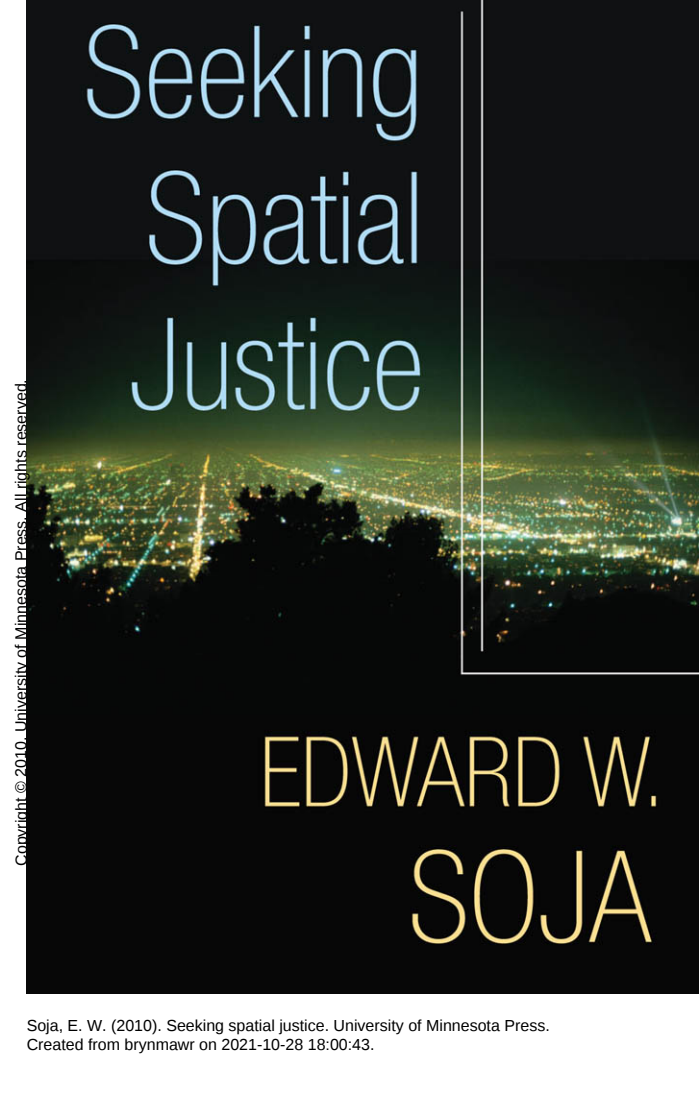


Seeking Spatial Justice



EDWARD W.
SOJA

SEEKING SPATIAL JUSTICE

Edward W. Soja

Globalization and Community Series



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Building a Spatial Theory of Justice

FROM THIS BROAD CONTEXTUAL LOOK at the production and reproduction of spatial (in)justice, we move next to the task of theorizing spatial justice and reviewing the various ways scholars have approached this theory-building process. Building a spatial theory of justice follows six steps:

- Theorizing theory itself
- Building a new ontology of space
- Theorizing justice
- Examining the historical debates on spatial justice
- Focusing on David Harvey and the urbanization of injustice
- Developing and extending Henri Lefebvre's ideas about the right to the city

Theoretical Foundations

Theory building is one of at least five modes or levels of knowledge formation. Theory itself forms a bridge between the more abstract realms of ontology and epistemology, which respectively make statements about the essence of human being-in-the-world and develop ways to assure that our knowledge of the world is reliable; and the increasingly concrete modes of empirical analysis and practical application or praxis, the transformation of knowledge into action, theory into practice.

Before going any further, I want to emphasize the interconnectedness and equal importance of these five forms of knowledge. Practice is not intrinsically better than theory, nor is theory better than ontology. Similarly, concreteness is not inherently superior to abstraction. They all play a role in the production of knowledge and need to be seen as interdependent. I focus here on theory and its extensions, for the movement from theory building through empirical application to actual practice and social action is of primary importance in understanding the meaning of spatial justice. But this portion of the sequence rests on ontological and epistemological foundations that make the translation of theory into practice possible.

Epistemological discussion relates to methods and approaches and especially to how we can affirm that our knowledge (or our theories, empirical findings, and practices) can be confidently relied on. Theories themselves are attempts to explain as much as possible about specific aspects of the actual world we live in. They are a form of generalized explanation and are developed from particular epistemological methods. Theories can be constructed deductively, drawing on and extending existing forms of general explanation, or inductively, building on new empirical and practical information. Some theories are more speculative and hypothetical than others, but as a bridge between the abstract and the concrete, theory rests on the reliability of ontological and epistemological assumptions. Good theory never floats on its own terms without any reasonable substantiation.

How this reasonable substantiation is defined is a key epistemological question and relates to the differences between normative, scientific or positive, and critical theory. Rather than being tested in a direct way, normative theory rests on the power of logical reasoning backed by moral or ethical objectives. It builds on statements of what ought to be, what is desirable or undesirable. Scientific theory makes positive (hence positivist) statements about what is, what actually exists, and seeks empirical verification or falsification based on some form of the scientific method. For the most part, the scientific method, given the need for empirically testing the truth value of the knowledge it produces, draws only on our observational senses and perceptions. Finding the boundary between what is knowable and what is not has been a heated area of debate in the philosophy of (positive) science.

Critical theory, as I adopt it through a critical spatial perspective, is primarily concerned with usefulness in praxis, especially with regard to achieving freedom from oppression and domination. Although its epistemology is practice rather than norm or truth oriented, it is never entirely divorced from either normative or scientific theory. By its very nature, however, critical thinking leads to some questioning of all established epistemologies and to a search for their weaknesses and flaws. Although I do not reject scientific or normative thinking and try to combine rather than choose between materialist and idealist epistemologies, my approach to theory building works both toward practical application and back to ontology and the necessary assumptions about what the world must be like in order for us to know anything about it, that is, to obtain any knowledge in the first place.

New Ontological Beginnings

All theories are rooted in ontological assumptions about human existence and the nature of the world in which we live. These assumptions about human being-in-the world, what ontologists call *Dasein* or *être-là*, being there, are like axioms. They are not tested against reality but logically asserted to define what it is that all humans share in just being alive. Familiar to everyone is the notion that we are essentially social beings. Human existence is not solitary by nature but always embedded in social contexts and relations. How we behave in these relational contexts, how they vary and change over “real” time and place, and other particular qualities of human social being or sociality are not ontological. They are particularized contingencies that arise from the fundamentally social nature of our existence. Nonetheless, the accumulation of knowledge about the actual playing out or performance of these contingencies is almost unconsciously shaped by ontological assumptions. In some ways they are a kind of DNA of our thinking processes, a taken-for-granted template from which we gain knowledge and understanding of our life worlds.

The Need for Ontological Restructuring

I give so much attention to this highly abstract world of ontology because I think it is the source of what for the past century at least has

been a fundamental bias in knowledge formation, distorting to some degree our epistemologies, theories, empirical analyses, and social practices. Identifying this ontological distortion and presenting a better alternative are essential to the task of developing a useful critical theory of spatial justice. An outline of this ontological restructuring has been presented earlier and can be summarized in easily understandable terms: human being-in-the-world as well as what the ontologists call “becoming,” the living out of our lives, are essentially social, temporal, and spatial. At this very basic level, everything else in life is contingent on this spatio-temporal sociality of human existence.

As discussed earlier, it can be argued that most of our social theories and their associated epistemologies have been based on and shaped by almost subliminal assumptions that focus attention primarily on the social and temporal or historical aspects of being and much less emphatically on life’s fundamental spatiality. This ontological distortion, as I have called it, did not always exist. According to Michel Foucault (1986), the tendency to see time as dynamic and developmental, and space as relatively fixed and dead background arose in Western thought in the last half of the nineteenth century and continued, almost entirely unrecognized, to shape our thinking up to the present. As Foucault noted, there is no good reason to presuppose that our existence as social and historical beings is axiomatically more important, more basic, than our existence as spatial beings, yet nearly all streams of philosophical thought, from the social sciences to Marx’s scientific socialism, privilege the social and historical nature of reality over its fundamental spatiality.

I must repeat, for fear of being misunderstood, that I do not mean to privilege the spatiality of human life over its just as fundamental sociality and historicity. Nor do I want to diminish the importance of the social and historical imaginations. My argument, following the earlier ideas of Foucault and Lefebvre, is that there are three rather than two fundamental or ontological qualities of human existence, from which all knowledge follows: the social/societal, the temporal/historical, and the spatial/geographical. Despite this “triple dialectic,” nearly all the knowledge that has been accumulated over the past century or so has been based primarily on a twofold ontology linking dynamically and dialectically the social and the historical dimensions of individual and societal development, with the spatiality of our sociohistorical being relatively neglected.

The time has come, so to speak, to rebalance this ontological triad, to see that all forms of knowledge production, from epistemology to theory formation, empirical analysis, and practical application are always simultaneously and interactively social, historical, and spatial, at least a priori. Different emphases may arise in forming specific knowledge about a given topic or theme (here the emphasis is decidedly spatial with regard to the concept of justice), but the assumption of a three-way ontological balance must always be kept in mind. This essential balance is difficult to achieve, for it runs against the grain of how nearly everyone reading this has been educated, but it is a vital starting point for understanding the nature of a critical spatial perspective and the new spatial consciousness that has been emerging in recent years.

Arising from these new ontological beginnings is a critical awareness that we are spatial beings from birth, our primordial occupation of space. Throughout our lives, we are enmeshed in efforts to shape the spaces in which we live while at the same time these established and evolving spaces are shaping our lives in many different ways. We are thus inescapably embedded in the geographies around us in much the same way as we are integral actors in social contexts and always involved in one way or another in the making of our individual biographies and collective histories.

