

PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION: THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

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Ten or fifteen years ago, when this book was written, conceptions of space were muddled, paradoxical, mutually incompatible. With interplanetary rocket technology and the feats of the astronauts, space was undoubtedly 'in vogue': space of this and space of that – pictorial, sculptural, even musical space – but what the vast majority of people and the general public understood by the word 'Space' (with a capital), laden with new and unusual connotations, was only the distances of the cosmos. Traditionally, the word suggested little more than mathematics, (Euclidean) geometry and its theorems, and was thus an abstraction: a container without content. And in philosophy? Space was mostly treated with disdain, as one 'category' among others (an 'a priori', as the Kantians said: a way of organizing sensory phenomena). Sometimes it was loaded with all kinds of illusion and error: deflecting desire and action, the interiority of the 'self', thus psychological life towards the exterior and inert, dividing and divided (with and as language: Bergson). As for the disciplines that studied it, they parcelled it out amongst themselves, and space became fragmented according to simplified methodological premises: geographical, sociological, historical, etc. At best, space passed for an empty zone, a container indifferent to its content, but defined by certain unexpressed criteria: absolute, opticogeometrical, Euclidean-Cartesian-Newtonian. We may have been accepting 'spaces', but we were bringing them together in a concept whose scope was poorly defined. The poorly assimilated idea of *relativity* established itself on the margins of this concept, of representations and above all, of the everyday, in thrall to tradition (the three-dimensional, the separation of space and time, the metre and the clock, etc.).

Paradoxically, that is to say, in a (diabolical) unexpressed, unavowed, inexplicit contradiction, practice – within existing society and its mode of production – was going in a different direction from fragmentary

representations and forms of knowledge. *Someone* (the politicians? No; it was more their collaborators and technocratic assistants, endowed with considerable power and authority), *someone* invented spatial planning; and in France, mainly; the project was to no less rationally fashion and model French space; by surrendering to the inevitable, it was seen (not without reason) to be developing a poor appearance and regrettable tendencies: desertified here and congested there, etc. In particular, the 'spontaneous' axis that goes from the Mediterranean to the northern coast, via the valleys of the Rhône, the Saône and the Seine, already posed problems. There was a project to build 'regional capitals [*métropoles d'équilibre*]' around Paris and in various regions. The official body responsible for regional development,¹ a powerful, centralized organization, lacked neither resources nor ambitions: to *produce* a harmonious national space – to bring a little order to 'wild' urban development, which answers only to the pursuit of profit.

Today nobody is unaware that this innovative planning initiative (which was consistent neither with input-output analysis nor state control over capital spending, i.e. planning by financial criteria) was wrecked, reduced to practically nothing by neo-liberalism and since clumsily put together again.

Hence a remarkable but nevertheless little noticed contradiction between theories of space and spatial practice. A contradiction concealed – one might say stifled – by the ideologies that threw into confusion debates on space, jumping from the cosmological to the human, from the macro to the micro, from functions to structures, without being thought out, conceptually or methodologically. The ideology of spatiality, which is very confused, collapsed into a single whole rational knowledge, effective but authoritarian planning and trite, commonplace representations.

Hence the effort to escape confusion by no longer considering (social) space and (social) time as facts of 'nature', modified to some degree, nor as simple facts of 'culture' – but as *products*. That brought about a change in the use and meaning of that word. The production of space (and time) did not see them as some kind of 'object' or 'thing', created by hand or machine, but as the principal features of *second nature*, as effects of the action of societies on 'first nature', on sensory data, matter and energy. Products? Yes, in a specific sense, particularly in a certain character of *globality* (not of totality) that they have, but which 'products' in the ordinary everyday sense (objects and things, merchandise) do not (even though the very space and time that are produced, but 'parcelled out', are exchanged, bought and sold, just like 'things' and objects)!

It should be noted in passing that even at that time (around 1970) *urban* questions were being raised with great clarity (too blindingly clear for many people, who preferred to avert their gaze). Official documents could neither regulate nor mask the new barbarism. Massive and 'uncontrolled', with no other strategy than to maximize profits, devoid of rationality or creative originality, construction and urban development, as they called it, were having noticeably disastrous effects – visible on all sides even then. Under the colours of 'modernity'. Even then!

