

International Journal of Urban and Regional Research

Authors meet Critics

A joint initiative of the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (IJURR) and the *Studies in Urban and Social Change* book series published by Wiley-Blackwell.

DATE: 17/01/2013

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Article: The Urban Question under Planetary Urbanization, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2013, 37(3) pp.909-22

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Interview with Andy Merrifield

Due to unfortunate circumstances with the server being down, the Andy Merrifield Authors Meet Critics online exchange did not take place. Given the relevant issues addressed and the interest of the participants, we collected the questions and comments submitted by the participants, and Lazaros Karaliotas (University of Manchester) – who we thank very much for this – interviewed Andy Merrifield in Manchester on 22nd February 2013. This paper is the author's revised version of the answers provided.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> It's a very great pleasure to welcome Professor Merrifield for this Authors Meet Critics interview. After an unfortunate telecommunications failure, we are reproducing the questions posed for the online forum.

So, the first question from **Justin Kadi** reads like this: 'Speaking of rejecting binaries. Your idea of the urban fabric, as well as the idea of centrality as the cell form of the urban and as atomic structuring, strongly reminds me of Deleuze and his concepts of the plane of immanence (the woven urban fabric) and universal singularity (the cell form from which everything else originates). Do you take Deleuze into account in your idea of the urban?'

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> It's a good question, that one. I like that question. Yes and no... Immediately no, in the sense that, thinking about the urban as fabric, thinking about it as being constituted by certain molecules, if you go inside the molecules, there is a kind of core–periphery model which is in a dynamic, interactive dialectic between the two: between core and peripheries inside the urban, inside the molecules of the urban fabric. Not influenced by Deleuze and Guattari in the sense of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Only afterwards did I become aware, when people mentioned it to me, that there is a certain similarity with all the stuff on *l'espace strié*, or *l'espace lisse*, between the two different kinds of space that Deleuze and Guattari outlined.

Yes, in the sense that that understanding was much more influenced by Deleuze's thinking about Spinoza, particularly his book on Spinoza: the questions of immanence in Spinozan thought influenced me a lot. And I am a great admirer of Deleuze's *own* work — though I have certain reservations about his work with Guattari, I have to say. People will get upset and jump up and down and get pissed off with me, doubtless, but even though I like

Guattari's work as well — I think he's great — I could not get a tremendous amounts from the two of them together, in all honesty. But when I listen to Deleuze, the tape of his Spinoza lectures that he gave in the 1980s in Vincennes — they're just actually amazing. And it was in some ways propped up and backed up by the book, the book on Spinoza's expressionism, his expressionist philosophy. Deleuze's great book on Spinoza has definitely influenced the way I've thought about immanence, and urban immanency, the question of the urban fabric being a form of substance that gives rise to certain attributes that become the empirical manifestations of the urban, as I've outlined in the paper.

So, yes and no. Deleuze is there, but not really his stuff with Guattari from *A Thousand Plateaus*. But this was a very interesting question and I can understand where the question was coming from as well.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Thank you, the next question is from **Hade Turkmen**. 'Professor Merrifield I would like to ask a practical question, which would enable me to see the actors of a possible progressive struggle more concretely. The "politics of everybody" seems a very complex structure, since everybody doesn't refer to a particular group made up of people who have commonalities. Rather, "everybody" sounds like individuals from different backgrounds, political views, ethnicity, class, etc., which are categories that are already contentious in themselves. So, how do you read the dynamics of the encounters community? What may bring them together and does this issue provide the political ground for future actions? How do we need to read the formation of the political demands and future collective actions of everybody? What do you suggest taking into consideration in the analysis of the development and process of political action by everybody/encounters?'

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Ok, there's a lot there, it's a good question. The politics of everybody: this is a tricky one. I've been thinking about it and I just want to preface this answer — and in some ways this goes for all the questions that have been given — by saying that this book, this paper was extracted from a book called *The Politics of the Encounter*. This book has much more material in it, obviously, than the single essay that's being scrutinized here by the critics. It has a

lot in it — but in itself it is also work in progress, which has led me to begin another book which I am midway through, called the *New Urban Question*. I'm very aware of some of the critical remarks I've had about some of these ideas, because I've been giving them in seminars, and have had to respond to critics. I'm aware about the 'everybody'. The 'everybody' is — the way in which I would qualify and justify it, as it were — would be a little like the Rousseauian 'general will'. So, I'm suggesting that there are a bunch of people out there who don't necessarily identify themselves as coming from a certain class. A lot of them who are involved politically today — whether the *indignados* or the people in Occupy or people in the developing world, the so-called developing world, in Chile, for example, Chilean students ... we can go on and on and talk about different participants with grievances, from the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, people on the street — tend to be young people who don't necessarily identify with a certain class, but they collectively identify with something, which is a certain enemy. Now, the enemy may be the financial system, it may be a certain form of government, it may be both — it usually is both: they have identified a common enemy. Now, what is the 'everybody'? Well the 'everybody' is this very very strange grouping of people that, at a certain moment I'm suggesting, through certain means, certain forms of organizing, come together to form a collectivity, which I have called the 'everybody'. And the 'everybody' is a bit like the general will, and, according to Rousseau's *Social Contract*, the general will is infallible in the sense that it's always right. It will come together because it comes together. It comes together often through a contingent insurrection, which happened in Tunisia, then it happened in Egypt, and it seemingly happened in the United States. It's happening now in Greece; it's happening all the time in Spain. The contingency is the coming together of this general will, this 'everybody', with a particular moment, which I'm calling the politics of the encounter, which has eruptive implications. Which isn't to say that there haven't been things going on that are more, let's say, more deterministic in terms of who is organizing this, and in terms of dissatisfaction, in terms of the repression that's going on, the economic and political repression. But the everybody is a form of coming together of people at a certain moment when there is some form of collective awareness, some form of collective consciousness that's gelled, that's congealed, that does identify a kind of common enemy. And it is a kind of general will; there is a certain sovereignty

to it about its coming together. Now, it could well be that this is the 99%; it could be a very imaginative re-rendering of the working class. It is just one way in which I've adopted another label, to try and instigate a new vocabulary in debate about a politics which, I think, since the beginning of the eruptions in Tunisia, seems to have taken a different kind of democratic form than politics of the past. It was just a way to identify that actually there is a coming together of people that are struggling for democratic yearnings which involve spaces of the city, but aren't necessarily per se urban politics. So there is a twofold thing going on here: to identify the new global constituency — and I am very clear that it is global — that's making itself, that uses spaces of the city to instigate a new form of urban politics; and, given that this new constituency is conceiving a new form of urban politics, in a new terrain that we could see as being urban, we need to identify in what sense it is urban.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Thank you. The next question takes to the realm of urban design and it comes from **Lefteris Theodosis**. 'Hello, Andy. Thanks for this interesting paper. I find it very intriguing, particularly for the juxtaposition of two approaches to global urbanization that, in most cases, as far as I am concerned, are contrasted. However, in your paper they seem to converge. On the one hand, the analysis of Lefebvre and the shift from the city to the urban realm, manifesting a new politics of space in an urbanized world, on the other hand the *ecumenopolis* of Constantinos Doxiadis that depicted in a scientific fashion the dystopia of Asimov in an attempt to promote action and plan the inevitable "worldwide city". Considering the fruitful debate on the future of the "global container" initiated in the 1960s, do you think that we still lack the framework of analysis and understanding for planning the urban world, or are the constraints of another nature? In your opinion, can professionals (i.e. planners, architects, geographers) guide global urbanization — give form to the formless — in a way that involves politics of space?'

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Excellent stuff! And thanks for mentioning the *ecunomenopolis*, very hard to say! The idea that the world is somehow internalized in the city ... Planetary urbanization isn't quite like that, I think. And it isn't like Asimov's Trantor either, even though I've used that quite

rhetorically in the paper. It's much more this notion of cells coexisting with other cells. Now, if you want to call those other cells cities, that's fine. In a sense, the cells that are the attributes, the manifestations, often the empirical manifestations, the commonsensical manifestations, that people would identify as being a city, are cells which coexist in a kind of dynamic dialectical rapport with other cells that constitute the global urban fabric, the planetary urban fabric. It's not that one city internalizes everything like Trantor and becomes the whole planet. It is more that, actually, these different cells, which do have their own particularity, constitute — only through their relationships with the other cells — the totality, if you like, of the urban fabric. This sounds really complicated but, in other words, it's not one thing that internalizes everything, it's more the way in which Marx would theorize capitalism as being constituted by certain particularities that have no meaning other than the way they exist with others. And I think that the urban fabric, which is global, is the way in which these particularities, i.e. what we might call cities, exist within a bigger dynamic reality, a bigger dynamic constellation, if you want, that I would want to call 'the urban'. And it is important for the politics and also for any kind of theorization to identify just what that particular constellation is and just what it is becoming, because Lefebvre is very clear that there is this progression, this becoming — *le devenir* is the word that the French use — the becoming of what was once an industrial city, which is congealing into something which is very different from that, which he calls the urban society, the urban fabric. Now, just in terms of whether that is formless, well it's not formless in the sense — and I mention this in the paper, at least I think I do — in which Marx identifies the commodity form and the value form — having his cake and eating it. The commodity form is a certain particular form of the commodity, a particular manifestation, but the value form is something which renders that particular concrete manifestation something much more abstract and much more fluid. So it is formless, but it is not formless as well. It is a form which has a certain formlessness, and it is a formlessness which takes a certain form. Some of the analogies I use are from quantum theory, which may not be entirely successful in talking about a kind of dynamic complementarity between waves and particles. Then I start to look at it in relation to some of the pictures that Jackson Pollock did, to see that actually, underlying this apparent chaos of the urban fabric, of global planetary urbanization, is a certain coherence and a certain

form you can identify. But it does involve another way of thinking or another way of seeing it, and another way of maybe conceiving what a future urban politics might be.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Thank you. Next is **Julita Skodra**: ‘Thank you Professor. Merrifield. When you say “planetary expansion of the productive forces of capitalism’s penchant to annihilate space by time, and time by space”, do you mean that space is shrinking in relation to time due to the development of technology, especially information and communications technology, which produces new levels of social and geographical inequality, extends the range of the powerful and allows them to bypass local environments?’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Yes, sort of ... That phrase from Marx, from the *Grundrisse*, was talking about the productive forces — technological change, technical change, the quest for relative surplus values through various adaptations and changes of a labor process. We can see clearly something like Fordism as being one of the most predominant [of these] that actually got rid of the porosity of certain labor processes by making them very intensive and extracting relative surface value in quite a brutal way that seemed quite gentle, in a sense, working on a transmission line. So capitalism has always tried to search for profit. Now, for me, I am using the analogy that, clearly, that same form of capitalist technology, if that’s what you want to call it — this would also include the Internet, this would also include the whole development of transportation infrastructure, computerization, the whole shebang — has made the world at once smaller — but also quite large — for a lot of people, in the sense that it has collapsed time in space. At least in theory, this Author Meets the Critics could have been conducted with people having a conversation even though they were scattered around different parts of the world. That itself is an example of the annihilation of space by time. But it also means then — it cuts both ways — it also means that recipients have that possibility — and this is where it becomes complicated because not everybody is a recipient in the sense that they have the technological prowess to engage in the world as a smaller place — but if they can, then it is clear that, for them, the world is a smaller place, and for them the expansive reach, their social reach, their intellectual reach, their practical reach is much more extended in the sense that

they can participate in things like this. They can travel around the world very easily; they can commute transnationally, as some people do. So there is a way in which all of this couldn't have taken place if there hadn't been a certain impetus, and the impetus is capitalistic and is a little the way which Marx described it in the *Communist Manifesto* — you know, this great desire to settle everywhere, nestle everywhere, expand productive forces everywhere, develop exchange relationships everywhere, establish cash nexuses everywhere, to convert the whole world into a factory, if you want. This was the great burning desire, and not only the burning desire of a collective bourgeoisie, but actually the burning necessity to reproduce itself on an ever-expanding scale. But it cuts both ways, and that always was the hope of the *Manifesto*. In some ways, one of the best examples of how it cuts both ways, or how there is a potentiality to cut both ways, is that working people have no country. To talk about what Marx said, you know, you could say that working people often don't have any work anymore, but, actually, if they could, begin to think in those terms — the world is theirs, we are citizens of the world, with the other citizens sharing something in common, being able to communicate with other people across the world, being able to empathize with people across the world — then why scoff at the potentiality for a more progressive politics?

