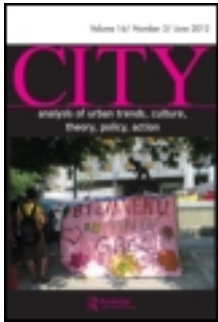


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Marxists, libertarians and the city

A necessary debate

Marcelo Lopes de Souza

Cities for people, not for profit. Critical urban theory and the right to the city, Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer (eds). Routledge, London and New York, 2012, 284 pp., ISBN 978-0-415-60178-8, US\$39.95 (pbk).

Prologue

After the publication of *City's* special issue on 'Cities for People, Not for Profit' in 2009¹—where many of these chapters had their first incarnation—I published a critique in the same journal aimed at raising the authors' awareness of some of the shortcomings and omissions I found there. The book I now review is—as I would like to underline—certainly full of merits, as were many of the original papers themselves. Nevertheless, these merits should not blind us to the problems to be found there as well, and I believe it is important that I repeat some of my original criticisms.

As already stated in my initial response, I am writing from a perspective whose particularities I want to stress: I am a libertarian² author commenting on a book that is essentially committed to Marxism (and from whose viewpoint 'critical urban theory' is fundamentally, if not exclusively, Marxist), and I am also a Latin American (more specifically a Brazilian) scholar discussing works written predominantly by European and US-American colleagues (whose contributions I feel are often limited not only by

this situation, but also by an implicit and contradictory Eurocentrism). Thus, we have already arrived at the two main pillars of my critical account.

No contribution in the field of social sciences, urban studies included, is free of 'accent', since every piece of knowledge directly related to social life is both culturally embedded and historically–geographically situated. As 'cosmopolitan' as we can sometimes be, we always speak from *some-where*—and the place in which we live or have been socialised shapes our worldview and political options no less than our conscious political–philosophical choices and affiliations. Therefore, it goes without saying that even if my remarks are sometimes more or less 'general' in their character and above all in their theoretical implications, they surely and unavoidably reveal a 'particular' flavour and reach in many respects—a limitation that applies to *all* of us, not only to scholars based in the so-called 'global South', as some colleagues from the 'global North' often seem to forget.

The context in which the authors of *Cities for People, Not for Profit* live and work has certainly left its 'footprints'. Many remarks on globally relevant problems, factors,

processes and challenges are clearly made from a specific perspective—in the majority of chapters, from a European or North American one. This is obviously not a problem in itself, as a more or less specific perspective is unavoidable. As I stated before, ‘[t]he problem lies somewhere else indeed, and it is related to excessive simplifications and generalisations’.³ In fact, it is related to a lack of awareness of the specificity of some theoretical assumptions on the one hand, and to the lack of awareness of the importance of different kinds and levels of epistemic (and political) ‘otherness’, on the other.

Prolonging (and sometimes renewing) the tradition of Marxist urban studies

The vitality of ‘urban Marxism’ during the 1970s and 1980s (stretching even later to some extent) is undeniable. Taken as a whole, it has been the most important specific ‘school’ and source of inspiration for all radically minded scholars interested in urban studies, including myself. Moreover, it has been a very relevant trench of intellectual resistance and source of academic innovation in both geography and sociology.

Cities for People, Not for Profit is a descendant of this lineage, with its focus on the potentialities of the (Marxist) urban political economy perspective. Considering how urban political economy has been neglected over the past two decades in favour of more fashionable subjects—alongside a certain conservative and depoliticised understanding of ‘culture’, in which the latter appears deprived of a consistent or clear connection with power relations, the interests of classes and groups, and the (re)production of the material world—even a libertarian should have no difficulties in admitting that the kind of effort represented by *Cities for People, Not for Profit* is valuable from a critical standpoint. (Of course, economism is a problem in itself, and I feel that even many ‘heterodox’ Marxists are not really inclined

to take this problem as seriously as is necessary; though culturalism is by no means an acceptable alternative either.) I think Kanishka Goonewardena makes a good point when he says in his chapter ‘Space and Revolution in Theory and Practice: Eight Theses’ that ‘[...] the inspiration for it [the agenda of difference], if it can be called that, comes rather from liberal-populist valorization of ethno-cultural identity, more often than not aligned with state-sponsored ideologies of “multiculturalism”’; and, as he continues, ‘[t]he “celebration” of actually existing identities becomes the norm here, if not “toleration”; but rarely “critique”’ (p. 94).

However, culturalism and some kind of uncritical ‘multiculturalism’ have been by no means the sole challenges for critical analysis (and praxis). As Tom Slater says in his good chapter on gentrification (‘Missing Marcuse: On Gentrification and Displacement’), the last decades have been lean times for the people on the ground and activists ‘fighting for affordable housing, protecting against displacement and insisting on viewing housing not as a commodity but as a source of basic need satisfaction, upon which people depend absolutely’ (p. 172). We can add that the last two or three decades, a period marked to a large extent by reactionary measures and trends at many levels (in academia as much as anywhere), have been lean times for those academics clamouring for more social justice as well as for critical analysis.

However, the often exaggerated prominence of ‘urban Marxism’ in the context of radical urban studies has also contributed to the neglect of some themes and authors (especially libertarian ones), a problem sadly facilitated by the fact that libertarian contributions have often been ignored or underestimated by other libertarians themselves. (Curiously, this ignorance does not apply to all fields: in both political philosophy and the history of political ideas, the libertarian contributions have received much more attention, sometimes even on the part of

non-libertarians.) The openness of geography and sociology to radical ideas in the 1970s and 1980s was in actuality remarkably narrow, giving the impression of a ‘Marxist monopoly’ regarding anticapitalist thought—a monopoly that never actually existed. The situation has changed little since then, in spite of the fact that outside academia libertarian principles, methods and ethos have increasingly gained visibility since the 1990s.

