that what's the foundational problem, what is anti-capitalist struggle about, requires a definition of what is Capital. And if you go through Volume II of Capital, you will find that Marx asks all these questions. Is Capital Money? The answer is no, because Money was around before capitalism was around. Is it Commodification? No! Because Commodification was around… Is it the buying and selling of Labor power? No, because the exchange of Labor power for services…

And Marx goes through all these possibilities and rejects all of them except one. And the one he does not reject is the class relation between Capital and Labor in the act of Production, which permits the Capitalists to extract surplus value. That has to be abolished. So Marx's answer is: this means that, there has to be… the associated laborers have to displace that class relation.

So there is very strong kind of political program there immediately. But then the problem arises: if the associated laborers in this factory are producing goods in their own way and according to their own decisions but those goods are partly an input into the factory over here, then how does the factory over here insure that the people over there produce enough for them… and this goes on. Solidarity economies are now actually organizing production chains in which they communicate with each other and say "we need so many buttons to put on a shirt" or whatever it is, but that requires coordination and that at some point or other means there has to be some coordination of division of labor and coordination of outputs out of this and of inputs into that, which then require flows to be organized in a systematic way, which at some point or another is likely to require some sort of planning authority, not necessarily authority but planning organization that can actually keep a lot of those bits and pieces together. So justice in this situation would be very much about supporting for example the recuperated factories in Argentina and saying that is the beginning point, but we now have to think about how to challenge the way in which the law of value operates on the world market in order to do that systematically everywhere. So, justice at some point for me is very much about a process of trying to liberate humanity from the domination of that class relation and production, and is not about simply everybody having the same income or so. Some issues of that sort may come into the picture, but fundamentally the anti-capitalist society would be one which is full of worker control, of worker self-management and self-decision making but also collectively organized around some principles of collaboration between different producers so that we can all have some reasonable standard of living.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnzjjv_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-9_news

JSSJ: Sorry, I am coming back to the spatial justice issue: the complexity of space which you elaborate on, with the three dimensions of Lefebvre, and your own three dimensions (relational, relative and material), this is a strong and difficult spatial theory of what is space, isn't it a way to understand the complexity of what social justice might mean as it has to be spatial, it has to be located? Being located is a complex issue, because space is such a difficult notion. Couldn't we take in consideration all the dimensions of space to understand what spatial justice would be? That would be a difficult theory, maybe not efficient enough?

David Harvey: Yes, I haven't wanted to launch into that debate but you are very welcome to! And your journal might want to debate that, I think it would be very interesting to think about it. I know, for example, quite a few people are critical of me, like Ed Soja is critical of me for not really talking about spatial justice, but I am trying to explain to you the reasons I don't. I think that doesn't mean that justice is something that is irrelevant to what I am interested in. But it is the manner through which it is achieved and the fact that there can be no justice under a capitalist social order that are what an anti-capitalist struggle should be focusing on, and for me, probably politically. Rather than use the notion of justice, I would use the kind of rather traditional Marxist notion of "human flourishing": that development should be about the development of human capacities and powers, and that is very different from the growth of

wealth and income. Therefore we should get away from the growth and accumulation, I mean the neoliberal theory is that if you liberate market forces and accumulation of capital is allowed to play out its role, then everybody will be better of. What Marx shows in The Capital is that the closer you get to that utopian idea, the greater the class divisions that exist in society. So, in a way, the neoliberal argument is a con game which is going to produce something radically different, and clearly is producing something radically different: if you look at the huge increases in social inequality that have occurred in the midst of this crisis, you see this is very much in motion. So, to me, the political task is to go after that and I think that notions of justice can certainly be mobilized as part of what that's about, and I think that the geography of it, the territoriality of it, I mean why is it that the Greeks are being hit so hard right now, really viciously? What is involved in that? Is this really an economic necessity? Or is it a political choice to engage in accumulation by dispossession, by dispossessing the Greeks who are one of the most vulnerable groups in the euro zone right now: you dispossess them, and then you go dispossess the Spaniards and the Portuguese, and you have already dispossessed the Irish, so now you are going for the Italians. There is an interesting territoriality in how this is being worked out and you could look at that and say: "this is unjust!' and mobilize against it on those grounds. But again it comes back to how we understand the geography of all of this and what is going on within the geography of all of this. That is why I would kind of argue that much of what is going on right now is more about accumulation by dispossession than it is about actually expanding the surplus through the exploitation of labor. There is not that much expansion of the surplus going on, so what do you do? You steal stuff from everybody, and so and so. It is a very predatory moment, all over the place, with plenty of examples inside the United States right now.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnzl0t_an-interview-with-david-harvey-by-jssj-question-10_news

JSSJ: I was re-reading yesterday evening the epilogue of Spaces of Hope, which was written in 1998, in which you tell us about this dream. If you look at the dates, it is not very reassuring because you mention the date of 2013 as being the moment of the big economic crash, and then, in that dream, we move to a terrifying situation of military power, of a military theocracy. But then you come back to Utopia and what could happen after that period. Do you think all that is what is happening now? Do you think we should be terrified as I was yesterday night reading these pages?

