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EDWARD W. SOJA

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# THE SOCIO-SPATIAL DIALECTIC

EDWARD W. SOJA

**ABSTRACT.** An increasingly rigidifying orthodoxy has begun to emerge within Marxist spatial analysis that threatens to choke off the development of a critical theory of space in its infancy. The concept of a socio-spatial dialectic is introduced as a means of reopening the debate and calling for the explicit incorporation of the social production of space in Marxist analysis as something more than an epiphenomenon. Building upon the works of Henri Lefebvre, Ernest Mandel, and others, a general spatial problematic is identified and discussed within the context of both urban and regional political economy. The spatial problematic is not a substitute for class analysis but it can be an integral and increasingly salient element in class consciousness and class struggle within contemporary capitalism.

*Space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react back upon them . . . Industrialization, once the producer of urbanism, is now being produced by it . . . When we use the words "urban revolution" we designate the total ensemble of transformations which run throughout contemporary society and which serve to bring about the change from a period in which questions of economic growth and industrialization predominate to the period in which the urban problematic becomes decisive.*

THESE observations are drawn from a postscript to *Social Justice and the City* in which David Harvey presents a brief appreciation and critique of the ideas of the French social philosopher, Henri Lefebvre, on urbanism, the organization of space, and contemporary Marxist analysis.<sup>1</sup> But Harvey's interpretation also accomplished something more. It recreated a pattern of response to Lefebvre's critical theory of space that matched what had already been established in the French literature through the writings of

Manuel Castells.<sup>2</sup> Harvey praised Lefebvre but ultimately denied the acceptability of his major conclusions, which clearly stressed the "decisive" and "preeminent" role of spatial structural forces in modern capitalist society more than could be comfortably embraced within Harvey's own Marxist perspective.

Lefebvre was recognized as having dealt brilliantly and insightfully with the organization of space as a material product, with the relationship between social and spatial structures of urbanism, and with the ideological content of socially created space. But surely Lefebvre had gone too far? He had raised the urban spatial "problematic" to an intolerably central and autonomous position. The structure of spatial relations was being given an excessive emphasis while the more fundamental roles of production (vs. circulation and consumption), social (vs. spatial) relations of production, and industrial (vs. finance) capital were being submerged under a rather overin-

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*Dr. Soja is Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles in Los Angeles, CA 90024.*

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<sup>1</sup> David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 306; translation from Henri Lefebvre, *La Revolution Urbaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970). Other related works by Lefebvre include *Le droit à la Ville* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1968), *La Pensée Marxiste et la Ville* (Paris: Casterman, 1972), *La Survie du Capitalism* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1973), and *La Production de l'Espace* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974). Of these, only *La Survie du Capitalism* has been translated into English as *The Survival of Capitalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

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<sup>2</sup> See, in particular, Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), a translation of *La Question Urbaine* (Paris: Maspero, 1972).

terpreted alternative, what Lefebvre called the "urban revolution." In his conceptualization of this urban revolution, Lefebvre appeared to be substituting spatial/territorial conflict for class conflict as the motivating force behind radical social transformation. For one hundred years, it has been customary among orthodox Marxist scholars to resist such apparent attempts to divert attention away from class conflict as devious revisionism and Lefebvre was to be no exception.

The key question to Harvey was whether the organization of space (in the context of urbanism) was "a *separate structure* with its own laws of inner transformation and construction," or "the *expression* of a set of relations embedded in some broader structure (such as the social relations of production)." To Harvey, Castells, and others to follow, Lefebvre seemed to be arguing the former and was thus succumbing to what Marxists have traditionally called a "fetishism" of space—the creation in the structure of spatial relationships of an autonomous determinant to history and human action separated from the structure of social relations and the production process that generates it. Struggling to be serious and rigorous in their application of Marxist methods, many of those most responsible for introducing an explicit and powerful spatial interpretation to Marxism thus began to establish certain boundaries beyond which radical spatial analysis must not reach.

This episode is part of a much more pervasive syndrome within the new Marxian analysis of space that I believe is significantly blunting its impact and weakening its accomplishments. The reaction to Lefebvre, one of the leading spatial theorists in the twentieth century, is but one manifestation of this rigidifying pattern and cause enough for the presentation of a forceful counterargument. I propose to discuss here a broader proposition: that the recent emergence of a more spatially explicit form of Marxist analysis—exemplified best in the works of Harvey and Castells but extendable also to the rapidly expanding literature in radical urban and regional political economy in general—has incorporated an unnecessarily limited and inappropriate conceptualization of space and spatial relations. Thus what could prove to be the most significant implications of Marxist spatial analysis for both theory and practice are, I contend, being

obfuscated through the well-intended but short-sighted efforts of radical scholars to avoid spatial fetishism.

Rather ironically, the primary source of misunderstanding over the relationship between social and spatial structures may lie in the failure of Marxist analysts to appreciate the essentially *dialectical* character of this relationship and that of other relationships which are structurally linked to it, such as that between production and consumption. As a result, instead of sensitively probing the mix of opposition, unity, and contradiction which defines the *social-spatial dialectic*, attention has too often been drawn to the empty question of which *causes* which or to endless arguments about preeminence.<sup>3</sup> The socio-spatial dialectic fits neither of the two alternatives pressed upon Lefebvre by David Harvey. The structure of organized space is not a separate structure with its own autonomous laws of construction and transformation, nor is it simply an expression of the class structure emerging from the social (i.e. aspatial) relations of production. It represents, instead, a dialectically defined component of the general relations of production, relations which are simultaneously social and spatial.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A recent comment by Richard Walker, referring to an earlier version of this paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Association of American Geographers, New Orleans, 1978, indicates that the impulse to establish eternal "primacy" of the (nonspatial) social is still alive, even among the most spatially sensitive Marxists. Walker argues that dialectical analysis already incorporates the spatial relations of the mode of production, but that social relations (as value relations) remain primary. Value relations, however, are defined as abstract and aspatial—but nonetheless social. This depiction Walker himself describes as "undialectical and convenient" and I agree. It is precisely this convenient suspension of dialectical reasoning that permits spatial relations to be "incorporated" yet immediately (and undialectically) subordinated to a despatialized "social," apparently as a rigid structural universal evident in every historical moment in the development of capitalism. See Richard Walker, "Two Sources of Uneven Development Under Advanced Capitalism: Spatial Differentiation and Capital Mobility," *The Review of Radical Political Economy*, Vol. 10 (1978), pp. 28–37.

<sup>4</sup> A similar conceptualization can be derived from the structuralist analysis presented by Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar in *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 180. Althusser writes that "the structure of the relations of production determines the *places* and *functions* occupied and adopted by the agents of production," i.e., individuals. Agents and the "objects" of production are thus combined "in a specific structure of the

What must be clearly demonstrated then is that there exists a full and equally salient spatial homology to traditionally defined class structure and hence to class conflict and structural transformation. It will be suggested that such an homologous structure within the spatial relations of production may exist in the division of organized space into dominant centers and subordinate peripheries, a structure which is captured with greater precision in the concept of geographically uneven development. It should be emphasized, however, that this does not mean that the spatial relations of production or the center-periphery structure are separate and independent from the social relations of production. On the contrary, the two sets of relations are not only homologous, in that they arise from the same origins in the mode of production, but also dialectically intertwined and inseparable.

That there exists such a dialectical homology between what might be called the vertical and horizontal structures of the mode of production is suggested in the writing of Marx and Engels—in discussions of the antithesis between town and countryside, the territorial division of labor, the segmentation of urban residential space under industrial capitalism, the geographical unevenness of capitalist production, the role of rent and private ownership of land, the geographical transfer of surplus value, and the dialectics of nature. But one hundred years of Marxism has failed to develop the logic and scope of this argument.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in a process not dissimilar to what occurred in the rise of the bourgeois social sciences, in which there was a submergence of a significant spatial analytical framework and an uncoupling of spatial organization from its social basis, Marxism has evolved without a pertinent spatial perspective, dwelling primarily in a predominantly sociological-historical—as opposed to what Harvey perceptively called a geographical—“imagination” in both theory and practice.<sup>6</sup> That this tendency remains difficult to combat even within the recent emergence of more explicitly spatial

Marxist analysis is reflected in many ways: in the rising cry of spatial fetishism and a flurry of unproductive debate and controversy over terminology, emphasis, and credentials; in the continuing division between urban, regional, and international political economy where there might be a more unified spatial political economy; and in the multiplying claims that the resurgence of spatially explicit, radical political economy represents a “new” urban sociology, a “new” geography, a “new” urban politics, or a “new” planning theory when what it actually signifies is something broader than these disciplinary compartments, perhaps even a dialectical materialism that is simultaneously historical and spatial.