In his brilliant chapter ‘Critical Theory and “Gray Space”: Mobilization of the Colonized’, devoted to Bedouin resistance in Israel/Palestine, Oren Yiftachel (beside Goonewardena one of the very few non-European/non-North American contributors to the book) drives our attention to some of the limitations of mainstream ‘critical urban theories’. He writes:

‘[...] most critical urban theories (CUT), while providing vital foundations for the understanding of cities and regions, have not sufficiently accounted for the implications of a new political geography, characterized by the proliferation of “gray spaces” of informalities and the emergence of new urban colonial relations’ (p. 152)

He then explains the basic features of the central concept of his text:

‘The concept of “gray space” refers to developments, enclaves, populations, and transactions positioned between the “lightness” of legality/approval/safety, and the “darkness” of eviction/destruction/death. Gray spaces are neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today’s urban regions, which exist partially outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans.’ (p. 153)

I will return to Yiftachel’s criticism of the shortcomings of current Marxist ‘critical urban theories’. For now, it suffices to stress that besides challenging academic Eurocentrism, he also shows enough courage to critique one of the central notions of the book, saying that ‘[d]espite its wide appeal, the notion [of “right to the city”] is rather vague’ (p. 159),

and—about its formulator—that ‘[Lefebvre] never developed his theory academically or practically’ (p. 159). That is not to say that Yiftachel does not value Lefebvre’s contribution; but it is a remarkably positive, and a relatively rare, phenomenon, that he does not restrict himself to uncritical exegesis or mere intellectual reproduction.

To be sure, Yiftachel does not much consider critical ideas and theories from outside Marxism, and libertarian contributions seem to be non-existent for him. Nevertheless, his sensitive and powerful analysis is a refreshing example of the possibilities for the renewal of a tradition.

The limits of a too self-referential Marxism

While *Cities for People, Not for Profit* certainly contributes to the renewal of the Marxist traditions, it unfortunately suffers from its indifference or ignorance of libertarian contributions to critical urban studies and theory. For instance, Goonewardena writes that ‘Toni Negri (2009 [2002]) has underlined the centrality of urban struggles to revolutionary politics today, arguing that “the metropolis is to the multitude what the factory used to be to the working class”’ (p. 99), yet seems to ignore that Murray Bookchin paid a great deal of attention to the urban scene and its activists as early as in the 1960s, continuing through the whole of his working life into the 1990s, precisely because he understood (much better than most Marxists) the importance of the bureaucratisation and co-optation of the working class (at least in the ‘North’). At the same time he was sensitive to the importance of squatters and activists from the ghetto; instead of dismissing these struggles as mere ‘diversionism’ (because they are not directly related to the factory floor and the sphere of production) or the activists as suspicious ‘lumpenproletarians’ (as Marxists traditionally did, beginning with Marx and Engels themselves), Bookchin recognised that ‘the factories in the United States are virtually

quiescent while the cities, particularly the ghettos and neighborhoods are not' (2010 [1980–82], p. 38).

There are many other examples of this sort in the book, some of them even more evident in terms of their excessively self-referential Marxist perspective, I would dare to say. For these highly Marxism-centred scholars, libertarians probably appear as people who simply do not count, such as the 'fool on the hill' of Lennon and McCartney's homonymous song⁴—though many Marxists have increasingly said similar things as those that libertarians have said for one and a half centuries now, though at the same time forgetting to give them the due credit.

To begin with, Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer repeat in their introductory chapter the same self-referential remarks that I had already objected to in my response to their introductory piece included in *City's* special issue. For instance, when they say that '[t]he field of critical urban studies [...] was consolidated in the late 1960s and early 1970s through the pioneering interventions of radical scholars such as Henri Lefebvre (2003 [1970], 1996 [1968]), Manuel Castells (1977 [1972]), and David Harvey (1976)⁵' (p. 3), they 'forget' to mention Bookchin's important book *The Limits of the City* (1974). In contrast to Lefebvre, Castells and Harvey, Bookchin was not a typical academic, though he became a widely recognised radical thinker from the 1960s onwards; he began his life as a factory worker—but *precisely* from a critical, left-wing standpoint this particularity should be highly valued as positive.

A few pages later, a certain remark on Lefebvre and the potentialities of the *autogestion* already made in 2009 is now reproduced by Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, with exactly the same words:

'Lefebvre (2009 [1966]) himself grappled with an analogous problem in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Eurocommunist concept of *autogestion*—literally, "self-management", but perhaps best translated as "grassroots

democracy"—was being pervasively misappropriated by various interests to legitimate new forms of state bureaucratic planning.' (p. 6)

At this point, I cannot prevent myself from quoting from my own earlier text:

'First of all, *autogestion* was *not* an "Eurocommunist concept"; it is a very traditional anarchist and autonomist idea, which was largely distorted in former Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito (*samoupravlje* being the Serbo-Croatian word for *autogestion*) and then to some extent and for some time usurped by some communist parties in Europe.'⁶ (Souza, 2009b, p. 488)

As far as Lefebvre is concerned, he, 'as a very heterodox Marxist in many senses', as I then pointed out, cultivated himself the concept of *autogestion*,⁷

'while addressing at the same time pertinent criticisms towards the threat of an ideological co-optation of this notion; however, apparently without having interest in paying an adequate tribute to the very complex and radical discussion on workers' self-management which had been developed since the 1950s by members of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group in France, not to say to the ancient anarchistic roots of this political conception. (He reduces the radical-libertarian contribution to this debate to Proudhon's thought, whose ambiguities and ambivalences he accurately stresses: see Lefebvre, 2009, pp. 142–143.) It is also a little bit disappointing that although he was claiming for an *autogestion généralisée* (and simultaneously criticising "l'expérience de la planification autoritaire et centralisée" of bureaucratic "socialism" [Lefebvre, 1998, p. 77]), and although he showed clear reservations about Yugoslavia's experience (sometimes only in an implicit way [Lefebvre, 2009, pp. 147–148]), he nevertheless insisted using the term *autogestion* to describe that experience. Was Tito's Yugoslavia ultimately not similar to the pro-Soviet countries of bureaucratic "socialism", a little less centralisation and a little more "participation" notwithstanding?' (Souza, 2009b, p. 488)

In his chapter ‘What is Critical Urban Theory?’, Neil Brenner states that ‘[i]n short, critical urban theory involves the critique of ideology (including social-scientific ideologies) and the critique of power, inequality, injustice, and exploitation, at once within and among cities’ (p. 11). This politically–philosophically narrow definition of ‘critical (urban) theory’ can hardly be justified by means of pointing out that *kritische Theorie* is an expression inherited from and popularised by the Frankfurt School, hence from/by Marxists. It is much more important to recognise that as long as we use adjectives like ‘critical’ and ‘radical’ in such a narrow way, we actually insult a whole set of traditions and thinkers who were or have been definitely committed to anticapitalist struggle and critical/radical approaches to society but cannot be identified as Marxist. Why is it so difficult to acknowledge the relevance and apparently even to *perceive the existence* of the anarchist, neo-anarchist and autonomist contributions to urban studies, from Élisée Reclus to Murray Bookchin and other authors?