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Thank you. The next question takes us to the Occupy Movement and comes from **Davide Caselli**. 'In your article you mention the Occupy Movement as an example of the "politics of encounter" opposed to the "politics of rights", coherent with the transformation from "city" to "planetary urbanization". My question is: what happens after the encounter? How can the privileged part of the city/planetary urbanization society — which is predominant in the composition of these movements — connect with the poor and deprived ones without referring to rights and opportunities they are deprived of? I read a recent article by Thomas Frank, published in *The Baffler* and *Le Monde Diplomatique*, in which he raises really a big question about Occupy Wall Street and its refusal of the discourse of "rights" and "representation". I don't know well the reality of the US, but those questions are very important in Europe too: the connection between "new" social movements and the poor, who broadly recognize themselves in, and vote for, right-wing neoliberal parties. In other words:

how to face the fact that in our late-neoliberal societies, politics of encounter is not for all and risks occurring in a worse and worse context if we don't find a way to actually radically affect social and political reality under neoliberalism as "rule regime"? Žižek told Occupy Wall Street "Don't fall in love with yourselves". I think we too, as researchers and academics involved in the struggle for a more just society must be really careful about that. So my question is: what may be the impact of the concept of "planetary urbanization" for urban struggles able to involve those not encountering in the streets and in the squares?

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Yes, there's a lot in that question. It is a good question, it is slightly scattergun, if you'll forgive me for saying so, but you have raised some good issues there. The *Baffler* piece by Thomas Frank I actually read, and I am very sensitive about some of the criticisms that I had about the politics of encounter, that this is just one moment, almost the insurrectional moment, when people might come together and form a collectivity with sufficient force, sufficient unity, to actually effect some change. Then the question is at that point, as Žižek says, what comes after the party? — What about the day after when everyday life resumes a certain normality? — which is true, because I think the insurrectional moment — and the politics of encounter is concerned with the notion of insurrection — is something which radically disrupts everyday life, and radically challenges the existing structure of everyday life, and maybe, even though it doesn't have the words in that moment, is by the very insurrection proposing another form of everyday life and suggesting it might be possible. But 'what comes after?' is a good question. I am very sensitive to this. In fact, I have tried to address some of the shortcomings of the paper and the book because *The Politics of Encounter* doesn't tremendously deal with what comes after either. I've been writing another book called *The New Urban Question*, and one chapter does address this issue and it does address both Žižek's 'what about the day after?' and the *Baffler* piece by Thomas Frank, talking about what is the real substance, what is real thing that endures from Occupy etc. etc. This is actually a blog if you are interested. It is a blog entry on the cities@manchester website and it's called Urban Jacobinism. Why it's called Urban Jacobinism is ... The question you posed is a bit like resolving a revolutionary simultaneous equation. Simultaneous equations have two unknowns, so that in

order to satisfy the equation you have to know them both simultaneously, so, in other words, you have to know what comes after the insurrection as well as what is the insurrection. How to organize the insurrection and what comes after has to be *answered* in a revolutionary simultaneous equation. In this piece I've played around with some ideas — we have ideas about planning for the insurrection and if you look at some of the nineteenth-century literature, for example, people like Auguste Blanqui. Blanqui was a conspiratorial anarchist cum Marxist *avant la lettre*, who proposed that a group of clandestine cells — people organizing clandestinely involved with a certain group of professional conspirators/organizers — could instigate insurrection. Blanqui was not in any way concerned about what came after, the day after. However, somebody like Robespierre was. Robespierre is a name which has a bad press in many circles for his reign of terror — supposed reign of terror. Now, Robespierre tried to put in place a certain form of social contract, a certain constitution that was seen to be a revolutionary constitution, which to my mind was actually magnificent. However, to do so he had to make sure that the revolutionary government could defend itself from counter-revolutionary forces. And that does resonate a little bit with your question. Clearly the politics-of-encounter people coming together to form an insurrection will happen if it has some democratic credibility; it won't happen if it doesn't. It would only happen if it does, if it expresses some general will. Afterwards, however, it's ludicrous to think that actually what can be put in place won't involve certain conflicts, and won't involve certain people who want to fight to return to the status quo, the former established order. The degree to which that involves violence ... and, you know, our friend Žižek has spoken a lot about the virtue of violence in this form of revolutionary government, what comes after the day, and is it necessary? I don't know whether it is necessary or not, but I do know that there will be a conflictual process to keep in place any form of possible transformatory change that has been initiated by the insurrection. The great example of that right now is looking at Egypt two years on from the so-called Arab Spring, the uprisings of the Egyptian people to oust Mubarak, and what has been put in place — clearly what has been put in place is trying to resolve that second part of the revolutionary simultaneous equation. And clearly there are issues there which are contextualized, which involve a certain political culture that existed — there were very particular manifestations of it. But there is no

doubt that there are going to be naysayers, people don't want to be part of this politics of encounter, and how that is dealt with ... I think that inevitably there are going to be through certain forms of force and certain forms of post-insurrectional social conflict.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> That was very interesting — sorry for the comment. Next question again on the politics of the encounter and the question of citizenship comes from **James Field**: 'You discuss the idea of a political citizenship and the ways in which encounter is important in instigating and developing this. I was interested in what hope you saw for such a citizenship, when you take into account the increasingly heavy-handed regulation of space by private enterprise (e.g. court injunctions to prevent assembly, and trespass laws) as well as by the state (e.g. requiring police permission to assemble in certain places, such as within the vicinity of the Houses of Parliament), which stymie the opportunity for encounter and assembly and thus the opportunity for producing a visibly public, dissenting public sphere.

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Yeah, again a good question. Fair comment in very many ways. I did talk about citizenship in the paper. I have spoken quite a bit about citizenship in the longer book, *The Politics of Encounter*, as well as in the book in progress. Directly answering that question in the best way I can would be to suggest that citizenship here has to be something that is, obviously, much more than a passport, obviously something much more than a nationhood. This is one of the possibilities of a world that has become thoroughly urbanized, and, in a way, it is why Marx, even though he didn't quite understand urbanization as well as maybe Engels, who in turn, didn't get it either, and in some ways couldn't have got it from the standpoint of where they were in the mid part, the latter part, of the nineteenth century. They were generally pro-urbanization, because it did create a certain form of what Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* called a 'world literature'. It was a kind of global lingua franca and he saw it clearly as being solidified by what people did for a living, i.e. the form of work they did, which had its go for a quite number of years when we talk about international union solidarity. But I am not sure that today most people identify themselves, first and foremost, with the world of work, what they do for living. It is possible they may identify themselves with where they live, I'm not sure, or

how they see themselves belonging in a certain context, in a political economic space in which they belong. The more progressive elements will no longer necessarily identify with the nation-state, so that begs the question, what could you form a citizenship based on? Well, you could base it on a certain form of urban citizenship as a global citizen, that in some way sees fellow citizens as neighbours across the street, or next door across the corridor, and as people who live across the world. So it becomes a certain form of empathy which isn't about passports and isn't about a nation-state, but is based upon a certain awareness of themselves coexisting in a little world which is rather expansive and enormous, and which they belong to, and which they can communicate in, and that they can feel they have some stake over. I think that I said in the paper that perception needs to replace passport in any progressive notions of citizenship, and *horizon* becomes almost — not as important, but almost as important — as *habitat*. Clearly, having somewhere to live and having the material needs, the means to reproduce oneself as a species, is important. But one's horizon, one's perception are, I think, the ingredients whereby one can have a different notion about how one belongs. And, you know, there's some amazing material. I mean in Baudelaire, for example — if anybody talks about modernity, one talks about the French poet Baudelaire — he talks in the 'Painter of Modern Life' essay about Constantin Guy, the painter of modern life, being the spiritual citizen of the universe — a man of the world, he calls him ... it could be a person of the world. He is called a person of the world, somebody who he feels he belongs everywhere — they live somewhere, but they feel like they belong everywhere. Their horizons are open, their curiosity to the world is open, their understanding of what is going on is open, and the ability to communicate with the world is there as well. And that has a possibility of forming a different kind of solidarity which, I would like to think, is a kind of urban solidarity that's channeled through the capillaries of this global urban fabric and is communicated a bit the way that electricity is — it lights up the sky and it lights up peoples' lives. And people can find a certain form of awareness — you know, I think what went on in Occupy was a kind of global urban citizenship, because what went on there couldn't have happened if it hadn't happened in Tahrir Square in Cairo, or if it hadn't happened in Tunis or in Athens or in Madrid. All of those struggles have their own fierce particularities, but somehow all of them express and have achieved something through the way in which they have circulated

through the urban fabric to other struggles everywhere, and they mutually kind of reinforced themselves in some ways. For several months, from September 2011 onwards, there was this amazing feeling that actually things were connecting in the world, and that is not a citizenship that has anything to do with nationality, even with ethnicity, but it had something to do with something much more expansive, which I would like to think, as a normative ideal, could be something that could be construed as urban.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> The next question refers to the importance of the urban centre and comes from **James Thompson**: 'Over the last couple decades, places like here in Seattle have witnessed the rise (or return) of the neighbourhood as the primary scale of social attachment, and local governments have advocated such a decentralization of social identity. Plenty of theorists from the left have bemoaned how the American downtown has been stripped of its political efficacy. However, the Occupy protests (as well as the Arab Spring, etc.) focused primarily on occupying the literal urban centre, either for symbolic or strategic reasons, or both. While I agree with your point that the tactics of "taking back the centre" and the rights claims of the 1960s are perhaps less fruitful today, the urban centre seems to have played a significant role in aggregating the neighbourhood scale protests to a potentially critical mass. I'm curious how your understanding of these movements' activities led to your claims of centrality not being about the absolute centre of the city anymore, and what examples you have of a politics of encounter at the "cell form of the urban"'.

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Thank you, it is a good question. Again, if I can invoke the book, the book does talk a little bit about the questions of centrality and centres. In terms of protest, in terms of what has gone on, it's clear that the central public spaces of certain capital cities have been symbolically important, are symbolically important, for forms of demonstration, for forms of people literally encountering other people. Now, this harks back to a couple of other things. First of all it harks back to the notion of citizenship and also to the idea of what comes after the insurrection. I think all insurrections have somehow taken place in some central city place ... space. But, if you look at a history of insurrections actually, oddly enough, a lot of them started

in the countryside — in fact most of them have, if you think about it. 1917 was a bit complicated, but if you look at the Maoist revolution, essentially the mainstay of the organization was done in the countryside. Look at the 1979 Nicaraguan revolution by Daniel Ortega and the Sandinistas, it was essentially done from the countryside, and the goal then was, of course, to take over the capital city, be it Managua or be it Moscow, Leningrad. We could see that with Castro. Castro's support, his base came from the hinterlands. I think we can call it 'hinterlands' now rather than the countryside because that kind of countryside isn't countryside as we once knew it, so I would call it hinterlands. Clearly Castro's goal was to storm Havana, and take over Havana, which was the centre of money, the centre of power of some sorts — to some degree it still is. But the organization isn't necessarily about reclaiming the centre. I think the action, quite frankly, is in the hinterlands, is organizing in hinterlands, and how the hinterlands are organized and maybe ... swoop on certain symbolically important forms of the centre. Of course the centre is purely arbitrary, because initially Occupy Wall Street was going to go and occupy Wall Street, but it ended up in Zuccotti park, which was not central at all. It is a very marginal unimportant space which is barely very big at all. So, occupying a park which is not more two acres in size is hardly occupying a centre. What it did occupy was something which was quite prominent in terms of its proximity to a financial centre. But even if you occupied Wall Street, even if you wanted to go, you know, and take over Wall Street, would that have really challenged the financial system? I am not sure it would, you know. September 11 had several planes knock down the World Trade Centre. I'm not sure it stopped world trade for a single day. So the idea is that centres are important symbolically, but I don't think in the real struggle — i.e. what comes after the party in Žižekian terms, after the Carnival, the day after — I don't think the centres are that important and, in fact, if they are important, it is only relative. In a sense that there are centres of degree rather than centres of kind, and often that involves the certain proximity to power, to parliament, to the financial districts, but the centres of American cities have been devastated long ago, so the right to the city, the right to the centres downtown isn't worth very much for many people, because most of the rich guys are suburbanized and living in the periphery. And other suburban forms are congealing into new urban forms in their own right. I think where the battle does lie is in the hinterlands. How described? In French you might