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF SPACE AS A SOCIAL PRODUCT

##### *Contextual vs. Created Space*

It is necessary to begin by making as clear as possible the distinction between space *per se*, or *contextual space*, and socially based spatiality, the *created space* of social organization and production. From a materialist perspective, whether mechanistic or dialectical, time and space in the general sense represent the objective form of the existence of matter. Time, space, and matter are inextricably connected, with the nature of this relationship being an important traditional theme in the history of philosophy and epistemological inquiry. This contextual, physicalist view of space has deeply influenced all forms of spatial analysis, whether philosophical and theoretical or practical and empirical, whether applied to the movement of heavenly bodies or to the history and landscape of human society. It has imbued all things spatial with a lingering sense of primordality and physical composition, objectivity, and inevitability.

Space in this generalized and existential form has been conceptually incorporated into the materialist analysis of history and society in such a way as to interfere with the interpretation of human spatial organization as a social product. Contextual space is of broad philosophical interest in generating discussion about its absolute and relative properties, its character as “container” of human life, its objectifiable geometry, and its phenomenological essence. But it is an inappropriate and misleading foundation upon which to analyze

distribution of relations, places and functions.” (Emphasis in original.)

<sup>5</sup> One of the few attempts to explain why spatial analysis has historically been so little developed in Marxism can be found in Lefebvre, *La Pensée Marxiste et la Ville*, op.cit., footnote 1.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 1 of Harvey, op.cit., footnote 1.

the concrete and subjective meaning of human spatiality. Space itself may be primordially given, but the organization, use, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience. Socially produced space is a created structure comparable to other social constructions resulting from the transformation of given conditions inherent in life-on-earth, in much the same way that human history represents a social transformation of time and temporality. Along similar lines, Lefebvre distinguishes between Nature as given context and what he terms "second nature," the transformed and socially concretized space arising from the application of human labor.<sup>7</sup> It is this second nature that becomes the subject and object of historical materialist analysis.

The spatial organization of human society is an evolving product of human action, a form of social construction arising within the physical frame of ubiquitous, contextual space but clearly distinguishable from it. Unfortunately, it is difficult to convey and focus upon this social meaning and origin of organized space. The dominance of the contextual view has so permeated spatial analysis that it distorts even our vocabulary. Thus, while such adjectives as "social," "political," "economic," and even "historical" generally suggest, unless otherwise specified, a link to human action and motivation, the term spatial typically evokes the image of something physical and external to the social context and to social action, a part of the "environment," a context *for* society—its container—rather than a structure created *by* society.

We really do not have a widely used and accepted expression to convey the inherently social quality of organized space, especially since the term "social space" has become so murky with multiple and often incompatible meanings. But instead of entering into a terminological debate, let us assume that the use of such words as "space," "spatial relations," and "spatial structures" in this paper will refer unequivocally to the socially produced organization of space and not to their abstract, externalized interpretation. Whether it be the form, content, and distributional pattern of the built environment, the relative lo-

cation of centers of production and consumption, the political organization of space into territorial jurisdictions, the uneven geographical distribution of income and employment, or the ideological attachments to locational symbols and spatial images, all organized space will be seen as rooted in a social origin and filled with social meaning. As Lefebvre states:<sup>8</sup>

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be "purely" formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies.

### *Organized Space and the Mode of Production*

Once it becomes accepted that the organization of space is a social product—that it arises from purposeful social practice—then there is no longer a question of its being a separate structure with rules of construction and transformation which are independent from the wider social framework. From a materialist perspective, what becomes important is the relationship between created, organized space and other structures within a given mode of production. It is this basic issue that has divided Marxist spatial analysis into at least three distinctive orientations.

At one extreme are those whose interpretations of the role of organized space lead them to challenge established Marxist approaches and interpretations, especially with regard to conventional definitions of the economic base and the superstructure. Thus Lefebvre writes:<sup>9</sup>

Can the realities of urbanism be defined as something superstructural, on the surface of the economic basis, whether capitalist or socialist? No. The reality of urbanism modifies the relations of production without being sufficient to transform them. Urbanism becomes a force in production, rather like science. Space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react back upon them.

<sup>8</sup> "Reflections on the Politics of Space," translated by M. Enders, *Antipode*, Vol. 8 (1976), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> *La Revolution Urbaine*, p. 25, translated in Harvey, *op.cit.*, footnote 1.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 1 of Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism*, *op.cit.*, footnote 1.

Here we have opened the possibility of a true socio-spatial dialectic operating within the structure of the economic base, in contrast with the prevailing materialist formulation which regards organized space and spatial relations only as a cultural expression comprising part of the superstructure. The key notion introduced by Lefebvre in the last sentence suggests the fundamental premise of the socio-spatial dialectic: that social and spatial relationships are dialectically inter-reactive, inter-dependent; that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent (insofar as we maintain a view of organized space as socially constructed).

Within the regional as opposed to the urban frame, similar ideas have been presented by Ernest Mandel. In his examination of regional inequalities under capitalism, Mandel asserts:<sup>10</sup>

The unequal development between regions and nations is the very essence of capitalism, *on the same level* as the exploitation of labour by capital.

By not subordinating the spatial structure of uneven development to social class but viewing it as "on the same level," Mandel suggests for the regional and international scale a spatial problematic which compares closely with Lefebvre's interpretation of the urban spatial structure, even to the point of suggesting a powerful revolutionary force arising from the spatial inequality that is necessary for capitalist accumulation. In his major recent work, Mandel focuses upon the crucial historical importance of geographically uneven development in the capital accumulation process and thus in the survival and reproduction of capitalism itself. In doing so, he presents perhaps the most rigorous and systematic Marxist analysis of regional development currently available.<sup>11</sup>

Neither Lefebvre nor Mandel, however, attempt a cross-scalar synthesis to define a more general socio-spatial dialectic and their formulations thus remain incomplete. Nevertheless, in their attribution to the structure of spatial relations of a significant transformational potential in capitalist society comparable to

that which has conventionally been associated with the "vertical" class struggle, the direct social conflict between labor and capital, both Lefebvre and Mandel have presented a point of view which engenders strong resistance from other Marxist scholars, a point of view which has been labelled fetishist and determinist.

This resistance to the suggestion that organized space represents anything more than a reflection of the social relations of production, that it can contain its own major contradictions and transformational potential with regard to the mode of production, that it is in some way homologous to class structure and relations, defines another, much larger group of radical scholars. Here I would include the growing cadre of critics seeking to maintain some form of Marxian orthodoxy by persistent screening of the "new" urban and regional political economy. Typifying this group is the belief that contemporary neo-Marxist analysis adds little that is inherently new to more conventional Marxist approaches, that the centrality of traditional class analysis is inviolable, and thus that the contributions being made toward an understanding of Marxist urban and regional analysis, while interesting, are too often unacceptably revisionist and analytically muddled. Needless to say, the conceptualization of space adhered to by this group differs little from that which has characterized Marxism in general over the past century.

A third approach can be identified, however, which seems to fall somewhere in between. Its practitioners appear, implicitly at least, to be adopting much the same formulation as described for Lefebvre and Mandel. Yet when pushed to an explicit choice, they maintain the preeminence of aspatial social class definitions, sometimes to the point of tortuously trying to resist the implications of their own observations, emphasis, and analysis. I contend, and will attempt to demonstrate more clearly in the sections which follow, that this group (in which I include Manuel Castells, David Harvey, and Immanuel Wallerstein) has developed some of the most insightful presentations of the socio-spatial dialectic as I define it; but has also backed off from its interpretations into analytically weak and vulnerable positions on the role of spatial structure as it relates to contemporary capitalism. Whereas

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Mandel, "Capitalism and Regional Disparities," *Southwest Economy and Society*, Vol. 1 (1976), p. 43. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978).

the first group mentioned occasionally overstates its case, this group retreats from it without effectively capturing its meaning and implications, creating confusion and contradiction which are reacted to in turn by the more orthodox critics.

