

Introduction: Theory, Not Method – Thinking with Lefebvre

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In 1970, Henri Lefebvre formulated his thesis on complete urbanization. He understood urbanization as a general transformation of society, fundamentally changing the living conditions in urban and rural areas. Having studied rural life for decades, Lefebvre was well aware of the fundamental transformations of the traditional forms of agrarian societies occurring as a result of urbanization: not only the material structure, the built environment and the urban morphology were changing, but also everyday life. For Lefebvre, urbanization was an encompassing process stretching out in time and space, transforming all aspects of society and having a planetary reach. He described this process in dramatic words: the expanding city attacks the countryside, corrodes and dissolves it. This strange urban life, savage and artificial at the same time, penetrates peasant life, dispossessing it of its traditional features, such as crafts and small centres. The village as a traditional unit of rural life has been absorbed or obliterated by larger entities and has become an integral part of networks of industrial production and consumption. At the same time cities have experienced the dissolution of their social and morphological structure through the extension of financial, commercial and industrial networks accompanied by the dispersion of all sorts of urban fragments: suburbs, residential conglomerations, industrial complexes, tourist resorts, distant urban peripheries and so on.¹

In a powerful metaphor, borrowed from atomic physics, Lefebvre described the urban process as ‘implosion–explosion’: ‘the tremendous concentration (of people, activities, wealth, goods, objects, instruments, means, and thought) of urban reality and the immense explosion, the projection of numerous, disjunct fragments (peripheries, suburbs, vacation homes, satellite towns)’ (Lefebvre 2003 [1970]: 14).

Lefebvre accounted for this process of implosion and explosion, of condensation and dispersion, by introducing the term ‘urban fabric’ (*le tissu urbain*). He never defined this term precisely: it is not reduced to urban morphology, but encompasses all manifestations of the urban; it forms an economic base and the material support of a more or less intense urban way of life that penetrates ever

larger areas. This implies a whole system of material relations but also a system of values. With its varying density, thickness and activity, the urban fabric is more or less tightly woven: it profoundly changes the old urban cores, erodes them and integrates them into a worldwide web; it is differentiated into agglomerations, stretches further out and corrodes the residues of agrarian life. More than a piece of fabric thrown over a territory, this term designates a proliferation allowing larger or smaller areas to escape – thus forming islands of ‘ruralism’ and islands of ‘nature’, which nevertheless have their character completely changed in the course of the process.

At the time when Lefebvre put forward this hypothesis, he expressed a tendency rather than an already existing reality. Extending Marx’s approach from the methodological chapter of the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1973 [1939]), Lefebvre projected the current tendency into the future in order to allow the future to illuminate the past, the virtual to examine and situate the realized. Thus the hypothesis of complete urbanization served as a point of arrival for existing knowledge and as a point of departure for a new study and a new project. The result of this regressive–progressive procedure leads to a virtual point of convergence: the complete urbanization of society marks a decisive turning point and indicates a possibility – the fundamental transformation of society into an urban society. Urbanization lays the groundwork for this urban society, but in order to be realized, it needs a social upheaval – the urban revolution that unleashes and realizes the potentials that the urbanization process generates.

What is the urban society – or the ‘urban’ tout court? Lefebvre did not give any specific answer: the current reality presented itself to the observer as a ‘blind field’, whose properties were still to be detected. The urban society, this virtual object, would reveal itself only as the result of a contradictory historical process full of conflicts and struggles. Curiosity and openness are decisive qualities if we want to understand today’s urban trajectories and to reveal their potentials. Urban reality is by necessity unfinished: it is an open horizon; it is the possible, defined by a direction. In this sense, it is a promise, a project and a practice: to bring the impossible into the realm of the possible.

THE URBAN REVOLUTION TODAY

Looking back, it becomes evident that Lefebvre’s hypothesis of complete urbanization marked a fundamental turning point in critical urban theory and opened up a new way of thinking ‘the urban’.

First, it changed the focus of analysis from urban form to urban process, which has profound consequences for the definition of the urban. For a long time, the urban was defined mainly in respect of a morphological and/or sociospatial form, indicated by the size or density of the population, or by similar characteristics, while approaches that understood the urban as a process of social transformation were relatively rare (see for example, Harvey 1982). Once the urban is conceptualized as process, it becomes obvious that urban form is a floating and ultimately ephemeral

phenomenon, as it is a constantly changing, temporary result of an underlying transformation, and is thus shaped according to the trajectory and the rhythms of urbanization, which brings new urban forms constantly to the fore.

Second, Lefebvre understood the urban as totality, and thus proceeded towards a multidimensional analysis of urbanization while criticizing strongly reductive definitions, which often limit urbanization to one single element or a restricted series of factors, such as the growth of cities or the expansion of urban networks. In contrast to those attempts, Lefebvre strove to grasp the concept's complexity and contradictions – which led him to a conception of urbanization as a process that transforms not only physical and socioeconomic structures but also everyday life and lived experience.

Third, Lefebvre not only critically analysed the phenomenon of urbanization and its implications, but at the same time explored and revealed its potentials. His research was among the first studies that theorized the instrumentality of urbanization processes in the reproduction of capitalist relationships, but at the same time he also explored urban space as a place of transgression and alternative social projects. According to Lefebvre, urbanization carries on this projective energy, which he captured in concepts such as 'centrality', 'difference', 'the right to the city' and 'concrete utopia'.

