

Political Space in the Work of Henri Lefebvre: Ideology and Utopia

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The ideas of philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) are currently experiencing a revival in urban studies in France, while his theories on the city and urban society have been discussed and modified for many years in Anglophone social science literature. This new interest, which moreover extends to Europe, demonstrates however various uses of his philosophy: while some attempt to draw practical applications and to identify the influences of his theories on the practices of *The Production of Space* and on the usual uses of *The Right to the City* (Stanek, 2011), some philosophical or biographical exegeses ignore the concrete purpose of his reflections, namely, the socio-spatial processes of alienation, and occasionally at the same time turn up their noses at the setting in which they are expressed (social, political, urbanistic, etc.) and the conditions of their development. While some depoliticize his philosophy, giving it the currently popular slant (post-marxist) and emptying it of its subversive content and emancipating aim, as well as all references to conflict and the class struggle, others, conversely, especially abroad in the work of the supporters of Anglo-Saxon "radical geography", take their inspiration from Lefebvre and do not allow their thoughts on space to be disassociated from an analysis of class or an analysis in terms of politics¹.

This article would be in alignment with the latter perspective, resituating Lefebvre's thought on space and all its criticism, theoretical and practical alike, at the heart of that which in our opinion makes it unique, namely, its relationship with the political. This will refer, of course, to the question of utopia, inherent to Lefebvre's philosophy, but also to his criticism of ideologies, and urban ideology in particular.

When reading Lefebvre, one perceives fact that the philosopher's commitment, his stands, indeed, the affirmation of the means to be implemented to improve the setting studied – the urban reality in relation to the modes of production—are in no way in contradiction to scientific or theoretical work. The "perspectivist" or "visionary" aspect that some believed they discovered in Lefebvre, in reality only arises from his analysis of the processes of the production of space, and more specifically, the links between the relationships of production and urbanization processes (Garnier, 1994; Costes, 2009). From the 1960s through the 1970s, the author provided us with tools for analysing modernity and its ideologies, while also giving us the keys to a critical reading of the social relations inherent to capitalism and paving the way for what urban society could—or should - become.

So, it is a question here of addressing the relationship between space and politics in Lefebvre's works starting with this criticism of urban ideologies and utopia. In other words, we will be interested in the space/politics relationships starting with the politically directed representations of space and how they contribute to its production. This poses the question of the political instrumentalization of space and thus, its role and status both within Lefebvre's "utopia" which

¹ For further expansion on the topic of these various forms of contemporary reception of the work of Henri Lefebvre, see: Busquet Grégory, Garnier Jean-Pierre, 2011, "Un pensamiento urbano todavía contemporáneo. Las vicisitudes de la herencia lefebvriana", *Urban*, NS 02, Madrid: Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, (Sept.): 41-57.

must be defined, and within the ideologies accompanying the urbanization processes that he has taken pains to criticize. The theme of this article will be finding out if the space is a stake or if it is merely a tool (or mediator), of social change (in the utopia) or for the preservation of the social order (in the ideology).

But first and foremost, it is necessary to reconsider these relationships between space and politics and the political determination of the production of space in the context in which Lefebvre's urban philosophy developed. Only then will we be able to reconsider this political instrumentalization of space in two conflicting systems of representation, namely, in the dominant urbanist ideology and in the utopian aspects of its criticism in Lefebvre's work. We will see that the latter open perspectives that are still current concerning the comprehension of the links uniting the urban space, social groups and the democratic transformation of the social space.

Relationships between space and politics

Starting in the 1940s, Henri Lefebvre began to be interested in everyday life in the modern world, an interest that would gradually lead to an interest in the city and urban life. For him, this meant "[translation] the activities of individuals and groups in everyday life which lay the foundations for social practice" and thus this daily activity is what the philosopher must reflect upon to understand the modern world and to be able to revolutionize it. A philosopher belonging to a party whose official doctrine denounced the exploitation and alienation of factory workers, Lefebvre thus hypothesized that day-to-day life is itself alienated and alienating, and that it is through daily life in particular that social relationships are reproduced, in the time outside of work and possibly, that it is also through daily life, among other things, that change and the proletarian revolution will be able to occur. (Lefebvre, 1947, 1962, 1981 and 1968).

