

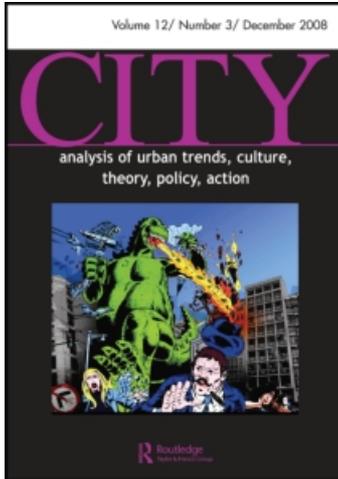
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(Top) Tribute to two *piquetero* activists killed by the police at the Avellaneda railway station in June 2002; Avellaneda (Buenos Aires Metropolitan Region), March 2007. (Middle) Eviction of squatters by the military police; Rio de Janeiro, May 2006. (Bottom) Co-operative in a squatted building (Ocupação Quilombo das Guerreiras); Rio de Janeiro, January 2008. Photos: Marcelo Lopes de Souza (top), Luiza Colombo [squatters' activist] (middle) and Rafael de Almeida [M. Lopes de Souza's research team] (bottom).

Cities for people, not for profit—from a radical-libertarian and Latin American perspective

Marcelo Lopes de Souza

This paper offers a brief response to 'Cities for People, Not for Profit: Introduction' by Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer, which introduces City's homonymous special issue. Additionally, very short remarks on a few other papers included in the same special issue are also provided, for the sake of a better clarification of some aspects of my critique. These are made from a political and cultural viewpoint which partly supplements, partly challenges the authors' Eurocentric and Marxist perspective.

Key words: cities; social justice; critical thought; radical-libertarian perspective; Latin America; social movements

'We think it is not just a matter of avoiding the traps and conceptions, theoretical and analytical in this case, which the centre poses and imposes on the periphery.

Neither should we simply invert things in order to move the gravitational centre to the periphery, from where it could be possible to "irradiate" towards the centre.

We believe, in change, that this other theory, of which some general aspects have been presented here, should also make a break from that logic that has to do with centre and periphery, and anchor itself in the realities that erupt, emerge and clear new paths.¹

(*Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, Ni el centro ni la periferia* [Neither Centre, Nor Periphery])

'Principled and naïve men
Clearly cannot bear our doubts.
They tell us: the world is flat,
And the legend of depth is an absurdity!

For if there were further dimensions
Beside the two which we very well know,
How could a man safely live,
How could he live in an unconcerned
manner?

In order to coexist peacefully
Let us strike one dimension off our list.

Indeed: if they are right, those principled
men,
And life in depth is so dangerous,
Then the third dimension is superfluous.²
(Hermann Hesse, poem from *Das
Glasperlenspiel* [The Glass Bead Game])

Prologue

Every time someone shows in my
presence that kind of naïve, post-
modern optimism according to

which diversity should be celebrated for its *own* sake, I ask how one reacts to those situations in which the otherness of the other is based on heteronomy and rooted in aggressive intolerance towards ourselves. However, sometimes one deals with difference in a way that unnecessarily makes every persuasion and every agreement impossible, regardless of concrete space and time. In this sense, there are differences that can make us weak, because they often divide us even in the face of common tasks. In contrast, others' differences—or rather the way we deal with them—can be one of the sources of our strength, as they show us how we can enrich our own approach to social problems and make it more acute *through* debate and divergence.

I would just like to make here some comments on the interesting, thought-provoking paper 'Cities for People, Not for Profit: Introduction' by Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer, which introduces *City's* homonymous special issue (Vol. 13, Nos. 2/3, June–September 2009). Additionally, very short remarks on a few other papers included in the same special issue—some of them written by the editors themselves—are provided in the notes, for the sake of a better clarification of my critique. It is intended as an unpretentious and collegial response. The points on which I agree with those authors are by far more numerous than those on which I disagree with them. Nevertheless, perhaps a discussion of the disagreements and supplementations can be useful.