When Lefebvre was writing four decades ago, the urban society appeared as a black box, an unknown continent stretching out in time and space. Today, we are living on this urban continent: urbanization has become a dominant reality in almost all parts of the globe, giving rise to a great variety of urban situations. We can detect a large range of new urbanization processes that has emerged in recent years, going far beyond what Lefebvre could have observed in his time, such as the emergence of urban mega-regions and urban galaxies (Soja and Kanai 2007), the development of new scales of urbanization, the blurring and rearticulation of urban territories through manifold processes of decentralization and recentralization, the disintegration of the 'hinterland', the urbanization of the 'global rural' and the end of the 'wilderness' (see Brenner and Schmid 2011). We still lack a specific and adequate vocabulary to express these complex processes.

At the same time, new representations of the urban are proliferating. Especially in recent years, a range of interventions into the urban field has been advanced in order to grasp today's urban reality, often echoing Lefebvre's fundamental thesis. The twenty-first century was often declared to be the 'urban century'. One of the most widespread and most-often quoted claims is the thesis asserting that the world entered an 'urban age' because, for the first time in history, more than half the world's population now supposedly lives in cities (UN-Habitat 2007, Burdett and Sudjic 2007). However, this thesis is based on a very narrow and limited definition of urbanization – in fact, it focuses merely on the size of 'cities' as they are defined in national statistics, brought together under the auspices of the UN (for a detailed critique of the urban age concept see Brenner and Schmid 2014).

Such empiricist, city-centric conceptualizations give only pale and even distorted accounts of the full dimensions of urbanization. They ignore all the urbanization processes that are transforming the putatively 'non-urban' spaces

and thus massively underestimate the whole dimension of urbanization. Far from Lefebvre's call for a careful analysis of the complexity of this process, simple concepts dominate today's scientific as well as political debates on cities and urbanization, thus leading to an undifferentiated and ahistorical understanding of urbanization.

At the same time, and this is the other side of the coin, the 'urban' is sometimes perceived as invested with an almost magical power. In recent years, a new meta-narrative evolved that even declares the 'urban' a superior form of life, thereby establishing a decisively city-centric vision of the world developing towards a 'new metropolitan mainstream' (Schmid 2012b). In a kind of urban triumphalism, cities are presented as places of wealth and progress, as engines of innovation, and as privileged places that make people richer and happier (see for example, Glaeser 2011). In this context, the term 'urban revolution' is even used for the promotion of modernization policies and growth-oriented urban development strategies, as books such as *Welcome to the Urban Revolution* (Brugmann 2009), or *The Metropolitan Revolution* (Katz and Bradley 2013) illustrate – tellingly not mentioning Lefebvre at all.

Against such approaches, a revisiting of Lefebvre's original concepts is crucial: do they keep the promise to guide an encompassing and differentiated analysis of urbanization; to stake out future research on the urban question; and to inspire an alternative project of an urban society? And, decisively, how can this theory be mobilized for fruitful applications in many different fields of urban research and practice? The challenge today is to do empirical research with this theory: to use it, to make sense of it, to realize it and to develop it beyond the formulation of its author.

We must reassess the meaning of the 'urban revolution' today. Taking Lefebvre's thesis as a guideline, we present in this volume scenes from highly contradictory and differentiated contemporary urban development. This book brings together contributions from different fields in a novel collection, engaging in the application of Lefebvre's theory and exploring today's urban realities as they unfold in many different situations and constellations.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH WITH LEFEBVRE

How should we analyse urbanization and how can we find practical answers and proposals to current problems and challenges posed by the urban question? Lefebvre gives no clear-cut or ready-to-use proposals, but provides us with a series of important concepts that he developed over decades. Crucially, he put the urban question into an overarching context and developed his theory of the production of (urban) space. This theory had already appeared in his work in rural and urban sociology from the 1940s, but its core was formulated in a relatively short period between 1968 ('The Right to the City') and 1974 (*The Production of Space*). It can be seen as a general social theory integrating the fundamental aspects of social reality, the perceived, the conceived and the lived moments, into a three-dimensional

conception of the production of space. Space can thus be understood as socially produced in the relationships between material social practices, practices of representing space, and practices of its appropriation in everyday life. At the same time, this theory offers a general theoretical framework integrating the main topics of Lefebvre's research: everyday life, the state, and the urban as intermediary and mediating level. Thus the urban lies in the core of this open-ended social theory (Kipfer et al. 2012, Schmid, Chapter 1 in this volume).

For a long time, Lefebvre's work was mostly seen as purely theoretical. It is therefore decisive to underscore that Lefebvre's theoretical concepts were strongly influenced by his own empirical studies as well as by those of his collaborators and students. As Łukasz Stanek (2011) showed in great detail, the theory of production of space has to be seen as a reinterpretation and development of Marxian categories from within a series of studies on the processes of urbanization of postwar France, which Lefebvre carried out or supervised from the late 1940s to the 1980s. This included his own studies on the Pyrenean communities during the Second World War; his research in rural and urban sociology at the Centre d'études sociologiques from the 1940s until the early 1960s; the interdisciplinary research projects headed by him as professor in Strasbourg (1961–65) and Nanterre (1965–73); and the studies on practices of dwelling carried out by the Institut de sociologie urbaine (ISU), which Lefebvre co-founded in 1962 and over which he presided until 1973. In the course of these studies, but also in response to the most heated political debates of postwar France, and his intense exchanges with architects and planners, Lefebvre's concepts were constantly reinterpreted, which contributed to the engaged, contextual, appropriative and performative character of his writings.