In my earlier reaction to Brenner’s approach, I asked a couple of plain questions in a note:

‘Is it not a matter of justice to recognise that critical thinking and theory in a broader sense goes beyond the Frankfurt School and Marxism itself? How could contemporary Marxists name non-Marxist, radical-libertarian intellectuals such as Piotr Kropotkin, Cornelius Castoriadis, Murray Bookchin, Noam Chomsky and many others if not as critical? ...’

And, more specifically, as far as critical *urban* theory is concerned,

‘is it justifiable that Murray Bookchin’s books on cities and citizenship (1974, 1992) and Élisée Reclus’ brilliant essay “The Evolution of Cities” (1895), not to mention the discussions on cities and urban problems contained in *L’Homme et la Terre* (Reclus, 1905–1908, Tome V, Chapter II), are simply

ignored, as they usually are? (I mention here only intellectuals who were or, as in Chomsky’s case, are based in Europe or the USA by virtue of the fact that there is no plausible linguistic excuse on the part of Western European and US American scholars for ignoring their contributions.) Last, but not least: I am *not* suggesting that Marxism shall be forgotten (in the way that many have tried to “surpass” it from a more or less conservative, “post-Marxist”, simplistically culturalist approach since the 1980s and 1990s), as many Marxists apparently do in relation to anarchism, neoanarchism and so on. It is fair to admit that the works of many Marxist thinkers (I mean particularly people such as A. Pannekoek, E.P. Thompson and H. Lefebvre) should be viewed as an important part of the intellectual patrimony of the left, and consequently valued in an adequate way also by radical-libertarians. The same view is valid in relation to Marx’s works themselves, since they are not reducible to their “authoritarian” (and economic and teleological) dimension, as undeniable as it can be. I am just claiming for the end of a certain kind of (intolerant?) theoretical and political blindness on the part of most Marxist scholars. Is it difficult to understand that, seven decades after the end of the Spanish Civil War/Spanish Revolution and in times largely influenced by conformist and reactionary forces, non-Leninist Marxists and radical-libertarians could and should cooperate with each other as far as possible?’ (Souza, 2009b, p. 490, n. 9)

From a Marxist point of view, *Cities for People, Not for Profit* is undoubtedly an important contribution to urban studies; from a critical/radical but non-Marxist perspective, and especially from a libertarian one, the book’s value is still high, but certainly it must be considered more limited. From a libertarian—anarchist, neo-anarchist or autonomist—perspective, *Cities for People, Not for Profit* continues to be astonishingly self-referential.

In a nutshell, the book virtually ignores everything that is not Marxist. Is that a big problem? And if yes, why? I believe it is a big problem, and for the following reasons:

- *The crisis of Marxism and the re-emergence of libertarian influences among social movements.* Marxist thinkers can try to ignore libertarian thinkers—as they have done for generations—but can they ignore social movements such as the Zapatistas in Mexico, *piqueteros* in Argentina, etc.? These and other emancipatory movements are remarkably guided by and organised according to libertarian principles such as *autogestion* and horizontality. In some cases, the movements and their organisations are ‘hybrid’,⁸ but who could ignore their libertarian influences?⁹ Who could take these movements, their message and their praxis seriously and at the same time despise or underestimate libertarian thought and praxis? After the military defeat of anarchists in Spain (by Franco’s fascists *but also by Stalinists*), libertarian praxis experienced an eclipse that lasted until the 1990s, the May 68 movement being an exception (or, as Castoriadis, Morin and Lefort called it, a *brèche*¹⁰). In the 1970s and 1980s, the so-called ‘new social movements’ were influenced by several different ideologies, including Marxism; but libertarian principles and strategies were not widely disseminated. The situation changed during the 1990s. The theoretical crisis of Marxism, tremendously aggravated by the ultimate collapse of bureaucratic ‘socialism’, has played a key role. Marxism’s theoretical and identity crisis is so evident, that important reactions range from deep melancholia (Jacoby [2000]) to attempts to absorb libertarian principles (as Henri Lefebvre [1983], [1991], [1998], [2009] tried to do in the 1960s and 1970s regarding the idea of *autogestion*, and as people such as John Holloway [2005] have done in more recent years by means of the formula ‘change the world without taking power’).
- *The convergences between Marxism and libertarian thinking and praxis have been important, much more important than both sides are usually willing to admit.*

Libertarians have often criticised Marxism in such a way as to give the impression that convergences never existed, and that Marxism is neither useful for critical purposes nor deserves to be considered as a true part of the history of radical thought and praxis. Both assumptions are unsubstantiated prejudices. In terms of political economy, Mikhail Bakunin borrowed substantially from Marx (and acknowledged it); the rivalry between Bakunin and Marx stemmed from other causes rather than disagreement at this level. (That was not necessarily or always a good thing for libertarian thought, as some Marxist economic assumptions were absorbed as well. The first thinker to develop a deep, highly comprehensive, constructive and left-wing critique of Marxian and Marxist political economy was Cornelius Castoriadis.) Furthermore, it would be unjust and absurd to ignore or deny that the political and theoretical contributions made by many heterodox Marxists (from Anton Pannekoek to Karl Korsch, Henri Lefebvre to Edward P. Thompson, Herbert Marcuse and Raymond Williams among others) deserve respect and constitute relevant achievements in the history of anticapitalist thought and struggle.

On their part, Marxists have despised and ignored libertarians (and insulted, persecuted and sometimes even killed them, as in the Ukraine during the Russian Civil War, and later during the Spanish Civil War). Interestingly, nobody less than Eric Hobsbawm, an erudite icon of Marxist historiography who in his recently published book *How to Change the World* regrets Antonio Negri’s ‘frankly insufficient formation in Marxian literature’ (Hobsbawm, 2011, p. 125), somehow feels comfortable in inducing his readers to believe that ‘[...] from the middle 1840s on it can no longer be said that Marx derived anything from the pre-Marxist tradition of socialism’ (Hobsbawm, 2011, p. 47). Such a *dixit* is symptomatic, considering the

typically biased and oversimplified comments on anarchism Hobsbawm makes here and there in his new book. However, as admitted by an honest sociologist influenced by Marxism, Georges Gurvitch, there have been libertarian influences on Marxists since the moment Proudhon anticipated part of the surplus-value theory developed by Marx in *Das Kapital* (see Gurvitch, 1980, p. 32). Though libertarian principles have been used (not necessarily in a consistent way) as a source of inspiration by Marxists (Marx and Engels recognised it, in the short moment when they abandoned the strategy of ‘taking [state] power’ and praised the Commune of Paris as well as the role Proudhonians played in that context), yet they generally openly rejected convergences. As we can see, an excessively self-referential Marxism actually does not mean an *absolute* closure, partly because this kind of self-reference is not incompatible with a further, even worse problem: the assimilation of contributions made by others (above all libertarians) without giving the due credit, and often without giving any credit at all, as Holloway’s best-known book exemplifies.