call it the *banlieue*, in other parts of the world you call it the *favelas*, and in other parts of the world you might call it some form of countryside. I think the language is whatever works strategically. I don't think we can talk about countryside/centres anymore in the same way, centres of city and the countryside, suburban and inner city, centre/periphery. Centres and peripheries are everywhere. In fact, I think one of the important theses which hasn't been spelt out enough in the politics of encounter book, nor was it spelt out as well as it should have been in this paper, was this idea that the world now is a project of neo-Haussmannization. In Haussmann's Paris we saw the centre being taken over by the bourgeois and the poor people being dispatched to the periphery, to the *banlieue*, and the centre was commandeered by the rich, and the poor were then displaced to the periphery, particularly to the northeast of Paris. Now, what I want people to do now is to imagine this not occurring in one city, but to see the whole urban fabric as being put in place through a process of neo-Haussmannization, whereby centres and peripheries are everywhere, centres and peripheries are in downtown and peripheral Sao Paulo. There are parts of Sao Paulo where talking about centre doesn't make any sense. There are parts where the poor are in the centre; there are parts where the poor are in the periphery. What you do know is that there is a centre and periphery that is commandeered by a certain group of people which you can no longer almost call bourgeoisie. They're so rich that they almost become a kind of almost aristocracy in the sense that they're parasitic, they live off rents, they live off interest from financial assets. They don't produce anything; they don't invest in anything productive. Meanwhile, there's a bunch of other people which we could call *sans culottes*, the 99 %, the everybody who are scattered round. So the core/periphery exists in every space, in every shape or form within the urban fabric, which is being constructed through a process of neo-Haussmannization.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> The next question comes from **Rui Santos**: 'I would like to ask you a question which is related to Portugal's present situation. Despite the growing pressure of "austerity" politics on people, mostly on "urbanites", it is still very difficult to envisage a collective uprising: demonstrations and Occupy movements normally mobilize just a few, scattered individuals and groups. The politics of encounter still faces, in Portugal, a lot of inertia

due to continuous policies favouring segregation and separation. In this light, what would be the concerns around which one could possibly mobilize urbanites' agency?

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Segregation and separation. If you look at Henri Lefebvre 's work, if I can invoke Lefebvre here a little bit, they're the only thing he would describe as being anti-urban. He is very slippery about what urban is, in terms of how he would define it — as this network, as this fabric, as this way in which people come together to form a certain kind of concentration, a certain form of simultaneity, a certain form of density, a certain form of intensity. But what he is absolutely rock solid on is saying that anti-urban sentiment is expressed through segregation and separation: keeping people apart is what is very problematic. So I am very aware that that is one way in which the powers that be, howsoever defined, as in Portugal, would see it. And — if I can talk like an academic again, as I am doing, I suppose — and we think of someone like Rousseau. Rousseau says the general will is infallible; he says people cannot be wrong; he says they cannot be wrong but they can be deceived, which is a great way of thinking about it. They are not wrong when they act, but they can be deceived into acting for what is not in their own interest. And the history of human life, the political form of human life, has always been there. So, when Portugal talks about that happening now, it is no surprise to me at all. People are fearful, austerity creates fear, austerity is the continental European equivalent of 9/11: you may not like what we're doing, but what might be the alternative is much worse. And, as the argument was with 9/11, anything that went against the grain of a certain patriotic fervor was seen to be terroristic. I think the austerity now is creating a climate of fear: people are fearful for jobs, people are fearful for their livelihoods, people are fearful that they can't afford to pay their mortgages, they won't have anywhere to live. People are fearful of the future. And the austerity propaganda is just that. It is an ideology, it's a propaganda, which is music to the ears of European central bankers and the *comprador* bourgeoisies of various countries — and they are *comprador* bourgeoisies because they are puppets of central bankers, or of more powerful countries like France and Germany, and the way which they control the European Central banks, including the International Monetary Fund, if you throw Christine Lagarde into the equation as well. Austerity creates a climate of fear, and fear, as we have seen and as many commentators

have suggested since September 11, creates two things: it creates either 'we' feelings or it creates certain forms of panic whereby people just look for self-survival — which is perfectly understandable. I think that what needs to be done — and I don't know a great deal about the Portuguese experience, but I'd be curious to know what the culture was that prevailed in the late '70s before the Portuguese revolution — is that this climate of fear in austerity has to be challenged and seen to be a myth. 'Austerity for who?' would be the beginning. When we find that some of the richest people in the world — one of them built islands in the Caspian sea — when the luxury art market, for example, has never seen such great times ... When the money is splashing out to invest in real estate in London, in inflated real estate in London, it's coming from very wealthy people in different parts of crisis-ridden European countries. When Michael Bloomberg, in another case in point, is just paying twenty million to install the air-conditioning in his London home, at the same time as he's invoking austerity on the bus riders, the school bus drivers in New York City. That's the big question now: 'whose austerity?', 'what does austerity mean?' European bankers met recently in February; European leaders recently met to talk about imposing austerity measures. Whose austerity? It's an ideology. It's a form of propaganda that creates fear. It needs to be contested and needs to be fought back. And, of course, it is being contested and is being struggled against in European countries. It's a question of building a movement which isn't necessarily about a numbers game, because another thing that Rousseau talks about in the *Social Contract* is that the thing about the general will is that it isn't necessarily about the number of votes: it is the unity of the forces that comprise the general will, and if they are unified rather than separated. So the whole question is about finding a movement that can unify itself: that can have a leader that can speak out some truths and can gain some popular backing — that's what is needed. But the whole fear that comes from austerity is a terribly pathological, purely manufactured form of consent.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> The next question from **Justin Kadi**: 'My question refers to the differences between urban and city. You write that the "urban" differs from the "city" in that the latter refers to "objects, categories, and things", a form of physical, concrete material form of the more abstract "urban". You go on to argue, making an analogy to Marx and his argument

about the world market, that “the urban” is a “vital necessity for the reproduction of capitalism on an expanded scale”. For an illustration of that a few paragraphs later you refer to Harvey’s second circuit of capital argument. But isn’t Harvey’s argument that capitalism constantly transforms the built structure to reproduce itself directly, linked to the material, concrete form of the urban, i.e. “the city”? So isn’t it then “the city” that capitalism needs to reproduce itself rather than “the urban”?

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Another question which is a very good question, and a question that has been posed to me quite often over the past year, talking about this paper, debating themes, reconsidering it. What to say? It’s clear that what I was saying about the urban vis-à-vis the city wasn’t articulated as best I could in the paper, because there are sections — and you just pointed them out — about the world market, and about Marx — and you didn’t mention the Spinoza connection, which I’ll mention in the second — well, it’s something which is there, but needs to be worked out. How I would address that question is — and I think I’ve skirted it in some of the answers given in so far — that I don’t have a problem with people if they want to use the vocabulary of ‘city’. We can debate what that is, frankly, in its own terms — where the boundaries lie, whether they are just jurisdictional boundaries, when you cross a certain threshold, then you’re into something else that isn’t a city. The city itself is a problematic concept, about just what it is, let alone the urban. Let’s put the urban aside. You could just think about what is a city. Are you just going to talk about the city that is the domain of the municipality that has control over it, or it is something else? So even ‘what is a city?’ is a difficult thing. Is it an incorporated city? Is it an endless city? Is it an arrival city? There are lots of labels that have been used by very good theorists — the world city is another one — to try to understand what it is we have got here. What I want to do is talk about the way in which ... when one talks about a market, maybe one has an idea of what a market is. You could see it as being in somewhere which is a market, a street market. You could see it as being somewhere which embodies a certain concretized form, a shopping mall, though people wouldn’t call a shopping mall a market, even though its involved in market transactions. But a market then ... you could argue, well, what is the financial market? What is the world market? Can you see the

world market? No you can't see the world market so much. You can see the outcome, the product of the world market, but you can't actually see the world market as an operational force. Again, you can see the outcome of financial markets, you know, perhaps the biggest outcome is, when your interest rates go up, whether you gain or lose money, whether you can afford your mortgage or whether you can't afford your mortgage, and that is a direct manifestation of the financial markets. We know where the financial markets operate, where they're housed, where the HQs are, but we don't see them operationalizing. What I want to see the city as a bit like that. We can see the city as concrete, as bricks and mortar, as social forms, social spaces where people interact. But I would argue, as I did in the paper, that that is just a particular manifestation of something else which you can't necessarily see in that way. And that is why I talk about Spinoza, and his idea of substance. Now, Spinoza uses substance to talk about his pantheist notion of God: that God is everywhere in nature and in us, that it is all-pervasive. Now, to some degree, Henri Lefebvre is hinting at a kind of substance, not a godlike substance, although maybe the urban is a new god — if you think of it as a technological force, it kind of is a new god. But he does hint that this idea of substance is something which is becoming. And even Spinoza in *Ethics*, which is very complicated ... even though he begins by defining what substance is, it is clear that in the book he's working towards somehow getting a better understanding of substance and how substance emerges through certain forms of intellectual shifts, intellectual movements, self-analyses, different levels of connections between what he called inadequate knowledge and adequate knowledge — how it comes about, and how this substance forms through certain common notions, the common notions people have with each other and with the environment in which they live. Obviously, it is intellectual knowledge of God with Spinoza, but I am using a form of that argument to think: actually, there is a form of substance which we call the urban and the urban fabric — and there is a kind of fabric which stretches across the whole world. I think that where its threads and where its joins are, we could call cities. I think cities do resonate with activity, social activity, economic activity, political activity, demographic activity, if you like, which resonates all around the world through the capillaries of cyber space, of fiber optics and various forms of infrastructure, various forms of communication, various forms of transactions, through cultural exchanges, through migration,

and everything all hangs together in this fabric, the threads of which we could see as being cities. So I would see cities, then, as being the empirical manifestations of urban substance. If you want to think about understanding the world, particularly from the standpoint of a progressive urbanist, just to think in terms of city ... isn't something else going on, which I have tried to identify as a form of urban substance, true, I think, to the heart and the intellect of Henri Lefebvre as he outlines this notion of urban society? Now, where does that leave people? Clearly people participate in urban society, they participate at many different levels, just the same as people participate in financial markets or participate in markets, we participate in the urban fabric. But we often have certain senses of belonging, which may be quite particular. So in some ways I feel I don't have problems about people being involved in neighbourhood struggles, which are the nitty-gritty of a kind of city, if you wanted to call it that — everyday struggles round maybe anti-gentrification, maybe struggling for affordable rents, maybe keeping public spaces public, maybe just generally fighting to keep the neighborhood economically viable where you live. That is one form of politics. If you want to call it city politics, that's fine. I think that if you want to call it urban politics and think about something much more progressive, bigger... the caveat I want to give you here is, this is a piece written by somebody has some certain Marxist hopes: it is a big-picture analysis. I am not in any way impugning or scoffing and being negative and leery about any localized struggle. I am just suggesting — and if you want to call that city-based that's fine — but I am just thinking that there are other stakes involved for a bigger politics around bigger issues of democracy. So why not launch into thinking about those struggles, given the way in which the world functions today through this urban fabric, where cities in themselves have no meaning other than how they coexist with other cities and other spaces, other places, other things that are going on in the world such as financial markets, which have no loyalty and have no concern really for particularity?

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Next comes a set of questions by **Lawrence Bird**. Let's take them one at a time. First: 'Thank you for your paper, it was very thought-provoking. This "concrete abstraction" that you identify as the new urban condition is a really intriguing idea. But it raises a question for me, which I pose as an architect and urban designer who dabbles in media, so I'm

very interested in the relationship between the material existence of the city and the way it extends into the immaterial world of media (and of representation). If we see the current situation in your terms — a concrete, real presence in the city, and a global, dispersed presence on a world stage through Twitter etc., today inseparable and strangely fused, we can imagine these two also in terms of urban space and its representation — even if that representation is, for example, something fragmented and incomplete, embedded in the online discourse. There is a long history of the interplay between making the city, imagining and representing it, and Lefebvre's analysis is part of that. Given all that, what does this new amalgam of concrete and abstract mean for those who design cities? Does it imply a new urban form, and what kind of form?'