As a first illustration, consider the conceptualization of space presented by Castells in his most influential book, *The Urban Question*, a book purposefully titled to contrast with *The Urban Revolution*, written by Castells' former teacher, Henri Lefebvre:<sup>12</sup>

To consider the city as the projection of society on space is both an indispensable starting point and too elementary an approach. For, although one must go beyond the empiricism of geographical description, one runs the very great risk of imagining space as a white page on which the actions of groups and institutions are inscribed, without encountering any other obstacle than the trace of past generations. This is tantamount to conceiving of nature as entirely fashioned by culture, whereas the whole social problematic is born by the *indissoluble union* of these two terms, through the *dialectical process* by which a particular biological species (particularly because divided into classes), "man," transforms himself and transforms his environment in his struggle for life and for the differential appropriation of the product of his labour.

*Space is a material product*, in relation with other material elements—among others, men, who themselves enter into particular social relations, which give to space (and to the other elements of the combination) a form, a function, a social signification. It is not, therefore, a mere occasion for the deployment of social structure, but a concrete expression of each historical ensemble in which a society is specified. It is a question, then, of establishing, in the same way as for any other real object, the *structural and conjunctural laws that govern its existence and transformation*, and the specificity of its articulation with the other elements of a historical reality. This means that there is no theory of space that is not an integral part of a general social theory, even an implicit one.

This brief encapsulization of the socio-spatial dialectic is presented as an alternative to the rejected Lefebvrian view which is fundamentally similar. To complete the categorization discussed above, Castells' own extension of these ideas has itself been criticized as revisionist by others who claim he commits the same error that he criticizes Lefebvre for committing: separating the spatial structure from its roots in production and class relations.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Castells, op.cit., footnote 2, p. 115. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the introductory chapter to Michael Harloe, ed., *Captive Cities* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976). Harloe praises Castells' analysis of the fetishization of space, but then argues that Castells seems

This presumed error is expressed in an over-emphasis on collective consumption and other social and spatial aspects of the consumption process in the bulk of Castells' writings, an emphasis which has been interpreted as burying the more fundamental role of production. I will address myself to the production-consumption issue in the next section. For the moment let us return to Castells' attempted resolution of the "debate on the theory of space."

Castells presents space as a material product emerging from a dialectical process relating and transforming the relationship between culture and nature, man and environment. Space is not simply a reflection, or "mere occasion for the deployment," of social structure, but a concrete expression of a combination, an "historical ensemble," of interacting material elements and structures. How then can one understand and interpret this created space? Through the identification of the "structural and conjunctural laws that govern its existence and transformation."

What appears to separate Castells and Lefebvre grows out of the former's assumption that "particular social relations" give form, function, and significance to the spatial structure and all other "elements of the combination." One "structure"—the aspatial social relations of production (which somehow includes property rights while ignoring their spatial/territorial dimension)—is thus given determinant and inviolable significance, for to suggest otherwise would appear to be contrary to conventional Marxist interpretations. But what if "class" were seen to be associated with both the social (vertical) and spatial (horizontal) relations of production in a dialectical interaction, with the "social problematic" involving the social *and* territorial division of labor? It is true that there as yet does not exist a formulation of the spatial relations of production which matches the depth and persuasiveness of social class analysis or, more specifically, which explicitly and systematically incorporates the powerful and fundamental

to undermine the prime relevance of production and the study of its effects to any Marxist analysis of space "to the point that his emphasis on consumption [along with David Harvey's] bears comparison, in some respects, with previous urban sociology and with Weberian urban sociology . . . both of which he has severely criticized." (p. 21)

contradiction between capital and labor. Is this an immutable fact, an inviolate law, or the product of historical processes which have deemphasized the social interpretation of space in Marxian analysis?

These questions merely reconstruct the challenge raised earlier: to demonstrate the homologous and dialectical relationship between the social and spatial structures arising from the mode of production and concretely expressed in particular social formations. It would be premature to attempt a rigorous and comprehensive formulation of the socio-spatial dialectic at this time, but it is nevertheless necessary to add some substance to what admittedly remains largely in the realm of assertion and conjecture. Toward this end, I will turn next to a more specific discussion of several important conceptual issues that have shaped the current debate on the theory of space, first at the urban scale and then at regional-international scale.

#### THE URBAN SPATIAL PROBLEMATIC

Marxist spatial analysis at the urban scale has evolved as part of a larger development which has drawn together particular emphases (economic, sociological, geographical) into a common focus on the political economy of urbanization. Underlying this development was an important set of assumptions about the nature of the urbanization process in advanced capitalism. The rise of monopoly capitalism, its expansion on a global scale, and its increasing dependence on the role of the state were interpreted as having introduced new historical (and spatial) conditions into contemporary capitalist social formations and into the revolutionary class struggle. Among other effects, these new conditions demanded a different approach to the city and to the urbanization process than that which characterized the treatment of urban problems under the competitive capitalism of Marx's time. The city came to be seen not only in terms of its role as a center of production and accumulation, but also as the control point for the reproduction of capitalist society in terms of labor power, exchange, and consumption. Urban planning was critically examined as a tool of state, serving the dominant classes by organizing and reorganizing urban space for the benefit of capital accumulation and crisis management. Major attention was given to

contradictions at the place of work (the point of production), to class conflict over housing and the built environment, the state provisioning and siting of public services, community and neighborhood economic development, the activities of financial organizations, and other issues which revolved around how urban space was socially organized for consumption and reproduction. A specifically spatial problematic was thus put on the agenda for both theoretical consideration and radical social action.

Many orthodox Marxists saw in these developments a potentially destructive revisionism, especially with regard to the traditional primacy of production in Marxist theory and practice. At one level, this was an understandable reaction. Efforts to separate consumption from production and to assign to it a significant autonomous strength in society and history—to define class, for example, primarily upon consumption characteristics—typified bourgeois social science and its efforts to counter the arguments of historical materialism. Furthermore, the emphasis given to spatial analysis triggered fears of a new variety of spatial determinism to match those of the past. Insofar as the new urban political economy did fall into a consumptionist tangent and disconnected spatial relations from their origin in the relations of production, it deserved a forceful critical response.

For the most part, however, the growing emphasis on distribution, exchange, and collective consumption did not represent a denial of the central role of production as much as it was a call for greater attention to certain processes which historically have been relatively neglected in Marxist analysis but which have become more pertinent to class analysis and class conflict in advanced capitalism. In this sense, Marxist urban analysis was solidly within the critical tradition of Western Marxism.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it could be argued that Marx himself viewed production and consumption as dialectically related moments of the same process. Surplus value, as the focus for capitalist exploitation, arises only through the ap-

<sup>14</sup> I refer here both to the "consumptionist" revision of Marx contained in the works of Baran, Sweezy, and Marcuse, as well as to the broader tradition of superstructural analysis vs. narrow economism. See Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: New Left Books, 1976).



plication of human labor for the production of commodities. But such surplus value remains abstract and potential unless and until it can be realized through the nexus of exchange and thus through the consumption process. To break this linked chain and to erect one moment timelessly above the others would be to oversimplify Marx's own conceptualization of the process.<sup>15</sup>

But whereas the emphasis on consumption and reproduction became effectively legitimized, much less effort was given to defend the revival of Marxist spatial analysis. It was widely accepted that there existed in the classical works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin a strong geographical and spatial orientation and that it was important to draw out and elaborate upon these classical observations in the context of contemporary capitalism.<sup>16</sup> But the fear of spatial fetishism weakened the attempt to focus directly on the role of space within the larger context of dialectical and historical materialism—to explain *why* spatial analysis had been virtually ignored for a century and to explore whether under the transformed conditions of advanced monopoly capitalism the social production of space has indeed become more central to the survival of capitalism itself. As a result, Marxist spatial analysis expanded, but increasingly as an adjunct, a methodological emphasis, to what has become the dominant focus of urban political economy, the search for a Marxist theory of the state.