However, applications and mobilizations of Lefebvre's theory for empirical studies came late. For a long time, debates on his work concentrated mainly on theoretical questions. The long and difficult history of Lefebvre interpretation through the conjunctures of neo-Marxist urban theory in the 1970s and postmodern geographies of the 1990s was dominated by one-dimensional readings and marked by conflicting views and claims between different epistemological positions. Only in the 1990s did a 'third wave' of Lefebvre interpretation develop that not only bridged the gap between 'political-economic' and 'cultural' readings, but understood Lefebvre's consistent integration of questions of political economy, state theory, language theory, architecture, everyday life and lived experience in an encompassing materialist and dialectical framework as the decisive advantage of his theory (Kipfer et al. 2008a).

In the last two decades, theoretical debates have thus shed light on many aspects of this complex and ramified theoretical work, and successfully clarified many questions, such as the basic construction of this theory, questions of dialectics, the concept of everyday life, the relationship between urbanization and the urban, the role of space, the spatial triad, the state and the production of nature.² By contrast, only rare attempts were made to utilize this theory for concrete research. This situation changed only slowly in the 1990s, when, inspired and propelled by the translation of *The Production of Space* into English (1991), considerably more

applications of this theory appeared, testing it in a wide range of topics, conceptual frameworks and places.

Many of these attempts aimed at an operationalization of Lefebvre's three-dimensional concept of the production of space: Shields (1989) applied it in his case study of a shopping mall in Baltimore; Allen and Pryke (1994) studied the production of the abstract space of finance in London, contrasting the everyday lives and spaces of those who work in the financial markets and those who work in the low-income support sector of the financial sector. Fyfe (1996) analysed modernization processes in postwar Glasgow, highlighting the dialectical relationship between representations of space and spaces of representation, and weaving together discourses about the city in planning and poetry. Dierwechter (2002) looked at the formation of modernities and the production of space through an excavation of informality, urban planning and economic survival in post-apartheid Cape Town. Pile (1996) explored the mobilization of psychoanalytical approaches for urban studies and combined Lefebvre's spatial triad with concepts borrowed from Lacan and Kristeva. Interesting further examples for applications of Lefebvre's work include Cartier (1997) on preservation activists who mobilized place-based representations to fight against development plans in Melaka, Malaysia; Hubbard and Sanders (2003) on street prostitution in Birmingham; and Sin (2003) on the political control of ethnic groups in Singapore.

However, many of those first engagements with Lefebvre in empirical research remained isolated contributions in dispersed research fields and disciplinary contexts, and were not further developed into a more elaborated and lasting research perspective. As Kipfer et al. (2012: 121) remind us in a recently published survey on current Lefebvre debates, Lefebvre's analyses need to be translated, actualized and de- and recontextualized. This means fully appropriating his work, enriching and deploying it in constant interaction with specific empirical studies to bring it into a dialogue with other approaches and eventually to develop new concepts and research perspectives (see also Schmid, Chapter 1 in this volume).

Systematic attempts to introduce Lefebvre's thoughts into urban research have been relatively rare – with the remarkable exception of David Harvey, who, since his pathbreaking book *Social Justice and the City* (1973), has been coming back again and again to Lefebvre's concepts. Another important exception is Edward Soja's work on Los Angeles, which until today represents a major attempt to deploy Lefebvre's theory for the analysis of urbanization (Soja 1989, 1996, 2000). While his decidedly postmodern reading of Lefebvre and his reinterpretation and redefinition of the spatial triad have been criticized (Kipfer et al. 2008a, Schmid 2008), his empirical studies reveal a remarkable 'urban imagination' and a sensibility for long-neglected aspects of urbanization – and illustrate the productivity of the combination of the concept of lived space in a political–economic perspective.

From a different epistemological starting point based on German-language critical debates on space and urban dialectics, another strand of urban analysis has evolved, mainly in two research groups in Frankfurt and Zurich, which critically analysed the urban development of these two cities while at the same time making critical interventions in public debates. Both groups developed a similar theoretical

approach, integrating Lefebvre's writings on the urban and on space, and especially the spatial triad, with questions of urban struggle, the global city concept, the regulation approach and debates on urbanity and difference (see Hitz et al. 1995). This led to a series of contributions that productively combined Lefebvre's urban epistemology and the triad of production of space by Walter Prigge (1986, 2008 [1991], 1995, 1996) and Christian Schmid (Hartmann et al. 1986, Schmid 1998, 2004, 2006, 2012a).

In a related effort, starting from critical studies on urban development in Toronto, Kanishka Goonewardena and Stefan Kipfer (2004, 2005) created an original approach to urban analysis especially based on, among others, the concept of 'levels of social reality' (Goonewardena 2005) and the concept of 'difference', shedding light on the key distinction between 'minimal' and 'maximal' difference (Kipfer 2008). These efforts were complemented by a long-term project to develop a renewed Lefebvrian approach with a decidedly postcolonial perspective (Kipfer 2007, Kipfer and Goonewardena, Chapter 4 in this volume).

The accelerated globalization and urbanization of recent decades has also changed the scales of urban territories dramatically, creating massive implications for regional development and regional politics. Starting from the widely debated 'scale question', Neil Brenner referred to Lefebvre's insights in order to bring together the scale question and the urban question (Brenner 1997, 2000; for a reply see Kipfer 2009). He consistently widened the scope of analysis on the role of the state in the production of space and developed the concept of 'state spaces' (Brenner 2004), mobilizing Lefebvre's work *De l'État* (1976–78) that had passed almost without notice for years and has unfortunately not been translated into English (a selection of chapters and essays has been published in Brenner and Elden 2009).