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> That's a good question. I think it means something more than an obsession with building spectacular forms of architecture in cities, in certain parts of cities, or even in certain peripheral urban areas, you know, like the Guggenheim — the Guggenheim when it came to Bilbao was seen to be put in some place that was peripheral. I just don't think that the role of building spectacular architecture, as pleasing some of this might be, the Rem Koolhaases and the Frank Gehrys ... I think a lot of what Rem Koolhaas has to say is very interesting when he talks about architectural theory. I think there is a role for designers and architects, and, clearly, a lot of what I've just said about the urban fabric, is predicated on some form of media, digital media, social media, some form of transactions which are done virtually, that there is a virtuality here. I don't want to overstate the virtuality, but it exists nonetheless and it is a kind of future that is becoming. What is the role for architects? There's still a role I think — it's almost like saying some of my best friends are architects — there is a role. I am just thinking of somewhere in the United States where there is just a colossal number of vacant buildings, not just vacant lots, re-developable vacant lots, but just kind of huge swathes and numbers of units have been constructed — speculatively, of course — then the markets crash and they are left vacant. So I think there are spaces there that can be adaptively reused. Progressive architects, instead of involving themselves in huge projects and getting a piece of the action, just one little piddly bit of the big project, can actually use, can in some way invest in

adaptively reusing, some of the vacant spaces that are there. There is a lot of steady work there, without building anything for another decade, I suspect. Adaptively reusing — I mean, some of the best architecture is the homemade stuff, you know, built from breeze-blocks, tin and scavenged forms of metal that people can construct for themselves in different parts of the world — in places like in Brazil, just to name one country. That is a form of self-help adaptive architecture that may need help, you know, that needs help to be propped up. So I have certain skepticism about the profession of architecture, knowing what it necessitates to build a building, and how much money it needs, and where that finance might come from. I am not alone in suggesting that some of the things that have gone on in London, some of other things that have been built, may have some economic benefits for certain people that control London. But the benefits there are muted, and also the way in which the resilience if you like — I think that's one of the words that can be used — of these buildings, their lifespan, is very very short. I've heard Maria Kaika talk about that, so I know a little bit about it, via her work. So, I don't want to suggest that there is no role for architects. I think the problem is the architectural profession, the architectural institutions, the sheer cost of funding an architectural project — realizing the fact that many projects never really see the light of day anyway. There is a role for architects but it may not be in building spectacular buildings, it may be in some form of adaptively reusing what we have got already, and maybe thinking in more imaginative concepts of urbanization. And, you know, if I'm not mistaken, I think I do start my paper with a Rem Koolhaas citation. So it's not as if I'm oblivious to some of this stuff. I just think that, as a profession, like all professions in our neoliberal age, there has to be other forms or other directions in which that profession can go, other than pandering to a kind of continued neoliberalization of the city.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Thank you, Second question from **Lawrence Bird**: 'If I understand right, you're using Pollock as a symptom of capitalist urbanization. But could one also see his work as an act of resistance, through a form of spatial practice? He inhabits the painting in a sense — it's created through the presentation and action of his body in and around the space of the canvas. So, in effect, is it some form of occupation, the creation of an *espace détourné*? It's

also a space of excess — how does that relate to places of excess in capitalism? Does it escape capital? (Leaving aside the point that this painting would now be valued in the tens of millions of dollars)‘.

<**MERRIFIELD, ANDY**> I couldn’t agree more, I agree entirely and I said it in the conclusion of the paper. It’s exactly that. I spoke of number thirty two, the 1950 painting, being the pictorial representation of struggle that’s exactly what I have said. I wholeheartedly agree. I am surprised you’ve asked the question because I answered it in the conclusion of my paper.

<**KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS**> The final question from **Lawrence Bird**, back to the question of concrete abstraction: ‘Perhaps I’m not following your argument with enough insight, but I’m wondering about the connection between these two phenomena that you discuss separately: 1. Buildings and infrastructure, the “second circuit”, are now an integral and unstable part of the system of global capital — rather than standing apart from capital. 2. Urban places and people in them are now part of a unity with virtual spaces and flows — rather than being superseded by them. Both a physical presence in the city and a virtual presence on Twitter etc. matter for the fulfillment of the city’s (and society’s) emancipatory potential. Today both these conditions could be characterized as fraught or charged: lots of destruction and reconstruction of cities; lots of protest in real and virtual spaces. What is it about the structural relationship between these two phenomena, which your paper wraps up in the notion of the “concrete abstract” that provokes this fraught condition?’

<**MERRIFIELD, ANDY**> A couple of things there, as well as several things about secondary circle of capital which you mentioned in relation to the Pollock. Now I try to say that the secondary circuit of capital — David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre’s ideas from the 1970s — there needs to be more work done on this, in a sense, by everybody, theoretical and empirical work, to find out just exactly how this functions. But my take on it is, as far as Pollock goes, is that I was imagining that at one time you had realist representations of the urban, when the urban seem to be a city fixed, absolute — you knew where the boundaries lay. Then you have strange phenomenon in

the nineteenth century when the Engels industrial city came about and we entered into the twentieth century. Then we had the forms of impressionism: they were trying to capture the city, the speed of the city, the speed of the life of a city, the urban life, the sidewalk ballet that Jane Jacobs spoke about. People were using different techniques in art to capture a different form of urbanism in that period. Now we have got something else, which, I just threw out, that actually is like a Pollock canvas that seems to capture pictorially the kind of urban forms that we have. It's interesting. I didn't show these but, if you look at satellite pictures of some of the top five world cities, the world's largest metropolises, it is amazing how similar they are to a Jackson Pollock painting. That is the secondary circuit capital, and secondary circuit capital, as we know, is investment that is channeled into the construction of some form of built form, as identified by Harvey and Lefebvre. Harvey, in some ways, has given us a more accurate and more complex and detailed rendering of the secondary circuit of capital, and how it flows into the fixed landscape, and how the secondary circuit is capital which instantiates itself temporarily in a particular fixed form, whether it be apartment blocks, whether it be warehouses, whether it be productive plants, whether it be infrastructure, roads, whether it be airports, whether it be marinas, whether it be anything that involves a certain fixity through a certain form of capital investment. And, of course, there are all kinds of agents that go with that, be they developers, be they real-estate interests, be they banks that loan money, financial interests that generate rent from these spaces, developers, civil engineers, and architects who design them. So, it's clear that there is an absolute material manifestation of what the secondary circuit of capital is, and it has, in some way, been linked to certain crises in industrial production and in different other sectors of the capitalist economy. So my notion was that, if you look at the Pollock drips, then maybe what you're seeing is the secondary circuit of capital across the globe. Now a very interesting thing about the secondary circuit of capital here — and this relates to David Harvey's work and I hope I'm answering the question — but, in a certain way, it has given rise to what I called subsequently a new urban question. Now the urban question of old, to Manuel Castells, in a nutshell, was that cities somehow were units of collective consumption. Now why is it new? Well, it's new in the sense that all those items of collective consumption that Manuel Castells identified as being somehow integral to the city, to the urban process — collective consumption

items being items which are, in some way, funded by the state, consumed collectively, such as public housing, public transport, schools, hospitals etc. etc. — were somehow extremely important to the whole reproduction of the city. The city, as Manuel Castells argued — was right to argue — was not meaningful, analytically, as a unit of production, but it was meaningful as a unit of reproduction of labor power. This was in his heavy Althusserian phase. Althusser himself poses the question in his essays on ideology, 'How is it that capitalism expands?'. It expands because it reproduces itself. That idea about reproduction was used explicitly by Manuel Castells to identify what he called the urban question. Then the urban question arose as a form of politics when, during the mid seventies under various fiscal crises, financial crises, particularly the fiscal crisis of the state, the state was beginning to disinvest on coughing up money for items of collective consumption. It gave rise to a new form of politics that Manuel Castells identified as an urban social movement that wasn't necessarily workplace-based, wasn't necessarily class-based, as in the classical, traditional Marxist sense, whatever that means. It was somehow based on a form of territoriality and a form of politics that involved different agents and different actors that somehow were novel, and he called them urban social movements in the 1970s. Now fast-forward 40 years, almost. What we have now is a new urban question because all those items that Manuel Castells' thought were so necessary to reproduce capitalism are expendable all along. I don't think, *pace* Manuel Castells — I don't think that he ever would have imagined that capitalism could survive without the state investing in units of collective consumption. What we know through the current neoliberal moment is that not only can it survive without them, it can actually sell them off, it can actually give them away to private capital free of charge to generate money from selling them off. So not only are they no longer necessary, they are actually dispensable in every sense. This is where we get a new urban question that is based around what David Harvey called accumulation by dispossession. The dispossession of the erstwhile public realm is in motion, and the urban flourishes through that. Now, that's why the notion of the secondary circuit of capital needs to be worked on more, because the secondary circuit of capital is itself a very interesting phenomenon, and David Harvey is doing lectures on volume two of *Capital* as we speak probably, or is planning them as we speak. Now, what is interesting here is the same question about how a system that is so

crisis-prone can reproduce itself and still continues to do what it does. Well, it does it through accumulation by dispossession, according to David Harvey, which then involves a certain form of secondary circuit capital which is linked somehow to different forms of profit, merchant profit, interest-bearing capital, rental income, and these are what seem to be the growth sectors of the economy and are creating a form of urban space. I think that does involve fixity, and where it fixates, if you want to call it that, where it instantiates itself, is in something that you could call city. But [as for] actually understanding the whole reproduction and the whole circulation ... If you can imagine that the secondary circuit of capital, now volume two of *Capital*, looks like a Jackson Pollock painting, how is it that a system so crisis-prone can actually coexist? So I think that take two of *Social Justice and the City*, David Harvey will forgive for saying this, is in some ways looking at this whole notion of the secondary circuit capital very closely, hooking it up with volume two of Marx's *Capital*. To see it from the standpoint of *Capital* is a very interesting thing. Clearly that begs the question then, what does it mean for the standpoint of resistance? But I think understanding it would be theoretically quite interesting through charting the whole notion of this new urban question, particularly if you think about it as a form of neo-Haussmannization on a global scale. Engels is right about volume two of *Capital* on, you know. David Harvey will have things to say about that, but in one of the introductions that Engels wrote for the volume two of *Capital*, he says 'there is plenty of good work that Marx does, but it's going to upset a lot of people because there isn't much there for agitation'. That was the word that Engels used. But the new urban question is deeply related to this idea of the secondary circuit of capital and the kind of urban forms that it has given rise to, and how that maybe in itself gives rise to a certain form of political struggle, which itself is a new form of urban struggle.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Michele Vianello: '1. Do you think that Lefebvre, despite his very clear disaffection towards technocracy, was entirely dismissing technique as a tool to achieve better cities? When, towards the final part of *Le Droit à la ville* he alludes to methods to achieve such a right, he refers to 'experimental utopias' (empiricism?), and 'transduction' (cybernetics?). The latter is a term taken from Gilbert Simondon (*L'Individuation à la lumière des notions de*

forme et d'information). This author, a philosopher of ontology, was proposing a change in the epistemology of the object of science and of the technical instrument, advocating an evolutionary turn in all disciplines. At the end of the line if the urban “outstrips our cognitive and sensory facilities” don't we need models to study its problems? Do you think that the new scientific approaches and techniques, maybe indeed cybernetic ones, doing away with dogmatism and centred instead on their capacity to build open-ended adaptive processes, can be of any help to achieve more justice in the places we live in?’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> I am aware of what Michele is saying. We've corresponded and met, so hi! Before, I didn't have a good sense of what you were on about, but I do now, I have a good sense because you sent me a paper that I have read and commented upon, and I see where you are going. A couple of threads of that question, as I see it, is that Simondon and Henri Lefebvre, as you know better than me, Michele... Simondon came up with this notion of ‘transduction’, which Lefebvre appropriated to talk about a kind of method of conceiving what is and what it might become. What it might become is immanent in what it is: that was Simondon's notion of individuation. Crystals coexist in some rock forms but actually their own particularity exists in a sense of what they are turning into. Lefebvre used that to think about what cities were turning into with the notion of urban society. So, transduction was Lefebvre's method of talking about the past present, when what he is really talking about is the possibility of the future. It is a very strange method which is neither deduction or induction, but transduction. That's my little potted understanding of Lefebvre's notion of Simondon. As Simondon wrote about cybernetics, you know, I may sound as if I know what I am talking about, but I don't really ... I'm a bit shaky. Does Lefebvre think that technique has a role to play? I am not so sure that he does, actually, I think he was very wary of the *cybernanthropes*, as he called them — a very strange word — which were these cybernetic technocrats, bureaucrats, scientists, experts, professionals who conceived what Lefebvre talks about as a science of the city that had to do with managing the city as a technocratic, bureaucratic, managerialist venture, which involved certain forms of rationality imposed upon the city. This was what was called a science which, Lefebvre said, was really an ideology of the bureaucrats bent on destroying the city as they knew it. He would point