The three distinctive approaches to spatial analysis identified earlier thus expressed themselves clearly. Guardians of Marxist orthodoxy continue to referee Marxist spatial analysis to weed out any hints of fetishism. A second group persists in making important contributions but tends to sidestep the spatial problematic, thus constraining further development of a critical theory of space. Finally, a third group attempts more boldly to develop Marxist spatial analysis despite increasing dismissal, vituperative criticism, and misinterpretation of their work. In an effort to reopen the debate on the theory of space, I will focus on the contributions of the one figure who

more than any other exemplifies this third group, Henri Lefebvre.

### *Urban Revolution and Spatial Praxis*

Lefebvre's work as a whole represents a lifelong effort to resist dogmatic constrictions of Marxist thinking, first as perhaps the leading French Marxist critic of Stalinism and the productivist orthodoxy of the Second International during the 1930s, later as a forceful critic of both existentialist and structuralist reductionism.<sup>17</sup> Constantly trying to keep Marxism open to new philosophical developments and adaptive to changing material conditions, Lefebvre nevertheless rooted his work in the foundations laid down by Marx, Lenin, and Hegel. Although his ideas appeared overly eclectic to some, they had a single dominant focus: the search to explain how and why capitalism survived from the competitive industrial capitalism of Marx's time to the advanced monopoly capitalism of today.

In this search, Lefebvre presented a series of increasingly elaborated approximations (as he called them) ultimately leading to his major thesis:<sup>18</sup>

Capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently, in the hundred years since the writing of *Capital*, it has succeeded in achieving "growth." We cannot calculate at what price, but we do know the means: *by occupying space, by producing a space.*

The production of this advanced capitalist space was linked directly to the reproduction of the social relations of production, that is, the means whereby the capitalist system as a whole is able to extend its existence by maintaining its defining structures.<sup>19</sup> From this cen-

<sup>15</sup> This is most explicitly stated in *Grundrisse* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 90–94.

<sup>16</sup> An excellent example is David Harvey, "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation: A Reconstruction of Marxian Theory," *Antipode*, Vol. 7 (1975), pp. 9–21.

<sup>17</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Le Materialisme Dialectique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1939); *L'Existentialisme* (Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1946); *Au-delà du Structuralisme* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1971). Although a severe critic of the early Sartre, Lefebvre later embraces Sartre's existential Marxism. See Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>18</sup> Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism*, op.cit., footnote 1, p. 21. (Emphasis in original.)

<sup>19</sup> Lefebvre distinguishes three levels in the reproduction process: 1) bio-physiological reproduction, essentially within the context of family and kinship relations; 2) reproduction of labor power (the working class) and the means of production; and 3) reproduction of the social relations of production. The ability of capital to intervene directly and affect all three levels has developed over time, with the development of the productive forces.

tral "discovery," which Lefebvre argues became explicit only in the later works of Marx (particularly those which were not readily available until after the second World War), one can construct a framework of propositions which help define Lefebvre's effort to build a critical theory of space and to create the basis for radical spatial praxis.<sup>20</sup>

Lefebvre grounded his arguments in the belief that social space (essentially urbanized space in advance capitalism) is where the dominant relations of production are reproduced. They are not reproduced in society as a whole but in space as a whole, a concretized and produced space which has been progressively occupied by advanced capitalism, fragmented into parcels, homogenized into discrete commodities, organized into the locations of control, and extended to the global scale. The survival of capitalism has depended upon this distinctive occupation and production of space, achieved through bureaucratically controlled consumption, the differentiation of centers and peripheries, and the penetration of the state into everyday life. The final crisis of capitalism then becomes the moment when the relations of production can no longer be reproduced, not simply when production itself is stopped.<sup>21</sup> Thus the class struggle must encompass and focus upon the vulnerable point: the production of space, the territorial structure of exploitation, and controlled reproduction of the system as a whole. The struggle must be one of a global proletariat, including all those who are exploited by the imposed spatial organization of advanced capitalism: landless peasants, proletarianized petty bourgeoisies, women, students, and the working class itself. In advanced capitalist countries, the struggle will take the form of *une révolution urbaine* fighting for *la droit à la ville* and control over *la vie quotidienne* in the territorial framework of the capitalist state. In less advanced countries, it will also focus upon territorial liberation and reconstruction—with regard to the imposed structures of dom-

inant core and dependent periphery within the global structure of capitalism.

Lefebvre thus raises the spatial problematic to a central position within class struggle by embedding class relations in the structures and contradictions of socially organized space. He does not argue that the spatial problematic has always been so central, for its significance reflects the progressive development of the forces of production over time, particularly with regard to the growing need to control the reproduction of capitalist social relations (which, under competitive capitalism, was left primarily to the market). Nor does he present the spatial struggle as a substitute for class struggle. Instead, he argues that no social revolution can succeed without being at the same time a conscious, spatial revolution. Spatial praxis is necessary therefore, but always as part of an encompassing socio-spatial praxis.

With this background, it becomes possible to clarify the meaning and intent of several controversial concepts and arguments presented by Lefebvre in his more specifically urban-oriented writings.<sup>22</sup> Take, for example, his comments on the historical relation between the primary (industrial) and secondary (financial) circuits in the circulation of surplus value, translated by David Harvey as follows:<sup>23</sup>

Whereas the proportion of global surplus value formed and realized in industry declines, the proportion realized in speculation and in construction and real estate development grows. The secondary circuit comes to supplant the principal circuit.

It is in this sense that Lefebvre claims that "Industrialization, once the producer of urbanism, is now being produced by it," for this secondary circuit is deeply involved in the manipulation of the built environment, the extraction of urban rent, and the organization of urban space for collective consumption, in all cases facilitated by the increasing role of the state. It would appear from the Harvey translation that Lefebvre does not state that surplus value is created in this secondary circuit, only

<sup>20</sup> Two volumes of *Grundrisse* were first published in Russian in 1939 and 1941. The first German edition appeared in 1953, the first English edition in 1973.

<sup>21</sup> Lefebvre has been a strong critic of what he calls the *ouvriérisme* of the modern left, the narrow economic focus on exploitation at the workplace and on revolutionary transformation either through the interruption of production (the general strike) or by the halting of production (total economic crisis).

<sup>22</sup> By 1974, with *La Production de l'Espace*, Lefebvre more explicitly presented the urban problematic within the broader problematic of space and the reproduction of the social relations of production. *La Production . . .* is his major work on space, but it tends to be neglected in most of the recent literature.

<sup>23</sup> Harvey, op. cit., footnote 1, p. 312.

that the proportion realized therein has massively expanded. This, I believe, is the necessary interpretation.<sup>24</sup> Lefebvre's argument thus builds upon the idea that the realization of surplus value has shifted over time from a dominant involvement in direct industrial production to an increasingly greater involvement in the circulation/consumption process—or, more appropriately, from the reproduction of the means of production to the reproduction of labor power and the general social order. This has been associated with a “change from a period in which questions of economic growth and industrialization predominate to the period when the urban problematic becomes decisive.”

These arguments suggest that the proportion of surplus value that is necessary for the reproduction of labor power and the social relations of production in an increasingly urbanized, increasingly monopolistic, increasingly global, capitalist society has become larger than ever before, perhaps larger even than the proportion absorbed more directly in industrial production. Nowhere is it said that this necessarily leads to a reduction of surplus value produced in industry, although the diversion of capital into unproductive activities is a significant structural problem in monopoly capitalist economies. What is suggested, instead, is that the increasing surplus product yielded through the centralization and concentration of capital under monopoly industrialization and the accumulation of capital on a world scale has disproportionately increased the costs of reproducing labor and maintaining the social relations of production to the point that collective consumption has become a major, if not dominant, arena for the realization of value and for the class struggle itself.

A more detailed and less ambiguous interpretation of this historical shift associated

with the rise of monopoly capitalism is presented by Shoukry Roweis:<sup>25</sup>

We find a pronounced shift in the locus of class conflicts accompanying the shift from early to late capitalism. The main problems in early capitalism were problems of production (i.e. problems of insufficient aggregate supply, hence relative scarcity). Under such conditions, class conflicts were over the division of surplus production. Concretely, the conflicts were strictly labour/capital conflicts centered in the workplace and focussing on wage/profit disputes.