Geographically Uneven Development and Spatial Justice

From this triple dialectic can be derived several additional principles describing the spatiality of human life. One that brings us closer to the theorization of spatial justice is the omnipresence of geographically uneven development and its associated spatial inequalities. As noted earlier, no social process takes place uniformly over space; there will always be some unevenness in the geographies we produce, just as there are always some variations between individuals in their sociohistorical development. The (social) inculcation of injustice into our geographies (and histories) arises in a most basic way from the inequalities that are produced from the uneven geographical effects of every individual action and all social processes.

In this sense, there can never be perfect equality across geographical space in any meaningful attribute of human existence. There will always be some degree of variation, although not all these variations and

inequalities are of social significance. Living on the surface of the earth is the existential source of uneven development, in the first instance because of our being constantly subjected to the frictional effects of distance. The friction of distance and related physical properties not only make it impossible for two material objects to occupy exactly the same place at the same time, they induce unevenness in other ways. Human action and the collective social contexts that frame human activities literally “take place,” they occur in particular places and spaces, and in so doing they tend for the most part to cluster, to seek proximity and propinquity to reduce the time and energy costs of traversing distance.

Although often out of our conscious awareness, distance-minimizing behavior is a fundamental part of our spatial being and our socially produced geographies. Relating to the theorization of (in)justice, this means that whatever we do will very rarely, if ever, be distributed perfectly evenly or randomly over space. Our actions and activities will tend more or less to be nodal, focused around particular centers or agglomerations, and this centering or nodality will generate unevenly distributed advantages and disadvantages depending on location and accessibility with respect to the center or node. These fundamental or ontological features of human spatial organization give rise to more complex and unjust empirical geographies.

The key point being made in these ontological and theoretical observations is that geographically uneven development, whatever its particular source, is a contributing factor to the creation and maintenance of individual and social inequalities and hence to social and spatial injustices. Only when we abstract away from or ignore the spatiality of human life can we conceive of a situation in which individuals and collectivities are perfectly equal no matter how such equality is defined. Whether it be occupying a favored position in front of a television set or shopping for food or finding a good school or choosing to live close to a job or achieving greater wealth and prosperity or finding a location to invest billions of dollars or, indeed, seeking greater spatial justice, human activities not only are shaped by geographical inequalities but also play a role in producing and reproducing them.

There are several important implications for the conceptualization of spatial justice that follow from this. The geographies that we have produced will always have spatial injustices and distributional inequalities

embedded within them. Stated somewhat differently, location in space will always have attached to it some degree of relative advantage or disadvantage. Some of this geographical differentiation will be of little consequence, but in other cases it can have deeply oppressive and exploitative effects, especially when maintained over long time periods and rooted in persistent divisions in society such as those based on race, class, and gender. This difference between inconsequential and consequential forms of spatial injustice is vital to any collective efforts to achieve greater justice and to any workable concept of democracy.

Whether considered consequential or not, every example of unequal individual or collective advantage and opportunity can be seen as spatial injustice. Conceiving the spatiality of justice in this all-encompassing way, however, has some practical and theoretical problems. The first can be described as the loss of specificity. When spatial justice and injustice are seen as an inevitable and ubiquitous part of our lives, achieving a more just society or reclaiming our right to the city can become an overwhelming, if not impossible, task. It may be true, as Martin Luther King announced from the Birmingham jail, that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, but this should be seen more as an invitation to recognize the salient spatiality of (in)justice rather than a call to identify and respond to every instance of injustice we can find.

This does not mean that the ubiquity of spatial (in)justice should be ignored or set aside, but rather that a first step in defining a robust political practice seeking spatial justice requires a more specific examination of the uneven geographies of power and privilege to determine which forms of spatial injustice warrant the greatest attention. How then can we avoid overgeneralization or selecting impossible-to-achieve objectives, and begin to differentiate between the consequential and inconsequential, as well as the feasible and unfeasible, in seeking spatial justice? Attempting to answer this important question leads us from the theorization of space to the theorization of justice.

Theorizing Justice

Justice defined and theorized in a narrow legal sense typically involves the notion of fair judgment of guilt or innocence under the law, and subsequent debate on what constitutes a fair punishment for the guilty. Justice

in this legal sense usually refers to individuals and involves a specific event or action. A broader approach, one that is emphasized here, opens up the concept of justice to more general statements about its attributes and meaning within a given social order. Although still often rooted in an established legal system, this broader concept of justice expands beyond the boundaries of the law to discuss general principles of fairness and democracy, and the rights and responsibilities attached to being a member of a particular social group, whether or not they are legally defined as such.

Theorizing social rather than criminal justice is always to some degree a normative exercise, a rational search for what ought to be and therefore what is worth fighting for. Complete justice, however, like complete equality, is unachievable. What this realization does is shift attention to the production of injustices and the embeddedness of this production process in the social order. Combining a normative, scientific, and critical theorization of injustice as a social product leads directly to debates about democracy, citizenship, and fundamental human rights. At least from a Western intellectual perspective, this takes us back to the foundational philosophy of justice that emerged in ancient Greece.

Urban Origins

The development of a general theory of justice has deep and distinctive roots in Western culture. Most conventional accounts trace its origins to the formation of the Greek city-state, or polis, and especially to Athens in the era of Pericles, around 600 BC, when many Western writers claim that democratic society was first widely practiced. There is growing evidence that democratic principles and sensitivity to notions of social justice began much earlier in the city-states of Southwest Asia, and, strictly speaking, democracy and justice in the Athenian polis were significantly limited. The majority of the population, consisting of slaves, nearly all women, simple artisans, and others who did not qualify as citizens, were excluded from the democratic order. What did develop, however, was a thoughtful philosophical discourse on participatory democracy, the rights and obligations of citizenship, and the meaning and significance of social justice as a democratic principle.

Justice, democracy, and citizenship came to be defined as rights to participate in the politics of the city-state as well as its social, cultural,

religious, and economic activities. The polis was seen as a privileged space in comparison to elsewhere, filled with advantages, opportunities, and accompanying obligations for all who qualified as citizens. After centuries of royal, theocratic, and imperial domination, citizenship rights were expanded in the Athenian city-state to include the growing merchant and landholding classes, as new institutions (and relevant bureaucracies) emerged to assure and maintain a functioning (if socially and spatially limited) democracy.

Early ideas about justice thus revolved around urban-based “civil” rights and the actions of a citizenry in what came to be known as civil society, or a public realm involved in deciding how best to maintain equitable access to urban resources for all those who qualified. It can be argued that these ideas represent one of the earliest notions of specifically spatial justice, that is, a conception of social justice in which geography matters in significant ways. For most of the next two thousand years, justice and democracy were embedded in the distinction between city and countryside, urbanity and rurality. Place of residence defined individual rights and responsibilities and became a key political framework for achieving social justice.

Universalizing (and Despatializing) Justice under the Law

These ancient urban-based spatial conceptualizations of justice, democracy, and citizenship tended to be displaced or given relatively little weight in the later development of Western theories based in the nation-state, even when discussing ancient Greece and Greek philosophical traditions. This distorting submergence of the urban spatiality of justice was associated with attempts to universalize justice as a “natural” right sustained primarily by a “blind” (in the sense of being unbiased) legal and/or constitutional system that defined citizenship not in terms of rights to the city but as rights and obligations determined by the nation-state.

A key turning point in the development of this universalized and statist concept of justice occurred in the late eighteenth century, with first the American and then the French revolutions, both founded on the need to guarantee the rights of all citizens to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, to *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, and to what would later be promised in the American Pledge of Allegiance: liberty and justice for all. In the Anglo-American and French traditions at least, justice and

liberal democracy became associated with generic “human rights” under the law, often with a presumptive emphasis on property rights in particular. While citizenship at first depended on property ownership of some kind, seeking “justice for all” was attached almost entirely to the legal system.

Condensing a rich history to move closer to the present, the development of a comprehensive liberal democratic theory of justice reached a major milestone with the publication in 1971 of *A Theory of Justice* by the critical legal scholar John Rawls. Ever since, Rawls has been at the center of nearly all discussions and debates on the nature of justice and liberal democracy, and the critical response to his work played a key role in stimulating the development (or rediscovery?) of specifically geographical theories of justice.

Rawls presented a theory of distributive justice that was intended to be universally applicable no matter where and when it might be applied, almost as if the theory reflected a natural law. A universal and normative-scientific theory of justice, built on reason and rational thought, is necessary, he argued, to avoid a wide range of biases based on class, gender, race, place of residence, or any other particular positioning of relative power and influence within a given social order. What actually generates the injustices to be dealt with by law was thereby submerged and subordinated to the alleviation of legally defined “unacceptable outcomes” and the pursuit of what constitutes the immediate wider good. How this wider good was defined, at least in Rawls’s original formulations, tended to reflect existing conditions, with all their built-in and built-up unfairness and socio-spatial inequality.

Rawls’s fundamentally aspatial and ahistorical notion of justice is primarily associated with unfettered egalitarian ideals and the fair distribution of valued goods such as liberty, opportunity, wealth, and self-respect. Justice reaches its ideal level when, as Rawls describes it, the prospects of the least fortunate are as great as they can be (under given circumstances), and when the more advantaged are contributing to meet the expectations of the least advantaged, assuming an acceptable democratic social order to begin with. Striving to achieve something close to this ideal condition lies at the core of the liberal democratic concept of social justice. What is deemed to be socially unacceptable injustice is determined entirely through and by appeal to the legal system upheld by the state.

Given Rawls's universalizing emphasis, distributive justice becomes focused on the immediate moment or condition for individuals and therefore can only be weakly spatial and historical in a collective sense. In terms of theorizing justice under the law, where one is located geographically does not matter in any significant way. Distributional inequalities are largely abstracted from geographical space into a naively given and purely social structure of stratification, usually defined in terms of income rather than the more contentious notions of class. With regard to time, the forces that may have created inequalities in the first place are not challenged, nor is intrinsic importance given to whether inequalities are increasing or decreasing at any given moment. Justice is judged in terms of existing outcomes, when they are seen as unacceptable departures from an idealized liberal democratic notion of a fair distribution.