the finger at Pompidou for being one of the great instigators of that science of the city in that post-1968 period in a French new-town movement. So, I don't think that he would see a tremendous role for that. I have read some of these books — *Vers le cybernanthrope* and *Positions*, two books that he wrote indicting the technocrats in the 1970s for perpetuating this scientific ideology, which he saw as very destructive. I don't know whether Lefebvre was right to do that. I can see how he would rail against Le Corbusier's notions of the mass plan, and the planning which, he said, somehow throttles spontaneity, which was the whole crux of his notion of urbanism. He talks about that with Mourenx and the new town in 'Notes on the new town', in the *Introduction to Modernity* amongst many other places. So I don't think that he would be much into the notion of technique and cybernetics, as helping us think about the city. Maybe he was wrong, maybe the nearest we can come is to think about the city as a kind of cyborg: nature culture, all comes together. Perhaps he was mistaken. I don't know enough about it. I am not sure. He wasn't a technophobe. He was very much for thinking about new technology, for thinking about what technology could do, how it could empower us. I think he was suspicious, quite rightly, in terms of its alienating capacities and its dehumanizing tendencies, which are historically proven. So, I don't know exactly what he may have thought about that. Maybe you can hazard some guesses and tell us.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Michele Vianello: 2. 'You say that the urban is an "ontological reality inside us" on page 3. I think you use the term ontological in the sense of information science: the set of concepts about the urban are formally explicable and they can support reasoning, am I right? On page 4, you refer to the global financial market as a virtual reality. Later, you give very interesting explanations about how these two kinds of reality can be compared through the lens of "concrete abstraction". The reference to American painting provides a good metaphor to explain how the two things are messily intertwined. Don't you think, though, that a clearer philosophical distinction could provide better heuristic tools to find possible solutions? Hasn't the urban a clear (although not absolute) propensity towards being quite ontologically real (the good old way, Greek-style) while the justification for the financial global market has a propensity to rely on the epistemology of many things, such as human behavior (e.g. homo economicus),

natural processes (e.g. evolution)? I mean: if tomorrow morning capitalism collapses a planet of 7 billion people will still be something in the lines of urban; while the market might be gone. Can we really put these two realities on the same level?

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Capitalism collapses tomorrow morning. What is it Fredric Jameson has repeatedly said? 'It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'. I don't know. Is there a need to delineate, to perhaps think more deeply about the philosophical undercurrents of this? Certainly, I think. To some degree this was a 'first cut', as it were, an attempt to lay out a new — I don't know, 'new' sounds a bit immodest — but just to rethink the whole context of urban studies, urban thought, urban theory. It may well be that my uses of epistemology and ontology are in some ways wanting, as a philosopher might think of them. But, if you look at a book like *Social justice and the city*, then these were the things that were preoccupying David Harvey. There is a lot of talk about ontology in the more radical chapters of *Social justice and the city* when he was trying to think about a different ontology. You know, he uses structuralism, he uses the Piaget book on structuralism, and he is using the American Marxist political scientist Bertell Ollman's notions of internal relations. So there is a sense in which he was working out a different ontology before he began to build a base of theory and a base of politics. So, I can appreciate the question, and I think you are right. I think what I am trying to do — and in some ways you have helped me to think it through now — is to create a different ontology, which isn't a *tabula rasa* from scratch, but is using what we have had already. Clearly Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey and the whole 1970s tradition of Marxist thinking about urbanization is hugely influential — I'm a product of that, passed down through the decade in the 1980s when I was a grad student. So it is very important to me to engage with this. It's not a *tabula rasa*, but it's suggesting that, actually, what we have now warrants a similar paradigm shift. I think David Harvey does talk about Kuhnian paradigm shifts in *Social justice and the city*. To think about redefining an ontology, which is maybe radically different, and then constructing a theoretical framework on top of that and think how that illuminates a different of kind of politics. So, yeah, my notion of ontology is about a theory of what exists, so it's very difficult to separate it from epistemology, which is a kind of a theory of theory, if you like. How do we know

what we know? What exists and how do we know what exists? I think the two are inextricably related. I think that comes through with this idea of the urban as an ontology, which is knowable through a certain theoretical understanding. How it's lived, perhaps, is through a city, form. And if we are thinking about global politics, then actually thinking about what the urban is, as an ontological undergirding of a certain theoretical understanding of what the urban is... it seems to me a worthwhile project to think about moving from the epistemology to the political realm. But, of course, all of those realms — the ontology, the epistemology and the political — are all intermeshed in some shape or form because what I perceive as existing is somehow shaped through why I am, who I am, where I have been, what I have done with my life. It comes with a whole series of baggage. That reflects how I abstract from that ontology and draw my theoretical constructs, and that, of course, will shape how I want to act upon that theory and whether I see myself as right or wrong, you know. So all of the heavy stuff that we are talking about here is very difficult to delineate in an analytical way. That said, I think, it may be worthwhile at least to try to get some sense of, and reposition ourselves *vis-à-vis* what an ontology is of the urban, what an urban theory is, and what the new urban question might be, and what a politics of that new urban question might look like. This is just a beginning, a beginning which is at once — this is a bit transductive too in my head, this paper is a bit transductive in the sense that, in a way I am talking about what is and what might be simultaneously and it is also infused with my own wishful thinking — my wish images, if you want to use the Blochian term — my wish images of the possible future. So what ought to be, from the standpoint of Andy Merrifield, is embodied in this paper, for what that's worth.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Michele Vianello 3. 'Again I want to refer to Simondon, who criticized Marx from a perspective that I consider complementary to that of Lefebvre. For Lefebvre, industrialization was a form of urbanization all along. According to Simondon, the techniques (e.g. the iron plough or the flying shuttle for weaving) have in them the potential to be oppressive and create inequalities. So it's not just about who holds the means of production or what kind of spaces industrialization produces, but also how techniques work. Do you think that this makes sense? Can different techniques, or a different use of them, can yield more just

spaces? Simondon proposed the term *technoesthétique*: something that, it seems to me, can be paired in its utopian formulation with Lefebvre's *jouissance*. Do you think that a further development on the idea of the right to the city could or should address how the objects we use and the places we live in are materially built?

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> I'm not sure, I don't know. I'm not entirely sure I understand the question, if I have to be honest. Can techniques help us think about urban forms? Well, techniques have built cities. The technologies have built physical forms, without technique there would be no secondary circuit of capital. So, it doesn't necessarily have to be the rich big guys who mobilize technique, and I think, to some degree, with digital media now, social media, we have seen how techniques, if you want to use that term, can be mobilized to try to formulate different kinds of politics — maybe not different kinds of politics, but certainly different forms of communication around politics. The politics, the material politics is, still, the acid test. The final analysis of the awful truth, the lonely hour of the last instance is the material politics evolving on the street. But it is very clear that technique can help organize and coordinate struggle, coordinate demonstrations, bring people to demonstrations, pass bits of information around about demonstrations, also expose shenanigans and machinations of the ruling classes — Wikileaks, things like that, you know, getting things on Facebook, getting images on Facebook, getting videos on Facebook, getting propaganda. I think the alternative media now is... I think most intelligent people realize that the bourgeois press, certainly the national press, most national newspapers need to be treated with a certain amount of caution, if you read them. And I think most people who want knowledge of what is going on in the world go elsewhere, to alternative media. That's a form of technique. So, yeah, I can see that a little bit, and I am sure that Lefebvre wouldn't have been an adversary of thinking about how Facebook and Twitter and new social media can help empower people in good ways — in progressive ways, I mean. That would be a thing that's there. I don't know. I can't speak for him. I can only think that there were dangers with that. Of course, you know, it is a tool of corporations as well. And there's censorship — they try to close down Internet sites. Anonymous and groups like that have tried to expose things and have constantly encountered

difficulties. There is a fear from the ruling powers that be that these new digital media can threaten their wealth and power and status in some shape or form. So, I don't know, I don't know whether Lefebvre would have thought that. I don't know whether Simondon can help. I don't know enough about of his work. I once spent the weekend with his son, believe it or not, in this farmhouse in the South of France. I didn't realize it was Simondon's son till he told me his father was a philosopher. He showed me all his books. I said 'oh wow!' so that was very interesting. Obviously, that's not going to be put into the pages of an international journal, but anyhow it was an interesting point, I don't know much about Simondon. So I can't say much more than that.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> The next couple of questions come from **Anthony Barnum**: Question 1: 'I agree that we should be talking about planetary urbanization. However, I would disagree with your focus. I think the focus should be on the developing world. The world population is now over 7 billion and you mention that by 2030, 4.9 billion or 60% of the world's population will be urban. But what you are missing is that 1 billion people today, one seventh, live in slums, *favelas*, *barrios*, etc. And this is set to double in 30 years according to the UN. In addition 3 billion people live on less than \$2/day and of these 1 billion live on less than \$1/day. What you miss is that a majority of urban city dwellers are, and will be, in the developing world. We might well argue that for the masses of humanity, the future of urban life is not New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, and we shouldn't argue that it is the capitals of the global south either. Instead the new urbanization is the *favela*: the *favelação* of the urban, ghettoization of the urban, slumification of the urban. If you really want to get at what are urban politics, we have to move. The urban has moved. Planetary urbanization is a developing world experience much more than a developed world experience. Mike Davis speaks to this in his book *Planet of Slums*. In the developed world our urban spaces were constructed during a different epoch. To talk of planetary urbanization, we must talk of the construction of urban spaces today and using new methods. I would argue the new methods under finance capital result in the urban citadel of the wealthy, the gated community, and the slum, *favela*, *barrio* of the poor. How do you conceptualize the role of these marginalized spaces within your work? Do they have a place? If

so, how central should that place be? The question is: flow definitely occurs with planetary urbanization. Any visit to a developing world city will show TuPac, Elvis, 50Cent, etc. A good example of this is “Demonstrations at work: some notes from urban Africa” by Abdou Maliq Simone in *Ghetto 2012* edited by Hutchison & Haynes, in which he documents an American-style gang in Kinshasa, Congo, which have also been documented in Latin America by someone else.’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Well, that’s not really a question, that’s voicing an opinion. I am not sure how much the opinion relates to my paper, because I would have thought my paper does address those issues. If it’s an opinion, I think there is a misconception of my paper, and I think, worse than that... if it’s an opinion, and that is your thought, I think it’s deeply problematic. In fact, my book is trying to get over that way of thinking, all those binaries, all the old hoary chestnuts, between city and countryside, inner city and suburb. North and South of the world are binaries, which are very, very problematic. So I disagree fundamentally with this idea. I think what you are saying there is that the majority of the world's population are living in some form of substandard housing and a very impoverished form of life, but actually substandard housing and impoverished forms of life exist everywhere, in the richest cities. In fact, I have never seen so much wealth in my whole life as in Sao Paulo, which is one of the most opulent places I have ever seen in my life where wealthy people far exceed anything that I have ever seen, and I have lived in London and New York. So I think the binary thinking of thinking of the developing world as being somehow analytically more important is mistaken. Upsetting a lot of people as that might do... I think why that is upsetting is... I think all of those things, and all those scenarios that have been mapped out in that question, or that comment, are actually differences of degree rather than differences of kind, because I think that I am talking about planetary urbanization and I am talking about urban substance, and I am talking about getting rid of binary thinking. I am trying to think that the whole world is a unified system now, and all those forces somehow create particularities. But to see those particularities, be they all the examples you have cited, as somehow having a privilege because they express something which New York isn’t — and in fact New York has plenty of places where people are living in almost as much