In today's capitalism, this is no longer strictly true. Problems of production gave way to problems of overproduction . . . . What labour takes away with one hand (in the workplace struggle) it gives away with the other (in the urban living place) . . . . With the intensified and expanded state intervention, the struggles over wages lose their meaning, and the struggle over political/administrative power begins to impose itself as crucial, but yet unpursued struggle. At the same time, with the ever increasing urbanization of the population, most of these struggles acquire a definite urban character. The struggle, in brief, has shifted from the sphere of production (of commodities and services) to the sphere of reproduction (i.e. the maintenance of stable, if not improving, standards of urban living).

Competitive industrial capitalism has been able to extend and transform itself through a series of structural changes associated with the increasing centralization and concentration of capital (in the rise of monopoly capitalism), the dramatic increase in the role of the state as a vehicle for social control, and the development of accumulation on a global scale. But it has done so without eliminating its fundamental contradictions. They have instead become expressed not only in the direct confrontation of capital and labor at the point of production but also, and as intensively, in the realm of collective consumption and reproduction. Whereas under competitive capitalism, Engels could argue that consumption-based working class militancy, as in the conflict over the “housing question,” could be resolved by the bourgeoisie to its own benefit (either by playing off improved housing conditions and reduced rents against decreased wages or by simply shifting bad housing conditions to another location rather than eliminating them), such consumption-based conflict can no longer be coopted as easily. Unlike the situation under industrial capital-

<sup>24</sup> What complicates matters here is the fact that Lefebvre actually uses the word *formée* with regard to the secondary circuit as well, but the word is omitted in Harvey's translation. If Lefebvre intended to suggest that surplus value can originate in the secondary circuit, then this would contradict the labor theory of value and be unacceptable in Marxist analysis. It seems, however, that his emphasis is on realization, not production. Immediately preceding the translated quote he writes: “Il peut même arriver que la speculation foncière devienne la source principale, le lieu presque exclusif de ‘formation du capital,’ c'est à dire de réalisation de la plus-value”; see *La Revolution Urbaine*, p. 212.

<sup>25</sup> Shoukry Roweis, “Urban Planning in Early and Late Capitalist Societies,” *Papers on Planning and Design* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, 1975), pp. 31–32. (Emphasis in original.)

ism, the realization of surplus value and hence the accumulation of capital itself has become as dependent upon control over the means of consumption/reproduction as upon control over the means of production, even while this control rests ultimately in the same hands.

It can thus be argued that the transformation of capitalism has come increasingly to revolve around both a social and a spatial struggle, a combined wage and consumption-based conflict, an organization and consciousness of labor as both workers and consumers, in other words a struggle arising from the exploitative structures inherent in both the vertical and horizontal class divisions of society. Class struggle thus involves the articulation of social and spatial praxis.

### *Finance Capital and the Class Struggle*

To illustrate more specifically the preceding arguments and to exemplify again the tripartite typology of contemporary approaches to spatial analysis, let us examine the controversy which has risen around the role of finance capital within the monopoly capitalist city. Take, for example, the following statement of Michael Harloe, a leading Marxist urban analyst:<sup>26</sup>

In general Harvey's emphasis on the role of finance rather than productive capital in cities has been criticized. He does not go quite so far as Lefebvre who sees finance capital, i.e. that concerned with circulation rather than production, becoming the dominant force in society, and urban conflicts, based on the role of such capital in property speculation and land, supplanting workplace conflict—a theory heavily criticized by Castells. However, Harvey distinctly sees this as a possibility, but his critics suggest that finance capital must remain secondary to productive capital because it ultimately has to abstract its wealth from surplus value and so is subordinate to the latter in the last analysis.

This compulsion to assert the ultimate dominant becomes epitomized in the conclusion that, while finance capital "can apparently be in control, the dominant role still falls to productive capital." Lefebvre is thus an irreconcilable deviant, Harvey is dangerously ambivalent and confused, while production reigns supreme and inviolable.

The major question, however, is not whether finance capital dominates industrial capital "in the last analysis," but *how* it relates, as one fraction of capital, to other capital frac-

tions within specific social formations, and how this affects class action. The issue is thus a conjunctural one, referring to the ensemble of class relations arising at particular places during particular periods of time. To reduce Marxist analysis to the assertion of ultimate structural determinations is to eliminate all historical and geographical specificity—and hence to eliminate the city itself as a subject of analysis. How then may we assess the role of finance capital in the contemporary urbanization process?

Although Lefebvre clearly stresses the growing importance of finance capital in the realization of surplus value, he does not unambiguously specify the relationship between finance capital and other capital fractions. Thus he does not directly assert either that finance and industrial capital are in permanent conflict or that they have totally coalesced in a cooperative union, as Lenin described in his theory of imperialism. Indeed, the nature of the relationship between finance, industrial, and property capital is, appropriately I believe, left open for analysis.

In an excellent paper on rent theory, Matthew Edel argues that David Harvey and others, in contrast to Lefebvre, appear to have taken specific but incompatible positions on the same issue. At times, finance capital is viewed as a separate fraction of capital, a parasitic monopoly sector sucking up funds which would otherwise be available for housing and in direct conflict with industrial capital (from which it is able to extract part of the surplus in the form of rent). At other times, however, it is seen in almost the Leninist sense, as coalesced with industrial capital in a monopoly imperialist stage, controlling the totality of the production process. Edel observes that the two concepts clearly describe different situations, one in which there is conflict among major capitalists, another where they are unified. He then adds:<sup>27</sup>

The two views of finance capital are not really compatible, and they lead to different strategic implications for the working class. If the first definition holds, and if financial monopolies or financial discrimination are making housing finance scarce, either for workers generally or for specific ghetto subgroups, then an anti-monopoly strategy—involving antirenting laws, state

<sup>26</sup> Harloe, op. cit., footnote 13, p. 25.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew Edel, "Rent Theory and Working Class Strategy: Marx, George and the Urban Crisis," *Review of Radical Political Economy*, Vol. 9 (1977), p. 12.

housing banks, or even moratoria on mortgage payments—would make sense. If, however, definition two applies and one integrated financial group controls both housing and employment, then a reduction of housing costs might be met by reduced wages. Finance capital's "certain indifference as to whether accumulation takes place by keeping wages down in the immediate production process or by manipulation in the consumption sector," if it emerges as Harvey suggests it might, would create a need for the working class to organize simultaneously as wage earners and as consumers, in order to make any economic gains under capitalism. But such victories would be difficult, since tactical errors on the consumption struggle side would adversely affect the wage struggle, and vice versa.

The various alternatives outlined by Edel summarize the issues arising over the role of finance capital very well. He considers either view theoretically possible, but claims that Harvey swings back and forth between the two definitions, leaving his arguments "unconvincing," a reflection, I would contend, of the intrinsically multisided stance Harvey has tended to take on the "urban question."

As Edel concludes, the nature of the relationship between finance and industrial capital must be seen as historically determined and thus clearly subject to change.<sup>28</sup> During the early phases of stagnation in the 1970s, financial barriers had a major effect; they were largely responsible for the transformation of metropolitan cores, through urban renewal and reduced low income housing supplies, into spectacular new centers for finance capital institutions. But deepening economic crisis shifted the burden back to the reduction of real wages, thereby establishing the need for a two-front struggle over consumption and production relations. Thus, Edel argues, an attack on only one sector of capital, be it banking or landlords, is no longer sufficient.

Unproductive finance capital has become an important element in the structure of contemporary monopoly capitalism, but not because it has supplanted industrial capital in the realization of surplus value. It obtains its importance from the increasing absorption of surplus value in collective consumption, in the reproduction of labor power and the social order, relative to directly productive activities and the reproduction of the means of produc-

tion. Under competitive industrial capitalism, the organization of urban space for both production and consumption could be left largely to market forces, private property capital, and competition among industrial producers for access to labor, materials, and infrastructure. The industrial capitalist city was primarily a production machine and as such took on a remarkably uniform spatial structure—the structure depicted so perceptively by Engels for Manchester and later by the urban ecologists for most of the industrial capitalist world.