Undoubtedly, the text by Brenner *et al.* poses several relevant questions. However, as we know, every piece of knowledge (especially if it is directly related to social life) is culturally embedded and historically–geographically situated. The context in which Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer live and work has left its 'footprints' in the paper as some remarks on globally relevant problems/factors/challenges are made from a quite specific (rather than from a more social-geographically more 'inclusive') perspective.

In fact, as I will comment later, the same is true for almost all contributions to the special issue. Of course, this is not a problem in itself, as it is more or less unavoidable; social scientists have just to live with the peculiarity that—as 'cosmopolitan' as they can sometimes be—they always speak from *somewhere*. The problem lies somewhere else indeed, and it is related to excessive simplifications and generalisations.

Moreover, there is also another question which could (should) be raised: namely, that regarding the degree how political alternatives are made explicit and productive in their text. Also in this regard there is something which could be said in order to contribute to a debate.

I

It was said by Brenner *et al.* that '[t]he rapidly unfolding global economic recession is dramatically intensifying the contradictions around which urban social movements have been rallying, suddenly validating their claims regarding the unsustainability and destructiveness of neoliberal forms of urbanization', immediately adding that '[c]ities across Europe, from London, Copenhagen, Paris and Rome to Athens, Reykjavik, Riga and Kiev, have erupted in demonstrations, strikes and protests, often accompanied by violence' (2009, p. 176).³ We 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 it is not only in European cities that strikes and protests directly or indirectly related to the consequences of capitalist crisis (and 'logic') can be seen.⁴ 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 the 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 'hyper-preariat' (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.⁵ 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 persons 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.)

The three editors of the special issue are convinced that '[...] it appears increasingly urgent to understand how different types of cities across the world system are being repositioned within increasingly volatile, financialized circuits of capital accumulation' (Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 176). However, as they clarify some pages later in relation to the papers which integrate the special issue:

[t]he majority of the contributions focus on patterns of urban restructuring and their associated contradictions during the last decade, with particular reference to the

hypercommodified urban spaces of western Europe and North America, but also, in some contributions, with reference to urbanization processes in the Middle East (Yiftachel) or in the global South (Rankin)' (Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 180)

Well, it seems that the majority of the world is unintentionally reduced at the end of the day to a kind of 'academic footnote' ...⁶

Unfortunately, even some brilliant left-wing authors can sometimes overestimate the centrality of their own point of view (I mean this not only politically or theoretically and at the individual level, but also in broader terms: *culturally/geographically*). It 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 imperceptibly 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. I'm 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.⁷

We 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 personal 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',⁸ 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 'militari-

sation' 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).

II

Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer stress that '[e]qually important is the question of how this crisis has provoked or constrained alternative visions of urban life that point beyond capitalism as a structuring principle of political-economic and spatial organization' (Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 176). Yet to what extent are we really interested in discussing alternatives both to capitalism *and* to bureaucratic 'socialism'? The authors invite us to pay attention to the fact that 'both negative and positive lessons can also be drawn from the experience of cities under really existing socialism, in which top-down, centralized state planning replaced commodification as the structuring principle of socio-spatial organization' (Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 177). However, it is not entirely clear to what extent the authors are politically prepared to extract some painful lessons from the past. Such lessons would often be related to problems which partly lie in the foundations of the politico-philosophical context (historical materialism/Marxian socialism) which has largely been the hegemonic variant of 'urban critical theory' since the 1970s ... Despite the differences between authors as diverse as Lefebvre, Castells (in the 1970s) and Harvey, all they (as well as most of the other radical geographers, sociologists, 'urban political economists' and so on) shared and share some kind of (more or less 'heterodox') Marxism as an almost self-evident basis of radical thinking.⁹

