

Spaces of Capital

Towards a Critical Geography

David Harvey



SPACES OF CAPITAL

DAVID HARVEY is Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the City University of New York Graduate Center. He was previously Professor of Geography at the Johns Hopkins University and Halford Mackinder Professor of Geography at the University of Oxford. He received the Outstanding Contributor award from the Association of American Geographers in 1980; the Anders Retzius Gold Medal from the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography in 1989; and in 1995 both the Patron's Medal from the Royal Geographical Society, and the French Vautrin Lud Prize.

by the same author

Explanation in Geography

Social Justice and the City

The Limits to Capital

Consciousness and the Urban Experience

The Urbanization of Capital

The Urban Experience

The Condition of Postmodernity

Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference

Spaces of Hope

Spaces of Capital

Towards a Critical Geography

David Harvey



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
New York London

This edition published 2012 by Routledge

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
711 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
2 Park Square
Milton Park, Abingdon
Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.

© David Harvey, 2001

Published by arrangement with
Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, in 2001.

Typeset in Ehrhardt by Pioneer Associates, Perthshire

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be printed or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Harvey, David, 1935–

Spaces of capital : towards a critical geography / David Harvey.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-415-93240-8 – ISBN 0-415-93241-6 (pbk.)

1. Communism and geography. 2. Urban geography. 3. Urban economics. 4. Marxian economics. 5. Space in economics. 6. Capitalism.
I. Title.

HX550.G45 H35 2001
330.12'2–dc21

2001031921

Contents

Preface	vii
Sources	xi

PROLOGUE

1	Reinventing geography: an interview with the editors of <i>New Left Review</i>	3
---	--	---

Part 1

GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGES/POLITICAL POWER

2	What kind of geography for what kind of public policy?	27
3	Population, resources, and the ideology of science	38
4	On countering the Marxian myth – Chicago-style	68
5	Owen Lattimore: a memoir	90
6	On the history and present condition of geography: an historical materialist manifesto	108
7	Capitalism: the factory of fragmentation	121
8	A view from Federal Hill	128
9	Militant particularism and global ambition: the conceptual politics of place, space, and environment in the work of Raymond Williams	158
10	City and justice: social movements in the city	188
11	Cartographic identities: geographical knowledges under globalization	208

Part 2

THE CAPITALIST PRODUCTION OF SPACE

12	The geography of capitalist accumulation: a reconstruction of the Marxian theory	237
13	The Marxian theory of the state	267
14	The spatial fix: Hegel, Von Thünen and Marx	284
15	The geopolitics of capitalism	312
16	From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism	345
17	The geography of class power	369
18	The art of rent: globalization and the commodification of culture	394
	Bibliography	412
	Index	423

Preface

No one who aspires to change the way we think about and understand the world can do so under circumstances of their own choosing. Everyone has to take advantage of the raw materials of the intellect at hand. Each must also try to combat the presumptions, prejudices and political predilections that at any time constrain thinking in ways which may at best be understood as repressive tolerance and at worst as merely repressive. The essays collected here, written over some thirty years, record my attempts to change ways of thought in the discipline of geography (until recently my institutional home within the increasingly dysfunctional disciplinary division of knowledge characteristic of the academy), in cognate areas (such as urban studies) and among the public at large. They also reflect the changing circumstances of knowledge production within the English-speaking world during those years.

The onset of the Cold War and the devastations wrought on freedom of thought by McCarthyism during the 1950s, aided and abetted by disturbing revelations about the excesses of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, made it extremely difficult during the 1950s and early 1960s to treat Marx's writings as serious raw materials for shaping new understandings and modes of political action. Indeed, as the case of Owen Lattimore (see Chapter 5) so clearly shows, it was dangerous in the United States to voice any dissident opinion (no matter whether grounded in Marxism or not) which did not fit exactly into the mould demanded by US foreign policy. This policy was dominated by the doctrine of containment of Soviet influence and the co-optation or outright suppression of all political movements that sought a socialist rather than a capitalist path to economic betterment. Yet by the mid-1960s it was clear to many that prevailing systems of knowledge were failing badly when it came to understanding the numerous revolutionary thrusts and struggles over decolonization (often inspired by Marxist thought) occurring throughout much of Africa, Latin America and Asia. As the Vietnam War evolved, so the US was increasingly seen as not defending freedom and liberty but working to establish a new kind of imperialism in support of the US-based capitalist system

that had proven so vulnerable during the catastrophic events of the 1930s and 1940s. The civil rights struggles and urban uprisings in the United States (the murders of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and the frontal attack upon the Black Panthers which culminated in the state assassination of Fred Hampton in Chicago) also called for serious re-evaluations in thought and political practice.

