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# 3

## READING THE URBAN REVOLUTION

### Space and representation

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(translated by Bandulasena Goonewardena)

The present age may be the age of space . . . We are in the era of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the scattered.

Michel Foucault, 1967<sup>1</sup>

We have often been told . . . that we now inhabit the synchronic rather than the diachronic, and I think it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism.

Fredric Jameson, 1984<sup>2</sup>

Appropriated space is one of the sites where power is consolidated and realized, and indeed in its surely most subtle form: the unperceived force of symbolic power. Architectonic spaces whose silent dictates are directly addressed to the body are undoubtedly among the most important components of the symbolism of power, precisely because of their invisibility . . . Social space is thus inscribed in the objective nature of spatial structures and in the subjective structures that partly emerge from the incorporation of these objectified structures. This applies all the more in so far as social space is predestined, so to speak, to be visualized in the form of spatial schemata, and the language usually used for this purpose is loaded with metaphors derived from the field of physical space.

Pierre Bourdieu, 1991<sup>3</sup>

1

The debate about the social and historical power of the *spatial* is now more than twenty years old, but progress in its development has encountered an obstacle. Undoubtedly this obstacle consists of the *significant* capacity of spatial structures to symbolize, in a seemingly natural way, something that cannot be visualized and, therefore, cannot be perceived: social relations and the distribution of social positions and roles. Social and cultural scientists have become concerned with this naturalizing effect:

They have attempted to grasp everything that—through the subconscious submission to the naturalizing effect that results from the transformation of social space into appropriated physical space—is often attributed to the effects of physical or geographical space, but can and also must, in fact, be derived from the spatial distribution of public and private resources. In turn, the latter only represents the crystallization of the local basic unit in question (region, department, etc.) at a definite time in its history, and of its position within national space and so on. Once the totality of the phenomena that are apparently bound up with physical space, but in reality reflect economic and social differences, have been identified and evaluated, an attempt would have to be made to isolate the irreducible remainder that must be attributed to the genuine effect of proximity and distance in purely physical space.<sup>4</sup>

During this critical reduction of physical or geographical to social relations, one arrives at that irreducible remainder of proximity, distance, or density. But this often leads to the analytical destruction of space: why still grapple with the problem of the spatiality of social relations if it can be isolated as a physical and geographical problem and handed over to the corresponding social disciplines, and if the trap of the geographical naturalization of the social can thus be avoided?

With this reduction, epistemologically critical social scientists have returned to the social. They grapple with the objective, economic, political, and cultural practices that explain social processes, and ultimately also the spatiality of these processes. They cannot avoid perceiving the everyday power of that naturalization, the practical “dominance” of categories of space in everyday speech acts. They proceed to banish the practices of appropriating space that undergird the naturalization to the imaginary realm of ideologies of space and consider even these ideological and symbolic discourses as explicable with reference to the objective context of social relations.

However, it should be noted, with the help of the authors quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that the power of spatial structures to represent something is an irreducible feature of the symbolic and imaginary which itself produces social

meaning that is not explained by an understanding of social processes. The empirically demonstrable everyday transformation of social space into physical or geographical space produces the symbolic meaning of a spatial representation of social reality. This link of social power and representation in the spatialization of social relations has been the subject of debate among authors who speak of the epochal dominance of the spatial and of the everyday domination of space in culture and social relations.

If social power is symbolized in the appropriation of space, the significance of such spatialization is revealed only through an analysis of these relations as relations of meaning. In contrast, avoiding the geographical often leads to a sociological naturalization that defines symbolic reality as more or less embedded in social context: "the naturalization of social processes conceals from us the process by which social reality is discursively constituted."<sup>5</sup> How the imaginary and the symbolic character of the spatial is historically inscribed in social contexts remains concealed, therefore, if it is not theoretically reconstructed as a real object of discursive and symbolic practice and therewith recognized as a specific form of constituting the social. Such an analysis must clarify the daily dominance of spatial concepts as the discursive hegemony of spatial modes of speech.

## 2

Lefebvre was aware of the complexity of imaginary and symbolic processes in the realm of space. His urban theory reconstructs the increasing spatialization of social relations through philosophy of history and structural analysis. It occupies a central position in the social-theoretical reflection on space, time, and modernity in European social theory. In sociology and urban research in the Federal Republic of Germany, this position was considered as an epistemological hindrance. Dominated by history and the philosophy of time, vehement discussions about the relationship between history and structure have prevented reflection about the historical and structural significance of the spatial in contemporary social formations and thus also kept intellectuals from recognizing the epochal importance of historical transformations of space and time.