How are we to maintain without new arguments the thesis (Graeco-Latin: our own, that of our civilization!) that the City, the Town, the Urban, are the centres, the privileged places, the cradles of thought and invention? The 'city-country' relationship was changing, at the world scale, with 'extremist' interpretations (the worldwide countryside versus the worldwide city!). How to think about the City (its widespread explosion-implosion, the 'modern Urban') without conceiving clearly the space it occupies, appropriates (or 'disappropriates')? It is impossible to think of the modern city and modern urban phenomena in terms of *oeuvres* (in the broad, powerful sense of a work of art [*oeuvre d'art*] that transforms its materials) without first conceiving of them as products. And this within a specific mode of production, which all at the same time fails, shows its extreme consequences, sometimes allows 'something else' to emerge, at least as expectation, demand, appeal. Of course, environmentalists had already raised awareness and stirred up public opinion: territory, environment, polluted air and water, nature – this 'raw material' – the material of the City, ravaged without scruple. What this environmental movement lacked was a general theory of the relationship between space and society – between the territorial, urban development, the architectural . . .

The conception of space as a social product did not develop without difficulties, in other words, without a problematic that was partly new and unforeseen.

As it did not denote a particular 'product' – a thing or an object – but a cluster of relationships, this concept required that the notions of *production* and *product*, and their relationships, be enlarged. As Hegel used to say, a concept only emerges when what it refers to is under threat and nearing its end – and its transformation. Space can no longer be conceived of as passive or empty, nor as having, like 'products', no other meaning than that of being exchanged and consumed and disappearing. As a product, interactively or retroactively, space intervenes in production itself: organization of

productive work, transport, flow of raw materials and energy, product distribution networks. In its productive role, and as a producer, space (well or badly organized) becomes part of the relations of production and the forces of production. Thus the concept cannot be isolated or remain static. It becomes dialectical: product-producer, underpinning economic and social relations. Does it not also play a part in *reproduction*, reproduction of the productive apparatus, of enlarged reproduction, of relations which it realizes in practice, 'on the ground'?

Does not this idea become clear as soon as it is formulated, and does it not clarify many things? Does it not reach this obvious point, the realization 'on the ground', and thus in a social space that is *produced*, of the social relations of production and reproduction? Can they remain 'in the air', abstractions created by and for academic study? Furthermore, this way of theorizing enables us to understand (while remaining within the framework of the existing mode of production) the originality of the *project*, which is spatial planning. To understand it, but also to modify it, and complete it, as part of other claims and projects, but while taking into account its nature, and especially the fact that it is concerned with urbanization. And therefore to take up again.

A second and no lesser difficulty: in the strict Marxian tradition, social space could be seen as a superstructure, as outcome of forces of production and of structures, including property relations. Now space enters into the forces of production, the division of labour; it has a relation with property, that is clear – with forms of exchange, with institutions, culture, learning. It is bought and sold; it has exchange value and use value. Thus it is not located on this or that 'level' or 'plane', as defined in traditional hierarchies. The concept of (social) space, and space itself thus escape the classification 'base-structure-superstructure'. Like time? Perhaps. Like language? That remains to be seen. Should Marxist analysis and orientation be abandoned for as much? Invitations and suggestions that we do so came from all sides. And not only with reference to space. But could we not, on the contrary, go back to the sources and deepen our analysis by introducing new concepts and trying to find new, subtler approaches? Which is what this work attempts to do. It assumes that space appears, is formed, acts, sometimes on one of these levels, sometimes on another. Sometimes in the area of work and relations of domination (property), sometimes in the way superstructures (institutions) work. Unevenly, therefore, but everywhere. The production of space would not seem to be 'dominant' in the world of production, but would seem to

bring together aspects of practice by coordinating them – by unifying them in precisely that, a practice.

And that is not all. Far from it. (Social) space may act in the world of production, as effect, cause and reason all at once, but it changes with this mode of production! That's easy to understand; it changes with 'societies', if you can put it like that. There is thus a *history of space* (as of time, of the body, of sexuality, etc.). A history yet to be written.

The concept of space links the mental and the cultural, the social and the historical. By reconstituting a complex process: *discovery* (of new or unknown spaces, of continents or of the cosmos) – *production* (of the spatial organization characteristic of each society) – *creation* (of *oeuvres*: landscape, the city with monumentality and *décor*). A process that is gradual, genetic (with a 'genesis'), but follows a logic: the general form of *simultaneity*; because every spatial mechanism rests on the juxtaposition in the intelligence and on the material assembly of elements from which we *produce* simultaneity.