All these engagements in urban research posed the question of social struggle and urban social movements. As early as the 1970s, this field was theoretically defined and structured by Manuel Castells's conception of 'collective consumption' and the related concept of 'urban social movements' (Castells 1977 [1972], 1973, 1983). In contrast to this approach, Lefebvre did not conceptualize urban social movements as such, but understood them always in the context of the dialectical contradiction between urbanization and social struggle. Herein lies the specificity of Lefebvre's perspective on urban movements (see for example, Schmid 1998, Uitermark 2004). From this point of view, Lefebvre's call for the 'right to the city', serving as the title of his first book on urbanization from 1968 (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]), not only marked a political statement and defined a specific urban perspective, but was also the starting point of a debate that is today more vibrant than ever, with or without reference to Lefebvre's theory (see below). An important contribution in this respect was Don Mitchell's book (2003) on the right to the city, public space and social justice, which focused on various struggles in the USA throughout history in order to show that the 'right to the city' is a demand that goes far beyond the provision of decent housing, but includes also the collective creation of urban spaces in response to the needs, desires and pleasures of its inhabitants.³

Another important strand of research not yet fully developed until today is the analysis of the urbanization of nature, leading to an urban political ecology that also owes much to Lefebvre's insights, especially to his notion of socially produced nature and his understanding of urbanization as the production of a second nature. Thus political ecology was extended to an analysis of the urban condition, often explicitly referring to Lefebvre's thesis of complete urbanization (see for example Keil 2003). Foundational in this respect was Erik Swyngedouw's (1996) analysis of the urbanization of water, illustrated by the example of the lack of access to potable water in the city of Guayaquil in Ecuador, coming to the conclusion that the social struggle for water was fundamentally a struggle for the right to the city itself. Those ideas were further developed in Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003), Swyngedouw (2004) and Heynen et al. (2006).⁴

If Lefebvre's theory of production of space entered architectural culture only slowly, it was because of the strong association of the discourse on 'architecture as space' with the architectural avant-gardes of the 1920s and 1930s, against which some of the most innovative architects of the second half of the twentieth century rebelled, including Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Rem Koolhaas (Scott-Brown and Venturi 2004, Koolhaas 2007, 344). Yet within the debates on the 'spatial turn', or the reassertion of space in social theory that occurred in the course of the 1980s (Soja 1989), Lefebvre's concept of space was contrasted with the discourse of modern architecture and functionalist urbanism, against which Lefebvre had been writing since the 1950s (Stanek 2011). Rather than returning to the modernist definition of 'architecture as space', his concept of space as produced and productive in multiple, heterogeneous and often competing practices was taken up by architectural and urban historians and theorists. Lefebvre's argument that the production of capitalist modernity allows for a retrospective recognition of space as always-already produced offered a new perspective on architecture's instrumentality as perceived individually and collectively, experienced, interpreted, contested and appropriated (Blau 1999, Arnade et al. 2002, Stieber 2006).

This was complemented by discussions in postcolonial and feminist theories focused on the everyday as a place of submission and normalization, transgression and resistance; Lefebvre's work was a key reference here (see for example, Ross 1995, 1997), despite critiques on moments of 'infuriating sexism' in his texts (McLeod 2000). For many scholars, counter-hegemonic practices of everyday space production became sites where the agency of architecture in the reproduction of social relationships could be addressed and, potentially, extended towards architectural innovation. Hence, within a reaffirmed understanding of architecture as production of space, Iain Borden studied skateboarding and argued that it is a particular type of space-time production that offers a 'critical exterior' to architecture and lends itself to rethinking 'architecture's manifold possibilities' (Borden 2001: 1).

Lefebvre's theory of production of space was developed into a number of specific questions, including that of centrality (Devisme 1998) and in a critical account of architectural projects (Milgrom 2002, 2008). In a much wider research perspective, ETH Studio Basel (Diener et al. 2006) was aiming at an encompassing analysis of urban Switzerland based theoretically and methodologically on

Lefebvre's hypothesis of complete urbanization and a reformulated concept of the spatial triad (see Schmid, Chapter 1 in this volume).

The position of Lefebvre's theory for architectural culture was one of the core questions in the work of Łukasz Stanek, who reconstructed Lefebvre's own exchanges with artists, architects and planners of various generations (Stanek 2011), and showed the productivity of Lefebvre's theory in architectural research (Stanek 2012). He studied the position of architectural practices within the division of labour in space production and, in particular, he analysed representations of space and spaces of representation as both products of architectural labour and as intermediaries, tools, instruments, milieus and media of space production (Stanek 2009, 2014).

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century the stream of applications and mobilizations of Lefebvre's theory expanded, spreading out into many different fields. Today, contributions informed by Lefebvre's concepts may be found in fields as diverse as geography, sociology, cultural anthropology, urban studies, cultural studies, architecture and urban design, planning, humanities, literature studies, arts, pedagogy, history, and even legal studies. They are operating with many different concepts, often stretch out over several disciplines and thus contribute to the constitution of transdisciplinary fields of research. A short overview of most recent contributions is no longer possible.

In this volume, we present a selection of essays covering a wide variety of applications of Lefebvre's theory in urban research, architecture and urban design, providing several cross-sections through these vast and transdisciplinary fields. The texts gathered in this volume stem mainly from two conferences: 'Rethinking Theory, Space, and Production: Henri Lefebvre Today' (Delft University of Technology, 11–13 November 2008) and 'Urban Research and Architecture: Beyond Henri Lefebvre' (ETH Zurich, 24–26 November 2009).⁵ Starting with a section (Part I) gathering contributions that engage with the thesis of complete urbanization and its consequences, we focus in Part II on the very core of the urban question in discussing the power of abstraction, the contradictions of abstract space, the role of difference and the call for the right to the city. The question of everyday architectures and the application of the spatial triad are the subject of Part III, and Part IV, finally, discusses the possibilities of 'concrete utopias' and the contributions of urban projects and strategies to the development of an urban society.