It is amazing how long it has taken for the problem of space to appear as a historical and political problem. Space was ascribed to "nature," to the given, to immediate circumstances, to mere geography, to a part of pre-history, so to speak. Otherwise, space was conceived as living space and the space for expansion of a people, a culture, a language, a state. One analyzed space as land, as surface or as expanse: only space as such and its boundaries were important. At the same moment when (towards the end of the eighteenth century) there developed gradually an explicit politics of space, the new

insights of theoretical and experimental physics deprived philosophy of its ancient right to speak of the world, of the cosmos, of finite and infinite space. The problem of space was now tackled in a twofold fashion: on the one hand by political technology, on the other by scientific practice. Philosophy, however, was relegated to the problematic of time. After Kant, time is the subject that remains for the philosophers, Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger.<sup>6</sup>

The analytics of space between knowledge and power as an apparatus (*dispositif*) of political technologies and scientific discourses has earned Foucault the title "new cartographer of modern topology," who "no longer designates a privileged location as the source of power and no longer accepts any localization of power at one single point."<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to Foucault, Lefebvre sets out to identify this modern topology in the urban. Foucault analyzes the connection of political technologies and their associated knowledge strategies as spatio-temporal matrices of power (Poulantzas) in the transition from the absolutist form of power to disciplinary society (and thus discovers the industrial "disciplines" as epistemological units of knowledge). Lefebvre, however, connects the thesis of the dominance of the spatial to the present stage of capitalist societalization that is characterized, according to him, by the totalizing tendency of urbanization, and that, therefore, must cause an epistemological shift. It is no longer the industrial and its disciplines focusing on capital and labor, classes and reproduction that constitute the episteme (the possibility of knowing the social formation), but the urban and its forms focused on everydayness and consumption, planning and spectacle, that expose the tendencies of social development in the second half of the twentieth century.

The urban is, therefore, pure form; a place of encounter, assembly, simultaneity. This form has no specific content, but is a center of attraction and life. It is an abstraction, but unlike a metaphysical entity, the urban is a concrete abstraction, associated with practice<sup>8</sup> . . . What does the city create? Nothing. It centralizes creation. Any yet it creates everything. Nothing exists without exchange, without union, without proximity, that is, without relationships. The city creates a situation, where *different* things occur one after another and do not exist separately but according to their differences. The urban, which is indifferent to each difference it contains, . . . itself unites them. In this sense, the city constructs, identifies, and sets free the essence of social relationships<sup>9</sup> . . . We can say that the urban (as opposed to urbanism, whose ambiguity is gradually revealed) rises above the horizon, slowly occupies an epistemological field, and becomes the episteme of an epoch. History and the historic grow further apart.<sup>10</sup>

Compared to homogeneous industrial space, urban space is differentially constituted. This heterogeneous structure predestines urban space to clarify contemporary social forms.

## 3

The epochal shift from the temporal to the spatial manifests itself in the radical transformation of the modern social formation. The "postmodern" stands for the loss of the critical and modern historicity, and a new "spatial" logic of the cultural representation of the world that reacts to the transformed relationships of image, language, sound, and reality (Jameson). "Post-Fordism" implies flexible and qualitative modes of regulating social and political-economic relations that are restructured in the capitalist apparatus (*dispositif*) of space—cities, regions, and nations—and evoke a "revenge of the urban" (Lipietz) at an international scale. "Information society" denotes the daily technology-intensive transformation of production and reproduction which infuses modern relations of money, time, and urban space with information (Castells). And "culture society" (*Kulturgesellschaft*) refers to the tendency of social space to differentiate between a plurality of lifestyles that are symbolized as "fine distinctions" in differential representations of urban life-worlds (Bourdieu). What are the consequences of this transformed geography and topology of social relations for the epistemology of the urban?