Against ‘gray spacing’ in academia

At this juncture, I would like to turn back to Oren Yiftachel’s excellent chapter, to show how ‘critical urban theory’ usually neglects some crucially relevant aspects of reality—a fact that he bravely acknowledges.

Yiftachel is acutely aware of the general/theoretical implications of his ‘case study’. He not only points out that ‘[g]ray spaces have become a dominant feature of contemporary urbanism, mainly, but far from solely, in the less developed world’ (p. 153), but also offers a crucially important remark in a note:

‘[w]hile most readers would associate Israel/Palestine with exceptionalism, ceaseless conflict, and political drama, I argue that these are the surface expressions of the pervasive

forces of ethno-nationalism, capitalism, governmentality, old and new colonialism with its ensuing class, identity, and gender politics; Israel/Palestine is constructed in the world media and politics as an exception, although the above forces are evident in most non-Western cities and states, quite often with similar ferocity, and increasingly so in the Western world’ (p. 167, n. 3)

We can raise doubts about the extent to which most of the other Marxist ‘critical urban theorists’, especially those based in the ‘North’, can have a real grasp and extract a lesson from this. After all, as Yiftachel himself stresses, ‘[n]otably, colonial relations are strangely absent from the main corpus of critical urban theories, which often take the basic condition of formally equal citizenship and political membership as a point of departure’ (p. 158).

As he also says, ‘[...] critical theorists, whether associated with the Frankfurt School, French and Continental philosophy, neo-Gramscian scholars, or the recent Anglo neo-Marxian and neo-Weberian scholarship, have generally overlooked the centrality of colonial relations in the formation of urban social relations’ (pp. 158–159). And what is more:

‘The critical literature includes an abundance of insightful critical concepts accounting for the power of elites to assimilate, co-opt, and tame the subaltern. These include the Gramscian concept of “transformismo”; Foucauldian “discipline” and “governmentality” or neo-Marxian “neoliberalization of Empire” (Hardt and Negri, 2000; AlSayyad and Roy, 2006). Yet, these concepts fall short of explaining the development of group relations and collective subjectivities, in colonial settings, where subaltern groups are often cast as too different, too hostile or too geographically distinct, to be included within the limits of societal hegemonic projects.’ (p. 159)

Now, I think it can be useful to use Yiftachel’s ‘gray space’ and ‘gray spacing’ as a *metaphor* as well. Concretely, as a metaphor

for the usual Eurocentric bias in the production of academic and above all theoretical knowledge in the social sciences, urban studies included.

In this sense, perhaps we can speak of a ‘gray space of theory’, meaning theory produced in the ‘global South’—that is, by researchers and thinkers other than Europeans and US-Americans, especially those contributions that are not published in English. A *huge* ‘gray space’, as such usually unrecognised and unknown.

The feeling of self-sufficiency that largely predominates in the anglophone academic world—and which is intensely present among radical/critical scholars as well—is a provincialism that arrogantly presents itself as cosmopolitanism. In fact, many anglophone colleagues apparently assume that what was not published in English practically ‘does not exist’, because it ‘does not count’ anyway. Many seem disinclined to welcome challenges to the widespread prejudice and ‘international division of academic labour’ according to which scholars based in the so-called ‘global South’ would do better circumscribing themselves to empirical research about their own cities, regions and countries, while leaving theory (and philosophy) to those who are supposedly the cosmopolitans par excellence—and therefore able to ‘think about the world’, not simply about the respective specific places in which they live and work. Is this kind of ‘(quasi-)invisibility’ of theory ‘from the margins’ something to be critically examined, challenged and finally surpassed or at least attenuated—or should it be fatalistically or even cynically taken for inevitable, in the sense of a cheap ‘life-is-hard’ approach? Is it possible that ethnocentrism is so deeply rooted in hearts and minds that all internationalist commitments have become nothing more than lip service? Is radical/critical socio-spatial research really committed to talking to the whole world rather than ‘understanding’ and influencing the world from a sole and specific (i.e. Anglo-American) perspective, for the

benefit of an ‘international’ academic elite as well as of a few powerful publishers?

Apart from a few exceptions—Goonewardena and above all Yiftachel—, the prism through which *Cities for People, Not for Profit* observes the world is a European and North American one. This situation does not seem to be regarded as problematic, or at least subject for discussion. Within such a framework, Yiftachel’s important contribution is in danger of being judged and labelled by colleagues by similar standards as music produced outside the USA and a few other (usually anglophone) countries: just a little bit ‘world music’, nice and exotic.

When Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer repeat in their introductory chapter what they had already said about ‘[c]ities across Europe, from London, Copenhagen, Paris, and Rome to Athens, Reykjavik, Riga, and Kiev’, which ‘have erupted in demonstrations, strikes, and protests, often accompanied by violence’ (p. 1), I simply must repeat myself as well to say that

[w]e have all followed these eruptions in the last few months (as far as the contemporary [economic-]financial crisis and its consequences are concerned) or even in the last years (in relation to the effects of “urban neoliberalism” and of neoliberalism in general). However, I think it is not irrelevant to register that not only in European cities strikes and protests directly or indirectly related to the consequences of capitalist crisis (and “logic”) can be seen.’ (Souza, 2009b, p. 485)

I then offered a couple of ‘some recent examples (among many others)’:

‘in Mexico City, on 30 January 2009, thousands of members of trade unions as well as of organisations of students, peasants, *indígenas* and fishermen protested in a “*megamarcha*” against the high prices of gasoline and energy as well as against the economic policy implemented by Felipe Calderón’s conservative government to cope with the crisis. In Buenos Aires, two months later, on 30 March, many organisations and

social movements (from the peasants of the *Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena* to the *piqueteros* of the *Frente Popular Darío Santillán*) departed from different places in the metropolis and joined together in a march—called “Continental Mobilisation against Crisis and War”—which converged on the famous obelisk in the downtown. Even in Brazil—where the crisis is still not as present in daily life and where the “wannabe-left-wing” government of Lula da Silva has been successful in co-opting a large part of the population, including the working class—it is quite possible to find several symptoms of and reactions against today’s crisis. Interestingly, in this to a not insignificant degree industrialised country, precisely peasants and the urban “hyperproletariat” (and *not* the *Proletariat* in a strict sense ...) have played a relevant role in terms of resistance in the last months as well as in the last years. And as far as the popular reactions against neoliberal policies are concerned, can we forget the role played by Caracas’ population in 1989 (“*Caracazo*”), when hundreds of people lost their lives? ... (By the way, the “*Caracazo*” was just the most significant of many “IMF riots” which occurred in several Latin American cities during the 1980s.) (Souza, 2009b, pp. 485–486)