It seemed important to engage with Marx for two compelling reasons: first, to understand why it was that a doctrine so denigrated and despised within official circles in the English-speaking world could have such widespread appeal to those actively struggling for emancipation everywhere else; secondly, to see if a reading of Marx could help ground a critical theory of society to embrace and interpret the social conflicts that culminated in high political drama (bordering on cultural and political revolution) in the climacteric years of 1967–73.

My own work on these topics originated as part of a general effort to come to terms with these questions during the early 1970s. It was, of course, helpful to discover that the embers of Marxist scholarship were still glowing strongly in certain quarters (the work of Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy shone out in the United States and of Maurice Dobb, E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams in Britain) and that various currents of Marxist thought remained strong in Europe. At first attention had to be paid to recuperating these achievements while developing fresh insights from the classical Marxian texts appropriate to the times. Marx's writings subsequently became more widely studied and commonly accepted, but later still were seen increasingly as repressive dogma or as anachronistic and reactionary: it was then important to show that there was life in his ideas when they were adapted and extended to deal with unfamiliar circumstances.

The specific angle of my work was, however, somewhat unusual since it was almost as uncommon for those working in the Marxist tradition to pay any mind to questions of geography (or of urbanization, except as a historical phenomena) as it was for geographers to consider Marxian theory as a possible foundation for their thinking. If anything, the radical tradition of geography (which was never very strong) harked back to the anarchists, particularly those at the end of the nineteenth century when geographer-anarchists like Peter Kropotkin and Elisée Reclus were prominent thinkers and activists. There is much of value in that tradition. It was, for example, much more sensitive to issues of environment and urban organization (albeit critically) than has generally been the case within Marxism. But the influence of such thinkers was either strictly circumscribed or was transformed, through the influence of town planners like Patrick Geddes, into a communitarianism framed in gentle and

acceptable opposition to what Lewis Mumford, for example, considered the dystopian trajectory of technological change under capitalism. Part of the radical geography movement in the late 1960s was dedicated to revitalizing the anarchist tradition, while geographers with strong sympathies with, say, national liberation and anti-imperialist revolutionary movements wrote in a more directly historical-materialist and experiential mode and eschewed Marxian abstractions. Geographers of this sort (Lattimore and Keith Buchanan come to mind) were marginalized, often treated like pariahs, within their discipline. Radical geographers sought nevertheless both to uphold this tradition (in the face of fierce opposition) but also, as in the radical geography journal *Antipode* (founded in 1968) to underpin it by appeal to the texts of Marx and Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Lukacs, and the like.

The initial essays in Part Two of this collection, all published in *Antipode*, were part of that collective effort. There was very little written on the geography of capital accumulation, the production of space and of uneven geographical development from a Marxist perspective. Marx, though he promised a volume of *Capital* dedicated to the formation of the state and the world market, never completed his project. I therefore set out to do a comprehensive reading of all of his texts to see what he might have said on these matters had he lived to complete his argument. There are two ways to conduct such a reading. One is to treat Marx as the 'master thinker' whose statements bear the imprimatur of absolute truth no matter what. The second, which I much prefer, is to treat his statements as tentative suggestions and rough ideas that need to be consolidated into a more consistent theoretical form of argument that respects the dialectical spirit rather than the verbal niceties of his largely unpublished studies, notes and letters. Read in this second mode, I found in Marx a fertile basis for a whole range of subsequent studies (some of which appear in this volume) as well as later books such as *The Limits to Capital* (1982), *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), and *Spaces of Hope* (2000).