ON COMPLETE URBANIZATION

How to analyse complete urbanization? How to make use of this concept? Part I questions the importance and actuality of Lefebvre's hypothesis of 'complete urbanization', which he posited more than four decades ago. This thesis has been an important inspiration for many accounts of the urban, but it was only rarely examined in detail and applied to concrete empirical analyses of urban territories.⁶ This changed in recent years, when a Lefebvre-inspired debate on 'planetary urbanization' evolved (see Brenner and Schmid 2011, Merrifield 2013), starting

from the observation that a variegated terrain of urbanized conditions is being produced, extending well beyond the zones of agglomeration that have long monopolized the attention of urban researchers. In a recently edited volume that refers directly to Lefebvre's concept of 'implosion–explosion', Brenner (2014) presents a wide collection of already published as well as new papers on this question.

Under conditions of complete urbanization, the meaning of the urban must itself be fundamentally reimagined both in theory and in practice. This perspective is introduced by Christian Schmid in Chapter 1: 'The Trouble with Henri: Urban Research and the Theory of the Production of Space'. He analyses the difficulties involved in applying Lefebvre's theory to concrete urban research, focusing especially on the analysis of complete urbanization of Switzerland and presenting methodological tools for the analysis of extended processes of urbanization.

To take complete urbanization seriously means looking at all parts of the planet, studying the uneven development of capitalist urbanization and exploring the great differences that are evolving today. This becomes obvious in Chapter 2, by Elisa Bertuzzo, 'During the Urban Revolution – Conjunctures on the Streets of Dhaka'. Starting from a long-term engagement with urbanization in Dhaka by creatively applying the triad of space as structuring concept (Bertuzzo 2009), she provides a reading of the entire city by constantly zooming in and out of various neighbourhoods, thus showing the simultaneity of different urban situations, exploring what urbanization means today and what it involves. Bertuzzo highlights that, within the ongoing urban revolution, the urban takes on many different forms, thereby also amalgamating rural and urban structures in unprecedented ways.

Following this line of argument, Wing-Shing Tang (Chapter 3) analyses the urbanization of Hong Kong with the example of the complex relationships between the urban and the rural in this process. In his chapter, 'Where Lefebvre Meets the East: Urbanization in Hong Kong', he questions Lefebvre's account of the contradictory relationship between city and country and makes clear that we have to be careful with concepts of the urban that are based on Western historical experiences. He invites us to rethink the rural and the urban, and the way they are related to each other, coming to the provocative conclusion that Hong Kong experiences at the same time a ruralization of the city and an urbanization of the countryside. While Lefebvre (as well as Marx and Engels) was well aware of the different relationships between city and country that existed in different parts of the world,⁷ this intervention starts an important debate on the very content of the urban and the rural and their mutual relationships in the course of urbanization.

This debate leads directly to the postcolonial critique of Lefebvre's concepts. Based on their longstanding engagement with postcolonial theory, Stefan Kipfer and Kanishka Goonewardena are proposing a reformulation of the concept of colonization, enriched by lectures of Frantz Fanon and based on a rereading of Lefebvre's *De l'État* (1976–78), going far beyond Lefebvre's original conception and use of this term. In Chapter 4, 'Henri Lefebvre and "Colonization":

From Reinterpretation to Research', they apply this approach by comparing neo-colonial strategies in public housing redevelopment projects in Paris and Toronto.

These contributions raise the question of whether we can apply Lefebvre's concepts directly to all possible situations in the contemporary urbanized world. Does the Western bias of his concepts, strongly (but not exclusively) influenced by his experiences in Paris and the Pyrenees, inevitably limit the explanatory power of his approach? A planetary perspective can only be reached with a multi-polar analysis of knowledge production and political struggle focusing on the differences that shape the urban world today. It is necessary to destabilize well-established Western narratives in urban studies and to take into consideration the wide range and great variety of urban conditions that shape today's world (Robinson 2006, Roy 2009). In this respect, Lefebvre's open-ended conception of the urban could indeed be one (out of several) important starting points for conversations about urbanity and urbanisms across the diversity of contemporary urban situations and their multiple histories (Robinson 2014).

CONTRADICTIONS OF ABSTRACT SPACE

From the debates and contributions on urbanization presented above, a further question emerges: what is the urban in an urbanized society? One of the main theoretical consequences of the thesis of complete urbanization is the need for a new definition of the urban: if the contradiction between city and country no longer serves as the epistemological anchor for the definition of the urban, this new definition must be based on the properties and differentiations developing inside the urban itself. In Lefebvre's dialectical conception the urban is a concrete abstraction, defined by the contradiction between abstract space and differential space (see Stanek 2008). From this epistemological basis Lefebvre developed an understanding of the power of abstraction, which served as a tool for his forceful critique of planning and design concepts. In the perspective of complete urbanization, Lefebvre distilled three terms that structure and define the contradictions of the urban field: 'centrality', 'mediation' and 'difference' (see Schmid 2006, Kipfer et al. 2008b). The urban must be understood as a force field marked by constant debates, controversies and struggles.