Critiquing the Rawlsian Version

Rawls's liberal egalitarian theorization of justice has received a long sequence of vigorous criticisms both from the right and the left, and Rawls has responded with a number of modifications of his original ideas. For most conservative thinkers, the concept of distributive justice was seen almost by definition as sacrificing too many individual rights and liberties, especially with regard to private property and ownership. Justice in this sense is considered too social, if not socialist, and warranted relatively little attention except as related to the maintenance of law and order. For nearly all radical critics, again almost by definition, the liberal theory did not go far enough, leaving almost untouched the major sources and causes of inequality. It dealt only with static forms of social inequality, the unfair outcomes, and not the deep structural processes that produce them.

A more broadly based critical theory of justice began to emerge in response to Rawls's work, shifting attention from outcomes as such to how and why these outcomes are socially produced and maintained. Literally dozens of books and articles reacting to Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* were published in the two decades after its appearance in 1971. A representative list of books with *justice* in their titles is included in Notes and References. What can be seen from this list is an elaboration and refocusing of the liberal theory of justice on particular forms and expressions of inequality and social discrimination. Increasing emphasis was placed on

questions of racial justice, on the injustices of gender, on Marxist critiques of justice theory. Specific notions of environmental justice had not yet received widespread attention, but there were the beginnings of a geographical approach to justice studies, starting with David Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1973).

Of particular interest is the work of Iris Marion Young, a political philosopher and critical thinker who, in her influential *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), argued forcefully for the need to contextualize justice in more concrete geographical, historical, and institutional terms. She urged us to move away from a fixation on distributive justice to focus more on the structural forces that generate inequalities and injustice. Young shifted the emphasis in justice studies from outcomes to processes and from assuring equality and fairness to respecting difference and pluralistic solidarity. As she notes, "social justice . . . requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression" (1990, 47).

The emphasis and value given to differences and the right to be different arose from Young's powerful critique of traditional concepts of homogeneous communities of identity. Community in its traditional sense required rigid boundaries between we and they, who is inside and outside the community, and assumed a definitive homogeneity of outlook. For Young, this view of community was inherent in Rawls's "original position," his starting point for theorizing justice, and it led to similar problems. Seeing society as a collection of insular and tightly bounded communities, a widespread view in modern social science, not only tends to ignore internal differences of outlook but also draws attention away from significant forms of oppression arising from racial, gender, class, and other sources of injustice that cut across community lines. This prevailing view of homogenous community, Young argued, frequently failed to see the political potentialities of pluralism and the heterogeneous mixing of social groups, as might occur, for example, in coalition building.

In essence, Young was substituting a multisided concept of oppression for conventional emphases on distributional fairness. She elaborated her notion of oppression, and hence of injustice, into five distinct but interacting forms: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Exploitation is essentially a matter of

class, where structural relations, social processes, and institutional practices allow a few to accumulate economic wealth while constraining such accumulation by others through actions in the workplace as well as in the home. This was the view of justice that most Marxists focused almost exclusively on.

Marginalization as a mode of injustice involves curtailing full participation in social life and accessibility to societal resources and respect for certain segments of the population, systematically reducing their quality of life. Powerlessness specifically focuses on the draining away for some of any sense of political power, participation, representation, and capacity for self-expression, whether based on class, race, gender, or any other human attribute. Cultural imperialism is a form of dominance whereby one group or culture is subordinated and made almost invisible by another, losing their distinctive differences in beliefs and behavior, an idea akin to colonial domination. Violence relates to social and institutional practices that tolerate or even encourage violent acts as acceptable parts of daily life, raising danger levels for certain individuals and groups. These overlapping aspects of oppression open up the concept of justice to many more specific modes of expression, evaluation, and social action.

Although Young rarely was explicitly spatial in her early work, her arguments were taken up in the development of a spatial theory of justice, including liberal and radical formulations of notions of territorial justice, environmental justice, and the right to the city. Young herself contributed to spatializing justice concepts in her later writings, especially with respect to notions of regional democracy or democratic regionalism, an innovative outgrowth of her search for larger-scale sources of pluralistic solidarity. Building on Young's retheorization of justice, we turn next to the developing attempts by geographers and planners to spatialize justice more thoroughly.

Debates on the Spatiality of Justice

The basic idea of spatial justice has been around for a long time. As described earlier, democracy and justice for the Greeks were definitively urban, and in this urbanity they become intrinsically spatial as well, rooted in the politically charged formation and spatial organization of

the city-state, or, just as accurately, the state-city. Being political, with its etymological roots in the Greek word *polis*, was always to some degree a matter of being urban, being part of the “civilized” world of the city. Living in the city defined who were the politically active “citizens” or *polites*, as opposed to everyone else: slaves, most women, barbarians, and *idiotes*, those difficult to organize nonurban folk that Karl Marx described as immersed in the apolitical and supremely individualistic “idiocy” of rural life.

City, space, society, and the state were intricately interwoven and inseparable in the *polis* and have remained in active and politicized articulation up to the present, even if disjointed to some degree by the power of the nation-state. Think of the extensions we have in English for the Greek word *polis*: politics, police, policy, polite; and for its equivalent in Latin, *civitas*: civil, civic, citizen, civilization, city itself. The city, with its meeting places and public spaces, was the wellspring for thinking about democracy, equality, liberty, human rights, citizenship, cultural identity, resistance to the status quo, struggles for social and spatial justice. With the rise of the nation-state and the later spread of industrial capitalism, the power of the city-state ebbed but never disappeared. Although the specific spatial referent tended to be lost in the literature, the generative force of the city remained in what should always be described as *urban* industrial capitalism.

Recognition of the consequential geography of the city and the usefulness of a critical spatial perspective faded from view in the literature on both socialism and liberal democracy, at least until the turbulent 1960s, when the connections between geography and justice began to be systematically reexamined. What was happening in cities nearly everywhere in the 1960s was an often violent expression of dissatisfaction with the unequal distribution of the benefits of expansive economic development despite attempts by the most liberal welfare states to address issues of poverty and social inequality. While racial/ethnic and later gender discrimination received the greatest attention in the so-called advanced industrial countries, place of residence and the geographical distribution of wealth and poverty at urban, regional, national, and international scales also featured prominently in the new social movements that were arising to seek greater social and economic justice.

The spreading urban crises of the 1960s brought to the surface the injustices and unfair geographies that had become deeply embedded in urban life in the preceding era of mass suburbanization and metropolitan growth. Attempting to understand and act upon these explosive conditions stimulated the development of three interwoven streams of innovative thinking about the spatial or geographical aspects of (in)justice. One would eventually focus specifically on spatial justice as such, emphasizing a more balanced dialectic between social and spatial causality. Another begins with the notion of territorial justice and spins off in two directions, one building a liberal formulation based on geographical studies of inequality and social welfare, and the other taking a more radical path through Marxist geography to critical studies of the urbanization of injustice. Weaving in and out of the other two, a third stream emerges from Henri Lefebvre's ideas about the right to the city but just as significantly from the radically new theorization of spatiality that he and others began to develop in the late 1960s.

Starting with Territorial Justice

A rather pragmatic starting point for the conceptualization of spatial justice in English came from a Welsh social planner, Bleddyn Davies, who in 1968 published *Social Needs and Resources in Local Services*, a book in which he coined the term *territorial justice*. Davies presented this new idea as a normative goal for local and regional planners, a sought-for outcome of government actions in which the allocation of public services and related investments across different territorial units did not just reflect population size but met actual social needs. The concept of territorial justice continued to be referred to by some, mainly British, social planners and policy makers but was not theorized or elaborated much further, at least within the planning profession.

The concept of territorial justice was picked up and creatively expanded in 1973 by David Harvey in *Social Justice and the City*. Harvey defined territorial justice in a more dynamic and political way, as the search for a just distribution of social resources justly arrived at. Here the intersection of justice and geography did not focus just on outcomes but also on the processes that produce unjust geographies, linking the search for justice to its sources in various kinds of discriminatory practices,

including those he saw as inherent to the normal operation of urban labor and housing markets, government, and planning.

Harvey's original view of territorial justice, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section, was a significant advance in spatial thinking about justice but was soon almost summarily abandoned by Harvey and many of those inspired by his work. In an astounding intellectual and political turnaround that reverberated throughout the fields of geography and urban studies, Harvey turned from his liberal formulations about social justice and the city to a socialist critique, a move that became a powerful inspiration for the development of a new field of Marxist geography. Deep structural forces linked to the demands of capitalist accumulation were behind the formation of unjust geographies, Harvey argued, and therefore significant structural change was necessary to address these contingent urban and regional injustices and inequalities. Even the most progressive forms of liberal planning and social action were not enough to counter the demanding and injustice-inducing social processes underlying capitalist development.

Harvey and other Marxist geographers subsequently theorized and analyzed the search for social justice from a critical spatial perspective but did not use the term *spatial justice* and only very rarely referred to territorial justice, preferring, when they addressed justice at all, to speak more tangentially about the urbanization of injustice. Somewhat less radical in their perspective but nearly always acknowledging the importance of Harvey's analysis of social justice and the city, another group of geographers advanced our thinking about the spatiality of justice in a different way. They concentrated on the empirical measurement, description, and interpretation of the geographical patterning of social injustice and inequality.