Urban research sets out to analyze the epochal shift from the temporal to the spatial in concrete historical and geographical forms by reconstructing the theoretical and cultural shift in modernity from the "industrial" to the "urban." It thus secures the possibility of positioning the urban as the current apparatus (*dispositif*) of capitalist space in the process of urban development. Even if one considers the theses about postindustrial, postmodern, information, or culture society, and especially Lefebvre's claim that they are "ideological," one can still produce a varied body of knowledge about the relationship of industry and city and their representations in modernity, particularly the manifold ideological and real shifts in contemporary urban structure. In the process, one learns, however, that the modern, Fordist relationship between industry and city no longer represents the current social structure *in toto*, in Althusser's sense that the modern industrial, urban-determined ideologies represent knowledge about the imaginary relations of the subjects to their real living conditions in postmodern culture:

The cognitive map is called to . . . enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of the city's structure as a whole . . . What is affirmed is not that we cannot know the world and its totality . . . It has never been said here that a global world system is unknowable, but merely that it

was unrepresentable, which is a very different matter. The Althusserian formula in other words designates a gap, a rift, between existential experience and scientific knowledge: ideology has then the function of somehow inventing a way of articulating those two distinct dimensions with each other. What a historicist view of this "definition" would want to add is that such coordination, the production of functioning and living ideologies, is distinct in different historical situations, but above all, that there may be historical situations in which it is not possible at all—and this would seem to be our situation in the current crisis.<sup>11</sup>

In this crisis of representation, the thread has snapped between the real and the symbolic, between the existential experiences of everyday space and their representations in ideology, science, and culture.

## 4

The irreducible symbolic quality of spatial representations of daily social reality (the ideological hegemony of the spatial), the urban as the decisive episteme of the contemporary social structure (urbanity as the central apparatus [*dispositif*] of space) and the gulf between the spaces of subjective experience and objective perception (crisis of representation): how can this tangle of problems concerning an epistemology of space be unraveled? Lefebvre's answer was a differentiated schema of the social production of space.

- a. *Spatial practice*: the spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space. What is spatial practice under neo-capitalism? It embodies a close association within perceived space between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, "private" life, and leisure). This association is a paradoxical one, because it includes the most extreme separation between the places it links together. The specific spatial competence and performance of every member of society can only be evaluated empirically. "Modern" spatial practice might thus be defined—to take an extreme but significant case—by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project. Which should not be taken to mean that motorways or the politics of air transport can be left out of the picture. A spatial practice must have a certain cohesiveness, but this does not imply that it is coherent (in the sense of intellectually worked out or logically conceived).

b. *Representations of space*: conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived (Arcane speculation about Numbers, with its talk of the golden number, moduli, and “canons,” tends to perpetuate this view of matters). This is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production). Conceptions of space tend, with certain exceptions to which I shall return, towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs.

c. *Representational spaces*: space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of the “inhabitants,” and “users,” but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.

The (relative) autonomy achieved by space *qua* “reality” during a long process which has occurred especially under capitalism or neo-capitalism has brought new contradictions into play. The contradictions within space itself will be explored later. For the moment, I merely wish to point out the dialectical relationship which exists within the triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. A triad, that is, three elements, and not two.<sup>12</sup>

The reality of everyday life is, not surprisingly, the entry point for urban research. Today this should hardly be questioned any longer, for it has become the object of thorough theoretical work in European social theory. As the place where structure and agency are connected and localized in time and space, the category of everyday life also discloses the link between urban sociology and social theory. Lefebvre himself prepares the ground for this. In the opposition between “spatial practice” and “space” appears the opportunity for subjective action and the objective, functional spatial structure, which are linked to each other in the perceptions of temporally determined actions. The competent use of space and, hence, successful everyday acts depend on trained perception and ways of connecting difference that are made routine. The modern separation of sites of producing and reproducing life is taken for granted as the structuring principle of everyday lived space and enters successful spatial practices as accepted standardization. From the standpoint of the theory of ideology and reproduction (the theoretical perspective on everyday life), spatial practice is, on the one hand, subjectivization. Individuals appropriate space and constitute

themselves as subjects of their space(s) through spatial practice. On the other hand, spatial practice is at the same time the process by which individual spaces of action become objectified in spatial structures. Functionalist ideology, for example, establishes the connection between daily lived space and the structure of separations that is perceived as urban. These separations are reproduced and objectified in everyday modes of speech or in work, living, or leisure spaces, which become objects of spontaneous knowledge of space. From the standpoint of reproduction, the “satellite town” is an ideological apparatus where the lived ideology of spatial separation becomes materialized through everyday practice. Spatial practices thus acquire their cohesion through the dominant ideologies of lived space. They lead a material existence insofar as Ford’s Model T becomes a model of lived space.