The city and the habitat themselves, i.e. the backdrop for this daily life where society occurs and reproduces, are alienating particularly due to urbanism, a political action if ever there was, since through this practice, the State and the capitalist system organize and rationalize the space for social production, flow, and reproduction (Lefebvre, 1971; 2000 [1974])... From the late 1960s, through these reflections on urbanism Lefebvre devoted himself to the analysis and criticism of the State and the capitalist production mode, which is not in and of itself anything new. What is new is that he criticizes them in and through space, highlighting the political aspect of urban space as both a political product and a possible instrument of change.

If indeed Lefebvre, a theoretician of the burgeoning field of urban sociology states that "[translation] (social) space is a (social) product" (2000 [1974]: 35), space is quite obviously political, being simultaneously both a political product and a political stake (Lefebvre, 2000 [1973]).

It is first of all a political product because it is the outcome of contradictory, indeed conflicting, strategies, representations, appropriations and practices (Lefebvre, 2000 [1973]: 53), which take place in accordance with socio-cultural models, the interests specific to each group, and social (class) positions. As the capitalist production mode produces a space that is specific to it, a revolutionary strategy will have to create another mode of producing space, according to Lefebvre, by way of a collective reappropriation of the city (Lefebvre, 1965 ; 1974 [1968]), as well as by way

of a reappropriation and liberation of daily life, something which of course, is impossible except in a non-capitalist production mode.

Space is also, therefore, a political stake in the sense that it is the medium, the instrument and objective of struggles and conflicts (Lefebvre, 2000 [1973]: 35-36). There are, in fact, dominant spaces and dominated spaces. In the capitalist production of social space, dominated space would be the experienced space, the representational spaces, and daily life spaces relegated to the background. On the other hand, the imagined space –representations of space – the designers' (architects, urban planners, decision-makers) space, would be the dominant space (Lefebvre, 2000 [1974]: 48-49). According to Lefebvre, urban, daily life is where the stakes of a revolutionary struggle are found. But this domination of space stems primarily from the domination related to the social relationships of capitalist productions. In the 1970s, French urban sociology after Lefebvre, thus began to analyze space as the medium for the class struggle and institutionalized divisions. These struggles for and in the space may, of course, be violent but symbolic as well since space is what social groups and classes are competing for. With the space having acquired a market value, social inequalities materialize in the space, particularly between the bourgeoisie and the underprivileged classes (to date, the bourgeoisie continues to have the "initiative" for Lefebvre) (Lefebvre, 2000 [1973] :141-160).

One may conclude from these considerations that urban space is political in a number of regards. Firstly, it is a political product in so far as it is quite obviously subject to public policies: enacting urban policies at the national or local scale certainly echoes the vision of a specific and desirable evolution of society. Next, due to the link between space and social development in representations, it is tied to the question of the power that is held onto or conquered (power over the space but also over the social groups)². Finally, still in connection with these two characteristics, the urban space is political as it is one of the stakes in struggles (for appropriation of prestigious places, for example).

Thus, far from being merely a neutral medium – or receptacle – of social activities this space becomes a stake and a medium for conflicting social representations and strategies; it is an active medium (causing tensions, representations, and practices, intended or otherwise, since they are loaded with signs and symbols), that is produced, appropriated and transformed on the basis of conflicting interests, values and ideas.

And it just so happens that these conflicting ideas tied to diverging interests can lead us to wonder about the political instrumentalization of space in urban ideologies, which is exactly what Lefebvre attempted to work out in his time, and the utopian spirit he invoked. This enables us to deal in greater depth with these tightly woven relationships between the urban space and the political, since interest in urban ideologies and utopia also means being interested in the political orientation of the social representations of the space, which lead to theorization, practices and quite obviously, public action. And the urban provides the preferred medium of representation systems of this type.

² If, as the geographer Yves Lacoste wrote, knowledge and the mastery of space make it possible to hold on to power (military, but also political), they would also make it possible to maintain social peace (Lacoste 2012, [1976]).