poverty. So the question of what is poorer and what is richer, what is most impoverished and what is least impoverished, what is analytically more correct is a difference of degree not a difference of kind. What we are seeing here is something which is unified, involves a unified process. Everywhere is linked, and to see it as slightly ... I mean what you said is kind of fucked up, frankly, it's fucked up. The world now, with the planetary urbanization as I saw it in my paper, as I've argued in my paper ... If you want to engage with the paper, it sees something which I am calling neo-Haussmannization. Neo- Haussmannization is this global process of divide and rule, of creating centres and the centres create peripheries. Now these centres are not geographical centres, they are centres of wealth, affluence and power, and to justify them they create peripheries. To keep the centres in place, the peripheries have to be kept out. So often these centres are citadels and what you have said is true. But to see it as some sort of north-south divide, or to see it as a countryside/city problematic is wrong. Within the paradigm of — my paradigm, at least, of — neo- Haussmannization, the centres and peripheries are everywhere, scattered around everywhere, rich countries, poor countries, developing countries, developed countries: rich and poor coexist side by side. It's this mosaic which is almost a global fabric, which is a tapestry whereby centers and peripheries exist everywhere, including in what we would see as some of the world's poorest nations. I don't think that necessarily there is anything particularly revealing — other than a degree, a horrific degree, of what you can get away with in terms of injustice — that goes on in what one can see as being the developing countries. I think these binaries need to be gotten rid of. That includes another binary, the economy and politics, the public and the private, all the old binaries we once knew are problematic for understanding, in my opinion. I think what you have identified there is not really a question that is engaging with my paper, but a position piece and a value judgment of what you think it should be, and I am arguing that it shouldn't be that. I think that's a kind of thinking we need to actually readdress and think anew.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Anthony Barnum 2. 'For me, the right to the city is global citizenship. It is as Perlman (2010) says the right to be *gente* to be human and to be seen, recognized, respected. The right to the city is a request of the human to be acknowledged as a part of the

world. Although I see how this can be accomplished in the politics of the encounter, recently an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* by Thomas Frank “Yes, but what are you for? Occupy Wall St & Its Evil Twin, the Tea Party” discusses how these two movements are very similar in several basic ways. One is that they work to be visible and yet make no political demands. This idea that you have that citizens “just do, just act”, affirm themselves as a group, as a collectivity, as a general assembly for me doesn’t work. There is a difference between a spontaneous action built on mob mentality and a movement. Without the organization, without the demands, is transformative change possible? Or are we hoping that we will simply metamorphose into better humans? In order to demand rights we have to know what they are and we have to have both strategy and tactics in order to demand and take them. For me the question of Occupy is what is gained from protest against something, when nothing changes? The action becomes disconnected from a goal or act, or beyond the simple encounter. After the encounter, then what? After Occupy, then what?’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Well, I have answered that question in talking earlier about Thomas Frank, about the simultaneous revolutionary equation, about the insurrection and what comes after the day. I think that problem has now been identified as something which is actually quite important and quite magical — even though it may have been overstated, and even though it may have led to nothing. I think it has led to something and it has created a certain awareness even down to the language of one percent versus the 99%. It has absolutely created a certain fear amongst the financial sector. The financial sector see themselves now as having some kind of enemy. I don’t know whether they are a bit more aware of that enemy than they once were. I do think it has been an act of raising awareness, solidarity of people who didn’t know they had people around them who felt similarly, particularly young people, that they share certain commonalities that they didn’t know they had, that the politics of encounter has brought people together in very innovative ways. I went to Tent City University in London. Occupy London outside St Paul’s cathedral was amazingly organized, as I know it was around Zuccotti park in terms of the little life world it created with canteens and hospitals and libraries and forms of communication ... and, I guess, community, if you want to call it that, that existed

there. There was a tremendous organization. I think the issue is about coordination. Where it's true is about what comes after. But I don't think many upheavals of people, popular upheavals — and this would include some nineteenth-century ones. If you read around 1848 — particularly 1848, more than the Paris Commune — it was an amazing time that went somewhere between February and June, the June days of 1848, those four months when there was an interim government but there was also an amazing sense that something could happen. If you read the accounts of 1848, it is clear that they didn't have any leaders and they didn't really have any demands. And I think that demands are something which they shouldn't have. They should have goals, but why demands? Demands imply a certain form of politics of recognition. Demands mean asking for something for somebody. I don't think you need demands, I think you can just act. I think you can have goals, I think you can have objectives, and I think the goals and objectives do need to be spelt out, that's quite true — certainly in the aftermath of any kind of insurrection. What are the goals, what are the objections, what are the institutions that we can put in place? But to see that as everybody being disorganized is a misnomer. And to see them not making demands as a problem is mistaken. They shouldn't make demands. Demands means you are asking for something, you are asking an interlocutor for something, you want to be recognized as wanting something. That's a politics of conciliation, and that's not at all what it should be doing. Having objectives and having goals is another issue. It's the goals and the issues, and the organization and the tactics and what kinds of institutions can be put in place afterwards, what kind of conventions can be put in place that are important. The convention is what the French Revolution had; the revolutionary government had a convention. It was a system of representative democracy that was incredible because it allowed the people to have their say. Every day, you know, before the convention met, it would take in people. Three thousand people at one point could sit in the convention of the French revolution, certainly after 1791, and they could raise their issues to the representatives in a form of not participatory democracy but something more like representative democracy. I think that there is a need for some kind of spokespeople and leaders, and there is a need for a tighter form of organization and a phase of manoeuvring that can identify goals and objectives. Demands? I don't think they have to make demands, I think the demands are clear. The

demands are quite clear about what we don't want. I think what we do want is something that has to be worked out. But I suspect that has been the history of every revolutionary struggle that we have ever known.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> A set of questions from **Justin Kadi**: 1. 'I may be on a completely wrong track with this. But I will try nevertheless. If "the urban" is equivalent to "a coming together of people" (p. 8), as you argue, then urbanization may refer to the process in which there is an even greater coming together of people. You seem to suggest that these encounters are also no longer taking place just in one particular locality, but we live in an urban society where encounters do not necessarily require physical space anymore. If urbanization then refers to the growing interconnectedness of people in different localities, in which way is it any different from globalization?'

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> Interesting question. I think it's a difference of degree rather than kind. I think it's an aspect of the process that we have identified as being globalization. I think that globalization was the big debate in the mid 90s more so than now — people don't seem to talk about it anymore. Most people saw globalization as being, whether you agree with it or not, some form of industrialization, of exporting of goods, of setting up branch plants, of engaging in cultural exchanges, and, to some degree, it is that, what we're seeing now, but I think that there's a difference of degree rather than kind. I think the whole debate around globalization and internationalization of the economy — globalization was in Marx's *Manifesto*, clearly, and before that actually... you'll probably find it in Braudel or something — was in motion. I think that it's constantly undergoing certain transformations in its process, clearly powered by finance capital. I think what's happened, the way in which the global urbanization boom, if you want to use those terms... it's clear that that financialization that was so part and parcel of this form of industrialization that was seen to be globalization has now peaked and has now become very much a part of urbanization, so industrialization/urbanization seem to become synonymous, as indeed does financialization. I think that the degree to which that has become immanent in the globe is perhaps more significant than globalization. But I also think that when you talk about

something planetary, it conjures up a different vocabulary and a different form of language that may be more dynamic — perhaps it's just me seeing it — perhaps it's just a little bit more futuristic, perhaps, than globalization which seems slightly benign ..., and globalization has taken on an 'it' categorization — it does this, it does that, 'it' being globalization. Certainly, planetary urbanization is not an 'it'; it's a process which involves a certain historically specific form of capitalist development, which has long ago urbanized the countryside, long ago developed mature productive forces, and is almost beginning to do the more futuristic things that Marx spoke about in the *Grundrisse*, that is, to profit from the general intellect — the application of science as a force of production which then decouples itself from the traditional, as it were, law of value that is stated in *Capital* and has a dynamic of its own that is based around monopolization, monopolization of interest rates, of fixing interest rates, of adding on charges, one by one, when borrowing money, of unequal exchanges around merchant capital, buying cheap to sell dear, it involves dispossession, particularly in the urban world but it involves eminent domain, the state compulsorily purchasing land, then giving it away to private capital, sometimes for no money at all, which has been this amazing subsidization, the biggest land-grab in history as someone described it, ... just being very influential in thinking about the urban process. So it's perhaps identifying something which is a new, qualitatively different form, that's something that is part and parcel of the whole process which has been identified as globalization, but it's giving it a different spin, giving it a different bearing and seeing a different social and political reality that might come from it. Where it does have similarities with globalization is that there are naysayers and people who see it positively. I don't know, I mean, it depends on what mood I am in. I see it both ways sometimes, sometimes simultaneously. I can see the hazards of it, you know, I can see the hazards of what it's doing. But I can see perhaps the possibility of what's happening. What I am absolutely certain of is that there's no going back.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Justin Kadi: 2. 'Reading through the first half of your article where you talk about what "the urban" is in contrast to the "city", following Lefebvre, I was a bit puzzled when you come to the point where you talk about the "right to the city". Given that you

argue that the “city” only captures the material manifestation of underlying “urban” processes, I’m wondering whether it wouldn’t actually make more sense — or be more consistent- to talk about a right to the “urban” or even the right to “urbanization”. This is especially in the light of what I remember Lefebvre wrote about the right to the city, that it is not just a right to live in the city but also to “produce” the city, something that would rather be located at the level of “the urban” according to your conception of “urban” and “city”?’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> It’s a good question. If I had to choose between the right to the city and the right to the urban I would much prefer the right to the urban — for several different reasons. I think you are right in identifying the Lefebvre’s notion of the right to city as, in some way, much more expansive than just taking back the centre. I do accept that and I do acknowledge that. It was always about that right to urban life, the right almost to party in the city, if you like, the right to the *jouissance* of the city, the right to festival — all those kind of things he wrote about. I can see the right to the city as use value and exchange value, the right just to do what you want, not be, somehow, in some way decanted from the center. What I see now is that the centre is not ... to see the center as being something that needs to be reclaimed is not an issue to me, it’s not important. I think the right to urban life would be a better slogan. I guess, again, at the end of the day, I just don’t like rights talk, and identify this much better in the book than actually in that paper, I just don’t like the idea of rights; it’s something that just bothers me. Rights imply a certain bill of rights that has to be drafted, and rights have to be granted by some higher power. The higher arbiter of one’s rights tends to be some more important legal force, a higher court of justice, somebody who has power and needs to recognize that. It has its own Marxist rendering too with the Marxist-Hegelian theories — Alexandre Kojève in the 1930s when he talks about the dialectic between master and slave and his famous theory of recognition. To be free the slave has to be granted freedom by the master, and the master can only ever be free himself by granting that need and that demand to the slave. In so doing he affirms his own consciousness and then he becomes free himself, so that freedom is based on this dynamic reciprocity of master–slave dialectic — the consciousness of the two and the enslavement of both, including the master, is predicated on that relationship of