Modern “functionalism” in architecture and urban planning, for example, is the representation of this ideology of urban space as it is lived in the material acts of individuals. It symbolizes the imaginary, “naturally” and normatively separated, relations of individuals to their real, interdependent living conditions. As ideologies of urban space, such urban concepts are produced by specialists of space—architects, urban planners, geographers, urban sociologists—and represented in spatial constructs: in the disciplines and political technologies of city building, modern space, its forms and possibilities of use become part of discursive formations. In this “disciplining” process, specific fields of knowledge are established by way of observation, maps, surveys, analysis, and representation. These determine the legitimate objects of knowledge and, at the same time, become practical factors in shaping space. The spatial disciplines define how space can be talked about and lend scientific coherence to the spontaneous ideologies of appropriated lived space (thereby ensuring the cohesion of spatial practice). Through their mechanisms of exclusion (who has the right to speak about space?), they formulate the dominant ways of representing and exercising power over space. In these disciplines, political technologies and means of spatial control, apparatuses (*dispositifs*) of spatial policy are formed in which “the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process.”<sup>13</sup>

The “subjective,” lived and perceived spaces of action and the “objective,” scientifically and technologically conceived spatial structures are coordinated through ideologies of space. In such ideologies, a society does not generate ideas about the real conditions of existence of individuals but conceptions about the relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence:

It is this relation that contains the “cause” which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. Or rather, to leave aside the language of causality it is necessary to advance the thesis that it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology.<sup>14</sup>

Both the real conditions of existence of individuals and their "imaginary" ideas thereof can be scientifically established. However, one is not therefore in the realm of truth and outside ideology, for there are no true and non-ideological forms of knowledge. There are only dominant and dominated ideologies that can never be divided into two worlds (of "truth" and "ideology").<sup>15</sup> Ideological confrontations in everyday life seek to increase the(ir) respective room to maneuver and the(ir) articulation of interests by shifting the frontiers between dominant and dominated spaces. One possibility for increasing this room to maneuver lies in aesthetic spatial practices, where the power of images can reach beyond set frontiers towards utopias free of dominance. This allows people to imagine possibilities banished from the realm of ideology. An example is the modern *imaginaire urbain*, where the collective unconscious of functionalized metropolitan daily life can be made accessible to the inhabitants by means of shock experiences in language, images, and cinema. This is to allow inhabitants to set their own ideas of their real conditions of existence that may contradict the dominant ideological representations of these conditions.

Spatial practice as lived and taken-for-granted space of everyday production and reproduction denote "the real"; representations of space as conceptual ideologies of disciplinary and political-technical dominance over space refer to "the symbolic"; and spaces of representation as experienced and describable imagined spaces of existential experience of domination deal with "the imaginary." One can interpret in this manner Lefebvre's schema, point to possible links between synchronically co-present levels of society (with the help of theories of ideology), and analyze spaces. Such a commentary would have to be carried out and demonstrate its heuristic quality in competition with other interpretations. The logical sophistication of this schema is, however, unquestionable. Rival approaches in urban sociology tend to restrict their analysis to the first two levels (if they do not actually confine themselves to the first). Hence they remain trapped in the sociological naturalization of the social by neglecting the discursive constitution of the social: "triad: three terms and not only two."

It appears necessary to historicize this synchronic schema and thus connect it with the problematics of time and space, history and geography, industry and urbanity. In doing so, one can take up Lefebvre's own point: space is becoming a (relatively) independent "reality" as a result of the long process of modernizing society. The initial question for this sketch is the following: can the epochal shift from the temporal to the spatial, like the epistemological change from the "industrial" to the "urban," be located in the discourses and political technologies of the modern production of urban space?

## THE MODERNIZATION OF THE CITY

In the process of modernization, the industrial principles of organizing time and space in the workplace spread beyond the industrial triangle of factory/villa/

workers' tenement that determines the city. They tend to take hold of the entire society and level the class structure of the bourgeois city that is divided into urban and proletarian spheres. The industrial "disciplines" break out of the "closed institutions" of "disciplinary society," penetrate the social body, and homogenize and standardize the social through separation and individualization:

The direct producer, the worker, is now totally separated from the means of labour—a situation which is at the root of the social division of labour in machine production and large-scale industry. The latter involves as its precondition an entirely different spatial matrix: *the serial, fractured, parcelled, cellular and irreversible* space which is peculiar to the Taylorist division of labour on the factory assembly line . . . The space matrix . . . is composed of gaps, breaks, successive fracturings, closures and frontiers; but it has no end: the capitalist labour process tends towards world-wide application . . . The whole process is inscribed in fresh space . . . In this modern space, people change position *ad infinitum* by traversing separations in which each place is defined by its distance from others; they spread out in this space by assimilating and homogenizing new segments in the act of shifting their frontiers . . . Within this very space are inscribed the movements and expanded reproduction of capital, the generalization of exchange, and monetary fluctuations.<sup>16</sup>

The new order of social spatiality can be experienced in the modernization of metropolitan ways of life, which are already imbued with social homogenization, individualization, rationalization, the industrial division of labor, the culture of money, and the "fast" temporality of simultaneity. It is above all the urban intellectuals who digest these experiences of transition to a new social formation: Occidental rationalization and bureaucracy (Weber), love, luxury and capitalism (Sombart), individuality and the unconscious (Freud), heightened nervous stimulation and money culture (Simmel), historico-philosophical passages and modernity (Benjamin, Krakauer), political economy and culture of industrialization (Frankfurt School). These critical treatments of social development constitute the background for the concurrent practical experiments of the technological and aesthetic avant-gardes of the early twentieth century to overcome the separations and specializations of knowledge that result from the social division of labor: science and technology, art and daily life, and also theory and practice, hand and head. In this manner, urban specialists attempt to break through the epistemological barriers of the industrial disciplines of the nineteenth century by means of interdisciplinary work and cooperative efforts to bring together specialized scientific, technical, and aesthetic forms of intelligence.

The disciplines of city building are being recomposed. Translated from the sphere of production, cooperation in the division of labor is the principle for the new,

Fordist relationship of social knowledge and power, which is redeployed to shape metropolitan everyday life by means of rationalization, standardization, typification, and Taylorization. As exemplified by the New Frankfurt of the 1920s, the city is represented as an enterprise: "What is the city for? It should enable every single citizen to realize their vocation by allowing them to maximize performance with minimal effort. This principle must be the guiding star directing all future measures undertaken by the city builder."<sup>17</sup> This performative idea of the "city as enterprise" regulates the trend towards a new type of social rationalization, for which the New Frankfurt is paradigmatic. The new methods of planning in architecture, urban planning, and administration combine organically with the modes of life of the metropolitan masses, for whom these methods have already become a steady habit in their working lives. In these processes of modernization, the perceptions of daily lived spaces are undergoing a fundamental transformation. With this notion of the city as enterprise, the hegemony of the Fordist model makes itself felt already. "Enterprise" becomes the regulative idea of the urban that finds its appropriate symbol in the industrial machine, the engine and the automobile (Fordism). Mobility, synchronicity, speed, and traffic thus become the predominant themes in the planning and control of an economy of time that determines the functioning of metropolitan everyday life. In contrast to the backward-looking science of history of the nineteenth century, "progress" now constitutes history as an expectation of future development—and this especially through practices of metropolitan reform, which relate to the social history of the urban masses and intend to integrate the latter into society by means of "social efficiency" and "equality."

## THE URBANIZATION OF SPACE

Mass media and automobiles transport modern metropolitan culture to all places that assume urban qualities through zoning and functional separation.

The problematic of city building intensifies . . . the problems of rural areas are slowly losing significance . . . This kind of planning leads to the creation of a formal uniformity . . . But the homogeneity of space does not prevent its sprawling disarticulation . . . The state authorities and the economy are responsible for homogeneity while disarticulated sprawl can be attributed to the market and private initiative. Disarticulated, sprawling space has a strongly hierarchical structure: there are residential districts, centers for this and that, more or less refined ghettos, developments subject to various statutes etc. . . . It can be shown that this space (which was first tested in spatial planning) has been applied to other fields such as science. The results were an ever more pronounced homogeneity (identical norms, rules and restrictions following a uniform logic), differentiation (specialization), and

hierarchical gradation . . . The schema becomes a model, it shifts from reality to the sphere of culture, produces ideologies to justify itself (for example, structuralism). Yet, once turned into a model, it can also explain the collapse of ideologies.<sup>18</sup>