Criticism of urban ideology

Henri Lefebvre was thus the first person in France to establish links between ideology and space. Spatial ideology features prominently for others, especially the supporters of French social geography in which ideologies and representations are integral parts of the constitution of territories (Frémont et al., 1984, Di Méo, 1998, Di Méo et al., 2005). Therefore, this geography, which was also inspired by Marxism, and which began to develop in the 1960s, focussed a great deal on the analysis of representations of space, understood as a social construct.

But Lefebvre outlined a definition of the ideology that has been useful for analyzing urban thought for more than a half-century – its reformist application in France, if nothing else. In 1966, he thus defined spatial ideology as a system of meanings of spatial reality, a product of a “political strategy” that would impose their representations, indeed their needs and aspirations onto the dominated classes (Lefebvre, 2001 [1966]: 20-22). There would therefore be alienation in the space, through the spatial ideology, and the space would also be at the centre of an ideological struggle.

Lefebvre also asserted, in 1974, in *The Production of Space*, that there cannot be a lasting ideology without referring to space, in the same way that all conceived space conveys ideologies (Lefebvre, 2000 [1974]: 54-56): “What we call “ideology” only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and thus by taking on body therein (Lefebvre, 2000 [1974]: 55). The ideology, supporter of the will and the myth of “power” (Lefebvre, 1970a: 118) must crystallize around the actual place that conveys it (monuments, for example, even if they often lose their original meanings over time) to become effective. Ideology can then be implied by the space, and understood as a social production. This space would therefore engender ideologies just as it might be seized by them, and even in a way “created” by ideologies, becoming a repressive space, the ideology is unable to come into being except by connection to the space.

Since Karl Marx, and subsequently with the analyses of the sociologist Karl Mannheim, the concept of ideology referred to a system of falsified representations of reality (“false consciousness”) intended to perpetuate reproduction and social hierarchies, more akin to conservative ideas, whereas utopia would be a form of thought with social change as its objective (Marx, 1970 [1845], Althusser 1996 [1965], Althusser, 1976, Mannheim, 1956 [1929]). Lefebvre observed, at the turn of the thirty-year period after the end of the Second World War, the emergence of an “[translation] ideology of change (of modernity)” (1974 [1968]: 144). This ideology applied particularly to urbanism and (modern) architecture and paradoxically supposedly aimed at preserving the existing social order. This would indeed be an ideology, and not a utopia, even if it has often been portrayed as such. Around the same time, the architecture historian Manfredo Tafuri considered that this utopia promoted by the avant-garde was only the ideology’s culmination in the stage of advanced capitalism; this utopia would only mask the ideology in order to perpetuate it. Modernist ideology, therefore, would deny itself everything while also perpetuating itself and by reproducing (Tafuri, 1979 [1973]). More generally, urban ideology, like all ideologies – but under the guise of utopian aspects, of progress – would only maintain and reproduce domination and divisions in the space and through action on the space.

In Lefebvre’s opinion, the modern city as conceived of in the 1950s-1960s with standardization of architecture and streamlined urban planning, became synonymous with boredom (Lefebvre, 1960). The modern city was especially losing its historical “use value,” in Marx’ meaning of the term (value supposed to meet social needs and “desires”) and was increasingly subject to exchange value

(characterized by commoditization) (Lefebvre, 1974 [1968]). Lefebvre purported to be a fervent critic of what he called “technocratic urbanism.” Faced with this modern urbanism, which reasons in terms of basic functions meeting predetermined and standardized needs according to the Athens Charter’s principles, Lefebvre the sociologist suggested instead reasoning in terms of representations, uses, practices and appropriation of the space. Of course, at the time this approach was alien to the culture of the architect, the urbanist, the decision-maker, the “technocrat,” who were the artisans of an abstract “designed space” that was decided on without taking social practices into account.

At any rate, modern urbanism shows us that the idea of progress is not necessarily linked to utopia and potential social well-being, but that “progress” could to the contrary be synonymous with the preservation of what already exists and don the mantle of the spirit of conservation. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was more and more talk of a modernist, functionalist or rationalist ideology that, under the guise of progress and progressivism, aimed only to keep the capitalist system and social hierarchies operating in and through space.