The first major text on this subject was *Geography and Inequality* (1977), written by Coates, Johnston, and Knox. The most important subsequent works on the geography of social justice from a critical liberal perspective were written by David M. Smith, a British geographer whose work later involved him in debates about inequality in apartheid South Africa. In all of Smith's major works on geography and social justice, there is little mention of the specific term *spatial justice*. In both the radical and liberal vocabulary, adding *spatial* to *justice* seemed uncomfortably to suggest an unacceptable spatial determinism or fetishism.

Radical Urbanism and the Right to the City

The urban crises of the 1960s generated another stream of thought about geography, justice, and the urban condition that would play a greater role in the evolution of the concept of spatial justice. I refer here to the notion of the right to the city as originally conceived by the heterodox Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre's ideas about the right to the city, reflected in the introduction's lead quotation from Erik Swyngedouw, a geographer influenced by Lefebvre's writings, were a stirring call to everyone disadvantaged by the conditions of urban life under capitalism to rise up to take greater control over how the unjust urban spaces in which they live are socially produced.

The struggle over the right to the city, aimed in part at a fair and equitable distribution of urban resources but even more so at obtaining power over the processes producing unjust urban geographies, is as good an example as any of the complex geographical struggle over ideas, forms, images, and imaginings described by Edward Said. It also became a rallying cry for the dissidents in the turbulent events of May 1968 in Paris. Embedded in Lefebvre's ideas was a radically new way of conceptualizing space and the spatiality of social life, which, after several decades of relative neglect, reemerged in the 1990s to stimulate what has been described as the spatial turn and, more recently, many new initiatives that combine a sense of spatial justice with the call for taking more control over the right to the city. I will return to Lefebvre's ideas and inspiration in a later section.

Specifically Spatial Justice

The discourses on territorial justice, the right to the city, the geography of social justice, and the urbanization of injustice were major advances in the conceptualization of the spatiality of (in)justice, even if none of the contributors ever used the specific term *spatial justice*. Although conceptually intertwined with the others and difficult to separate clearly, the development of the literature using the specific term, with its stronger assertion of the social effects of spatial processes, deserves particular attention.

Searching the English language literature, I have found only three instances where the term *spatial justice* was used in the title of a scholarly work before the last few years of the twentieth century. The first, dated

1973, was a doctoral dissertation on racial and spatial discrimination against black American voters written by the political geographer John O’Laughlin. Although part of a developing stream of research on the geography of racial injustice and the manipulation or gerrymandering of electoral districting for racially exclusionary purposes, the dissertation and its use of the term *spatial justice* had very little effect on the larger spatial- or justice-related literature.

Ten years later, G. H. Pirie, a South African geographer affected by the experience of apartheid and reflecting on the concept of territorial justice as used in Marxist geography, published a short article titled “On Spatial Justice.” Pirie expressed curiosity and concern over what he saw as a peculiar aversion to the term *spatial justice* in the writings of radical geographers. What is equally remarkable about this inquisitive paper, with its call for developing the specific concept of spatial justice, is that it is the only substantive academic publication using the term in the title published before the year 2000, other than a few referring to the spatial aspects of criminal law.

Indicative of an interesting shift in direction, the only other publication I have found using the term in its title is a small pamphlet written by Steven Flusty, an architectural critic and geographer. In *Building Paranoia* (1994), Flusty explored what he called the “erosion of spatial justice” in the built environment of Los Angeles. Influenced by Mike Davis’s well-known *City of Quartz* (1990) and the work of local geographers and planners analyzing the social and economic restructuring of the Los Angeles urban region, Flusty in his use of the term *spatial justice* crystallized in print what was already in the air both in the local academic world and in grassroots organizing: a sense of the consequential geography of injustice and the need to mobilize social action to deal with the increasingly unjust geographies emerging in Los Angeles from the uneven effects of globalization, the formation of a New Economy, and other restructuring forces.

Flusty’s work was an early marker of a new trajectory of theoretical and practical research on spatial justice that was rooted in the Los Angeles urban and regional context. *Seeking Spatial Justice* is a product of this trajectory, drawing insights and inspiration from the substantial literature that has been produced by local scholars on urban and regional restructuring, the productive synergy that developed between spatial theory and spatial practice among local planners and geographers,

and the extraordinary resurgence of labor and community organizing that emerged before and after the Justice Riots of 1992. Before moving the discussion in this empirical direction, however, it is worthwhile taking a closer look at the work of Harvey and Lefebvre, for they contain some of the richest elaborations of a spatial theory of justice.

David Harvey and the Urbanization of Justice

Liberal Formulations

In what he called his “liberal formulations” in *Social Justice and the City*, Harvey critically reconfigured Rawls’s theory of justice by moving beyond its emphasis on outcomes to focus on the processes that produce them, especially the production process itself, with its deep involvement in the social division of labor. Harvey defined territorial justice as a socially just distribution that is justly arrived at. Achieving justice was seen as an intrinsically geographical problem, a challenge to “design a form of spatial organization which maximizes the prospects of the least fortunate region” (110). He recognized the “pioneering work” of Bleddyn Davies (1968) in developing the concept of territorial justice and proceeded to define several “principles of social justice as they apply to geographical situations.”

The first of these principles states that the organization of space and the regional or territorial allocation of resources should meet the basic needs of the population. To affirm and promote this foundational principle, Harvey called for the creation of socially just methods to determine and measure these needs and adds that “the difference between needs and actual allocations provides us with an initial evaluation of the degree of territorial injustice in an existing system” (107). Harvey, however, moved beyond this initial evaluation as introduced by Davies to develop a more elaborate and urban-focused geographical theorization, one that remains essential today to an understanding of the concept and practice of seeking spatial justice.

A territorial or regional allocation of resources can be made more just, he observed, when there are positive (socially beneficial) spillover or multiplier effects from the locational or spatial pattern of public and private investments and where special attention is given to redress unusual environmental or social problems. This approach steers the search for

justice toward access to the positive effects emanating from the urban economy, akin to the right to the city idea, and toward fundamental questions of environmental justice and social democracy. These principles would significantly inform and affect the development of the concepts of territorial and spatial justice and the geographical study of distributional inequalities for the next three decades.

In many ways, Harvey pushed liberal egalitarian theories of justice to their progressive limits, and in doing so he plunged creatively and deeply into the social and spatial causes of territorial inequality and injustice. Among his most powerful and insightful arguments was the one concerning the dynamics of urban development and its impact on income distribution. Harvey boldly argued that the normal workings of an urban system, from housing, labor, and land markets to the strategies of retailers, developers, bankers, and planners, tend toward a redistribution of real income in favor of the rich and more politically powerful. In other words, normal urban functioning makes the rich richer and the poor, at least relatively, poorer.

Here was a rigorous analysis of how social and economic inequalities and injustices were built into the evolving geography of the city: into why the poor pay more for basic goods and services, why redlining and disinvestment as well as the location of noxious facilities occur most often in poor areas while attractive public and private investments bring greater spatial advantages to the rich, why expensive freeway construction absorbs more public funds than effective mass transit serving the needs of the poor, why almost every aspect of urban development and change has regressive and discriminatory socio-spatial effects. Empirically enriching his critique of Rawls, Harvey demonstrated that unjust outcomes arise from inherently unjust processes operating in an urban milieu preloaded with distributional injustices to begin with.

Massive social intervention was necessary, he observed, to turn these inegalitarian social and spatial tendencies around. But Harvey was increasingly pessimistic about the likelihood that grassroots political and social actions and institutional plans and policies could be redirected to favor the relatively poor populations and areas of the city rather than the more rich and powerful. Pushed to their limits, these ultraliberal formulations appeared to have no hope of being implemented, leading Harvey to turn elsewhere in his search for social justice in the city.

Marxist Geographical Perspectives

In his “socialist formulations,” Harvey radically shifted gears to reformulate the debates on urban social justice in a Marxist framework, an intellectual move that stimulated the development of the distinctive field of Marxist geography and at the same time created in this radicalized form of geographical analysis a lasting inhibition, if not prohibition, regarding the concept of distributive justice and the use of such descriptors as territorial and spatial, especially among the radical geographers he influenced most. Writing about the geography of social justice, particularly in the city, was acceptable within certain limits. Writing about spatial, geographical, or even territorial justice as such became much less satisfactory, for reasons that can be traced back to Marx.

For Marx, distributive justice was essentially a diversion from the main problems of capitalist society. It was a “mistake to make a fuss about so-called distribution and put the principal stress on it,” he argued, for all inequitable and unjust distributions are produced by capitalism itself. Justice, however defined, can only be achieved through the transformation of the social relations of production that characterize capitalist development. Although these social or class relations shape space significantly, as Marxist geographers continued to demonstrate so effectively in their writings, the social relations themselves should not be seen as being shaped by spatial processes or relations, as implied in such terms as spatial justice. This implicit or explicit presumption of spatial (versus social) causality seemed to fall into the traps Marx identified as either fetishism or reification, an obsessive or unconsciously innocent overemphasis on surface appearances or outcomes rather than deep and determinative structural forces.

Harvey’s Marxist turn moved him away from his earlier liberal formulations of territorial justice, but in both halves of *Social Justice and the City* his critical geographical imagination produced many brilliant insights regarding the social and spatial causes of inequality and injustice, insights that he continued to elaborate creatively in his subsequent writings even without explicitly using the term *spatial justice*. His liberal formulations about the redistributive effects of the normal workings of an urban system—the everyday operations of housing and labor markets, patterns of financial investment, the distribution of positive and negative effects of public expenditure, the availability of doctors and

medical facilities, the costs of insurance and retail shopping, the forms of social regulation and planning, and so on—have already been mentioned and need to be assertively remembered in any discussion of spatial justice in theory and in practice. Rather than extending these observations, however, Harvey moved on to a very different conceptualization of what he called the “urban process under capitalism.”