However, the thing gets more complicated. Is there perhaps a connection – direct, immediate, immediately grasped and therefore transparent – between the mode of production (the society under consideration) and its space? No. There are discrepancies: ideologies are interpolated, illusions interposed. That is what this work began to elucidate. Thus with the invention of perspective in Tuscany in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Not only in painting (the Sieneese School) but first in practice, in production.² The countryside changes, it passes from the feudal domain to the sharecropping system; avenues of cypresses lead from small farms to the lord's residence, where a steward is installed, because the landowner lives in the city, where he is a banker, or an important merchant. The city changes, with implications for architecture: façade, alignment of buildings, horizon. This production of a new space – perspective – is not separate from an economic change: increases in production and exchange, the rise of a new class, importance of cities, etc. But what actually happened does not have the simplicity of a chain of cause and effect. Was this new space conceived, engendered, produced by and for princes? For rich merchants? By a compromise? Or by the city as such? Several points are still unclear. The history of space (like that of social time) is far from exhausted!

Another case in point, even more surprising and also referred to and poorly explained in this work: the *Bauhaus*, plus, Le Corbusier. We took the *Bauhaus* people – Gropius and his friends – for revolutionaries, in Germany, between 1920 and 1930; for Bolsheviks! Persecuted, they went to the United States.³ There they emerged as *practitioners* (architects and

planners) and even *theoreticians* of so-called modern space, the space of 'advanced' capitalism. They helped to construct it, to create it 'on the ground', through their works and their teaching. What a misfortune and sad fate for Le Corbusier! And again, subsequently, for those who saw large complexes and long, low-rise blocks as a habitat specific to the working-class. They neglected the concept of the *mode of production*, which also produced its space and so came to an end. Under the colours of modernity. The space produced by 'modernity' has specific characteristics: homogeneity–fragmentation–hierarchy. It tends towards the homogeneous for various reasons: manufacture of elements and materials (and corresponding demands on the part of those involved), methods of management and control, surveillance and communication. Homogeneity, but no plans or projects. False 'ensembles' – in fact, units. Because paradoxically (again) this homogeneous space is fragmented: lots and parcels. Reduced to crumbs! Which produced ghettos, units, clusters of detached houses [*groupes pavillonnaires*] and pseudo-schemes [*pseudo-ensembles*], poorly linked with their surroundings or with town centres. With a rigid hierarchy: residential areas, commercial areas, leisure areas, areas for the marginalized, etc. This space exerts a curious logic, which we mistakenly connect with computerization, and which hides 'real' relationships and conflicts behind its homogeneity. Furthermore, it seems that this law or model of space, with its logic (homogeneity–fragmentation–hierarchy) has acquired a broader scope and achieved a kind of generality, with analogous effects, in the domains of learning and culture, in the workings of the whole society.

This work therefore attempted not only to describe the space we live in, and its origins, but to retrace the origins, through and by the space it produced, of present-day society. An ambition the title does not declare overtly. Let us resume this proposed plan, inherent to the approach: a 'retro' study of social space in its history and genesis – from the present going back towards this genesis – then return to the present, which allows us to glimpse into if not to foresee the future and what is possible. This approach leads on to local studies, on different scales, inserting them into the general analysis, the global theory. Its implications and logical overlappings are understood as such, but in the knowledge that this understanding does not exclude (far from it) conflicts, struggles and contradictions, nor, conversely, agreements, understandings, alliances. While the local, the regional, the national and the worldwide interweave and overlap, and this is incorporated into space, actual or virtual conflicts are neither absent nor

eliminated. Implications and contradictions, in space as in other domains, have wider meaning now than when this book was written. Relations of implication do not prohibit opposing strategies, either in markets or in armed conflict. And so in space also.

There are analogous relations between the territorial, planning and the architectural: implications and conflicts. Which can only be grasped if we have understood the relationships 'logic-dialectic' and 'structure-conjuncture', which are presented and assumed here in a certain way and made fully explicit elsewhere.⁴ These relationships, which are both abstract and concrete, come as a surprise in a philosophical and political 'culture' that puts this 'complexity' to one side and looks for it elsewhere.