But this is placing a great deal of importance on action on space, even though this remains necessary to capitalism’s survival (Lefebvre, 2002 [1973]). Lefebvre thus considered that urbanism, which purports to be a science or a practice, is nothing more than an ideology and “mystification”: the voluntaristic organization of space (1970b). This ideology refers to what later authors would describe with the neologism “spatialism” (Chalas, 1997: 17-18; Garnier, 2001, Busquet, 2007). It is this ideology – which moreover, does not spare the utopian spirit from its inception – according to which action on space would make it possible to act on the social – whether to better control social groups or transform social relations, lifestyles, sociability, etc. This spatialist ideology, by postulating a causal determinism between the space and social facts, consists in decreeing that since social problems belong to and are visible in space, space has led to them, and we must act on the physical, built, space in order to solve them. In short, this ideology makes social order dependent on the spatial factor and imposes action on space to preserve or transform this order (whether by public action or the proposal of an “ideal city” with architecture and organization appropriate to new social relations, new lifestyles and behaviours, etc.). This is forgetting that, although urban space and its organization certainly have impacts on lifestyles and representations, although material space has an influence of sorts on practices and behaviour, and although it acts in a binding way on social groups and structures (morphologies, sociability, identities), it is first and foremost through representations that social groups and individuals create themselves based on their histories and their social ties (Halbwachs, 1970 [1938]: 8-13; Halbwachs, 1968 [1950]: 133-146; Roncayolo, 1997); these representations were certainly brought about by the symbols and signs laid out for them (Lefebvre, 1970 [1969]: 283).

Henri Lefebvre moreover deciphered this spatialist ideology – in its voluntaristic, i.e. action oriented, aspect, in other words, the second “period” of the spatialist ideological process following the observation (social ills resulting from space) – when he made a point of singling out the myths and mystifications associated with urban space. Although Lefebvre is utopist – “utopian”, as he said himself (Busquet, 2004: 54-57) and as we will see further on –, his utopia is the opposite of a spatialist utopia.

“Although there is a connection between social relations and space, between places and human groups, to establish cohesion it would be necessary to radically modify the structures of space ... This role of architect as demiurge is part of urban mythology and/or

ideology, which are hard to separate. ... Can this situation be reversed? The possible is today impossible, bound up with transformative actions within society. It is not for the architect to 'define a new conception of life,' to enable the individual to develop on a higher level by relieving him of the weight of the everyday, as Gropius believed. It is for a new conception of life to make possible the work of the architect, who will continue to act as a 'social condenser,' not of capitalist social relations and the commanding order that 'reflects' them, but of relations in motion and new relations in the process of development." (Lefebvre, 1970a: 124-134)

"Change the city to change life" is therefore, in Lefebvre's opinion, synonymous with error and mystification – even though he advocates social and spatial change. He suggests approaching the problem from the other way around. It is social change and change in "everyday life" that will enable the self-transformation of the production mode of space and the space itself. In this process, the architect's role would only be that of a guide³.

But a social transformation can however only go hand in hand with a spatial transformation – or rather a different mode of production of space, which is not quite the same thing. Conversely, a transformation of space and its mode of production would be useless without a radical transformation of the (capitalist) structure and social relations. In other words, different social relations would inevitably lead to different modes of production of space and therefore to a different space appropriate to these relations. Vice versa, such relations would only be possible with a space appropriate to them. So, there is no spatial determinism here, but a more complex interrelation between spaces and social becoming. By no means, according to the author, is this then a matter of reducing this complexity to the spatial factor alone, and space/society relations to space alone.