David Harvey: Well, I did not mean to terrify! Just a footnote on that: that piece has generated almost no response in the English speaking world at all; people did not respond to it at all, they avoided any discussion of it. In Latin America, people use it a lot, and love it, and talk about it all the time, so when I go down there, people always want to talk about the epilogue of Spaces of Hope! In the English speaking world, nobody wants to talk to me about it, it is almost like if I never wrote it, and it is almost like an embarrassment that I wrote such a thing. So it's interesting that you mention it. I honestly don't know, obviously I have no idea of what might happen, but there certainly are signs of a very autocratic series of moves. When you have two governments already that have, in effect, gone outside of any democratic system and appointed so called "technocrats" to solve their problems without any democratic process behind it; when you look at what is going on in the euro zone, and you look at the decision making where it is Germany and France, plus the IMF, plus the Central Bank, essentially dictating terms; it evokes

something that I wrote about in The Enigma of Capital which I called the State-Finance nexus, which became very clear to me in the United States when the crisis came on that it was the Treasury and the Federal Reserve that ran the Government: the President didn't. What you have right now is not only a democratic deficit, but you have got almost an overthrow of democratic representation entirely. And when you look at some of the protest movements and the responses, it is almost militarized. And there is no need in the United States to hit; they did not do that to the Tea Party! They did that to the Left. They supported the Tea Party, they facilitated the Tea Party and they attack this. So I think we're heading into a very difficult period where there is likely to be a lot of use of police power and military power to control discontent, because what else can they do? Now I don't know if it is going to get as violent as I suggested in Spaces of Hope.

JSSJ: But then there is the second part of the dream, in which the most deprived revolt and something else emerge. Which part of the dream is the utopia now?

David Harvey: Well, we see signs of the revolt all over the place actually. There have been long standing revolts going on: the MST in Brazil, the Maoist insurgency in central India, the Chilean students who really camped out and are really very strong, and we see evidence of it on Tahrir square… At this particular moment, it seems to me, we are at this inflexion point. For example, the Chilean students, what are they battling? They got rid of Pinochet, but they never challenged the system that Pinochet put in place, and now the Chilean students are confronting that system, saying: "We want out of that system". In Britain, Thatcher stepped down but Thatcherism is still very strong. What is going on in Egypt right now is "Ok, we got rid of Mubarak but we did not get rid of the system" and now there is a predictable confrontation going on with the system. As somebody interested in South Africa, you know you got rid of Apartheid and many people there would say "Ok, this means I can walk around in places I could not walk around, I can have conversations across race lines which I could not have before, but frankly my daily life has not improved one jot". And so, what we have is a system that got put in place and systemically now has to be confronted and attacked, and all the signs are that the guardians of that system are likely to use political power, pretty ruthlessly as they just done on Tahrir Square, to really respond in a thoroughly violent way. What this means is that system of exploitation and accumulation by dispossession is deepening rather than being attenuated through the crisis. I don't know how that is going to be turned around peacefully -because I would like it to be done peacefully-, but what you see is the mobilization of incredible media power and class power to maintain the status quo, which does not save capitalism, it saves that portion of capitalist class that has all the wealth.

JSSJ: I think Lefebvre said something like "a revolution which has not changed the system and space is an unfinished revolution". South Africa is a very good example of a neoliberal system which is very well adapted to the former spatial organization, which can reuse it. This "system and space" is interesting to me.

David Harvey: Yes, I think it is foundational. Of the two major problems that we have, one is global impoverishment and the other environmental degradation, and there is no way that those two questions can be addressed without a radical reconfiguration of urban life, a radical reconfiguration, which involves a spatial reorganization of how cities work. And we have the problem in the United States, more than you do here, of the suburbs: what do we do about the suburbs? They were built as a mode of capital accumulation, there now people have adopted a way of life which they don't want to give up and yet you see that environmentally this is a disastrous form of urbanization. Socially, it is highly discriminatory and socially unjust; increasingly the rich are being ghettoized in gated communities in which they have a

responsibility to what goes on inside the community but no responsibility for urbanization in general. So politically this is a disaster. So, you look at this and say, well, we are not going to be able to do anything in the United States unless we are prepared to do what you are saying, which is to change the social relations and change the spatial organization in radically new ways. And I am not sure I see the academic thinking around about that, the technical thinking around that or the political thinking around that.

JSSJ: Thank you very much, merci!

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