Finance capital under these conditions was relatively unimportant in the urban context. It played a major role, however, in capitalist expansion through imperialism, as the urban production machines surpassed their capacity to consume their product and faced falling rates of profit and class conflict. Expanded reproduction on a global scale and the concurrent growth of monopoly capitalism, however, massively intensified the concentration of capital in the centers of advanced capitalism and created intensified pressures for infrastructural investments, for expanding collective consumption, and for maintaining control over class conflict. More than ever before, there was a need to intervene to reorganize urban space and to make urban systems function more effectively not only for the centralization of capital but for the realization of surplus value through socialized consumption, especially when it became clear that imperialist expansion would not eliminate class conflict and economic crises in the core countries.

In the monopoly capitalist city, therefore, finance capital, sometimes in competition but more often in alliance with monopoly industrial capital, becomes more significant than it had been in the industrial capitalist city. Along with the state, it has become a primary means for restructuring the city as a consumption machine, transforming luxuries into needs, facilitating suburbanization and its associated privatized consumption (e.g. the automobile, household appliances, and gadgetry), and working toward the segregation/territorial fragmentation of the working class. Also in conjunction with the state, it has, I would argue, begun to supplant small-scale private property capital in control over urban land, a process with interesting but relatively unexplored repercussions. What has come out most clearly in the literature on Marxist urban

<sup>28</sup> Harvey now accepts this view and argues that he adopted both definitions of the relation between finance and industrial capital for both apply, albeit at different historical moments. (David Harvey, personal communication.)

analysis—and more importantly, it should be added, in practice—is that these structural changes have failed to resolve the old contradictions. Indeed, they have created new ones, vividly described and interpreted by Castells in his discussion of *la ville sauvage*, the “Wild City.”<sup>29</sup> It has rooted the urban-based class struggle not just in the relations of production or the “uneven development” of consumption, but in the unity and articulation of the two.

#### THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SPATIAL PROBLEMATIC

Paralleling criticisms of spatial fetishism in urban political economy are equally vehement arguments against an emphasis on spatial inequality and center-periphery relations in Marxist regional analysis. Such an emphasis is seen as a diversion away from the class struggle and class analysis, as the construction of a separate structure unacceptably autonomous from the social relations of production, a bourgeois delusion.<sup>30</sup> My response to these attacks remains the same: that there exists in the structure of organized space under capitalism a fundamental relationship which is homologous to and inseparable from the structure of social class, with each structure forming part of the general relations of production. This connection between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the class struggle in both theory and practice requires a fundamental rethinking of many Marxist concepts to introduce a more explicit spatial problematic, a rethinking which is being unnecessarily sacrificed by a reassertion of Marxian orthodoxy.

The construction of this argument for regional political economy is made more difficult, however, because the debate on the theory of space has been much less explicit than in Marxist urban analysis, and has come to the

surface only within the past few years.<sup>31</sup> It has arisen primarily from the interpretations given to the works of such scholars as Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, Arghiri Emmanuel, Andre Gunder Frank, and Ernest Mandel, who have made important contributions to regional political economy rather serendipitously, as adjuncts to their insightful but largely nonspatial analyses of expanded reproduction under capitalism. The presentation which follows is therefore more of a piecing together of a debate than a critique of already established positions and stances.

#### *Geographically Uneven Development*

The spatial problematic and its social ramifications at the regional and international levels hinges upon the importance assigned to uneven geographical development in the origin, growth, survival, and transformation of capitalism. Stated somewhat differently, it depends upon the degree to which Mandel's assertion—that the unequal development of regions and nations is as fundamental to capitalism as the direct exploitation of labor by capital—can be accepted and built upon.

It is necessary first to distinguish between an analysis of the general laws of motion of capital under pure and homogenous (i.e., spatially undifferentiated) conditions and the analysis of the concretized conditions which exist within and between particular social formations. In the former, abstracted from the particularities of time and place, the fundamental logic of structure and process is indeed spaceless. Following Marx in *Capital*, capitalism can be revealed as a system of production built upon a set of internal contradictions between the forces and relations of production which much inevitably lead, through crisis and class struggle, to revolutionary transformation. In this essentially theoretical analysis of capitalism, which has appealed so strongly to Western conceptualizations of science in terms of the establishment of general laws freed from the specificity of time and place, geographically uneven development is not only irrelevant, it is defined away.

<sup>29</sup> Manuel Castells, “The Wild City,” *Kapitalistate*, Vol. 4 (1976), pp. 2–30.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Ann Markusen, “Regionalism and the Capitalist State: The Case of the United States,” *Kapitalistate*, Vol. 7 (1978), pp. 39–62. Markusen criticizes (p. 40) “younger Marxist social scientists, who unwittingly mimic the tendency within bourgeois social science to assign characteristics to places and things, rather than sticking to the dynamics of a process as the analytical focus.”

<sup>31</sup> In particular, see *Review of Radical Political Economy*, Special Issue on Regional Uneven Development in Advanced Capitalism, Vol. 10 (1978); Doreen Massey, “Survey: Regionalism: Some Current Issues,” *Capital and Class*, Vol. 6 (1978), pp. 102–25; Alain Lipietz, *Le Capital et son Espace* (Paris: Maspero, 1977).

Marxist analysis built upon these general laws of motion, upon the contradiction between labor and capital in the production process, demonstrates the ephemerality of capitalism, its imminent self-destruction. But it does not, by itself, explain how and why capitalism has continued to exist. To do so requires more direct attention to reproduction processes, especially to the expanded reproduction of capitalism (for simple reproduction alone cannot assure capitalism's survival). When the laws of motion of capital are related to their concrete historical and geographical context, to how they unfold over time and space in the evolving framework of expanded reproduction, the key role of uneven geographical development becomes apparent.

Here we have a direct link between the regional/international problematic and the urban spatial problematic discussed earlier. Defined away by appeal to orthodox Marxist theory in its abstracted form, the role of space becomes salient when concretized in the context of reproduction and is crystallized most clearly in response to Lefebvre's central question: how and why did capitalism survive from the competitive industrial capitalism of Marx's time to the monopoly capitalism of today? It is no coincidence, therefore, that the major contributions to regional political economy are associated first with the development of the theory of imperialism and more recently with related analysis of accumulation at a global scale, the development of a capitalist "world system," and various processes of unequal exchange and underdevelopment. All these contributions have two things in common: they focus upon the process of expanded reproduction and they recognize the existence of noncapitalist, semicapitalist or, at least, not fully and purely capitalist relations of production. Furthermore, they place the class struggle in its appropriate location, at the global level, and its goal in the appropriate direction, against the expanded reproduction of capitalism.

How then can we define the role of uneven geographical development within this framework of expanded reproduction? Most basically, it can be argued that the historical survival of capitalism has depended upon the differentiation of occupied space into "overdeveloped" and "underdeveloped" regions. Mandel observes that regional underdevelopment is a universal phenomenon of capitalism,

its principal direct role being to furnish huge areas of labor reserves and complementary markets able to respond to the spasmodic, unequal, and contradictory development of capitalist production.<sup>32</sup> "If in order to survive," Mandel argues, "all of the working population found jobs in the region where they lived, then there would no longer be reserves of wage labour free for the sudden expansions of industrial capitalism."<sup>33</sup> When these labor reserves are not created by "natural" population movements, they are produced artificially through direct force and other means.

The creation of labor reserve space also supplies important and complementary markets for capital in the "overdeveloped" centers of accumulation. This combination of economically depressed labor reserves serving also as markets for the surplus product of the center is maintained and intensified through a system of unequal exchange, or, more broadly, the geographical transfer of value. Mandel writes:<sup>34</sup>

If the rate of profit were always the same in all regions of a nation and in all the countries of the world, as well as in all the branches of industry, then there would be no more accumulation of capital other than that made necessary by demographic movement. And this itself would be modified in its own turn by the impact of the severe economic stagnation that would ensue.