"Urbanism as an ideology formulates all problems of society as questions of space and transposes all that comes from history and consciousness into spatial terms. It is an ideology that immediately splits. Since society does not function in a satisfactory manner, could there not be a spatial pathology? From this perspective, the virtually official recognition of the priority of space over time is not conceived as an indication of social pathology, as one of many symptoms of a reality that engenders diseases of society. On the contrary, what are represented are healthy and diseased spaces. The planner should be able to distinguish sick spaces from spaces linked to mental and social health which are generators of this health. As a physician of space, he should have the capacity to conceive of a harmonious social space, a space that is normal and normalizing. Its function would then be to grant pre-existing social realities to this space (which happens to be identical to the land surveyor's space, that of abstract topologies)" (Lefebvre, 1974 [1968]: 51)

³ This conception was moreover taken up by the Institut de sociologie urbaine, which starting in the 1960s, would take up Lefebvre's theories in order to apply them to the study of private housing environments and lifestyles: see, in particular, Haumont Nicole, 1968, "Habitat et modèles culturels," *Revue française de sociologie*, Vol. IX, no. 2, Paris: CNRS, (April-June): 180-190.

This spatialist ideology, which exists in urbanism, in architectural practice, as well as in urban policies, has often also, and paradoxically, guided the mottos of those opposed to it, occasionally advocating “the right to the city” or “the urbanization of class struggle,” two slogans in late 1960s France (Busquet, 2007). At any rate, this spatialism has been running through all public action related to land use in France and the challenges to this action (to speak only of the French context) for over a half-century, from urban planning to the “Politique de la ville” [city policy], renovations and other urban requalifications. And this ideology seizes upon space as an instrument, to the point where it is passed off as a stake.

So, spatialist ideology has direct repercussions on the production of contemporary urban territories. It has also been said that utopia, from Thomas More to Charles Fourier, has always been characterized by this “spatialist” spirit: change the space in order to change the society; create a different space for a different society.

However, the response to this ideology, is utopia of course, but not just any utopia: not the one defined by Françoise Choay, namely a utopia characterized by a “model-making criticism” and the proposal of a spatio-temporal “other world” (Choay, 1980: 51-52). We will speak here of a utopia in the broader sense according to Henri Desroches (1996) or Joseph Gabel (1974), according to whom utopia would be a form of criticism – the “imaginary plan for a different reality or society” allowing “perception in the present of the unknown possible”.

From ideology to utopia

Although today urban sociology that is even more or less engaged would like to be seen as objective, Lefebvre’s sociology, is openly subjective both methodologically because it must situate itself as closely as possible to social practice, representations and daily uses of space; but also politically, as according to Lefebvre, this sociology must also be used for the emancipation of the city-dweller, the inhabitant – and the working class – from every form of domination and alienation (including specifically urban domination and alienation).

This is how Lefebvre passes himself off as a utopian (Busquet, 2004), utopia being understood here in the sense of Karl Mannheim or Joseph Gabel as a system of ideas that “transcends” a given historic or social situation, not by denying it but by surpassing it.

Moreover, Lefebvre prefers to describe himself as a “utopian”, a term etymologically referring to the inhabitant of utopia, because according to him, the “possible” is an integral part of the real (1974 [1968]: 112). So, the utopia he proposes does not deny (social, spatial, historic) reality but takes it into consideration – deals with it – precisely in order to explore its possibilities. And the urban space itself is strewn with the marks and potentialities of change: it is particularly subject to the signs of this utopia and, therefore, suitable to becoming the preferred object of this utopia. Just as there can be no ideology without reference to the space, there can be no urban philosophy without utopia (Lefebvre, 2000 [1972]: 64).

As a matter of fact, there are three clearly established points in this utopian process: knowledge and criticism of the real, exploration of the possibilities, and potentially, a proposal for another “world”. As Lefebvre often explained, to be able to imagine and propose a different reality, we must obviously analyze and know and understand the actual reality. Once this has been done, criticism can be put in place. In the same vein, sociologist Joseph Gabel distinguishes “psychological utopia”, synonymous with escape into the imaginary or “sterile dreams”, from “socio-political utopia”, which makes it possible to “[translation] dream the impossible to carry out

the possible" (Gabel, 1974 : 27). To describe this form of utopia which does not deny reality but explores its potentialities from a perspective of a possible transformation of social, political and social realities, the philosopher Ernst Bloch speaks of a "positive" or "concrete and active" utopia that makes it possible to "hope based on the actual" (Bloch, 1982 [1959], and 1977 [1918]), Henri Lefebvre speaks of a "concrete utopia" (Lefebvre, 1970c) and later, David Harvey speaks of a "dialectical utopianism", aiming to surpass reality starting with its radical criticism (Harvey, 2000). Moreover, like Joseph Gabel, Lefebvre distinguishes two types of utopia which he defines as "[translation] image of the future that makes it possible to leave the past to criticize and judge the present": utopia as a "[translation] symptom of failure and impotence" and utopia as the "[translation] manifestation of an affective surge towards action" (Lefebvre, 1962 : 73). The fundamental goal of utopia, in his opinion, is not so much the formal proposal of an ideal order as the criticism of the existing order and the "action". In a way, the proposal is just an excuse or an instrument, for criticizing this order.