recognition and only through mutual recognition can freedom and liberty ever come about. It's a very interesting idea. And that recognition can only come through struggle, which I totally agree with — struggle with a capital Sin Kojève, if you read it, all important things get upper case in his *Introduction to the reading of Hegel*, which is a series of lectures he gave in the 1930s which influenced many many people, including Lefebvre to a certain degree. Lacan, Bataille, Breton — all the super stars of that generation listened to Kojève's seminars on Hegel. I have a real problem with the notion of recognition. I don't think there should be idea of recognition of right to get one's right. It means you have to appeal to a higher power. I don't think we should be asking questions and making petitions about being given our rights — a higher power bestowing our rights on us. We should just take them. We should just act. We should actually just take them without having any rights talk. It's an irrelevancy. Most of the time, you know, when people ask for their rights, there is no right for them to be granted. We have got the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which is just riddled with contradictions, which isn't worth anything, isn't worth the paper it's written on. Human rights have been flouted from time immemorial. They have been flouted, obviously speaking, in the occupied territories, you know Palestinian under the Israelis. The politics of rights isn't politics at all, quite frankly. It's based on some moral recognition of one's demands being accepted, and I think that it is against a conciliatory politics, which I think progressives should forget about. I don't know if it could be used strategically at certain moments. I am not saying it's not important, but I just think that the right to urban life should be a given: it should be a natural right, if you like, if you want to use a Rousseauian term, that we don't even have to talk about. I think where rights would come into it would be in a post-revolutionary democracy, when you have a bill of rights, which can be actually there, that people can understand and know there are some rules whereby one's duties and obligations have some reciprocity, and liberty and the law can mutually support each other. But that's way down the line, it's not now. Getting rights isn't going to help us, and the right to the city is always a form of revolutionary citizenship, Lefebvre said, and I think that the revolutionary citizenship is more interesting than the right of the city.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Justin Kadi: ‘You build your argument on the work of Lefebvre and his conception of the urban that he developed in the 1960s. In which way would you say that “the urban” today differs from what Lefebvre projected it to be in the 1960s (other than it being closer to the state of planetary urbanization that he was thinking about)? What about the role of the Internet for instance in transforming the “urban”? You point to that at the end of the article when you discuss the role of social media for organizing politically today. Could you elaborate on the differences between the urban in the 1960s, or Lefebvre's projections in the 1960s and the urban we are experiencing today?’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> He was very aware what was going on. In terms of the urban process of his day, in the 1960s, he saw two things going on. In one he had less foresight, he had less of his finger on the pulse than in the second one. The first thing he saw in the 1960s was actually that to see a city similar to Paris, a city he knew very well, as being the paradigm of all urban forms was mistaken. He was seeing the way in which the urban process was creating a form of ... in those days it was identified as being suburban, suburbanization, and in France it was seen as the new town movement. This peripheralization of the creation of *banlieue* became something that was put in place in Haussmann's day, actually, the decanting of the urban poor to the periphery, the so-called *faubourgs* as they were called then — but now it would be seen as a process of the creation of decentralization of the urban and a form of suburbanization, of new town. Lefebvre was talking about that in the 1960s. He seemed to think that it was a managerial, bureaucratic guidance of where the urban form was going, that it was the work of the managerial class, bureaucrats and technocrats, propped up by a certain form of rational urban theory, that was based on zoning, that was based on a form of de-urbanization and decanting and reducing urban populations and creating peripheral spaces to create new cities, new towns, as happened in France. Hence what's going on now with the dialectic between the so-called rich centres and the *banlieue* and the peripheries. That was addressed more to the French experience than anywhere else, because the second point that he was also identifying — and some of this came closer to home — was a certain shift away of urban resources that would be seen as central to a kind of periphery. Even to the point where the University of Nanterre was moved to west Paris,

La Défense, behind La Défense, which was a very peripheral, Portuguese and Italian immigrant area, a poor area of France. The University of Nanterre, part of the University of Paris — Paris dix or Paris huit, I can't remember which one it is — was carved out of this peripheral space. And he said: 'If you want to understand the future of urban life, all you have to do is look out my office window' at the rebuilding that was going on. So he saw this suburbanization, peripheralization, depopulation, decentralization — I don't know what you want to call it — this 'decityfication' going on — he would probably have called it that. In other words it was decanting populations to create different urban spaces, and it was in these new urban spaces that the battle was waged. Where he was less insightful there, I think... a lot of information about what was going on with new urban forms, particularly through decentralization, was actually coming in, in more traditional geographical circles. People like Jean Gottman were identifying the megalopolis, the strange congealing of cities on the northeastern seaboard going down roughly from Boston to south of Washington DC and forming its whole singular urban unit. Even the interstitial spaces in between, that would once have been seen maybe as rural Connecticut or part of rural New England, were really being converted into special urbanized forms of agriculture, and this whole new region was adopting new labor and labor practices based much more not only on tertiary activity but also on quaternary activity, Gottman said, which was a university knowledge-based thought with forms of growth that were linked intimately to the urban process. Lefebvre doesn't talk about that in that same way. I think what Jean Gottman, from a more traditional geographical standpoint, was identifying, and identifying empirically, was pretty much what Lefebvre was in 1970 identifying as being urban society in the making, the becoming of urban society. So I think — to get back to the question as I remember it — that from the 1960s there were things being put in place such that Lefebvre recognized that it was mistaken to think of the city of light, Paris, as being paradigmatic of what all urban forms were going to look like in the future. Then in the 1980s when he started to travel after his retirement from Nanterre, he went to Los Angeles and that kind of blew his mind when he realized actually this, the decentred form of urbanization — no longer the traditional city, to call it a city no longer really captured what it was — was more the future of urban life than Paris.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Justin Kadi: 'In your text you write that "the politics of encounter hinges upon another conception of centrality as a locus of actions that attract and repel, that structure and organize a social space, that define the urban" (10). Could you please elaborate further on this concept from the perspective of an everyday urban practice (in contrast to protest)?'

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> OK. This is theoretical, this is big-picture theory, this is a big theoretical — at its worst academic — understanding of what is going on globally. I just wanted to see a big picture of the urban process, as I think I am being faithful — maybe that's putting it a bit too strongly 'faithful' — to Henri Lefebvre's theorizations. One of the implications of the coming of urban society, as Lefebvre said in the section on the urban phenomenon — the first line is 'From now on I am going to stop using the term city, I'm going to use instead the word urban society, urban fabric, the urban' and he plays around with those terms. Now he has got from something quite concrete, from a city in a singular, to cities in the plural to something called the urban in the singular. So there is an analytical sidestep of some sort going on here. Now, how does this enrich us? I think it would be good to think what are the implications of that, how can we run with it. Well, if you see something as a fabric, the fabric is stitched together with different thread and different forms of cloth, and often we can see a fabric as a mosaic and it has different colours, different forms of cloth stuck together, different shapes and sizes all stuck together. The important thing is, you see it as a singular cloth and you can see the different stitching, different ways in which the coloration of cloth and the different fabric, if you like, of the singular cloth come together in this way. And I just think it can give you a more powerful understanding about what we're told is a world which is increasingly globalized, which is increasingly interconnected. We know and we have heard that places connect with other places, that almost the idea that there is some island which is its own island which is disconnected from anything else in the whole world, as if you can be a Robinson Crusoe on your island, is ridiculous. It's just ridiculous. That includes isolated parts of the countryside. The fact they are isolated is indicative that the isolation is not passivity. It's dynamic because of its relationship with somewhere else or its non-relationship with somewhere else, particularly the urban. So

the urban then, if we could just move it forward, is somehow a very dynamic matrix, constellation, configuration based upon relationships. So cities then, different cities, cities of different sizes, and different locations that would seem to be within city orbits, within the urban fabric, exist because of a sheer relationship with other cities elsewhere. Then you have got this very dynamic ontological realm, which is accepting that the globe, ontologically, is defined by this sheer dynamic of molecules, city molecules existing within a dynamic structure which we would call the fabric. There is a fabric to the world, and if you get your analytical microscope, as a theorist, and you penetrate any cell within this fabric, any piece of it in the cloth, and you go in there with your microscope in the way in which maybe a quantum theorist would go, you enter a world where you see the molecules, and the molecules could be just different neighborhoods of the city. I am suggesting you go in as a quantum theorist looking at something very small, which, in effect, is actually extremely large. OK? So when you go into this dynamic reality you then see this like a quantum theorist. You see waves and particles oscillating. I am suggesting you see cores and peripheries oscillating in dynamic repulsion, attraction, repulsion. They attract because they need hinterlands to keep the coherence of what is seen to be a perceived core. But there's repulsion because it kind of keeps it at bay. That's where you get the separations and you get the citadels. This is a kind of understanding which is a purely ontological realm that I can see in my own head, as a theoretician. The role of the theoretician is to try and identify what that might actually look like in a reality — theoretically, which I try to do. Then politically it suggests ... Well, actually, given that this is all interconnected, this was always a kind of relationship that I see in David Harvey's *Social justice in the city*, internal relations, the dialectic, a kind of form of structuralism, seeing a structure which is there, but seeing a certain contingency within it. So the ontological reality of this world is contingent and seemingly structural and formed around internal relations, sheer relationships between centres and peripheries, neighbourhoods and other neighbourhoods, cities and other cities that form the totality of the urban fabric. Then politics within that, and in everyday life, can in some way construct itself around that ontology, around that reality of what the world is. People may think 'Isn't it some kind of fantasy land I'm creating here, isn't this just a product of my imagination?' Maybe. But, if it isn't, I think you can justifiably argue that people do tend to live in a world

which is circumscribed within a certain orbit. But, actually, where one's head lies is often a good example of this: it's here but its somewhere else at the same time, you know, and to see it just as here and see it not as itself a process in the making... We're making ourselves — just by being somewhere we make ourselves, just by walking down the street encountering other people we make ourselves, just by being on a computer we are making ourselves. I don't want to use the notion of networks but we are created through the relationships we have with other people, and the relationships we have with other places, some of which are fixed in a location in space while others are just somehow somewhere else. The empathetic relationships, the virtual connections — people do live in those realms simultaneously, and it's not just rich guys either, privileged people, ... although with the privilege comes a much more expansive world, of course. But then, oddly, the reality is that often rich people live in very narrow worlds and increasingly they want to barricade themselves in to keep people out. To that degree we could almost say that the city is not a small 'c' but it's a big 'C', and if you going to use the right to the city, the right to the city with the big 'C', then it maybe a more worthwhile project ... but I am rambling now. That's just how I see it. It may not go anywhere, but I am convinced it might make the ontological view that you affirm, and the theory you develop from that ontology, and the potential politics that might emerge from that, much richer. If not, it's very interesting to do it. *The Social Contract*, the book we have mentioned a couple of times here, is a purely ideational construct. But I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be thinking in those terms — this imaginative what-might-be — rather than being just dogged down in the realm of the real. This was always the thesis of *Magical Marxism* anyway.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> I think what you have just said speaks to the last question by Justin, but I will read it in case you want to comment further: 'You are stating that the urban is "formless", shapeless and a "pure form" at the same time (7). As I understand it, the urban then is more a dynamic set of social relations than concrete, material forms. That implies that the material city as empty form does not signify anything, that it does not impose certain social relations over others. What role does the material city/form play in your conception?'

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> It's both. Without some manifestation, without some empirical clothing, then the dynamic world I'm sketching out and calling urban has no ontological reality. It doesn't exist. It exists because it takes shape somewhere. So it's not a denial of some kind of form, some kind of concretization — in fact, it's the opposite. But it's suggesting that that concretization, from a theoretical standpoint, is just one moment within a bigger, within a much more ... You know, David Harvey has done it when he's talking about the flows of capital. People did criticize him for talking about the world as a flow of capital. What I am trying to do is to suggest that, if you like, there is a flow of politics and a flow of revolt. It can't quite flow in the same way, because people can't be in two places at once, whereas capital can be. But people can almost be in two places at one time, actually, if they can connect quick enough, and they can talk to each other quick enough and who knows what they'll be able to do in the future, quite frankly. I am insistent that the city is at once formless and has a form, just as any dialectician could never ever suggest that form and content don't take on meaning unless they have each other to be oppositional forces. It's clear that there is form. I try to identify it as a kind of commodity form, the way that Marx talks about commodities. A chair is made of wood. In *Capital*, wood has a particular concrete expression just as the concrete building does. But actually it becomes something else when that chair made of wood becomes sold on a market place, and you could make the same example about what that concrete building becomes when it becomes constructed to a world that we live in which is marketized, which is social, which is political. That building doesn't stand alone as a pure building that's a building in itself. It becomes something which is involved in a moment of a certain process of which we are the warders, because we make it, but also the inmates, because then it embodies us. The great — if I can sound really pretentious and incite more people — one of the many great things from Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* was just that. There were two things he identified — and this is pertinent to the encounter — one is that he identified when a group becomes a fused group. What makes people come together? Well, we come together all the time like here. We come together waiting for a bus, standing in a line. That's a group — seriality he would call it, it's a group which is connected but disconnected. Then he suggests a theatre line. The connection is standing in line to see the same show, standing in line maybe to get the same bus — or at least to get a bus,

as a concept of bus, shows that we share something. But actually the fused group is something more than that. It's when that person in the line turns around and starts talking to you; it's when you start talking to them; it's when you start saying 'This fucking bus is late. What we going to do about it together? Maybe we can get our own bus service here and go on our own way'. Then it becomes something like a group in fusion. So he was trying to identify the role of what was passivity and activity within a group. And it's a bit like that, that we encounter people all the time, sometimes encounters are very very disruptive, we push people away, — you know, you're a different skin colour, you are dressed in a dishevelled way, you can't come in, you keep out, you're not like us. It creates separation, it creates violence, it creates conflict in a not entirely positive way and I call that a kind of repulsion. But then there is also attraction. It could be that we realize that we share things: we share a common enemy, we like certain things, we dislike other things and we share our dislikes and our likes, and we didn't know it but we know it and suddenly whoosh! So that was one of the amazing things about Sartre trying to work that idea out within a quasi-Marxist standpoint. The other great idea that he has was that, when we do come together as a group, we have this issue: we're dealing with something which is fixed, which is static, passive and he called that the *pratico-inerte*. So that very materiality of our world, call it a city, call it a building, call it a life in general, you know, all of this is against us. It's a thing whereby we live and we breathe and we want to make it ours, but often it's the passive, the *pratico-inerte*, the dead labor, the fixed capital which is just rendered pure fixity, pure passivity, which confronts us. That gap between us as individual human beings and as collectivities creates a certain nausea. The realization that we're touching doorknobs which are things, you know. Anybody who has read *Nausea* will see the protagonist when he touches the doorknob — and he gets a shock as he touches something cold and hard, and he realizes actually he is warm and living, and it's terrible, it makes him feel sick. I think that has to happen now. People need to be made physically sick, a political nausea whereby they can become aware that we have created this *pratico-inerte* of the world that we have, which we have created — not entirely, there are people who are more culpable than others — and which we need to engage in. And this does become a practical political struggle, if you think about standing up to something like Wall Street, you know, financial institutions which do have their