Be that as it may, at least one author apparently revealed herself at least partly sensitive to the kind of objection I raised in my response two and a half years ago. In her chapter ‘The “Right to the City” in Urban Social Movements’, Margit Mayer, on the one hand, unfortunately repeated some problematic sentences she had already used in her *City* paper, such as the following ones, which betrays an evident analytical Eurocentrism:

‘Again and again, in the course of this decade, waves of anti-gentrification struggles swept across New York, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, and later Istanbul or Zagreb, and slogans such as “Die, yuppie scum!” became literally global. *Reclaim the Streets* and similar local mobilizations of the anti-globalization movement popularized the slogan “Another

world is possible”, as well as “Another city is possible!”’ (p. 68)

The problem represented by these sentences (and exemplified by other remarks as well¹¹) can be better understood in the framework of a comparison with her added comments on urban movements in the ‘global South’—something absent from her paper published in *City*’s special issue in 2009.¹² Let us consider, for instance, the following synthetic remark:

‘The struggles of the pavement dwellers in India, the favela residents of Latin American cities (Lanz 2009), the slum residents of the rapidly urbanizing Asian “tiger” countries (Menon 2010; Roy and AlSayyad 2004), or the shack dwellers of the urban peripheries of Capetown, Durban, and Johannesburg (Pithouse 2009a; Patel 2010) all demonstrate the urban poor, in resisting dispossession, eviction, police violence, and repression, have organized themselves in independent structures, developed their own local protest cultures, and have achieved—through mass mobilization, occupations, and political protest—improvements in their living conditions.’ (p. 79)

It seems that Mayer finally pays in the second version of her text at least some attention to the movements in the ‘global South’. On closer inspection, however, it is clear she still has difficulties in grasping the complexity of social movements’ global reality. When she refers to the movements in the ‘global North’, she refers mainly to the ‘discontent’, though she correctly recognises the presence of the ‘dispossessed’ among the European and North American urban populations in the form of a growing ‘advanced marginality’,¹³ which ‘become[s] increasingly characteristic of cities of the global North, as expanding low-wage and informal sectors employ more and more migrants and women’ (p. 78); but when she refers to the ‘global South’, she exclusively sees the ‘dispossessed’. An accurate ‘radiography’ of contemporary oppression inevitably

must show that discontent, discrimination and dispossession are present *both* in cities/metropolises such as Los Angeles and Paris *and* in cities/metropolises such as São Paulo and Mexico City. Obviously, an elementary fight for better living conditions and the satisfaction of the most basic needs predominate in the socio-political landscape of cities/metropolises in which a large portion, often the majority, of the inhabitants, tries to survive under largely inhumane conditions and a crass heteronomy; but this fact is no excuse for not perceiving that there are also several other groups contributing to emancipatory praxis (sometimes in direct collaboration with the residents of favelas, peripheral semi-legal settlements and *ocupações* of *sem-teto*¹⁴) such as middle-class students (and not just students) protesting against capitalist globalisation, neoliberalism, violence and corruption. But above all it does not capture the key point that the poor are often protagonists of a much more diversified and politically sophisticated struggle than the label ‘dispossessed’ may suggest—as exemplified by Mexican Zapatistas, Argentina’s *asambleas barriales* and *piqueteros* and even by Brazilian *sem-teto* activists.

The oversimplification implied in the picture that many scholars based in the so-called ‘global North’ have in their minds in relation to the countries and cities of the ‘global South’ becomes evident in other chapters as well. Such oversimplifications, alongside a specific kind of superficiality in the sense of assumptions about ‘exceptionalism’ of certain ‘Southern’ situations (to use the term Yiftachel used in his important analysis), usually serve as an alibi for underestimating the relevance of those countries and cities for *global* capitalism. While apologising to the reader for the length of the following quotations, I think it is important to note, as I said in 2009, that

[w]e should not forget that in many respects the so-called “(semi)periphery” has been used by big capital and imperialism as a kind of “laboratory”, be it in a conscious or in an

unconscious way. Strategies and tactics (as well as pharmaceutical products, new weapons, methods of social control and repression, etc.) are often tested in “(semi)peripheral” countries before they are used (in a modified manner) in the countries of “central capitalism” . . . Torture techniques used in recent years by the US military were developed or improved in Latin America in the 1970s (be it under supervision of US military/CIA personnel or not) . . . When Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer mention the spectre of increasing repression (for instance, mentioning that “the new US director of national intelligence has presented the global economic crisis as the biggest contemporary security threat, outpacing terrorism”, and that “[p]reparations to control and crush potential civil unrest are well underway” [Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 176]), it is important to see that “militarisation of the urban question” has been ongoing for many years in countries such as Brazil and Mexico, as has been pointed out elsewhere (Souza, 2008, 2009). This “militarisation” has many aspects, from the intervention of the army (effectively or allegedly) against drug traffickers to the proliferation of paramilitary, fascist-like militias; from the “war against the poor” as the subtext of “war against criminality”/“war on drugs”/“zero tolerance” (in its “[semi]peripheral”, particularly brutal versions) to the deepening of the “criminalisation of economy” (beyond the formation of specific, corrupt criminal circuits).’ (Souza, 2009b, p. 487)

Unfortunately—as I also pointed out in my text of 2009—, it seems that ‘even some brilliant left-wing authors can sometimes overestimate the centrality of their own point of view’. And in order to make myself as clear as possible, I then added: ‘I mean this not only politically or theoretically and at the individual level, but also in broader terms: *culturally/geographically*.’ This problem, in my opinion, is at least partly