That the outcomes of this urban process would be inherently inegalitarian and unjust was taken for granted. That urbanization generates injustice is no surprise when seen from a Marxist perspective. What Harvey most incisively addressed were the underlying structures and processes that shape urban life and urban geographies in capitalist societies and in so doing indirectly presented one of the most insightful explanations of the 1960s urban crises and especially the unexpected consequences of well-intentioned efforts at urban renewal. Looking at the built environment, he states:

Capital represents itself in the form of a physical landscape created in its own image, created as use values to enhance the progressive accumulation of capital. The geographical landscape which results is the crowning glory of past capitalist development. But at the same time it expresses the power of dead labour over living labour and as such it imprisons and inhibits the accumulation process within a set of specific physical constraints. . . .

There is a stunning argument made here that cannot be ignored by those uncomfortable with Marxian terminology. The argument is also a major challenge to orthodox Marxism, which tended, like orthodox neoclassical economics, to treat the economy almost as if it existed on the head of a pin, with no significant spatial dimensions or spatiality. What is focused on here is how powerful social forces (arising from capitalism but it could just as well be racism or patriarchy) purposefully shape spatial form (geography, the built environment). These geographies, along with their inherent injustices and inequalities, are produced to meet the needs of those promoting the social processes (capitalists in Harvey’s formulation), but that is not the end of the story. The geographies that are produced in a given time period, Harvey notes, can become out-of-date, no longer as useful, at some time in the future, when conditions have changed. The “old” geography, in other words, can become countervailing,

counterproductive, imprisoning, constraining, no longer suitable to immediate needs.

Harvey goes on to say that because of this spatial-temporal tension,

Capitalist development has therefore to negotiate a knife-edge path between preserving the exchange values of past capital investments in the built environment and destroying the value of these investments in order to open up fresh room for accumulation. Under capitalism, there is then a perpetual struggle in which capital builds up a physical landscape appropriate to its own condition at a particular moment in time, only to have to destroy it, usually in the course of crises, at a subsequent point in time. The temporal and geographical ebb and flow of investment in the built environment can be understood only in terms of such a process.

Here the urban built environment is not just shaped in significant ways by capitalism, producing unjust geographies in its wake, but these produced geographies also work to shape capitalist development itself, at times sustaining and stimulating growth, at other times imprisoning and inhibiting the capital accumulation process. This version of the socio-spatial dialectic, whereby the social and the spatial are mutually formative, becomes even more complex here because of the relative fixity of built forms and socially constructed geographies. The built environment does not simply adapt to changing conditions. The Empire State Building, for example, may have been ideally located when it was originally built, but its location became less advantageous (profitable) with the changing economic geography of Manhattan. Unfortunately for its owners, however, it could not simply be picked up and moved to another site.

Asserted here is a theory of crisis formation and “creative destruction” built into the historical geography of urban development. Not only is the industrial capitalist city a machine for generating inequality and injustice, it is also a generator of crises. More than just implied here is an explanation of why cities exploded all over the world in the 1960s, and how different fractions of capital, complicated further by well-meaning planners and state bureaucrats, competed with one another over what needed to be done about declining downtowns, racial ghettos, increasing poverty, metropolitan political fragmentation, urban sprawl, and inadequate public services.

The outcomes were not predetermined, but it was no surprise that the interests aimed most directly at rapidly increasing profitability and restoring social order tended to prevail. In perhaps the majority of cases, the promoted intentions of urban renewal and poverty alleviation led instead to bulldozed buildings, radically altered property ownership, and the removal of the poor for “higher and better” (more profitable) land uses. Responding to crisis, capital was creating a new geography to meet its altered needs. In an acute turn of phrase, Harvey later described this drive toward reorganizing or restructuring (already unfair and unjust) geographies as capital’s search for a rejuvenative “spatial fix.” Perhaps more than any other idea Harvey developed, the concept of a spatial fix explicitly recognized the power of spatial forces in the development and survival of capitalism, although he did not openly acknowledge this spatial causality until very recently.

Deflecting the Debate on the Spatiality of Justice

These insightful arguments inspired generations of geographers and urban scholars to follow in Harvey’s footsteps, at least in terms of a critical diagnosis of urban problems. With respect to the study of territorial justice, however, it created a peculiar refraction. For most Marxist geographers, territorial justice became a diversionary issue, more characteristic of liberal or bourgeois thought than a radical critique. Almost nothing was written on the specific subject up to the present, although a variation on the theme appeared in *The Urbanization of Injustice* (1996), edited by Andy Merrifield and Erik Swyngedouw, both geographers strongly influenced by Harvey’s work.

The book developed from a conference at Oxford University, where Harvey had served earlier as the Sir Halford Mackinder Professor of Geography, to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Social Justice and the City*. The terms *justice* or *social justice* appear in the titles of eight of the eleven chapters, and Harvey discusses the emerging concept of environmental justice in his contribution, but it is almost impossible to find any specific mention of either spatial justice or territorial justice on its pages.

Reacting to the earlier submergence of the debate on territorial and/or spatial justice, G. H. Pirie in his 1983 article lamented the move away from debates on the specifically spatial aspects of justice and called,

with some trepidation, for a closer engagement between political philosophers, radical spatial theorists, and applied researchers interested in justice and equity. Informed by an emerging understanding that space is a structure created by society, a social product and not just an environmental context or container for society, Pirie pondered “the desirability and possibility of fashioning a concept of spatial justice from notions of social justice and territorial social justice” (472):

Conceptualizing spatial justice in terms of a view of space as process, and perhaps in terms of radical notions of justice, stands as an exacting challenge. . . . In spite of the challenge of spatial fetishism, and in spite of the radical assault on liberal distributive concerns, it would be worthwhile investigating the possibility of matching justice to notions of socially constructed space. (471-72)

Pirie’s caution (“in spite of the challenge . . . the assault . . . it would be worthwhile investigating the possibility”) reflected the virtual taboo that had developed in radical geography against giving too much attention to spatial versus social processes and relations, and especially daring to suggest that spatial processes or forms could actually shape class relations, a sign of allegedly diversionary spatial fetishism.

For other geographers involved in studying geography and inequality from a less radical or explicitly Marxist perspective, Harvey was also influential as a critical urban theorist, but there was little inclination to use either of the specific terms of spatial or territorial justice. Studying social justice geographically from a liberal-progressive but not explicitly Marxist standpoint was sufficient. Disciplined geographers, however, were also hesitant to suggest any strong sense of spatial causality, remembering the “burnt fingers” associated with nineteenth-century dalliances with geographical-cum-environmental determinism.

Until very recently, studying the geography of inequality and social injustice, for the most part, moved away from a more explicitly spatial conceptualization. In the work of David Smith, for example, there has been a turn toward moral philosophy, a field closely associated with John Rawls and critical legal studies. This has shifted attention toward notions of morally unjust geographies, and for the most part back into the Rawlsian version of justice theory criticized by Iris Marion Young, David Harvey, and others.

For more applied researchers in urban planning and public policy, Harvey's diagnoses of the urban condition were attractive, but his prognosis for social action seemed too narrowly constrained and ultimately propelled only by revolutionary practices. Remaining within this Marxian orthodoxy left very little for activists and even self-styled radical planners to do short of the total transformation of capitalism. Planners specifically interested in social justice and the city have moved increasingly out of Harvey's Marxian shadows and toward softer and less explicitly spatial notions such as the "just city," discussed briefly in the introduction.

In More Hopeful Spaces

Like Rawls many years earlier, Harvey has also been sensitively responding to some of his critics. Despite Marxism's weakened contemporary influence in geography and planning, or perhaps because of it, Harvey's recent work has loosened up some of the rigid closures many perceived in his earlier writings. In *Spaces of Hope* (2000), for example, he speaks favorably of normative and utopian thought and opens new possibilities in the struggle for human rights and environmental justice, after earlier dismissing much of the environmental movement as little more than "militant localisms" (Harvey 1996). Unfettered neoliberal globalization has created such a "maelstrom of contradictions on the world stage," he argues, "that it has unwittingly opened up several paths toward a progressive and universalizing politics," especially with regard to "a fundamental reconception of the universal right for everyone to be treated with dignity and respect." To reject these issues of human rights as unavoidably tainted with bourgeois reformism is "to turn our backs on all manner of prospects for progressive political action" (94).

There remained significant boundaries beyond which Harvey would not reach, and he maintained some caution in asserting explicitly spatial causality, but a new flexibility was evident. Noting Marx's deep suspicion that talk about rights and justice was little more than a bourgeois diversion, he asks, "what on earth are workers of the world supposed to unite about unless it is some sense of their fundamental rights as human beings?" He calls for a redefinition of "the terms and spaces of political struggle . . . in these extraordinary times" (18). Struggles over universal or fundamental human rights still tend to remain ineffectively

spatialized, but at least Harvey locates these struggles in redefined political spaces, leaving open some recognition of the consequential effects of geography.

While continuing to squeeze all the meaning he can from the *Communist Manifesto*, Harvey recognizes the need to go beyond its ample insights on globalization and restructuring to emphasize an enriched interpretation of uneven geographical development. Not without irony but with due caution, he returns to Lefebvre and one of the most powerful assertions of spatial causality in the literature, the idea that the very survival of capitalism has depended on the production of space:

While Lefebvre (1976) perhaps exaggerates a touch, I think it worth recalling his remark that capitalism has survived in the twentieth century by one and only one means—"by occupying space, by producing space." It would be ironic indeed if the same were to be said at the end of the twenty-first century. (31)

It was precisely this kind of assertion of how geography shapes social relations of production and class that turned Harvey, Manuel Castells, and other geographers and sociologists away from Lefebvre in the 1970s, deflecting both the radical retheorization of space Lefebvre was advancing (see below) and the debates on territorial and spatial justice. At that time, a balanced socio-spatial and geo-historical dialectic was almost inconceivable on the Marxist left, and for various other reasons, Lefebvre's ideas remained buried for more than two decades. While Lefebvre's spatial explanation of the survival of capitalism was muted in its impact, Harvey came forward with his very similar idea that capitalism seeks a spatial fix when faced with crisis. Harvey was careful not to make this spatial fix, with its intonations of urban and regional restructuring and the spatial transformation of the built environment, appear too likely to succeed, for crises, by their very nature, always had to carry the possibility of revolutionary transformation.