And criticism of the existing order is a criticism of the power, of course, but also of the society that shaped it, as well as a criticism of the space that this same society shaped and which in turn shapes the society. So, for Lefebvre, the city becomes the place of all that is possible, the best and worst alike. A different production mode of space can only be accompanied with a different "view of the world"; no longer an ideology but a concrete utopia that is positive and active, i.e. one that is not outside the social time or space. And this, it would seem, is the prelude to this type of non "schizoid" (Gabel, 1974 : 27), non "sterile" utopia.

Lefebvre then applies what could be described as a "utopian method" to the social order: grasping the socio-spatial reality as-is (with its problems, assets and contradictions) and discovering its hidden possibles.

This utopia, this possible that he believes he sees, is the famous "urban revolution". And this urban revolution is a panel of the achievable and corresponding "urban society" triptych along with the course of history and the future of societies, he thinks. And its condition is the "right to the city": "[translation] *The development of society can only be conceived of in urban life, through the realization of the urban society.*" (Lefebvre, 1974 [1968]: 144)

Based on the criticism of the urban order which was described in detail, in 1968 Lefebvre appealed to this "right to the city" or "right to urban society". More than a right to housing or access to the services the city offers, this "right" corresponds to the right to the genuine appropriation by the inhabitants of their life as city dwellers, their living conditions. To this right, he adds a right to the once-again important "play", and the appropriation of its symbols and functions from the perspective of a city understood as a "collective work" (Lefebvre, 1974 [1968]), which implies, he wrote in 1974, "[translation] the collective possession and management of the space" (Lefebvre, 2000 [1974]).

This "utopia" defended by the author is in no way, however, intended to serve as a "model". By determining the "possibles-impossibles" of the "reality" – that which Lefebvre calls "transduction"- this utopia only makes it possible to make knowledge of the urban evolve at the theoretical level, among other things, and then, to open, it could be said, to a better spatial planning that does not go against social practices, the "desires", or freedom. This is an "experimental utopia", "studying utopia's implications and consequences on the ground" (Lefebvre, 1974 [1968]: 112), in short, the opposite of a spatialist utopia. The expressions "urban life" or "urban society" in no way amount to morphological (spatial) aspects. Thus, when Lefebvre states that society can only develop in the urban, he is implying generalized urbanisation. He is in no way advocating total planning of the

society in and by the space but a change in the social relationships made possible “in” a space, the development of which must not be restrictive. The “realisation of the urban society” does not therefore mean planning, or not planning alone:

“All daring is allowed. Why limit these proposals to the morphology of space and time alone? It is not out of the question that proposals concern life style, how we live in the city, development of the urban in this regard. ...to achieve this, neither organization of the initiative, nor global planning are sufficient...Realization of the urban society calls for planning directed towards social needs...It requires a knowledge of the city (relationships and correlations in urban life) [and] the social and political strength to implement these means (which are but means)” (Lefebvre, 1974 [1968]: 117-145)

This political strength is, of course, the working class. Lefebvre’s utopia thus echoes a theory linked to a (in this case, revolutionary) practice. It imposes nothing but leaves it up to the working class, the inhabitants, to materialize the “possibles” that the philosopher believed he discovered in society’s evolution and in the space. And indeed, the modification of social relations and the abolishing of the capitalist mode of production are the stakes of the utopia; in other words, the Marxist point of view. The production of the space, appropriated for its new social relations, must become collective, and is but one of the revolution’s various means.