In *Late Capitalism*, Mandel presents an excellent historical synthesis of the importance of geographically uneven development and the relation between the geographical and sectoral transfer of value. He builds this synthesis upon a critical contradiction in the process of expanded reproduction, that between *differentiation* and *equalization* in the rate of profit and, more broadly, the development of the forces of production. Whereas the development of competitive capitalist production relations tends toward an equalization in the rate of profit between sectors and among regions, expanded reproduction under monopoly capital depends upon the extraction of "superprofits" (i.e., more than the average) which in

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Mandel, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Vol. 1 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), p. 373. Regional uneven development is described here as "usually underestimated in Marxist economic writing" and "one of the essential keys to the understanding of expanded reproduction."

<sup>33</sup> Mandel, op. cit., footnote 10, p. 43.

<sup>34</sup> Mandel, op. cit., footnote 10, p. 43.

turn requires sectoral and/or regional differentiation. Thus, Mandel asserts, the actual growth process of the capitalist mode of production is not accompanied by any effective equalization in the rates of profit (or in the organic composition of capital).<sup>35</sup>

Thus even in the "ideal case" of a homogeneous beginning, capitalist economic growth, extended reproduction and accumulation of capital are still synonymous with the juxtaposition and constant combination of development and underdevelopment. *The accumulation of capital itself produces development and underdevelopment as mutually determining moments of the uneven and combined movement of capital.* The lack of homogeneity in the capitalist economy is a necessary outcome of the unfolding laws of motion of capital itself.

In the age of freely competitive industrial capitalism, regional underdevelopment—of the rural peripheries and between town and countryside—was the major source of superprofits (until the limited homogenization which occurred in the consolidation of national markets and bourgeois nation-states). In the age of classical imperialism, its source shifted primarily (although not exclusively) to the juxtaposition of development in the imperialist states and underdevelopment in colonial and semicolonial countries. In Mandel's conceptualization of late capitalism, the major focus is sectoral, the combination of rapid growth in some sectors with underdevelopment in others.<sup>36</sup> The entire capitalist system thus appears, from its origins, as a hierarchical structure of different levels of productivity arising from the unequal development of states, regions, branches of industry, and firms, unleashed by the quest for surplus profit.

What is being argued here is not simply that capitalist development is geographically uneven, for some geographical unevenness is the result of every social process, but that the capitalist mode of production actively creates, intensifies, and seeks to maintain regional or, more broadly, spatial inequalities as a means

for its own survival. At the same time, the continuing expansion of capitalism is accompanied by countervailing tendencies toward increasing homogenization and the reduction of geographical differences. This dialectical tension between differentiation and equalization is the underlying dynamic of the uneven development process.<sup>37</sup> To ignore the inherent horizontality of unequal development—to see only the vertical differentiation of sectors, branches, and firms—is to remain in an incomplete, overly abstracted, and nondialectical Marxism, incapable of fully comprehending (and changing) the history of the capitalist mode of production.

### *Center-periphery Relations*

Merely asserting that uneven development is inherently spatial is insufficient. It is necessary to identify the particular mechanisms which sustain geographically uneven development, to specify more clearly how it relates to the expanded reproduction of capitalism, and to explain how it linked with class relations and class struggle. Several important contributions have been made in this direction over the past two decades, but each advance has met with strong resistance and frequent backstepping. As a result, there still does not exist a rigorous, cohesive, and comprehensive analysis of geographically uneven development.

Take, for example, the analysis of center-or core-periphery relations. The opposition between dominant centers of production, exploitation, and accumulation, and subordinate, dependent, exploited peripheries represents the primary horizontal structure arising from the process of geographically uneven development and from the dynamic tension between equalization and differentiation. It is fundamentally homologous to the vertical structure of social class, in that both are rooted in the same contradiction between capital

<sup>35</sup> "Three Main Sources of Super-Profit," chapter 3 in Mandel, *op.cit.*, footnote 11, p. 85. (Emphasis in original.)

<sup>36</sup> Also important in late capitalism are renewed efforts at regional underdevelopment in advanced capitalist countries, with the current decline of New England being a good example. This role reversal of regions is a source of new regional crises and deserves intensive study. For an interesting political analysis, focusing on New England see Jeremy Rifkin and Randy Barber, *The North Will Rise Again* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

<sup>37</sup> This dynamic contradiction is paralleled in Lefebvre's work in the contradiction between homogenization and fragmentation in the production of space, which he presents as the deeper conflictive relation underlying the center-periphery structure. Much more work is needed in unraveling the nature and implications of these interlinked contradictions, equalization/differentiation and homogenization/fragmentation, for I suspect they will be crucial in the further development of Marxist spatial theory and practice.



and labor that defines the capitalist mode of production itself. In this sense, core and periphery are the spatial expressions of the same underlying relations of production which define bourgeoisie and proletariat. Both structures, social and spatial, are shaped by an exploitative relationship rooted in control over the means of production and sustained by an appropriation of value by a dominant social class. Class struggle arises from increasing consciousness of the exploitative nature of the combined social and spatial structure of capitalism and is aimed at a simultaneous transformation of both.

Failure to make this connection between social and spatial structures sufficiently explicit and to stress the combination as it operates at multiple levels, from the global to the local, has been the source of great confusion and criticism surrounding the school of "underdevelopment" and "dependency" theorists.<sup>38</sup> To many observers, this group of scholars appeared to deemphasize class relations and class struggle by placing the cause of poverty, exploitation, and inequality in peripheral capitalist states exclusively in the hands of core countries and an international division of labor based on some form of colonial or neo-colonial domination. Not only was exploitation seen as almost entirely a territorial process, between core and peripheral areas, but also as a process operating primarily at a single scale, at the level of relations between nations. Although this international process of underdevelopment is exceptionally important in the historical emergence of a capitalist world system, it must be understood in conjunction with the vertical conflict between capital and labor and as operant within a hierarchical structure which penetrates the class relations within nations as well as between them.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the most important contemporary work presenting a Marxist perspective on the core-periphery relationship has been pro-

duced by Immanuel Wallerstein.<sup>40</sup> Wallerstein depicts the capitalist world system as revolving around two basic "dichotomies," one of class (bourgeois vs. proletarian) and the other of "economic specialization" within a spatial hierarchy (core vs. periphery). He then adds that:<sup>41</sup>

The genius, if you will, of the capitalist system, is the interweaving of these two channels of exploitation which overlap but are not identical and create the cultural and political complexities (and obscurities) of the system. Among other things, it has made it possible to respond to the politico-economic pressures of cyclical economic crises by re-arranging spatial hierarchies without significantly impairing class hierarchies.

Wallerstein thus goes further toward an explicit recognition of the structural bases of the socio-spatial dialectic than the underdevelopment theorists, but ultimately steps back in a manner which parallels the treatment of the urban problematic by Castells and Harvey. After positing what appears to be a dialectical relationship between social (class) and spatial (core-periphery) structures, the spatial structure is subordinated to the social and viewed largely as a manipulation of space which does not affect class hierarchies. Wallerstein is thus able to use the core-periphery structure as an effective descriptive metaphor, but never succeeds in establishing its structural basis in Marxist theory.

### *The Geographical Transfer of Value*

One of the reasons why no solid theoretical foundation has been established for the core-periphery relationship has been the failure to clarify the workings of its underlying mechanism, the geographical transfer of value. Uneven geographical development results in a regional differentiation in labor productivity, rates of profit, organic composition of capital, and costs of variable capital (e.g. wage rates and reproduction costs) both within and between different social formations. Exchange between regions which differ significantly along these lines and, even in the absence of direct exchange, their coexistence within a

<sup>38</sup> For example, see Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 18 (1966), pp. 17-31; Celso Furtado, "The Concept of External Dependence in the Study of Underdevelopment," in Charles Wilbur, ed., *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment* (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 118-23.

<sup>39</sup> Gunder Frank has openly accepted this point of view in his recent work, pointing to the necessary combination of underdevelopment and class analysis.