With the resurgence and transdisciplinary diffusion of critical spatial perspectives in the last decade of the twentieth century, a deeper and broader meaning of Lefebvre's assertive and explanatory spatial arguments has become more widely understood. Although he characteristically takes a step back before moving forward in his spatial thinking, Harvey's explorations of the spaces of hope build on the Lefebvre revival

and add significantly to the development of a spatial theory of justice, democracy, and human rights. Harvey's cautious creativity and conservative openness are never more evident than in his recent renewal of interest in "the right to the city" (2003, 2006, 2008).

In his recasting of Lefebvre's original concept, Harvey presents the usual Marxist warnings about using bourgeois notions of universalized rights. If they are mainly about property and profit, then he wants none of it. But he goes on to recognize "a huge movement for global justice" that is searching for viable alternatives to the social processes that produce cities "marked and marred by inequality, alienation, and injustice." Here are some extracts from Harvey's cautious embrace of Lefebvre's ideas:

A different right to the city must be asserted. Those that now have the rights will not surrender them willingly: "Between equal rights, force decides." This does not necessarily mean violence (though, sadly, it often comes down to that). But it does mean the mobilization of sufficient power through political organization or in the streets if necessary to change things. But by what strategies do we proceed?

. . . Derivative rights (like the right to be treated with dignity) should become fundamental and fundamental rights (of private property and the profit rate) should become derivative. . . . [We can exploit the] contradictions within the capitalist package of rights. . . . But new rights can also be defined: like the right to the city which . . . is not merely a right of access to what the property speculators and state planners define, but an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image.

The creation of a new urban commons, a public sphere of active democratic participation, requires that we roll back that huge wave of privatization that has been the mantra of a destructive neoliberalism. We must imagine a more inclusive, even if continuously fractious, city based not only upon a different ordering of rights but upon different political-economic practices. If our urban world has been imagined and made then it can be re-imagined and re-made. The inalienable right to the city is worth fighting for. "City air makes one free" it used to be said. The air is a bit polluted now. But it can always be cleaned up. (2003, 941)

In an article on "The Right to the City" published in the *New Left Review* in 2008, before the full economic meltdown took effect, Harvey reviews his arguments about capitalism's "perpetual need to find

profitable terrains for capital-surplus production and absorption,” updated to include the mega-urbanization of China, and traces the history of urban revolutions and the crises that “repeatedly erupt around urbanization both locally and globally.” The modern metropolis, he argues, is now the focus of intensified struggles over the “developmental drive that seeks to colonize space for the affluent.” His final paragraph, while maintaining a cautious stance, is a compelling call for a radical right to the city movement and a frank admission that he was wrong in rejecting, along with many other Marxists at the time, Lefebvre’s idea that all social revolutions must also be urban (i.e., spatial) revolutions:

[C]rises repeatedly erupt around urbanization both locally and globally . . . the metropolis is now the point of massive collision—dare we call it class struggle?—over the accumulation by dispossession visited upon the least well-off and the developmental drive that seeks to colonize space for the affluent.

One step towards unifying these struggles is to adopt the right to the city as both working slogan and political ideal, precisely because it focuses on the question of who commands the necessary connection between urbanization and surplus production and use. The democratization of that right, and the construction of a broad social movement to enforce its will is imperative if the dispossessed are to take back the control which they have for so long been denied. *Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of that term, or nothing at all.* (emphasis added)

I will return to Harvey’s most recent observations on the urban causes of the current financial crisis in the concluding comments to chapter 6. To better understand what is happening today, however, and to put Harvey’s recent admissions into perspective, the work of Lefebvre needs to be addressed in more detail.

Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City

As repeatedly noted, the right to the city idea occupies a special place in *Seeking Spatial Justice*. The two concepts, spatial justice and the right to the city, have become so interwoven in their contemporary usage that it has become increasingly difficult to tell them apart. With resonances that connect back to all the previous discussions, I will use the concept of

the right to the city here as a framework to summarize and synthesize the preceding debates on the spatial theory of justice, elaborate upon the new spatial consciousness that has been emerging in association with the revival of the right to the city idea, and connect this discussion to the following chapters on seeking spatial justice in Los Angeles.

The Lefebvrian Version

The concept of the right to the city as originally formulated by Lefebvre reestablishes the urban foundations of seeking justice, democracy, and citizen's rights. After centuries during which the national state defined citizenship and human rights, the city is seen again to be a special space and place of social and economic advantage, a focal point for the workings of social power and hierarchy, and therefore a potent battleground for struggles seeking greater democracy, equality, and justice.

As Harvey later elaborated in his liberal formulations, Lefebvre saw the normal workings of everyday urban life as generating unequal power relations, which in turn manifest themselves in inequitable and unjust distributions of social resources across the space of the city. Demanding greater access to social power and valued resources by those most disadvantaged by inequitable and unjust geographies defined the struggle to reclaim the manifold rights to the city. The aim, at least from a liberal egalitarian point of view, is to gain greater control over the forces shaping urban space, in other words to reclaim democracy from those who have been using it to maintain their advantaged positions.

Lefebvre's view, like Harvey's, extended well beyond these liberal egalitarian formulations. Seeking the right to the city is a continuous and more radical effort at spatial reappropriation, claiming an active presence in all that takes place in urban life under capitalism. As such, it generates a constant challenge to what Lefebvre described as a "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption" promoted by the increasing penetration of the state and the market into all aspects of everyday urban life. In Lefebvre's view, often forgotten or misunderstood by even his most ardent contemporary exponents, this bureaucratic society and its extension through planning and public policy do not just affect those living in the city proper but impose their powerful influence everywhere via the operations of the state and the market. It is in this sense that Lefebvre claimed the whole world was being urbanized. The struggle

over the right to the city, despite Lefebvre's occasional remarks to the contrary, extends regionally to the countryside, to rural areas and the rain forest as well.

This broadened view of the regional right to the city, as I have been arguing persistently, can be best understood when urbanization and the organized space of the city are seen as generative forces, wellsprings of societal development, technological innovation, cultural creativity, as well as social stratification, hegemonic power, inequality, and injustice. Things do not just happen in cities, they happen to a significant extent because of cities. While Lefebvre looked at the formal city in his specific Paris-in-mind discussions of *le droit à la ville*, his other writings about the urban condition encompassed a larger, multiscalar vision of the global spread of urban industrial capitalism and the spatialization of class struggle.

This forceful appreciation of consequential geographies, the idea that space matters much more than most scholars ever imagined, drove Lefebvre's thinking about the right to the city. For most Marxists and social scientists at the time and extending up to the present for many, it was difficult to understand and accept these ideas about the generative power of urban spatiality. This resistance explains a great deal about why Lefebvre's ideas were buried under various persistent orthodoxies for decades, and why even today they remain for many scholars either incomprehensible or naively hyperbolic.

For Lefebvre, however, there was an even stronger spatial argument behind his conceptualization of the right to the city, an argument that Harvey referred to in his earlier quote saying it might be "a touch" exaggerated. Struggles over the right to the city are a vital political response to capitalism's efforts to create geographies suited to its fundamental interests, which Lefebvre described as the reproduction of the social relations of production, in other words, keeping capitalism going and growing even through times of economic crisis. Lefebvre's arguments about consequential geographies and the socio-spatial dialectic can be explained best through his own words:

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 bring about a change from a period in which questions of economic growth and industrialization predominate to the period in which the urban problematic becomes decisive.

This quote is taken from a postscript to Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1973, 306) and is a focal point for Harvey's earlier discomfort and disagreement with Lefebvre, a reason for contending that Lefebvre was going too far in his claims. Lefebvre, however, goes further.

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.* (1976, 21)

In other words, the production of space and especially urbanized space has been crucial to the very survival of capitalism since at least the mid-nineteenth century, when cities all over the world exploded with unrest and frustration over existing socio-spatial injustices. At every moment in its history but especially in times of crisis, urban industrial capitalism is engaged in a pivotal struggle over geography, over maintaining its ability to shape space in ways that meet its immediate needs. As Edward Said notes, this struggle extends far beyond soldiers and cannons. For Lefebvre, it revolves centrally around struggles over urbanized space between those seeking continuing advantage and the disadvantaged fighting to take greater control over how space is socially produced in order to make major transformations to better meet their basic needs.

The idea that the survival of capitalism depends fundamentally on the production of (predominantly urban) space is one of the strongest assertions of the significance of social spatiality ever made by a prominent scholar. It is the foundational argument behind Harvey's concepts of a spatial fix and capitalism's perpetual struggle over the built environment, as well as the notion of a socio-spatial dialectic and much that has been discussed here about the search for spatial justice. It also helps to explain why I have been so insistent in asserting the importance of using the explicit adjective *spatial* rather than any other alternative. I still am amazed that other scholars have given so little attention to this provocative idea.

On a more philosophical and hopeful plane, Lefebvre adds:

The dialectic is back on the agenda. But it is no longer Marx's dialectic, just as Marx's was no longer Hegel's. . . . The dialectic today no longer clings to historicity and historical time, or to a temporal mechanism such as "thesis-antithesis-synthesis" or "affirmation-negation-negation of the negation" . . . To recognise space, to recognise what "takes place" there and what it is used for, is to resume the dialectic; analysis will reveal the contradictions of space. (1976, 14, 17)

With this background, Lefebvre's specific conceptualization of the right to the city and the "urban problematic" can be better understood:

The right to the city, complemented by the right to difference and the right to information, should modify, concretize and make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (*citadin*) and user of multiple services. It would affirm, on the one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to the use of the center, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos (for workers, immigrants, the "marginal" and even for the "privileged"). (1996, 34)

As noted earlier, the word *droit* in French means both law and right. Its plural, *droits*, is used in such terms as *droits civils* (civil rights) and *droits de l'homme* (rights of man or human rights). Lefebvre combined all these meanings and references in his strategically spatialized notion of *le droit à la ville*. He also combined the right to the city with what he called the right to difference, the right to be different as a means of challenging the controlling forces of homogenization, fragmentation, and uneven development imposed by the state, the market, and the bureaucracy working together to foster mass consumerism and heightened social control.