‘due to the fact that they think that the most relevant things in terms of dynamics of contemporary capitalism always come from the “global North”—so that we can expect

that the “avant-garde” (by the way, a very problematic notion!) in terms of intellectual, particularly theoretical contributions also always come from there ... For instance, in his very important book *The End of Utopia*, Russell Jacoby imperturbably says that “[a]part from a few diehards in stray capitals and campuses, intellectuals have become willy-nilly liberals” (2000, p. 10). Really? Is it that simple? ... Did almost all left-wing intellectuals become complacent, devoid of any radicalism? Obviously, it is very difficult to deny that our time is largely an “age of generalised conformism” (“*époque du conformisme généralisé*”, as Cornelius Castoriadis said at the end of the 1980s [Castoriadis, 1990]). At the same time, a statement like that by Jacoby reveals, from a Latin American viewpoint, some irritating, arrogant ignorance regarding the vitality of resistance and thinking outside the USA–Europe axis. It is quite sure that most of the intellectuals who are working and sometimes cooperating with social movements in those “stray capitals and campuses” (and countries) do not publish regularly in English. Even less in French or German. But should linguistic ignorance (or ethnocentrism) on the part of the scholars based in the “global North” play such a decisive role as a parameter of their judgment of centrality, creativity, or political relevance of political and intellectual life? Katharine Rankin is telling a well-known truth when she suggests that “what occurs by way of progressive responses to financial crisis in Argentina or Bolivia may not seem to matter too much in the metropolitan centers of the global North” (2009, p. 222). But what about the *intellectuals* of the “global North”? ... Perhaps so-called “post-colonial” perspectives could benefit a little from the ideas developed by *Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos* in his thought-provoking speeches delivered at a colloquium in San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas) in December 2007 under the title *Ni el centro ni la periferia* (*Neither Centre, Nor Periphery*) (Marcos, 2009), in which the hegemonic views about centrality are challenged.¹⁵ (Souza, 2009b, pp. 486–487)

As one may see, postcolonial urban studies are often not as postcolonial as we can

imagine, and critical urban theory is often less critical (and above all less comprehensive) than it should be. Undoubtedly, Eurocentrism is by no means a privilege of Marxist scholars. However, it seems to me that Marxism’s typically unbalanced universalist ambitions have made it especially prone to Eurocentrism (and scientism).¹⁶

Oren Yiftachel mentions in his chapter an interesting Arabic word/notion, *sumood*, ‘an Arabic term denoting perseverance, patience, and quiet determination’ (p. 161). It seems that urban scholars (and social scientists in general) from the ‘global South’ certainly need a good amount of *sumood* to challenge and try to overcome Eurocentrism in academia, especially as far as theory building is concerned.

Some remarks on libertarian contributions to urban studies

I have discussed the contributions made by libertarians to urban studies elsewhere,¹⁷ and it would go far beyond the possibilities of this review to deal with them systematically now. Important discussions can be found directly by the reader in many works from the past and present, from Élisée Reclus (1895, 1905–1908) to Colin Ward (for instance, 1983) to Murray Bookchin (see especially 1974, 1992, 1995, 2003, 2007; see also 2002, 2004, 2005, 2010 and Bookchin *et al.* 1991) to Raúl Zibechi (2003, 2007, 2008) to some of the chapters of the recently published book *Revolt and Crisis in Greece* (for instance, Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou, 2011), just to mention a few examples. Instead of trying to offer here a tour *d’horizon* about libertarian ideas on the city, urbanisation and related themes, it is much more feasible to consider just a few aspects. In the followings paragraphs I will deal with the difference between Katharine Rankin’s approach to urban planning and David Harvey’s opinion on the contemporary political background for the fight for

the ‘right to the city’, on the one side, and a libertarian approach to the same questions, on the other.

Let us begin with the challenge represented by ‘radical’ or ‘critical urban planning’. While Katharine Rankin seems to believe that

‘the challenge for planning [...] is to develop a theory of resistance that retains [political scientist James] Scott’s commitment to political engagement and social transformation, while also acknowledging the significance of [Michel] de Certeau’s and [Lila] Abu-Lughod’s insights about the contradictory nature and political ambiguity of subaltern practices’ (p. 109)

I on my part think this suggestion is far from a Copernican revolution as far as urban planning is concerned. Similarly to many ‘radical planners’, Rankin praises resistance but at the same time implicitly regards planning (and planning theory, of course) as an activity for professionals, for academics only. Indigenous peoples’/grassroots movements’/activists’ agency is acknowledged as politically crucial in terms of resistance, for sure, but they are *not* the ‘planners’—that is to say, their intellectual and even political role and relevance is severely underestimated. From this point of view, one of the central tasks for ‘radical planners’ (maybe *the* central task par excellence) is to change the mentality of the (academic, commonly middle-class) planners themselves.

It is symptomatic that, immediately after saying [...] while what occurs by way of progressive responses to financial crisis in Argentina or Bolivia may not seem to matter too much in the metropolitan centers of the global North’, she recommends that ‘we might turn this around to think about possibilities for building strategic translocal alliances *within the profession* that might respond progressively to the conjunctural relationalities among cities [...]’ (p. 107; emphasis added).

This mentality seems to be somehow close to Leninism (‘[...] the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop

only trade-union consciousness’). It is not accidental that apart from criticising conventional urban planning, Marxist scholars (or scholars influenced by Marxism) usually see ‘radical planning’ as something to be implemented by the state apparatus under favourable circumstances (progressive conjunctures). As I have already stressed:

‘[p]rogressive urban planning led by the local state but *consistently* open towards popular participation and committed to the reduction of inequalities in the framework of a favourable political conjuncture corresponds to a very uncommon situation, but it is far from being impossible’.

However, ‘*it is by no means the only possibility in terms of “critical urban planning”*’ (Souza, 2006, p. 327; emphasis in original). The state apparatus is a heteronomous structure, so that regardless of the conjuncture it is much more important to understand what emancipatory social movements can directly do and have directly achieved (direct action) as planning agents themselves: ‘[c]ivil society *as such* (especially social movements) should be seen as a (potentially or de facto) relevant agent in relation to the conception and implementation of urban planning and management strategies’; this interpretation, as I immediately added, ‘probably sounds strange, for even left-wing planners are almost always quite “state-centred” [...]’ (Souza, 2006, p. 328).

The turning point in terms of radical planning, therefore, lies precisely in discussing and collaborating with this ‘theoretically neglected variant of “critical planning”—a radically bottom-up, genuine “grassroots urban planning”’ (Souza, 2006, p. 328). Or more precisely: an *insurgent* planning. I offer a couple of examples in my paper, but in *Cities for People, Not for Profit* there is a chapter that brings an interesting example, too:

‘Over the years, the RCUV [Regional Council of the Unrecognized Villages, a

Bedouin organisation] published maps and reports about the 45 communities seeking recognition, and showed that all of them were viable, each accommodating at least 500 people—well beyond the minimal limit of 40 families determined by the Israeli planning authorities for recognizing (Jewish) localities. The RCUV plan was widely dismissed as “unprofessional”, “wild” and “ridiculous”, but the public pressure bore some results: by 2008, the government recognized nine of 45 localities, and began to draw plans for legalizing homes and providing some infrastructure.’ (Yiftachel, p. 166)

(Interestingly, Rankin mentions Yiftachel’s work on page 109, but without extracting the crucial lesson . . .)