<sup>40</sup> An excellent collection of Wallerstein's essays has recently been published as *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

<sup>41</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "The World System Perspective on the Social Sciences," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 27 (1976), pp. 350-51.

unified world capitalist market, leads to a differential accumulation and realization of value, between dominant centers and subordinate peripheries. It is not possible to present this process in detail here, but the end result is clear: accumulation in the center is augmented by direct and indirect transfers of value from peripheral regions, while peripheral accumulation is distorted and decreased accordingly.<sup>42</sup>

The geographical transfer of value thus becomes the basis for the geographical centralization and concentration of capital which, in conjunction with the homologous concentration and centralization of monopoly capital, creates and reproduces continuing differences in the relative size of capital between centers and peripheries. This geographical centralization takes place in many different ways. What Kidron calls "positive centralization" is essentially equivalent to primitive accumulation and involves a direct gain to the center without a loss to capital in the periphery, i.e., in precapitalist social formations.<sup>43</sup> This direct extraction of surplus profit through colonial tax tributes and plunder, Mandel argues, was the chief form of metropolitan exploitation of the Third World prior to World War II.<sup>44</sup> "Negative centralization," in contrast, magnifies differences in the relative size of capital through the destruction of surplus in the periphery via war and the production of armaments and "waste"—in other words, the diversion of the peripheral surplus into nonproductive activities in terms of the accumulation process.

The various forms of what Kidron calls "neutral centralization," the transfer of surplus between capitals with no change in the total, has received perhaps the greatest attention in the contemporary literature. This involves what has been called the "brain drain"; the net export of profits, fees, royalties, etc. over "aid" receipts; the transfer of direct control over peripheral capital to multinational corporations; the technique of trans-

fer pricing within multinational conglomerates; and, in particular, the unequal exchange arising from trade in commodities. Against much criticism, Mandel, Emmanuel, Amin and others argue that unequal exchange has become the dominant mechanism in the geographical transfer of value in post-War capitalism.<sup>45</sup> Whether this claim can be statistically verified or not, the emerging debate over the theory of unequal exchange provides a useful context within which to discuss the political implications of the geographical transfer of value and the more general process of geographically uneven development.

Samir Amin summarizes the political controversy surrounding the geographical transfer of value in the following way:<sup>46</sup>

If the relations between the center of the system and its periphery are relations of domination, unequal relations, expressed in a transfer of value from the periphery to the center, should not the world system be analyzed in terms of bourgeois nations and proletarian nations, to employ the expressions which have become current? If this transfer of value from the periphery to the center makes possible a large improvement in the reward of labor at the center than could have been obtained without it, ought not the proletariat at the center ally itself with its own bourgeoisie to maintain the world status quo? If this transfer reduces, in the periphery, not merely the reward of labor but also the profit margin of local capital, is this not a reason for national solidarity between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in their struggle for national economic liberation?

Implied here is the question as to whether the contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat has been replaced by one between rich and poor nations, a territorially defined contradiction arising from uneven geographical development.

If this were true, think of the implications. It would challenge the basis of worldwide working class harmony. It would mean that the periphery pays for the higher wages, for the labor "aristocracy" and relative social harmony and well-being of the core, through the transfer of value; that the only alternative for the periphery would be a bourgeois-proletariat class alliance aimed at disengagement

<sup>42</sup> A more detailed elaboration of these ideas can be found in Constantinos Hadjimichalis, "The Geographical Transfer of Value," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1980.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Kidron, "Black Reformism: The Theory of Unequal Exchange," chapter 5 in Kidron, *Capitalism and Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 1974), pp. 95–123.

<sup>44</sup> Mandel, op. cit., footnote 11.

<sup>45</sup> Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade* (New York: Modern Reader, 1972); Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); and idem, *Unequal Development* (New York: Random House, 1973).

<sup>46</sup> Amin (1974), op. cit., footnote 45, p. 22.

from and confrontation with the international capitalist economy. It is no wonder that any intimation of such an interpretation has met with forceful counterargument among Marxist scholars.

While retaining an emphasis on the geographical transfer of value and the center-periphery structure, Amin attempts to resolve the political problems which have become associated with this perspective by reasserting the dominance of the "social plane." "The social contradictions characteristic of capitalism," he writes, "are thus on a world scale, that is, the contradiction is not between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat of each country considered in isolation, but between the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat."<sup>47</sup>

Herein we have the same two steps forward, one step backward, that characterized Harvey's evaluation of Lefebvre. Rather than confronting the dialectical relationship between the social and spatial planes, Amin resolves it in favor of the social, but now expressed at the global scale. In my earlier discussion of the urban spatial problematic, I argued that the socio-spatial dialectic was expressed in practice in the form of a two-front struggle over production and consumption issues, linking on the one hand territorial collectivities and, on the other, a general working class, each underdeveloped and exploited under capitalist relations of production and reproduction. Much the same argument can be applied to the global system. Thus the transformation of capitalism can occur only through the combination and articulation of a horizontal (periphery vs. center) and vertical (working class vs. bourgeoisie) class struggle, by transformation on both the social and spatial planes.

The two forms of class struggle can be made to appear in conflict, especially with the manipulation of territorial identities under bourgeois nationalism, regionalism, and localism. But when territorial consciousness is based on the exploitative nature of capitalist relations of production and reproduction, and not on parochialism and emotional attachment to place, it is class consciousness. The production of space has indeed been socially obfuscated and mystified in the development of capitalism, and this has allowed it to be used

against the class struggle. Lefebvre would argue that this is precisely how capitalism has survived. This does not mean, however, that spatial consciousness can be dismissed or casually subordinated in Marxist theory and practice. It is necessary to demystify spatial relationships in much the same way Marx demystified the commodity form, to reveal the social relations which lie beneath their ideological blanket. This may be the primary task of Marxist spatial analysis.

#### CONCLUSION

I have presented a deliberately provocative response to an increasingly rigidifying pattern in the recent literature on urban and regional political economy, a pattern which could choke off the necessary growth of Marxist spatial analysis in its infancy. Indiscriminate fear of fetishizing space, of assigning it too powerful and autonomous an influence in material history and society has, in my view, gone beyond what has historically been necessary to resist distorting revisionism and is beginning to restrain unproductively the dialectical materialist analysis of human spatial organization. Among other effects, this has led to a misinterpretation and dismissal of the important contributions of such Marxist scholars as Henri Lefebvre who, perhaps more than any other individual in the twentieth century, has cogently incorporated the social production of space into Marxist theory and practice.

A socio-spatial dialectic is a productive and appropriate focus for the concrete analysis of capitalist social formations and for concerted social action. As an analytical focus, the socio-spatial dialectic is not aimed at submerging class analysis or elevating space per se to the level of a "scientific subject" in Marxist science or presenting the organization of space as an autonomous structure with regard to fundamental relations of production. Instead, it serves primarily to specify explicitly that the social relations of production and social formations in general, as Marx himself observed, contain within them a fundamental vertical vs. horizontal structure affecting the position of all agents of production (i.e. people) and shaping a simultaneously social and spatial division of labor. In the development of Marxism, the spatial structure has remained, for the most part, externalized and incidental, a mere reflection of a deliberately despatialized concept

<sup>47</sup> Amin (1974), op. cit., footnote 45, p. 24.

of the "social." The social-spatial dialectic thus represents a call for the reinclusion of socially produced space in Marxist analysis as something more than an epiphenomenon.

The argument, however, is taken one step further by suggesting that the vertical and horizontal expressions of the relations of production under capitalism (i.e., relations of class) are, at the same time, homologous, in the sense of originating in the same set of generative structures (e.g., the relation between labor and capital); and dialectically linked, in that each shapes and is simultaneously shaped by the other in a complex interrelationship which may vary in different social formations and at different historical conjunctures. There is no permanent and rigid dominance of one over the other in all concrete historical and geographical circumstances. Indeed, the historical development of the dialectic between

social and spatial structures—the interplay between the social and territorial division of labor—should be a central issue in concrete Marxist analysis.

This attempt at critical spatial analysis remains incomplete. There may be some willingness to accept the appearance of a socio-spatial dialectic in specific circumstances as an at least superficially useful framework for description. But until the production of space is rooted more deeply into historical materialism, into the basic definitions of the relations and forces of production, into the mode of production itself, and especially into praxis, it will tend to remain as more apparent than "real," as epiphenomenal rather than transformational. Such a task lies ahead and should not be detained by the reassertion of antispacial dogmatism.