For Lefebvre, the urban dweller, by the very fact of urban residence itself, has specifically spatial rights: to participate openly and fairly in all the processes producing urban space, to access and make use of the particular advantages of city life, especially in the highly valued city center (or centers), to avoid all forms of imposed spatial segregation and confinement, to be provided with public services that meet basic needs in

health, education, and welfare. In this version of seeking spatial justice, the concrete urban geography, the full spatial specificity of the city, becomes charged with practical and political meaning.

Lefebvre's ideas about the right to the city played a major role in the Paris student and worker uprising in May 1968, an event that can be described as perhaps the first mass protest consciously seeking social justice through explicitly spatial strategies. At the time, Lefebvre's particular focus on the right to the use of the center reflected a major change in the residential geography of Paris that was rapidly taking shape in the 1960s. As discussed in chapter 2, the working class in Paris had become heavily concentrated in the central areas of Paris in the postwar era, to the point where they were becoming an electoral majority. In the French version of urban renewal, large numbers of workers were moved out of central Paris to suburban high-rise concentrations, or *banlieues*. The uprising of 1968 was not just a general protest against the prevailing form of French capitalism but also a more specific attack on the concrete new geography of inequality being created in Paris at the time, one that exploded most recently in the compacted immigrant *banlieues* in 2005.

This reminds us that the unjust geographies around which right to the city movements are organized change over time. The right to centrality in Paris in the 1960s is different today, in an age of regional urbanization and the rise of polycentric and globalized city regions. More and more, the rights to the city everywhere are becoming rights to the city region as a whole, to all the resources generated by the network of urban agglomerations forming the metropolitan regional economy and extending its reach to a global scale. This multiscale expansion of the struggles over the right to the city could not have been easily foreseen in the 1960s, although Lefebvre's argument that the whole world was becoming urbanized carried with it the sense that the struggle was not confined to the formal boundaries of the city itself.

In so many ways, Harvey and Lefebvre are in accord in their interpretations of the right to the city and its past and present implications and potential. They differ mainly in how they explicitly treat the causal power of urban spatiality and the relation between social and spatial processes. Harvey, even in his more recent contributions, continues to privilege the determinative effects of social forces such as capital accumulation, while Lefebvre insisted on a more dialectical balance of social

and spatial causality. For many, this may seem a minor difference, but for the arguments being presented in *Seeking Spatial Justice*, it is of crucial importance.

To give additional strength to these summative arguments, another remarkable development that was occurring during the same period that the concept of the right to the city was being formulated and tentatively practiced needs to be recognized and discussed. What follows elaborates upon the discussion of new ontological beginnings in this chapter and gives some historical background to the general overview of the new spatial consciousness presented in the introduction. Those who feel no need for such elaboration can skip to the next section on contemporary revivals.

Creating a New Spatial Consciousness

In a remarkable convergence of ideas about which very little has been written, Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, along with a few other Parisian scholars, initiated a call for a radical transformation in critical spatial thinking in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Deeply affected by the events of May 1968, both argued in very similar ways that prevailing approaches to thinking about and theorizing space were too confining and insufficient to understand the modern world in all its historical and social complexity. In their view, spatial thinking tended to be straitjacketed into a tight dualism that limited its critical capacity, especially in comparison with critical historiography and social theory.

Most spatial thinkers at the time, they argued, emphasized a materialist concept of space, characterized by concrete, mappable, and empirically defined geographies, or “things in space.” Spatial analyses of this sort were either highly descriptive of existing conditions or else sought to explain empirical patterns through spatial covariation or association, how one empirically defined geography correlates with others. A minority of spatial thinkers put their primary emphasis not directly on material things but on “thoughts about space,” how materialized space is conceptualized, imagined, or represented in various ways, from the subjective mental maps of the world we all carry with us to scientific epistemologies and philosophies of space and place. Then, and now, these two ways of thinking about space were seen by most spatial thinkers as filling the entire scope of the spatial or geographical imagination.

Lefebvre defined the first as *perceived* space, shaped by materialized and objectified spatial practices; and the second as *conceived* space, various often subjective representations of space in ideas, images, ideologies. Foucault similarly recognized this split between material and imagined spaces and, like Lefebvre, argued that this double-barreled approach, while it created important and useful knowledge and should not be neglected, had certain significant limitations and did not fill the entire field of possibilities for critical spatial thinking. Another and different way of thinking spatially was not only possible but necessary if the intellectual and epistemological privileging of time over space, and hence historical over spatial thinking, were to be reduced if not eliminated in a critical rebalancing of the historical and geographical imaginations.

For Lefebvre, a more comprehensive and theoretically richer way of thinking about space combined materialist and idealist approaches while also at the same time opening up new ways of interpreting what he would call the (social) spatiality of human life. He called this third way an understanding of *lived* space and linked it to a biographical and historical notion of lived time, as well as to that primordial lived space, the human body. What Lefebvre was saying was that we are all, individually and collectively, spatial as well as temporal and social beings. Our biographies are just as much spatial as they are temporal and social. This was a central message in his major work, *La Production de l'espace*, published in 1974 and translated in 1991 as *The Production of Space*.

Lived space like our lived time is never completely knowable, Lefebvre argued. Beneath all surface appearances, there is always something mysterious, undercover, undiscoverable. A team of the best biographers on earth will never be able to discover everything about our individual spatio-temporal lives. We can only learn about our lived times and spaces in increments, never satisfied with existing levels of knowledge but constantly moving on, almost like philosophical nomads, to search for the new, to push the frontiers of knowledge and understanding forward, and hope for the unexpected. I have tried to follow this path in seeking a spatial theory of justice.

The implications were clear: without adopting a lived space perspective, remaining confined by the materialist–idealist dualism, critical spatial thinking can never hope to reach the same levels of insight and understanding that derive from a critical historical perspective. The

traditional bicameral geographical imagination, for all its valuable contributions, is not enough to allow spatial thinkers to compete with the “history boys.”

Following a remarkably similar line of thought, Foucault also identified an alternative, or third, way of looking at and interpreting human spatiality. In a lecture that was published after his death in 1984 as “Of Other Spaces” (“Des espaces autres”), he described his more comprehensive, combinatorial, and critical spatial perspective as “heterotopology,” and proceeded to describe a series of particular examples illustrating his distinctively different approach to understanding human spatiality. Foucault saw all geographies, from those produced by what he called the little tactics of the habitat to the global realm of geopolitical confrontation and conflict, as filled not only with injustice and oppression but also with potentially emancipatory and liberating opportunities. Foucault did not focus on the city per se, but by looking at the “heterotopias” that arise from the intersection of space, knowledge, and power, he opened up new ways of thinking spatially.

These innovative reconceptualizations of space demanded a new and different form of spatial consciousness, a way of thinking that recognized that space is filled with politics and privileges, ideologies and cultural collisions, utopian ideals and dystopian oppression, justice and injustice, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation. To see space and geography in this more comprehensive and challenging way, several almost axiomatic principles need to be recognized, starting with the ontological assertion of the fundamental spatiality of being. At the risk of being somewhat repetitive, let me outline briefly some of the principles of a new spatial consciousness that derive from the work of Lefebvre and Foucault.

The starting point remains the same: human spatiality in all its forms and expressions is socially produced. We make our geographies, for good or bad, just or unjust, in much the same way it can be said that we make our histories, under conditions not of our own choosing but in real-world contexts already shaped by socio-spatial processes in the past and the enveloping historically and socially constituted geographies of the present. This profoundly displaces the idea of space merely as external environment or container, a naturalized or neutral stage for life’s seemingly time-driven social drama.

That our geographies and histories are socially produced and not simply given to us by god or nature leads to an awareness that the geographies in which we live can have both positive and negative effects. They can provide advantage and opportunity, stimulate, emancipate, entertain, enchant, enable. They can also constrain opportunity, oppress, imprison, subjugate, disempower, close off possibilities. In our terms, geographies or spatialities can be just as well as unjust, and they are produced through processes that are simultaneously social and spatial, subjective and objective, concretely real and creatively imagined. Geographies, in other words, are consequential, not merely the background onto which our social life is projected or reflected.

For Lefebvre and Foucault, space not only mattered, it was a powerful shaping force in society and in politics at every scale and context, from the intimacies of the body and the little tactics of the habitat to the playing out of global geopolitics and the repetitive crises of capitalism. For Lefebvre in particular, a special place was given to the city as perhaps the greatest achievement of human creativity. In his vivid terms, the city is both *produit* and *oeuvre*, a material outcome of human action and a representational work of art. For Foucault, every space is a heterotopia, a realized and imagined space of resolvable oppositions, and heterotopology becomes a way of looking at and interpreting all spaces and their consequential effects.

Moving closer toward a strategic spatial consciousness and thus a spatial theory of justice, it becomes evident and challenging that these socially produced geographies, because they are created by human actions, can be changed or transformed through human agency—for better or for worse, it must be added. Human geographies are not merely external containers, given and immutable. Their changeability is crucial, for it makes our geographies the targets for social and political action seeking justice and democratic human rights by increasing their positive and/or decreasing their negative effects on our lives and livelihoods. Without adopting this expanded form of spatial consciousness promoted by Lefebvre and Foucault, the objectives of seeking spatial justice and demanding the right to the city are difficult to comprehend and even more difficult to put into practice.