A further contrast between the Marxist-influenced view (combined with the specificities of a ‘global North’ perspective) and the libertarian approach to some problems becomes particularly evident when we discuss the questions posed by David Harvey (with David Wachsmuth) in the book’s last chapter (‘What is to be Done? And Who the Hell is Going to do It?’). On the basis of the essentially correct but nevertheless rather simplistic assumption that ‘throughout the world we are not in a revolutionary moment’ (p. 273), and ‘[d]espite the fact that there is often a substantial conflict between Keynesian thinking and Marxian thinking’ (p. 271), Harvey concludes that we are experiencing a ‘Keynesian moment’ nowadays (as a realistic reaction against neoliberalism), so that his ‘argument is that if we are in a Keynesian moment then we need to make use of it politically’ (p. 271): ‘[. . .] perhaps the best we can do right now is to redirect that Keynesianism in such a way that it benefits the mass of the people rather than continue to centralize capitalist state power’ (p. 271).

As a matter of fact, that is not Marxism (or Harvey) at its (or his) best: that is rather a *fin de siècle*, fatigued Marxism. However, it reveals the more or less reformist, state-centred ‘pragmatic’ view espoused by many Marxists as a consequence of melancholia

and insufficient confidence in emancipatory social movements. Under these circumstances, not only Keynesianism, but state capitalism in its more explicit forms tend to appear as the sole lifeboat:

‘[s]ince throughout the world we are not in a revolutionary moment—with possible exceptions in Latin America and China—we do not currently have the option of rejecting Keynesianism. The only option is to ask what kind of Keynesianism it should be, and to whose benefit should it be mobilized.’ (p. 273)

Harvey’s opinion about Latin America (for instance, Venezuela and Brazil) and China had been already presented in a very explicit form a few years ago:

‘While there are some signs of recovery of both labor organizing and left politics (as opposed to the “third way” celebrated by New Labor in Britain under Tony Blair and disastrously copied by many social democratic parties in Europe) along with signs of the emergence of more radical political parties in different parts of the world, the exclusive reliance upon a vanguard of workers is now in question as is the ability of those leftist parties that gain some access to political power to have a substantive impact upon the development of capitalism and to cope with the troubled dynamics of crisis-prone accumulation. [. . .] But left political parties and labor unions are significant still, and their takeover of aspects of state power, as with the Workers’ Party in Brazil or the Bolivarian movement in Venezuela, has had a clear impact on left thinking, not only in Latin America. The complicated problem of how to interpret the role of the Communist Party in China, with its exclusive control over political power, and what its future policies might be about is not easily resolved either.’ (Harvey, 2009, unpaginated)

I have already responded once to this optimism:

‘Mistaking appearances for substance, he assumes that Brazil’s government under Lula

is a left-wing one (while it is in truth a populist government, based on a coalition of parties which ranges from centre-left to centre-right and which is led by a former left-wing party). But what is particularly astonishing is that for him the problem of how to interpret the role of the Communist Party in China is a “complicated” one . . .’ (Souza, 2010, p. 325)

As I then explained in a note:

‘Brazil’s economic and social policy under Lula has been a mixture of statism and neoliberal elements, in which features such as “fiscal responsibility”, the priority given to agribusiness and the absence of a true land reform are “tempered” by compensatory social policies. By the way, when Harvey (surely not very well informed, but actually reproducing a statist interpretive bias as well) writes in his earlier paper on the “right to the city” that a new legal framework, conquered “after pressure from social movements”, was introduced as a tool “to recognize the collective right to the city” in Brazil (Harvey 2008, 39), he is both exaggerating the reach of this legal framework (and even the role of the social movements in the process) and contributing to a trivialisation of the “right to the city”-slogan.’ (Souza, 2010, p. 325, n. 6)

How can we talk about the possibility of a ‘revolution’ under these circumstances (or even regarding the Venezuelan case, surely more complex)? As far as China’s bureaucratic-authoritarian capitalism is concerned, the simple mention of a ‘revolutionary moment’ is an affront against not only libertarians, but also against the legacy of heterodox Marxists such as A. Pannekoek, K. Korsch, H. Marcuse and E.P. Thompson. Against this background, it is no wonder that Harvey stresses in his 2009 text that the ‘[...] co-revolutionary theory earlier laid out would suggest that *there is no way that an anti-capitalist social order can be constructed without seizing state power* [emphasis mine]’. Harvey had written a couple of pages before ‘[t]he failings of past endeavors to build a lasting socialism

and communism have to be avoided and lessons from that immensely complicated history must be learned’. The inevitable conclusion, from a libertarian viewpoint, is that it seems he has not learned very much from those lessons.

‘When Harvey writes that “a global anti-capitalist movement is unlikely to emerge without some animating vision of what is to be done and why”, this is a sentence which sounds like a foretaste and the meaning of which becomes later clear: He dreams (as orthodox Marxists do) of a “privileged revolutionary subject” and of a unifying theory (or “vision”) which clarifies what this “subject” has to do (“and why”). He knows that the working class (*Proletariat* in a strict sense) with its trade-unions and political parties (social democracy and the like) is no longer a “privileged revolutionary subject” in history. As a Marxist, he must be a little confused (and there are so many phenomena which can confuse Marxists nowadays, such as the role of peasants as much more relevant critical protagonists than factory workers or the critical-transformative role of large portions of the *Lumpenproletariat*) [...].’ (Souza, 2010, p. 325)

In defence of a true dialogue

There is no honest collaboration without honest dialogue. Nevertheless, divergences are important, probably much more important than convergences—but that depends on the political conjuncture. I do not think a kind of ‘united front’ makes much sense, apart from within coalitions formed to accomplish specific tasks. Differences still exist and should not be masked. However, it is a plain matter of fairness and justice to acknowledge the positive contributions ‘from the other side’. That is what pamphlet writers and dogmatic militants do not do, but that is what intellectuals and scientists are obliged to do. This is why I regard *Cities for People, Not for Profit* as not particularly constructive in the way it has been written as though libertarian contributions

to the subject have never existed. That is not to say, of course, that *Cities for People, Not for Profit* does not contain valuable contributions, as I hope I have made clear in the previous pages. In fact, it is the richness of the volume that prevents me from dealing with all of the individual chapters.