One key concept in this respect is 'the right to the city', which Lefebvre formulated in response to the struggles of the late 1960s in large parts of the world, but also reflecting his own experiences in Paris, as well as his historical studies of the Paris Commune of 1871. In recent decades, this term has been employed in a bewildering variety of contexts, in the most diverse adaptations and appropriations. Whether developed with or without explicit reference to Lefebvre's original concept, these debates have been marked by radical as well as reformist positions and strategies. In France, there has long been a split between a position oriented towards Lefebvre the revolutionary (Coornaert and Garnier 1994, Garnier 2010) and a reform-oriented, social-democratic position trying to integrate Lefebvre's call into official politics (Castro 1994). In the middle of the first decade of the 2000s 'the right to the

city' has been placed on the official agenda of UN-Habitat.⁸ The literature on the different aspects and readings of the right to the city is meanwhile so widespread that it is no longer possible to give a short overview of it.⁹

For Lefebvre, urban struggle was always a decisive reference point for the understanding of the urban. Set into the wider perspective of his theory, it must be clear that his concept of the right to the city is far away from liberal claims for diversity of city life, multicultural tolerance or the concepts of the 'creative city' that have mushroomed in the last decade: it includes resistance to the concretization of globally competitive abstract space, struggle against the reduction of urban differences, and protests against the enclosures of everyday life. The results of these struggles are always open, as is the urban process itself. Part II of this book refers to these concepts and resonates in many ways with Lefebvre's dialectics. It studies various examples of the functionalization, homogenization and commodification of urban space, and explores the struggles involved in the creation of concrete utopias of 'difference', a term that Lefebvre in his later writing substituted for the 'right to the city' (Schmid 2012b).

Chapter 5, 'Plan Puebla Panama: The Violence of Abstract Space', by Japhy Wilson deploys this contradiction between 'abstract' and 'differential' space, and analyses the various struggles against the regional development programme for southern Mexico and Central America, the Plan Puebla Panama. He analyses the effects of this plan on the large-scale restructuring of the whole region and shows that it embodies the structural, symbolic and direct forms of violence inherent in the process of abstraction.

Another instance of abstraction processes in space production is analysed by Jean-Pierre Garnier in Chapter 6, "'Greater Paris": Urbanization but No Urbanity. How Lefebvre Predicted Our Metropolitan Future'. Garnier discusses urban development in contemporary Paris on the tracks of Lefebvre's own critique of planning and urban development so forcefully put forward in *The Right to the City* and *The Urban Revolution* (1996 [1968]). He critically evaluates the recent debates on a fundamental restructuring of the Paris region through the spatial strategy to create a 'Grand Paris', impressively demonstrating that Lefebvre's analytical instruments have lost none of their power.

These contributions are complemented by critiques of urban strategies that are dominated by the ideological concepts of 'global competitiveness' and 'creative cities'. They are analysed by Greig Charnock and Ramon Ribera-Fumaz in Chapter 7, using the example of the urban restructuring of Barcelona ('The Production of Urban Competitiveness: Modelling 22@Barcelona'). This contribution opens the perspective on a wide range of studies referring to Lefebvre's concepts in the critical analysis of strategies of upgrading, gentrification and urban regeneration.¹⁰

Finally the discussion in Part II comes back to the original question of the right to the city in its most basic notion as the right to stay in one's place and to survive in it. In her contribution, 'Reconstructing New Orleans and the Right to the City', M. Christine Boyer (Chapter 8) carefully analyses the reconstruction of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (2005) and shows in detail how the needs and desires of

the most vulnerable inhabitants, including their right to return to New Orleans, are denied for a second time.

EVERYDAY ARCHITECTURES

The starting and the end point of any Lefebvrian analysis is everyday life. Urbanization and the changes that come with it are first and foremost visible in the changes in the everyday – the central indicator of the condition of a society. The concept of everyday life was also the first conveyor of Lefebvre's concepts into architectural history and theory in Anglo-American architectural audience in the 1990s. Writing after the translation into English of his major works, Mary McLeod (1997) embraced the concept of the 'everyday', rather than 'space', and argued that it is a resource for an architectural practice opposing the commodification of architecture, both in the 'banality and mediocrity' of the generic built environment and in the star system of the neo-avant-garde. Several other authors bringing Lefebvre to architectural debates at the turn of the century built up a contrast between a 'small-a' architecture of the everyday, ordinary and anonymous; and the 'big-A' Architecture as an individualized, unique and extraordinary object (Upton 2002). The aim was either to challenge the position of the designers by shifting power from the professional expert to the inhabitant, or to refuse to choose one of the sides of this binary opposition and instead advocate for a constant interchange between the ordinary and extraordinary in architectural practice, with the everyday as a productive context for the making, occupation and criticism of architecture (Crawford 1999; Till and Wigglesworth 1998).

The everyday is the guiding line for the chapter 'Ground Exploration: Producing Everyday Life at the South Bank, 1948–1951' (Chapter 9), by Nick Beech, who discusses the dialectical conditioning between the production of space, the production of subjects/bodies, and the production of state and market forms within the emergent welfare state of mid-twentieth-century Britain. Here, Lefebvre's concepts clarify the entanglement of nature, humans and matter within new forms of 'state–space' at various scales.

Beech stresses that his analysis requires a return to Lefebvre's spatial triad. As we have shown above, this triad was applied in many ways in many studies, and it is made operative also in many contributions in this volume. In discussing and applying Lefebvre's concept of space, we should be aware that we can understand space only in relation to time. Indeed, the notion of 'production of space' already implies time, as 'production' is a process that develops in time. A remarkable complement to the spatial triad was Lefebvre's posthumously published *Éléments de Rythmanalyse*; after its translation into English (Lefebvre 2004 [1992]) the concept of rhythmanalysis became one of the topical guidelines for urban research (see especially the wide selection of contributions in Edensor 2012, cf. also Highmore 2005, Meyer 2008, Vogelpohl 2012).