We need to go beyond the usual, today largely consensual criticisms against Leninism (and, of course, Stalinism) in terms of discussion of non-authoritarian, radically democratic alternatives of thinking and praxis. Since the 1990s, radical-democratic and libertarian approaches have experienced a kind of ‘rebirth’—usually in a different or modified form when compared to classical anarchism—both in academia and among social movements (as far as Latin America is concerned, see, for instance, Colectivo Situaciones, 2002; Di Marco *et al.*, 2003; Zibechi, 2003, 2007, 2008; Svampa and Pereyra, 2004; Rebón and Saavedra, 2006). As far as academic contributions are concerned, a renewed dialogue between critical sociologists, geographers, etc., on the one side, and the ideas of thinkers such as Murray Bookchin, Cornelius Castoriadis, Antonio Negri, etc., on the other, has been undertaken.¹⁰ On the part of the social movements, relevant contributions to a resurgence of radical-libertarian thinking and praxis have been made both in the ‘global North’ (a large part of the ‘alter-globalisation’ or ‘anti-globalisation’ movement, Reclaim the Streets, among others) and in the ‘global South’ (Zapatistas in Mexico, a large part of the *piqueteros* in Argentina, an important part of the *sem-teto* [squatters]—but not of the *sem-terra*, whose organisations are predominantly structured according to vertical, more or less Leninist patterns—in Brazil ...).¹¹

In the light of this, a certain remark made by Brenner *et al.* (2009) is particularly problematic:

‘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. 180)

First of all, *autogestion* was *not* an ‘Eurocommunist concept’; it is a very traditional

anarchist and autonomist idea, which was largely distorted in the 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.¹² As a very heterodox Marxist in many senses, Henri Lefebvre himself cultivated *autogestion* as a crucial political concept,¹³ 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?

Then, how could we ‘promote alternative, radically democratic, socially just and sustainable forms of urbanism’ (Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 177)? ... On which politico-philosophical and ethical basis? The ‘liberal-reformist’ approach is clearly discharged by Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer as insufficient and ideological. However, although they formally recognise that the radical/critical environment is not homogeneous, it seems that some

particularly crucial aspects of this heterogeneity are underestimated. By the way: *autogestión* (*autogestión*, *autogestão* ...) has become again a very important aspect of the praxis generated by many social movements in many countries in recent years, from the Argentinian *fábricas recuperadas* ('recovered factories') movement to some *sem-teto* organisations in Brazil to the social centres movement in Britain and in other countries ... Precisely questions like these have been—either directly or indirectly—addressed in several papers published in *City* as well as in some other journals (see, for instance, Chatterton, 2005; Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; Souza, 2006).¹⁴

III

Last but not least, a short remark specifically on 'social movements'. Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer ask:

'Will contemporary urban social movements be thus co-opted, as they were during the austerity, roll-out phase of neoliberal restructuring in the 1980s? Will they be content with reforms that merely reboot the system, or will they attempt to address the problem of systemic change as did the militant student and labour movements of 1968?' (Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 182)

As it stands, these questions are clearly formulated from a European or USA-based perspective which is not necessarily very useful to understand other social-geographical contexts. If we take the experience of the *sem-terra* and *sem-teto*, of the Zapatistas, of the urban expressions of the *nuevo movimiento indígena*, of the *piqueteros*, etc. into consideration, the question 'will they be content with reforms that merely reboot the system, or will they attempt to address the problem of systemic change as did the militant student and labour movements of 1968?' (Brenner *et al.*, 2009, p. 182) sounds rather dated: many organisations and movements have *already* generated a critical praxis in an analogous (but simultaneously different) way as some Euro-

pean/US movements did in the 1960s. At the same time, the attempts of co-optation on the part of governments such as those led by Argentina's political power couple, Lula da Silva in Brazil and the ANC in South Africa continue in a long tradition of co-optation and 'domestication' experiences (social democracy, 'Eurocommunism', the German Green Party ...), and this fully in the context of our very contemporary contradictions.

Latin American social movements (along with not co-opted intellectuals), as well as several organisations and movements in other parts of the 'global South' (for instance, Abahlali baseMjondolo in South Africa¹⁵) are playing chess against capital and the state apparatus. Of course, they are far from reaching a mate position, but in spite of their several handicaps (they are 'playing with the black pieces') they are performing very clever moves with their pawns, knights and bishops, sometimes threatening rooks and even the queen ... In fact, it is as if we were seeing several chess games being played in many different places at the same time. However, in some situations some aggressive moves have already been performed by the 'player who plays with the white pieces' (capital and state apparatus—in fact, it is quite obvious that the state is not a neutral judge in this tournament!), and the defences performed by the 'player with the black pieces' are full of 'lessons' for all challengers.