As the subtitle of this book review indicates, the debate between Marxists and libertarians is a necessary one. Unfortunately, it is totally absent from the pages of *Cities for People, Not for Profit*, but it is not too late to begin. As I said, that is not a plea for a ‘united front’; that is just a plea for more mutual respect—in the name of wisdom.

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Notes

- 1 ‘Cities for People, Not for Profit’ [Special Issue], *City* 13(2–3) (June–September 2009).
- 2 In order to avoid misunderstandings, I must explain that in this text the adjective *libertarian* does not refer only to anarchism, but instead covers, as I already said in my response to the papers included in *City*’s special issue ‘Cities for People, Not for Profit’, ‘the heterogeneous set of approaches to society which historically evolved in the context of a two-war-front, in which theoretical and political fighting has taken place simultaneously against capitalism and against “authoritarian” approaches to socialism. While classical anarchism (19th century and early 20th century), neoanarchism and autonomism (from the second half of the 20th century onwards) flourished mainly in Europe, and although (neo)anarchist activists have been present in Latin America (especially in Argentina and Brazil) for a very long time, some new or renewed forms of libertarian thinking and praxis have massively emerged in Latin American countries in recent years, largely as a “political–cultural encounter” of the European political and philosophical tradition on the one side and local and regional, “communitarian” traditions and institutions on the other. It is no accident that the words *autonomía* (Spanish) and *autonomia* (Portuguese) have

become increasingly important in the political discourse of several social movements’ (Souza, 2009b, p. 491, n. 11).

- 3 Souza (2009b, p. 485).
- 4 ‘Well on the way, his head in a cloud,/The man of a thousand voices talking perfectly loud./But nobody ever hears him,/Or the sound he appears to make’ (Lennon and McCartney, ‘The Fool on the Hill’).
- 5 Actually it should be Harvey (1973)!
- 6 ‘Même le Parti communiste français qui, il n’y a pas si longtemps, tirait à boulets rouges sur l’autogestion, où il voyait “um amalgame d’idées inspirées du réformisme et d’utopies anarchistes”, ne répugne plus maintenant à employer le terme [...]’ [‘Even the French Communist Party, which until recently sharply rejected *autogestion*—viewing in it nothing more than an “amalgam of ideas inspired by reformism and anarchist utopias”—, begins to use this term [...].’] (Leduc, 1989, pp. 147–148). (Note already included in Souza, 2009b, p. 491, n. 12.)
- 7 See, for instance, the essay published in 1966 in which he deals with *autogestion*’s theoretical problems (Lefebvre, 2009) or his book *L’irruption: de Nanterre au sommet*, written after the events of May 1968 and republished 30 years later (Lefebvre, 1998). (Note already included in Souza, 2009b, p. 491, n. 13.)
- 8 In some cases the movement is not only hybrid, but simply heterogeneous, as the *piqueteros* are. There are several *piquetero* organisations, and their political nature ranges from autonomism to Peronism.
- 9 As far as I can remember, in *Cities for People, Not for Profit* (both the book and *City* special issue) the sole author to mention—even if merely en passant and ironically—anarchism’s and autonomism’s presence in/influence on contemporary struggles is Margit Mayer.
- 10 See Morin *et al.* (1988).
- 11 Such as for instance the following one: ‘[...] from the US right the City Alliance and local coalitions bringing together public sector workers, the new homeless, and precarious groups of all kinds against the cuts in social programs and public services, to the coalition against Hamburg’s downtown development policies or the campaign against “Mega Media Spree!” (against the displacement caused by a huge media complex near the Spree river in Berlin)’ (p. 70).
- 12 In the previous version of her contribution, ‘Southern’ processes and achievements are seldom mentioned, and even in this case not free of factual mistakes, such as the misunderstanding entailed in the remark according to which ‘[a]doption of (part of) such charters [World Charter for the Human Right to the City, World Charter on the Right to the

City, etc.] has also occurred on various state scales: in 2001 a City Statute was inserted into the Brazilian Constitution to recognize the collective right to the city' (p. 73) (a text by Edesio Fernandes is then mentioned, but his information was misunderstood: the City Statute is not part of the Brazilian Constitution, but a federal law that regulates and supplements two articles of the Constitution).

- 13 By the way, a problematic term: the notion of 'marginality' was extensively and intensely criticised in Latin America in the 1970s.
- 14 *Sem-teto* (Span. *sin-techo*) is a Portuguese expression that literally means 'roofless'. As I explained in a previous work, '[d]espite the appearances, this expression has been often used to describe not homeless people or beggars (euphemistically known in Brazil as "*população de rua*", that is "street population"), but a specific kind of squatter. Although *favela* residents are also squatters in a broader sense, *favelados* do not see themselves as a part of the *sem-teto* movement. Historically, *favelas* have emerged either "spontaneously" or sometimes under guidance and protection of populist politicians looking for future electoral support, while the *sem-teto* movement is usually highly "politicised" from a critical standpoint. Nevertheless, many *sem-teto* are former *favela* residents and sometimes even former homeless people in a strict sense, and—as I could observe with the help of interviews—they show a strong solidarity with *favela* inhabitants, whose problems are so familiar to them and whose identity as squatters in a broader sense they surely share' (Souza, 2009a, p. 34). A *ocupação* is a *sem-teto* settlement, be it a squatted building or a squatted plot of land.
- 15 For the sake of precision and justice, as I admitted in a note in the same paper, '[...] it is necessary to underline that ethnocentrically or sociocentrically conditioned feelings of superiority and centrality cannot be analytically confined to the (rather simplistic) "global North"/"global South" divide. The cultural legacy of colonisation and colonialism has contaminated many people—predominantly, but not exclusively belonging to the upper and middle classes—over decades and centuries, and combinations of nationalism or regionalism, elitism and racism can be very often found at several scalar levels, from international to local, among and inside "peripheral" countries themselves, often in a very brutal form. Of course, neither ethnocentricity nor sociocentricity were invented in Europe, but in the forms they can be presently observed in former colonies they usually have very much to do with the colonial past and with the experience of neocolonialism' (Souza, 2009b, p. 490, n. 7).

- 16 See Nimni (1995) on Marxism's typical disregard of minority cultures and cultural particularities in the name of a Eurocentrally biased internationalism.
- 17 See Souza (2012).

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