These radically new ideas about critical spatial thinking were deflected in the years following the perceived failure of the 1968 Paris

uprising. For many feminists, labor and community leaders, civil rights activists, and others involved in the social movements that were expanding in the 1970s and 1980s, specifically spatial targets seemed too peripheral, abstract, and confusing. Old ways of thinking about space only as physical form and background environment made the notion of socially produced spatial justice and injustice almost incomprehensible. For more orthodox Marxists, the very idea of a Marxist geography was perplexing if not politically dangerous. Neo-Marxist spatial thinkers, such as Harvey and Castells, recognized Lefebvre's urban achievements but thought he went too far in promoting them. The more politically ambiguous Foucault was almost entirely ignored.

Confusing matters further, geographers did little to encourage the spread of this new critical perspective until the mid-1990s. Most geographers either did not or could not understand the call for a new spatial perspective and the critique of traditional forms of geographical thinking that was inherent in the writings of Lefebvre and Foucault, or else they somewhat proudly acknowledged them as leading figures from outside the discipline who were supporting (rather than deeply criticizing) the geographer's traditional ways of thinking. Outside geography, in the wider realms of social theory and philosophy, there were several important contributions to the debates on space and time made between 1970 and 1990, such as the time-space structuration theory of Anthony Giddens, but they had little effect in countering the powerful force of social historicism.

Today, however, the attention given to Lefebvre and Foucault inside geography and, with the spatial turn, in many other disciplines seems to have exploded exponentially, and with this has come renewed appreciation for foregrounding space as an interpretive perspective. I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of the expanding resurgence of interest in Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city.

Contemporary Revivals

Beginning around 2000, the idea of the right to the city took off as the subject of academic writing, meetings, and conferences and increasingly as a mobilizing concept for social and political organization and action. Today, if you enter "right to the city" in your search engine, there are nearly nine million hits. National or international conferences with right

to the city in their thematic titles have multiplied, some of which are listed in Notes and References.

Spurring the globalization of the concept is the World Charter for the Right to the City, appearing in 2004 in conjunction with the Social Forum of the Americas held in Quito and the World Urban Forum in Barcelona. Attempting to draw together the global justice, environmental justice, and human rights movements, the charter begins by recognizing that the city “is a rich and diversified cultural space that belongs to all its inhabitants,” and that everyone “has a Right to the City free of discrimination based on gender, age, health status, income, nationality, ethnicity, migratory condition, or political, religious, or sexual orientation, and to preserve cultural memory and identity.” Citizens are defined not just as permanent inhabitants but also those “in transit.” There is a list of “Principles of the Right to the City,” including democratic management, full exercise of citizenship and use of economic and cultural resources, equality and nondiscrimination, special protection for vulnerable persons and groups, and economic solidarity and progressive policies. That the right to the city is not confined to the formal city is recognized:

Urban territories and their rural surroundings are also spaces and locations of the exercise and fulfillment of collective rights as a way of assuring equitable, universal, just, democratic, and sustainable distribution and enjoyment of the resources, wealth, services, goods, and opportunities that cities offer.

Deserving special recognition in the contemporary right to the city revival are the regional movements developing in Athens, Greece, the originating polis. Coalitions of city movements demanding more open space, better housing, and various forms of environmental justice began to form after the return to democracy in 1974, initially through existing political parties but by the 1980s mainly in the autonomous organization of neighborhood groups. In 2004, a new right to the city alliance was formed to focus on struggles over public and private investments in the Olympic Games, stimulating hundreds of citizen’s initiatives across the Greater Athens area. This regionalization of struggles led to the creation of the Panattic Network of City Movements in 2007 and an allied group, reminiscent of Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles, the Panattic

Union of Cleaners and Domestic Personnel. See Notes and References for more on these developments.

Most of the growing literature on the right to the city makes some reference to Lefebvre's original idea, but there is usually very little critical evaluation of the concept or explicit discussion of a critical spatial perspective. In many cases, the notion of the right to the city seems to be little more than a slightly different way of speaking about human rights in general or merely a generic reference to the need for more democratic forms of planning and public policy. For the most part, the assertively spatial approach of Lefebvre and the notion of consequential geographies are ignored, and his radical political objectives reduced to softer liberal egalitarianism or normative platitudes.

Amid this liberal co-optation, however, a more critical if still appreciative approach to Lefebvre and the right to the city idea has begun to develop, for the most part from scholars connected in some way with either the geographer-planners in Los Angeles, where the first conference on the right to the city held in the United States took place, or with the now New York-based David Harvey and his productive writings on the urban condition under capitalism. An early representative of this second stream is *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (2003), written by Don Mitchell, a leading figure in the People's Geography Project, a kind of clearinghouse of information and support for urban scholars and activists based in Syracuse, New York.

Mitchell, who also wrote an excellent book on migrant workers in California (1996), roots his analysis of struggles over free speech, homelessness, and the use of public space in the work of Harvey and Lefebvre, significantly advancing our understanding of the urbanization of injustice and efforts to reappropriate the right to the city in ways that avoid the limitations of both Harvey's and Lefebvre's approaches. Mitchell's Marxist perspective is open-minded and flexible, but an old taboo lingers in his relative avoidance of explicitly discussing spatial processes and their effects on social form in comparison with the more comfortable emphasis on social processes shaping spatial form. There is a concluding section on spaces of justice and ample discussion of the geography of social justice, but the term *spatial justice* is not used at all.

Inspired in part by Harvey but more open to Lefebvre's assertive spatiality and to the need to create new spaces of opportunity and hope

between revolutionary radicalism and liberal egalitarianism are the writings of three geographer-planners associated with UCLA Urban Planning and Geography: Neil Brenner, Mustafa Dikec, and Mark Purcell. All three have written important critical analyses of Lefebvre's writings and have specifically addressed the right to the city idea.

Dikec's work on justice and the spatial imagination and the French *banlieues* has already been mentioned. In all his work, including critiques of French urban policies and *politique* (referring simultaneously in French to politics, policy, and police), Dikec draws creatively on Lefebvre and the right to the city concept. Brenner has become a leading figure in studies of the state and state restructuring, the social production of scale, and spatial theory more broadly, referring often to Lefebvre as well as translating several of his writings, including much of the four-volume work *De l'État*. Bringing the debates on the right to the city up-to-date and effectively connecting to the present discussion of seeking spatial justice is the work of Purcell and especially the recently published *Recapturing Democracy: Neoliberalization and the Struggle for Alternative Urban Futures* (2008).

Purcell presents an insightful reevaluation of Lefebvre's ideas, surveying the recent literature and cautioning against any reductionist interpretation of the call for a radical urban metamorphosis, including Lefebvre's own often-implied narrowing of the struggle to include only the working class as agents of change. The right to the city is seen not just as a right to appropriation, participation, and difference but even more broadly as a *right to space*, the right to inhabit space. In stretching the concept to a larger global scale, Purcell (2008) quotes Brenner:

Urban social movements . . . do not merely occur within urban space but strive to transform the socioterritorial organization of capitalism itself on multiple geographical scales. The "right to the city" . . . thereby expands into a broader "right to space" both within and beyond the urban scale. Even as processes of global capitalist restructuring radically reorganize the supracurban scalar hierarchies in which cities are embedded, cities remain strategic arenas for sociopolitical struggles which, in turn, have major ramifications for the supracurban geographies of capitalism. (102)

That struggles over the right to the city are fundamentally struggles against the oppressive effects of capitalism and more particularly its

neoliberal variants is made clear, but there are also openings to a multiplicity of agents and targets that widen the scope of political action to include what I have been describing as the production of discriminatory and unjust geographies of many different kinds, relating to gender, race, sexuality, environmental factors, and others. Here it is important to recall Iris Marion Young's more pluralistic five-sided concept of injustice as oppression, in which class struggle per se focuses primarily around economic exploitation at the workplace and place of residence while other structures of social advantage and hierarchical power define broader fields of social action related to cultural and political domination and other axes of discrimination.

Combining Purcell and Young opens up the converging movements for spatial justice and the democratic rights to urban space to many new possibilities. The more monolithic and focused forms of class struggle inherent in Lefebvre's and Harvey's approaches are not rejected but expanded to meet the multifaceted and multiscale demands for justice in the contemporary world. Most important for the challenges of seeking specifically spatial justice is the implied necessity to build diverse coalitions and networked social movements that extend beyond the narrow and often essentialist channels of the past. In today's world, separate movements for labor, against racism, patriarchy, or cultural domination, or to achieve peace or respond to global warming or to promote local community development are less likely than ever before to be successful. Crosscutting alliances and coalitions are becoming increasingly essential.

In an insightful turn of phrase, Purcell calls the right to the city, especially in its sense as a right to occupy and inhabit space, an organizational and mobilizing "linchpin," suggesting that it forms an integrative umbrella for coalition building, a kind of connective tissue or "glue" that can help to *unite diverse and particularized struggles into larger and more powerful movements*. The new spatial consciousness and its expression in the search for spatial justice provide just such an integrative umbrella. We all experience in one way or another the negative effects of unjust geographies. This makes struggles over space and the right to the city a potentially powerful source of shared identity, determination, and effectiveness in changing the world for the better. This may be the most important political lesson learned from the development of a spatial theory of justice.

These comments and conclusions bring into a new perspective the inaugural meeting of a national alliance of labor and community-based organizations on the right to the city that took place in January 2007 in Los Angeles. In many ways, this was a breakthrough moment in the revival of Lefebvre's original concept in the United States and at the same time the starting point for new and exciting initiatives. The meeting also provides a useful bridge to a discussion of how the search for spatial justice and the right to the city has developed over the past forty years in the urban region of Los Angeles.