"City without limits" reads the motto of the Fordist postwar period. This becomes evident in the extension of inner-city principles of the production of space to the peripheries (homogenization and hierarchization) and, in turn, the peripheralization of the center that earlier symbolized the history of city and society. The center "implodes" in the banality of a modern tertiary architecture. It becomes an empty foyer that no longer symbolizes the relations of residents to their city but reveals these in their merely symbolic spatialization: "The urban is, therefore, pure form; a place of encounter, assembly, simultaneity. This form has no specific content, but is a center of attraction and life."<sup>19</sup>

This empty inhospitability of abstract space results in urban flight and the suburbanization of the countryside; population dispersion becomes universal. Any place can become a subcentre, space is hierarchized and dissected into differential components that are defined in terms of distance (transportation). The institutional practices of Fordist urban planning overlay the industrial and, through urbanism, become the dominant ideology of urban everyday life. However, this ideology of the urban leads to differential thinking that diagnoses a loss of the urban by analyzing abstract space (fragments, distances, grids). This loss of the urban resulted from separations in urban culture and became codified in urban consciousness as a set of oppositions (private/public, work/residence, individuality/anonymity, monotony/variety). These are in fact calculated as losses of the urban. The modern metropolis fails to redeem its "progressive" promise of urbanity. In the urban realm, the utopia of progress is shattered by the functionalized architecture of the city.

The crisis of the city is of consequence for the representation of space:

The rediscovery of urban space took the place occupied by social utopias during the times of *Neues Bauen* . . . In the early sixties, after the essential foundations for a new concept of architecture were laid in the works of Saverio Muratoris, Carlo Aymoninos, Aldo Rossi, Oswald Mathias Ungers, the problematic of architecture undergoes radical change. The significance of space and its elements come to the fore; the construction of housing is relegated to second place behind city building.<sup>20</sup>

The Fordist transformations announce at the same time the end of perspectival space and of the centre, the end of the power of the enterprise and factory form over urban space, and of the social as the dominant ideology of city building. In "late capitalism," the principle underlying structures of power and corresponding social

topologies is no longer penetration but dispersion. In postmodern culture and urban protest movements, the loss of modern historicity (industry, the labor movement, intellectuals) and of relatively autonomous cultures (high and low) are being problematized as the crisis of representation. They dominate current and intellectual-historical debates between the universal intellectuals representing "the social" and specialist intellectuals. Of the latter, the architects, designers and urbanists, rather than the planners, technicians and engineers, have taken over the ideological leadership in the production of space. The modern culture of the social is being pushed to the edge of urban discourse. In contrast, "urbanity" becomes the regulative idea of the urban, hence a spatial form that replaces the historical-temporal (continuity, living standard) with a structural-spatial way of thinking difference and understanding modes of life. In addition, the crisis of Marxism casts doubt on the economy being the deciding factor in the last instance and foregrounds superstructures and representations. Historical sciences (especially the French, with the *Annales*), Anglo-American geography and urban sociology, American cultural science (Jameson, Berman, Sennett, as well as Foucault, Virilio, De Certeau, and others in Paris), and European sociology (Giddens, Bourdieu, Frisby, the regulation school) theorize representations of space and thereby discover the transformed urban forms, which allow one to concretize the general cultural and political crisis of representation. We can say that the urban (as opposed to urbanism, whose ambiguity is gradually revealed) rises above the horizon, slowly occupies an epistemological field, and becomes the episteme of an epoch.

### THE MATERIALITY OF THE IMMATERIAL

Such an analytical strategy of deciphering social forms with reference to representations of space, especially spatial images of the urban, can certainly fall back on epistemological traditions of modernity:

Just as Benjamin argues that "the *flâneur* is the priest of the genius loci," so too is Simmel's account of *modernité* located in specific spatial configurations. Simmel was the first sociologist to reveal explicitly the social significance of spatial contexts for human interaction. Spatial images of society were later to be crucial to Kracauer's own "topography of social space" as well as Benjamin's analysis of the relation between the *flâneur* and the arcades, the bourgeois *intérieur* and the spatial location of commodities. But no other social theorist was so preoccupied with social distance, with detachment from reality, with "the intersection of social circles" as was Simmel. In the analysis of modern society, all are located primarily within an urban context.<sup>21</sup>

Simmel analyzed the "separation from reality" as the dominance of the "objective" (objectified) culture of the rationalist money economy over "subjective" urban human relations which are forced into blasé self-preservation and nervous distanciation: "atrophy of the individual through the hypertrophy of objective culture."<sup>22</sup> The crystallization of objective culture, created by individuals themselves, is so far advanced that they no longer have a relationship to the individual practices of perception in quotidian urban life-worlds. Much the same applies to the diagnosis of space today. There is no coherent representation of space (the symbolic) that mediates between the existential experiences in the spatial practice of urban life-worlds (the real) and the spaces of imagining the world and nature (the imaginary). Image, concept, and reality are dissociated to the point of provoking a crisis of meaning and representation.