“The revolution will make the urban rather than the “urban” make the revolution, even though urban life and especially the struggle for the city (for its preservation and renewal, for the right to the city) may provide the framework and objectives for more than one revolutionary action. Without a metamorphosis of the rationality in industrial planning, without different management of industry, the purpose and meaning of the production will not be urban life as such. It is therefore on the level of production that the game is played and strategy designates its objectives.” (Lefebvre, 1968: 374)

In short, this right to the city will have to accompany an economic revolution (self-management and planning of production directed toward satisfying social needs), a political revolution (self-organization), a cultural revolution and a revolution in everyday life (Lefebvre, 1974 [1968]). Lefebvre’s concrete utopia therefore simultaneously concerns not only daily life, ownership and production modes but also the forms of power.

Because this right to the city of course also means effective participation – conquered, not granted – on the part of the inhabitants and city-dwellers in the decisions and plans of urbanism. Urban self-management, an innovative concept at the time, which he was one of the first to express and defend (Trebitch, 2003), and which would be taken up as a rallying cry in the urban struggles of the 1970s, is the foundation of this right to the city that is supposed to realize the future “urban society”.

Since the 19th century, the concept of self-management has been applied to economics, in the idea of abolishing capitalism in as much as this would abolish the capitalist’s appropriation of the means of production and allow its reappropriation by the worker, the collective, which owns its labour and the wealth produced (this is Proudhon’s “mutualism” in particular). On the political level, it reflects federalism without centralization. So, self-management most often echoes an economic self-organization of the workers (production and exchanges) and decentralization of political powers. In both regards – economic and political – it is thus against all forms of state

control, authority or hierarchy. But, after 1968, notably driven by Lefebvre, this idea of self-management also applied to urban production.

Now, according to him, once again, this "urban self-management" is only possible on the basis of new social relationships and a different (non capitalist) mode of production, without which we would run the risk of falling into "false participation" (Lefebvre, 1967). So, urban self-management is both a condition for and a consequence of the urban revolution.

Conclusions

From ideology to utopia, through these two representational systems of the same socio-spatial reality, we thus are dealing with a political interpretation of urban space that makes it an instrument - for the preservation of the existing order or for social change - rather than a stake. This means that for Lefebvre, the right to the city and the urban society are of course, conditioned by the economic, political, and cultural revolutions and a revolutionized everyday life. This is too often forgotten. Lefebvre's "concrete" utopia, intended as radical criticism of the existing in order to surpass it, leaves reality and includes spatial change - and a new mode of production of space - in a more global perspective of modification of social relations and daily life, without however proposing the ideal city or an authoritarian model for socio-spatial organization, unlike the usual utopias. At the same time, it leaves open the possibilities that are offered by social practices and "appropriation".

A different production mode for space thus cannot occur without the modification of social relations: the right to the city cannot be consecrated in the capitalist system. Henri Lefebvre (2002 [1973]), and David Harvey after him (1975 [1973], and 2010), indeed demonstrated that the space was necessary for the development, if not the survival of capitalism. According to Lefebvre, this space is also necessary for the advent of the urban society that he so fervently desired, but only among other things: generalized self-management, the collective appropriation of the means of production, etc.

Even within spatialist thought, action on the space has social aims. And this is whether or not the action relates to ideology or utopia, and whether or not it is the doing of the elected, the intellectual or the architect. It can be concluded that in the cases of ideology and utopia alike, the space is instrumentalized for political purposes but its transformation or development are never an ends in themselves. The complexity of the relationships between spaces and society leads us to think that that which is at stake behind the space and its politically oriented representations is no other than what the philosophers call the "vision of the world" or at the very least, the future of societies and therefore, the question of power. It is in this that space is first and foremost political.

Regardless, Lefebvre's writing makes it possible to comprehend spatialism as simultaneously running through ideological and utopian systems of thought and representations. This may encourage us, according to Paul Ricoeur, to not theoretically or arbitrarily separate "ideology" and "utopia" *a priori* in as much as they are different sides of the same reality (Ricoeur, 2005 [1986]). They also enable us to understand that the concrete, critical utopia, to use Lefebvre's terms - which moreover is often not described as utopian except by the supporters of the existing order -, must consider reality and its possibles not only spatially but also globally.

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