HQs and their offices and their materialities. How do you engage in a politics to address that, because they become this *pratico-inerte* for us. We want to find a language, we want to find a practice, we need to find a politics that can stand up to it and do something about it. I am talking as a Marxist here, identifying a certain form of capitalist development, call it neoliberal. It's defined by certain class of people which operate in a different way from classical notions of the bourgeoisie — they are not productive, they are not abstemious with their money, they squander their money on luxury items and amass huge wealth that actually in some ways decouples them from what we might see as a traditional bourgeoisie. These are a kind of new aristocratic people, you know, the super-wealthy who live off land rents, who live off the monopoly power of land, who live off interest-bearing capital from having financial assets, that buy things cheaper and sell things more dearly — unequal exchange. The rest of us I see as a kind of *sans culottes*. In some ways the notion of the urban here is a dialectical process between neo-Haussmannization and insurrection, and it's the insurrection that interests me, and both those forces, neo-Haussmannization and insurrection, are immanent in the planetary urban process that we are seeing today.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Jacob Lederman: 'In a way it's been a central paradox of Lefebvre's legacy that such a proliferation of texts have been generated by his concept of the urban and the right to the city, and yet, to some degree, this preponderance of academic discourse has had a peculiar way of emptying these terms of their broader political and social meanings. For the moment I'd like to focus on your discussion of "the urban" at the beginning of the article, though I think my comments suggest a certain tension between Lefebvre's notion of urban society and his writing on the right to the city (addressed in the latter half of your essay). You note that, for Lefebvre, the urban is a theoretical abstraction, related to urbanization in myriad ways, though conceptually distinct from the material transformations taking place in territories we call cities. Perhaps part of the brilliance of Lefebvre's writing is precisely his use of this high level of abstraction, allowing for multiple, if somewhat divergent, interpretations and empirical associations. My initial question flows from these tensions: should we be discussing urbanization at all when we speak of the urban? Is it useful or meaningful that 50% or 80% or

100% of the human population resides in areas denominated as cities, as you note toward the beginning of your piece? By talking about urbanization, do we not dilute the most fundamental point that Lefebvre is trying to make? If so, what then does a Lefebvrian research agenda look like? Obviously the last 20 or so years have witnessed an extremely fruitful production of social-scientific knowledge on the politics of urban space, citizenship, and public space. And yet it seems that there has been a less systematic exploration of what we mean by “urban society” in the Lefebvrian sense. How empirically might we consider the urban revolution in ways that have not already been tackled? For the sake of analytic clarity, I’d like to suggest — somewhat in the spirit of friendly provocation — that perhaps we might jettison the city for a moment to try to engage with “the urban.” For example, using Lefebvre’s theoretical rendering of the urban, perhaps the indigenous struggles in rural Bolivia against the extractivist policies of the national state are a more useful form of “urban” analysis than something like Tahrir. If we conceive of the urban in part as a loosely connected system, as a particular regime of production, social relations, and accumulation, would not natural gas extraction in the Alti-plano (or industrial waste dumped into the ocean for that matter) perhaps provide more analytic traction than revolution in Tahrir?’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> If I can just put my own cards on the table here ... I don't have a tremendous interest about anybody operationalizing Lefebvre empirically. It's not my — it never has been my interest. I probably did it when I was young, one time I did it with the American Can Company, I did in my doctoral thesis, but I'm interested in two aspects of Henri Lefebvre, neither of which is necessarily about the empirical, operationalized research programme. I'm thinking in terms of his theory and his politics. For me his theory is ... are ideas that he tosses out in ways in which make it difficult sometimes for people to understand because you're not really sure exactly what he's talking about. It does go back to the notion of transduction: sometimes you think he's talking about the present, sometimes you think he's talking about the past, then really you think he's talking about the future. Sometimes you think he's talking about something particularly concrete, then you realize he's talking about something metaphorical. Sometimes you think he's talking about something which is actually happening, and then you

realize he's talking about something which is normative, which he wants to happen himself. So he runs roughshod around all those differences between what is real and what is normative, what is concrete and what is abstract, what is deductive and what is inductive, what is here and what might be. All of it gets blurred into a very strange mode of thought, that wasn't to everybody's taste — including a lot of his contemporaries, it has to be said — and which then makes it really difficult to sociologicalize, if you want to talk about it, to render it as a working research program. It's never interested me. His theory's interested me only because it's offered me some ways in which I can think about the world myself and also I could enter it, because it isn't hermetically sealed and it is a little bit slippery, it's open-ended — and he never had the school of thought, like Althusser did, like other people have. You could always enter into something he had done, because everything he did was never finished, so there's always room to manoeuvre, to add a little bit to understanding. So my interest is developing Lefebvre's theory, being an interpreter of it — which I think I probably am within the Anglophone world — but also being somebody who can recalibrate it and develop it, and push it on in my own way. In my own way, why? Because I think it's still politically important. So that leapfrogs the realm of the empirical, or the empirical as testable operationalized research program, and puts me into the realm of the political, Does Henri Lefebvre's theory work or not? Does he enable me to engage in some kind of politics which are meaningful and robust and solid and can be operationalized as a form? That is what interests me: the theoretical development and the political engagement, I'm not interested in all the other stuff. That isn't a very nice answer or a very helpful answer for somebody who is doing a PhD and wants to operationalize Lefebvre. But I think it is if you keep those two things in mind: the theoretical and the political. The empirical is important only insofar as it can develop the theoretical and the political. And that might sound like a strange thing to say. Isn't theory testable to the empirical? No, the theory is testable to the political. And that's what's very important, that's what motivates me. Now, the rest of the question was ... what?

[The questioner repeats the second part of the question]

All those things don't mean anything. Rural struggles? You hear of rural struggles. What are they struggling about? Mining. What about mining — it's a kind of mineral extraction. What's the mineral extraction about? It's about developing urban life, it's controlled by big corporations, it seems to tend to be somehow urban. I just think that we should just talk about struggles that happen somewhere. We should identify them. In fact, we could be provocative and call them urban struggles in the countryside. The vocabulary has to change, I think — which isn't in any way suggesting that indigenous struggles aren't important. It's thinking about the Zapatistas — were they a rural or an urban movement? It's quite hard to think about. It controls 38 Communes, I think 38 Municipalities of Chiapas, you know, with a sub-commandant and his colleagues, his rank and file, and his comrades hang out in a jungle. But that kind of struggle has inspired so many people, that to call it a rural, indigenous struggle closes things down from what it actually might be, and what it is. So I just think that the theoretical understanding that Lefebvre gave us, if you're going to engage with this topic — and this is a minority topic in the broad field of urban studies anyway — but if you're going to engage with it, then the two things are the development of theory and how that theory becomes right or wrong because it has some form of pragmatic application in the realm of politics. They're the kind of testing grounds, the theory and the politics, it's this dialogue between those two realms. The empirical never really interested Henri Lefebvre. Frankly, it doesn't interest me in the way in which you generate data through a theory and you're testing Lefebvre's theory through the empirical. That's not the testing ground of his theory; the testing ground of his theory is in the realm of politics. That's my answer in the final analysis.

<KARALIOTAS, LAZAROS> Hade Turkmen: 'My second question is about sustaining a long-term struggle by the "encounters". The examples that you used to describe struggle of encounters are occupy movements and the people's movement of Arab Spring. Besides the impact of social media in the development and militancy of these movements, another commonality can be claimed as the driving force underneath the emergence of these movements: the corrupt global capitalist institutional politics. The face of this politics changes in different places since the characteristics and actors change, but it can be said that these movements arouse against the

institutional politics in a “reflexive” way and they demonstrated the people’s power in a very strong way. However, sustaining the power of encounters and raising a transformative, progressive and radical politics opposed to dominant power groups and politics is a challenging and discursive topic. How do you interpret the power of these movements in the long term against the highly institutionalized political hegemony? How does a transformative, comprehensive and radical agenda come out from this power? What are the means that can be used by the encounters to establish this agenda for everyone?’

<MERRIFIELD, ANDY> I can't give any answer to that, other than the fact that reality is very odd. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. Sometimes when you win, it actually turns out that you lose. Sometimes when you lose, it turns out that you might even actually win at some future point. It's just impossible for me to say anything about it. All I can say is that maybe there are two kinds of encounters. There are the encounters which you might call morphing encounters and there are encounters which you might call punctuating encounters. There's an encounter which takes place that actually is some kind of insurrection, is some form of revolt, collective revolt, en masse, in the street, people demonstrating, activity frequently violent, that leads to a certain transformation of the social relations that existed the day before. However, it may transpire that that has really changed very little. You'll get new form of government, a new bunch of ruling people come in, wearing different clothes, who look differently, but actually they go about doing the same thing after the action has died down. That is probably a little bit of what's gone on in Egypt, and that is what I maybe would call a ‘morphing encounter’, things that just morph into something else and become a kind of reformism. It may have raised something. Things may not be exactly the same, but very little is significantly changed from before, even though there was a victory of a sort. The second kind may be called a ‘punctuating encounter’, which means actually this really rips apart the social fabric in a way that means that nothing’s ever going to go back to what it was. You can think of 1989 as being a punctuating encounter; even the French Revolution was a punctuating encounter. Things fundamentally change. There’s a rift; there is a rending of the fabric, of the social fabric, the political fabric, the economic fabric. The day after things are never ever going to be the same again, and that's a

form of punctuation. Oddly enough, if you look at the history of revolutionary movements, what anybody, any historian of revolt, will tell you is that very often it's incredible how simply these things happen. Historians of the French Revolution will say what was amazing was how quickly, and how relatively easily, an entrenched administrative, political economic system can dissipate almost overnight. That's the hopeful side of things. The negative side of things is, of course, that all revolts, all social transformations that you think you've won one day can lead to pyrrhic victories the other. You realize that actually it's transformed into something else, it isn't exactly what you expected, even though it's a punctuation encounter in itself, something's happened which isn't exactly what you perhaps intended. There's no way anybody can know the future. You have just to engage with it and deal with it and see what happens. There's no recipe book, there's no magic formula. The magic formula that I spoke about in *Magical Marxism* was people's imagination, the capacity to imagine something else, which we do all the time. It may be trivial; it may not be social formations or political forms of government, or indeed forms of life, we just imagine we're going to be somewhere else tomorrow or next week or we're going to build something, you know, we're going to do something that didn't exist two days ago. It's a form of imagination, and the capacity to act upon that imagination, which people have, makes us different from other animals. We can consciously construct things in imagination before we build them in reality. That's the promise of what we have. We've done it from time immemorial. We destroy all the time, but we also rebuild and strange things happen. At the end of the day, that's why I'm an optimist.