What such a reality almost devoid of any reference to reality lacks is, above all, the dimension which used to be captured by manifold and differentiated metaphors of "depth." The play of signifiers divorced from meaning and reference takes the place of semantic depth. In this way, and akin to the screens of the electronic media, the dimension which was earlier defined by bodily imagination implodes. The screen is in several respects an appropriate metaphor for the new form of experiencing reality . . . Spatial and temporal "orders of things" have dissolved into a movement of freely appearing occurrences from which one can expect little . . . Locating a place where the body can register itself is as difficult as finding "spatial depth" in meaning and signification . . . In a flat world, meaning is produced and distributed in any location. The body, which emerges from this meaning, rests nowhere. Mobility is its primary characteristic.<sup>23</sup>

Technological spaces of robotization and computerization get superimposed onto working and living conditions; genetic engineering conquers biological corporeality; semiological image spaces replace the hermeneutic cultures of the written world; apparatuses of artificial intelligence produce hyperspaces of experience (*Erlebnis*), cyberspace. Such phenomena produce an immaterial spatiality of networked information, free-floating signs and codifications, which can no longer be symbolized with conventional representations of space, time, and world. In the "symptomatology of the present" (Gumbrecht) there is, next to de-temporalization (loss of historicity), de-totalization (heterogeneity of life-worlds) and de-naturalization (fusion of man, machine, nature), an uncorporeal process of spatialization whose material consequences for the relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence can be represented at the most virtually, as transformations of a "process by which space becomes an autonomous 'reality'" mediated by images.<sup>24</sup>

Such a loss of "sensible" reference points also characterizes the contemporary funfair of urban ideologies. In the rapid succession of "re-construction," "deconstruction," and "neo-construction," the merry-go-round of prefixes of the architecture of the city spins out of control. Even the fanciful magic of postmodern architecture (buildings with computers between the pillars) cannot put a stop to the swindle of ideological representations.

Other spaces or urban revolution? The universal intellectual Lefebvre never stopped insisting on the implications of theories of revolution, and thus the utopia of a non-alienated urban society that for him was virtually present and so could be theorized. With his happily positivist, purely descriptive grasp of power-knowledge complexes as the absent causes of social relations, Foucault, the specific intellectual intervenes subversively in dominant discursive practices in order to restore practical power to subjected knowledges in heterogeneous sites. There does not appear to be another alternative at present. In their reflections on spatiality, both aimed at another kind of historicity and showed that the relationships between spatial practice, representations of space and the spaces of representation cannot be reduced through either ideology or cultural critique without running the risk of ignoring the critical epistemology of time and space, history and geography, industry and city of the past twenty years. Insofar as they formulated their theses of the materiality of the immaterial two decades ago, one should begin re-reading Lefebvre and Foucault.

## NOTES

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2. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 1/146 (1984): 64.
3. Pierre Bourdieu, "Physischer, sozialer and angeeigneter physischer Raum," in *Stadt Räume*, ed. M. Wentz (Frankfurt: Campus, 1991) (translation by Bandulasena Goonewardena), 113.
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5. Ernesto Laclau, "Diskurs, Hegemonie und Politik," *Neue Soziale Bewegungen und Marxismus*, ed. W. F. Haug and W. Elfferding, *Argument* Special issue/Sonderband (1982): 17.
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15. Michel Pêcheux, "Zu Rebellieren und zu Denken Wagen! Ideologien, Widerstände, Klassenkampf," *kultuRRévolution* 5–6 (1984), 17.
16. Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, trans. P. Camiller (London: Verso, 2000), 102–4.
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18. Henri Lefebvre, "Zwischen zwei Daten," in *Paris–Paris 1937–1957*, ed. G. Viatte (Paris/Munich: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1981), 398.
19. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 118.
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22. *Ibid.*
23. Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, "Flache Diskurse," in *Materialität der Kommunikation*, ed. H.-U. Gumbrecht and K. L. Pfeiffer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 918 (translated by B. Goonewardena).
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