Research on social space refers to a globality. It does not, let us repeat, exclude specific, defined research projects 'on the ground'. However, the danger inherent in 'one-off studies, valued as such because they can be controlled, sometimes measured, is that it separates what is connected, and disconnects what is 'articulated'. It thus accepts or endorses fragmentation. Which leads to excessive practices of 'de-concentration' and decentralization, practices that break up spatial networks, links and relations, and therefore social space itself, by making production disappear! This avoids a host of questions – pedagogical, logical, political . . .

A central idea to which we must return before concluding: the mode of production organizes – *produces* – at the same time as certain kinds of social relations, its space (and its time). That is how it works. Supposing we were to ask, has 'socialism' created its space? If not, it is because the socialist mode of production does not yet exist in concrete form. The mode of production projects these relations on to the terrain, which reacts with them. Though there is no exact, previously assigned correspondence between social and spatial (or spatio-temporal) relations. We cannot say that from the start the capitalist mode of production, by inspiration or intelligence, 'ordained' its extension in space, which by now should cover the whole planet! First there was the use of existing space, for example, waterways (canals, rivers, seas), then roads, followed by the building of railways, then motorways and aerodromes. No means of spatial transport – on foot, on horseback, by bicycle, etc. – has entirely disappeared. Nevertheless, it is a new space that has been created in the twentieth century, on a world scale; its production has not ended but still continues. The new mode of production (the new society) appropriates, that is to say, adapts to its own ends, pre-existing space, whose patterns had been previously formed. Slow changes, penetrating a space that

had already been consolidated, but sometimes brutally disrupting it (as in the case of the countryside and rural landscape in the twentieth century).

Undeniably the railways played a fundamental role in industrial capitalism and the organization of its national (and international) space. But at the same time, at an urban scale so did trams, underground railways, buses. Then on a worldwide scale: air transport. The previous organization disintegrates and the mode of production absorbs the results. A double process, visible for several decades in our towns and countryside, with the help of recent technology – but extending from the centres of cities to their distant outskirts.

The organization of centralized, concentrated space serves at one and the same time political power and material production, optimizing profit. Social classes stake a claim to it, and disguise themselves in it, in the hierarchy of occupied spaces.

However, a new space *tends* to develop, at the world scale, integrating and disintegrating the national and the local. A process full of contradictions, linked with the conflict between a division of labour on the planetary level, in the mode of capitalist production – and the effort to create another, more rational world order. This penetration of and into space has been as historically important as achieving hegemony through penetration of institutions. A crucial if not the ultimate point of this penetration: the militarization of space, not treated (and for good reason) here, but which completes the demonstration, on both the planetary and the cosmic scale.

This thesis, as that of a space that was both homogeneous and fragmented (like time!), provoked many objections ten or twelve years ago. How could a space obey common rules, constitute an 'object', and disintegrate, all at the same time?

It is not a question of contending that the recent and already famous theory of the *fractal object* (B. Mandelbrot) has a connection with the idea of fragmented space, which is put forward here.⁵ However, we can point to both the quasi-simultaneity of the theories, and the fact that the physico-mathematical theory makes the socio-economic theory more accessible and more easily accepted. Physico-mathematical space contains voids and solids, hollows and projections; it maintains coherence although 'worked' by fragmentation. These theoretical endeavours are thus analogous.⁶

The relationship between this fragmented space and the multiple networks that work against fragmentation and re-establish, if not a rational unity, at least homogeneity, has still to be worked out. Could there not

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emerge, through and against hierarchization, here and there, in architectural or planning terms, 'some thing' that comes out of the existing mode of production, that is born from its contradictions by exposing them, and not by covering them with a veil?

A point of self-criticism: this book has not described in a direct, hardhitting, even pamphleteering style the production of housing schemes, ghettos, isolates, false 'ensembles'. The project for creating a new space remains uncertain; several features of the draft outline may now be adjusted. The role of architecture as the *use* of space does not always emerge clearly.

Nevertheless, this book retains several focal points, and can be *reread* today using an approach that puts it to good use (as knowledge).

First phase or moment: the elements and the analysis that isolates them, the 'actors' of production, the profits made, etc.

Second phase: paradigmatic oppositions brought to light: public and private – exchange and use – official and personal – frontal and spontaneous – space and time . . .

Third phase: 'dialectization' of this static picture: power relations, alliances – the conflicts, social rhythms and phases produced in and by this space . . .

Such a reading should spare this work the twin charges of u-topia (a false construction, in the verbal vacuum) and a-topia (elimination of concrete space, leaving only the social vacuum).

Paris, 4 December 1985

POLITICS