But the learning of Marx's method also opened up all sorts of other avenues for intellectual work and political commentary on matters as diverse as the politically-contested nature of geographical knowledges, environmental issues, local political-economic developments, and the general relation between geographical knowledge and social and political theory. A whole field of endeavor emerged to understand the uses of geographical knowledges (however defined) by political power. In parallel this indicated a pressing need to define a critical geography (and a critical urban theory) that could 'deconstruct' (to use the current jargon) how certain kinds of knowledge, seemingly 'neutral,' or 'natural' or even 'obvious' could in fact be an instrumental means to preserve political power.

The essays assembled in Part One hover around this question. Enough partial evidence is here assembled to make such a connection more than merely plausible even though a satisfactory systematic presentation of the idea has yet to see the light of day. I consider these essays as studies preparatory to a broader project, deserving the deepest consideration, on the role of geographical knowledges in the perpetuation of political-economic power structures and in transforming by opposition the political-economic order.

Over the thirty years of writing on these topics I have had the good fortune to be engaged with many scholars and activists who have risked a great deal to develop alternative views to the standard technocratic evasions – bordering on capitalist apologetics – that dominate geography and the social sciences more generally. I owe an immense debt to these many others who are simply too numerous to mention (I trust they know who they are). But the untimely death of one long-standing comrade, Jim Blaut, leads me to dedicate this book to his memory. His recently published *Eight Eurocentric Historians* is a courageous example of the kind of salutary critical work I have in mind. It is my fervent hope that the embers which glow brightly in Jim's work as well, I hope, as in my own may be used by a younger generation to light a fire in critical geography that will remain burning until we have constructed a more just, equitable, ecologically sane, and open society than we have experienced heretofore.

David Harvey
New York, April 2001

Sources

Chapter 10 was first delivered to the Conference on Model Cities in Singapore in April 1999 and published by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore as conference proceedings, *Model Cities: Urban Best Practices in 2000*; the revised version, published here, was presented to the Man and City: Towards a more Human and Sustainable Development Conference in Naples, September 2000. Chapter 11 was first presented to the conference on Social Sciences at the Millennium sponsored by Hong Kong Baptist University in June 2000; the revised version, published here, was presented to the twenty-ninth International Geographical Congress in Seoul in August 2000. Chapter 18 was prepared for the Conference on Global and Local, held at the Tate Modern in London, February, 2001.

The sources for the remaining chapters are as follows:

- Chapter 1: an interview published in *New Left Review*, August 2000
- Chapter 2: *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 1974
- Chapter 3: *Economic Geography*, 1974
- Chapter 4: *Comparative Urban Research*, 1978
- Chapter 5: *Antipode*, 1983
- Chapter 6: *The Professional Geographer*, 1984
- Chapter 7: *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 1992
- Chapter 8: *The Baltimore Book: New Views on Urban History*, 1992
- Chapter 9: *Social Text*, 1995
- Chapter 12: *Antipode*, 1975
- Chapter 13: *Antipode*, 1976
- Chapter 14: *Antipode*, 1981
- Chapter 15: *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, edited by Derek Gregory and John Urry, 1985
- Chapter 16: *Geografiska Annaler*, 1989
- Chapter 17: *Socialist Register*, 1998.

The references have been collated in one bibliography. Otherwise reprinted articles appear unchanged in all substantive respects.

PROLOGUE

CHAPTER 1

Reinventing geography: an interview with the editors of *New Left Review*

First published in New Left Review in August 2000.

Since the war, the typical field for Marxist research has been history. Your path was more original. How did you become a geographer?

There's a trivial answer to this, which actually has profundity. When I was a kid, I often wanted to run away from home but every time I tried, I found it very uncomfortable, so I came back. So I decided to run away in my imagination, and there at least the world was a very open place, since I had a stamp collection, which showed all these countries with a British monarch on their stamps, and it seemed to me that they all belonged to us, to *me*. My father worked as a foreman in the shipyards at Chatham, with its very strong naval traditions. We lived in Gillingham. Once every year during the War, we would be taken for tea in the dockyards, on a destroyer; the romance of the high seas and of empire left a strong impression. My earliest ambition was to join the Navy. So that even in the very gloomy days of 1946–7, just after the war, there was still an imaginary that encompassed this whole imperial world. Reading about it, drawing maps of it, became a childhood passion. Later, when I was in my teens, I cycled all over north Kent, getting to know a great deal about the geology, agriculture and landscape of our local area. I greatly enjoyed this form of knowledge. So I've always been drawn to geography. At school I was also strongly attracted to literature. When I got into Cambridge, which was still a bit unusual for a boy from my background, I took Geography rather than Literature partly because I had a teacher who had been trained in Cambridge, who made it clear to me that if you studied English there, you didn't so much read literature as deal with F. R. Leavis. I felt I could read literature on my own, and didn't need Leavis to tell me how to do it. So I preferred to follow the track of geography, though of course I never ceased to be interested in history and literature.