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Notes

- 1 Spanish original version: 'Nosotros pensamos que no se trata sólo de evitar las trampas y concepciones, teóricas y analíticas en este caso, que el centro pone e impone a la periferia. Tampoco se trata de invertir y ahora cambiar el

centro gravitacional a la periferia, para de ahí “irradiar” al centro. Creemos, en cambio, que esa otra teoría, algunos de cuyos trazos generales se han presentado aquí, debe romper también con esa lógica de centros y periferia, anclarse en las realidades que irrumpen, que emergen, y abrir nuevos caminos.’

- 2 German original version: ‘[1] Die ewig Unentwegten und Naiven/Ertragen freilich unsre Zweifel nicht./Flach sei die Welt, erklären si uns schlicht,/Und Fasel die Sage von den Tiefen. [2] Denn sollt es wirklich andre Dimensionen/Als die zwei guten, altvertrauten geben,/Wie könnte da ein Mensch noch sicher wohnen,/Wie könnte da ein Mensch noch sorglos leben? [3] Um also einen Frieden zu erreichen,/So lasst uns eine Dimension denn streichen! [4] Denn sind die Unentwegten wirklich ehrlich,/Und ist das Tiefensehen so gefährlich,/Dann ist die dritte Dimension entbehrlich.’
- 3 The same formulation can be found in the same issue in the paper by Margit Mayer (2009, p. 370).
- 4 Having the *New York Times* as a source, Mayer concedes in an endnote (21, p. 372) that there ‘have also been dozens of protests at factories in China and in Indonesia’, though ‘not as large as the disturbances in Greece or the Baltic’. Meagre concession.
- 5 See Souza (2009) on the concept of ‘hyperprecariat’ as well as on the socio-political relevance (and ambivalence) of this social group.
- 6 By the way: Oren Yiftachel’s (2009) and Katharine N. Rankin’s texts (2009) are both surely very valuable, but while Yiftachel’s contribution is clearly *written from ‘another’, non-European–US perspective*, Rankin’s paper (partly) *dialogues with authors and deals with aspects outside the USA–Europe axis*—which is a different thing.
- 7 For the sake of precision, 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.

- 8 The concerns of the US director of national intelligence are also mentioned in the same issue of *City* in Margit Mayer’s paper (2009, p. 371).
- 9 In his paper ‘What is Critical Urban Theory?’ (Brenner, 2009), Neil Brenner develops a coherent way of reasoning, as he presents the roots of ‘critical urban theory’ (Marxian thought) in a very clear manner—and in this framework he underlines the fact that radical urban researchers have usually paid little attention to the intellectuals who coined the very expression *kritische Theorie* (critical theory), that is, to the thinkers of the Frankfurt School (see p. 204). But, 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? ... 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 Elisée 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 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?

- 10 In some countries—in France, for instance—this kind of dialogue was particularly intense as early as in the 1960s. In contrast to that, it has been intensely undertaken in some places of Latin America since the 1980s—that is, after the emergence of the ‘neoliberal era’, when especially radical-democratic/neonarchist authors became ‘old-fashioned’ in Europe and the USA (until they were partly ‘rediscovered’ in the 1990s).
- 11 In this paper, the adjective (*radical*)-*libertarian* covers 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.
- 12 ‘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).
- 13 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).
- 14 In her individual contribution to *City*’s special issue, Margit Mayer is mainly interested in the (to use her own words) ‘Euro-North-American core’ (2009, pp. 362 and 365). Although one cannot raise any plausible objections to this focus as such, all she has to tell us about efforts towards the ‘right to the city’ in Latin America is apparently related to the rather vague results of Porto Alegre’s World Social

Forum or to largely state-sponsored things such as ‘participatory budgeting’ and Brazil’s half-progressive ‘City Statute’ (Mayer, 2009, p. 368). In so doing, she unintentionally misrepresents the struggle for a just city (as a part of the struggle for a just society) in that continent, as far as the picture she offers is an oversimplification which practically ignores the existence of social movements.

- 15 See Pithouse (2008) on Abahlali baseMjondolo.

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