This temporal aspect of triadic space production is a common thread in the chapters by Ákos Moravánszky, Mejrema Zatrić and Fraya Frehse. In Chapter 10, 'The

Space of the Square: A Lefebvrian Archaeology of Budapest', Ákos Moravánszky addresses four urban squares within the *longue durée* of the production of space in Budapest. He comes back to the 'first' spatial turn in the second half of the nineteenth century: the introduction of the concept of 'urban space' (*Stadtraum* in German) into discussions about the city, under the influence of research and theoretical work in the physiology and psychology of visual perception. This historicizing of the concept of urban space allows Moravánszky to question its ideological function, and indeed the possible ideological function of Lefebvre's triad, where the supposed harmony between the perceived, the conceived and the lived obscures the surface-bound realities of real estate, dominating the production of space in post-socialist Budapest.

The role of an architectural object in the production of space is discussed by Mejrema Zatrić in her chapter, 'The Archi-texture of Power: An Inquiry into the Spatial Textures of Post-socialist Sarajevo' (Chapter 11). Zatrić focuses on Marijin Dvor, on the verge of the historic core of Sarajevo, and studies the production of centralities in successive ideological eras, from the erection of a Catholic church in the 1930s, the construction of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic in the 1970s, to a Saudi-based real estate development in the post-Yugoslav period. Inspired by Lefebvre's comments on architecture as 'architexture', Zatrić develops an analysis of architecture as a part of the production of centrality, developing Lefebvre's own analysis of the campus of Paris-Nanterre in May 1968 (Lefebvre 1969 [1968]; for discussion, see Stanek 2011).

Finally, in Chapter 12, 'For Difference 'in and through' São Paulo. The Regressive-Progressive Method', Fraya Frehse offers a creative reading of Lefebvre's triad in an anthropological study of the everyday uses of São Paulo's cathedral square. Lefebvre's spatial triad is translated here into the analysis of the mediating role of space between perceptions, experiences and concepts, and reveals the square as a *different* urban space.

URBAN SOCIETY AND ITS PROJECTS

Part IV of this book questions the very concepts on which it is based: what is an urban society? What is the urban? For Lefebvre, the development towards an urban society is at the same time an analytical hypothesis and a social and political project. As such, it poses the question of urban strategies that could fruitfully exploit the potentials and possibilities that the urban contains.

Key to this question is the concept of representation in its double aspect: as 'space of representation', which Lefebvre described as a space referring to an 'elsewhere' that becomes embodied in the everyday experience; and as 'representations of space'. Architects operate at the intersection of these two aspects of representation, and in Chapter 13, 'Architectural Project and the Agency of Representation: The Case of Nowa Huta, Poland', Łukasz Stanek shows how competing representations

intervene into the production of space in the ‘first socialist city in Poland’. Lefebvre’s strategic decision to theorize practices of representing space as practices of production of space, rather than seeing representations as secondary, was the starting point for the research on Nowa Huta. Instead of confirming or refuting particular representations of this city, Stanek studies specific conjunctures in which representations of space became operative; for example as arguments in municipal investment policies, as conceptual frames for architectural competitions; as operative design concepts, but also as vessels of everyday experiences of urban spaces.

The critique of the mobilization of affective ‘lived space’ is developed by Ulrich Best with the example of the conflict concerning the deflection of an airport in Berlin (Chapter 14: ‘The Debate about Berlin Tempelhof Airport, or: A Lefebvorean Critique of Recent Debates about Affect in Geography’). Best argues that the turn towards memory and affect allows redrawing the social and political geography of the city of Berlin. By discussing the ‘spatial politics of affect’ around the airport he problematizes the space of affect not only as a potential space of freedom but also as a potential space of control.

In ‘Novi Beograd: Reinventing Utopia’ (Chapter 15) Ljiljana Blagojević addresses the urban problematic of a post-socialist city. Planned and constructed during socialist rule in the former Yugoslavia according to the principles of modern urbanism and the paradigm of the ‘functional city’, in the post-socialist period the urban space in Novi Beograd was transformed primarily as a result of privatization, commodification and gentrification. Discussed by Lefebvre in the 1980s (Lefebvre et al. 2009), Novi Beograd becomes a privileged example for reassessing the concepts of the right to the city and urban citizenship in today’s post-socialist condition.

In Chapter 16, ‘Lefebvorean Vaguenesses: Going Beyond Diversion in the Production of New Spaces’, Jan Lilliendahl Larsen shows the experience of Supertanker, a network of architects, sociologists and geographers in the informal and creative diversions of industrial wastelands in the harbour of Copenhagen. Larsen shows how the activities of Supertanker revealed some of the potentials in Lefebvorean concepts such as the lived, the urban, the moment, the possible, self-management, appropriation and, in particular, diverted space. The author suggests ‘vagueness’ as an essential conceptualization of the potentials and perils of diverted spaces, connoting openness towards lived experiences and thus varying conditions of possibility for participation in and appropriation of an unevenly developed social space through the different moments of association.

A remarkable contribution to this discussion is made by the newly found manuscript ‘Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment’, edited by Łukasz Stanek. In this book, written in 1973 and never published, Lefebvre argues for architectural ways of thinking about habitation, and sketches a vision of architecture as a ‘pedagogy of space’ that is not a disciplinary practice but a development of the senses (Lefebvre 2014).

THEORY, NOT METHOD

What is the result of the current conjuncture of engagement with Lefebvre's approach? As the chapters in this book clearly show, Lefebvre's theory has proved its capacity to guide research, to be an important source of inspiration and to invite researchers to further develop their ideas by exchanges between theoretical experimentation and empirical research. It is possible to treat a wide range of different questions in urban research with this approach in a sincere and sophisticated way. In relation to earlier waves of Lefebvre interpretation, the current engagement is marked by great rigour in theoretical conceptualization; it uses the theory not to search for catchphrases to decorate a text, but as an instrument of analysis and research. Furthermore, many contributions successfully combine Lefebvre's theory with other approaches, as well as develop original interpretations and appropriations.

As this book shows, there are many ways to understand Lefebvre's theory and to make use of it. The chapters that follow cover many aspects, but they all share certain characteristics.¹¹

First of all, they appear as decisively *transdisciplinary*, encompassing the work of sociologists, geographers, architects and planners, but also historians of architecture and the city. Lefebvre's concepts, such as everyday life, complete urbanization, the perceived, conceived, lived space, the concept of rhythms, and the 'right to the city', are mobilized not as the lowest common denominators of the various disciplines involved, but as research perspectives stressing the heterogeneity of social practices of the production of space. Thus a convergence of perspectives that appears through these different engagements not only reveals shared points of interest, but also establishes a transdisciplinary field of urban research.

Second, most of the contributions are characterized by an ambition to link the analysis of a specific case study to an account of the *urban society as a whole*. This ambition – or the bet on the possibility of such a research perspective – is what distinguishes these contributions from much of today's scientific production on urbanization processes. While highlighting a specific aspect or exploring a well-defined problematic, they bypass the common scheme of exemplification of general processes and phenomena, such as 'gentrification' or 'urban social movements'. What brings these different accounts together is their shared understanding that urban society is becoming 'planetary'. Thus, reading these chapters, an overall picture emerges – however uneven, fractured and contradictory – of a planetary urban society.

Third, most of these contributions develop Lefebvre's understanding of *production of space* as a dialectical process irreducible to one original contradiction. The three 'moments' of space production, as theorized by Lefebvre, do not form a synthesis but rather exist in interaction, in conflict or in alliance with each other. What is crucial in this respect is not to apply this triad in a schematic way, but to develop it in view of each case study according to its specificity and complexity.

A fourth characteristic is that many authors treat Lefebvre's theory more as a *general orientation* than as a solid and codified corpus of knowledge. This relates directly to Lefebvre's specific approach to introducing concepts by drawing complex networks of relationships between them rather than defining them in an essentialist and isolated manner. In this way, they become structuring elements of his attempt to theorize space as part of a general social theory.

This points finally to the Marxist core of Lefebvre's theory, which he developed in a persistent dialogue with the writings of Marx while, in many cases, opposing their dominant readings (Stanek 2011). Lefebvre constantly stressed the *non-reductionist character* of the thinking of Marx and aimed at thinking the social whole without reducing the underlying heterogeneity of its phenomena and processes.

What becomes clear is that Lefebvre's concepts are not technical, well-defined and ready-to-hand tools to be instantly implemented. In that sense, doing research 'with' Lefebvre goes far beyond a simple application of concepts and ideas. It is not possible to apply them using a unified method, not even with a standardized set of methods. As this book clearly shows, a wide range of methods came into operation for performing a methodological multiplicity.

Theory, not method: this is Lefebvre's legacy in urban research, to which this volume subscribes. Even in those few contexts in which he characterized his own work by means of a 'method', he did not prescribe a systematic research formula. Rather, he preferred the term '*démarche*' (procedure) to indicate the openness of his research. He aimed at a confrontation of a variety of methods from within a shared theoretical framework, which allows outlining long-term research projects and, in turn, offers criteria for choosing specific case studies from within a historical conjuncture. These two sides of Lefebvre's work – the theoretical guidelines that form a persistent structure throughout his texts, and the experience of their operationalization in response to urgent questions – constitute the essential dynamics of his writings and one that can be fruitfully learned from and developed today. Taking Lefebvre as a starting point for research and design is thus still an endeavour and an adventure, and an expedition into unknown fields.

NOTES

- 1 See here, and in the following paragraphs: Lefebvre (1996 [1968]: 71ff, 119, 123), Lefebvre (2003 [1970]: 3f, 16f, 23, 166f).
- 2 For an overview see especially Gottdiener (1985), Schmidt (1990), Kofman and Lebas (1996), Shields (1999), Gardiner (2000), Elden (2004), Schmid (2005), Merrifield (2006), Roberts (2006), Goonewardena et al. (2008), Brenner and Elden (2009), Ajzenberg et al. (2011), Stanek (2011), Goonewardena (2011), Loftus (2012).
- 3 Other important contributions to this debate from the early 2000s can be found for example, in Staeheli et al. (2002); see also Purcell (2003).
- 4 See also Whitehead et al. (2006), Whitehead (2009), Angelo and Wachsmuth (2014).
- 5 For full programs of the conferences, see: www.henrilefebvre.org.
- 6 For exceptions see Diener et al. (2006), and Monte-Mór (2014 [1995]).

- 7 Cf. for example, Lefebvre (2003 [1970]: 119).
- 8 A critical analysis of the use of the concept 'the right to the city' in the policies of UN agencies is presented in Kuymulu (2013).
- 9 For a discussion of the basic concept see Schmid (2012b); for an overview of the debate in relation to urban social movements see Mayer (2012). The question of citizenship is approached, among others, in Gilbert and Dikeç (2008). In a wider context see also David Harvey's (2012) discussion of this conception.
- 10 See for example, Wilson and Wouters (2004) on Chicago, Davidson (2007) on London, and Dörfler (2010, 2011) on Berlin and Hamburg. Phillips (2002) analysed gentrification processes in two villages in south-east England. For two different Lefebvorean analyses of the political mobilizations around the demolitions of the Star Ferry pier and the Queen's pier in Hong Kong, see Ng et al. (2010) and Ku (2012).
- 11 This is based largely on Stanek and Schmid (2011).

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