Geography was quite a big, well-established school at Cambridge, which

gave a basic grounding in the discipline as it was practised in Britain at the time. I went on to do a PhD there, on the historical geography of Kent in the nineteenth century, focusing on the cultivation of hops. My first publication was actually in the house journal of Whitbread, the brewing concern – as a graduate student I earned a tenner for a piece published side by side with an article by John Arlott.

Your first book, Explanation in Geography, published in 1969, is a very confident intervention, of ambitious scope, in the discipline. But it seems to come out of a very specific positivist setting – a horizon of reference that is exclusively Anglo-Saxon, without any sense of the powerful alternative traditions in geography in France or Germany?

Explanation in Geography was looking for an answer to what I regarded as a central problem of the discipline. Traditionally, geographical knowledge had been extremely fragmented, leading to a strong emphasis on what was called its 'exceptionalism'. The established doctrine was that the knowledge yielded by geographical enquiry is different from any other kind. You can't generalize about it, you can't be systematic about it. There are no geographical laws; there are no general principles to which you can appeal – all you can do is go off and study, say, the dry zone in Sri Lanka, and spend your life understanding that. I wanted to do battle with this conception of geography by insisting on the need to understand geographical knowledge in some more systematic way. At the time, it seemed to me that the obvious resource here was the philosophical tradition of positivism – which, in the 1960s, still had a very strong sense of the unity of science embedded in it, coming from Carnap. That was why I took Hempel or Popper so seriously; I thought there should be some way of using their philosophy of science to support the construction of a more unitary geographical knowledge. This was a moment when, inside the discipline, there was a strong movement to introduce statistical techniques of enquiry, and new quantitative methods. You could say my project was to develop the philosophical side of this quantitative revolution.

What about the external role of the discipline, as these internal changes took hold? Historically, geography seems to have had a much more salient position in the general intellectual culture of France or Germany than Britain – it's been more closely linked to major public issues. The line of Vidal de la Blache's geography, descending into the Annales School, is clearly concerned with a problematic of national unity; von Thünen's, in Germany, with industrialization; Haushofer's, with geopolitical strategies of imperial expansion – there

was an Edwardian version of this in Mackinder, but more peripheral. How should postwar British geography be situated?

By the 1960s, it was connected here far more than anywhere else to planning – regional planning and urban planning. By that time there was a certain embarrassment about the whole history of empire, and a turning away from the idea that geography could or should have any global role, let alone shape geopolitical strategies. The result was a strongly pragmatic focus, an attempt to reconstruct geographical knowledge as an instrument of administrative planning in Britain. In this sense, the discipline became quite functionalist. To give you an indication of the trend, I think there are hardly any areas where, if you put the word ‘urban’ in front of research, you would say this is the center of the field. Urban history is essentially a rather marginal form; urban economics is an equally marginal thing; so, too, is urban politics. Whereas urban geography was really the center of a lot of things going on in the discipline. Then, too, on the physical side, environmental management is often about the handling of local resources in particular kinds of ways. So that in Britain, the public presence of geography – and I think it was quite strong – operated in these three particular areas; it wasn’t projected outwards in any grander intellectual formulation of the sort we might find in Braudel or the French tradition. You need to remember that for many of us who had some political ambitions for the discipline, rational planning was not a bad word in the sixties. It was the time of Harold Wilson’s rhetoric about the ‘white heat of technology’, when the efficiency of regional and urban planning was going to be a lever of social betterment for the whole population.

Yet a striking feature of Explanation is the absence of any political note in it. It reads as a purely scientific treatise, without any mention of concerns of this kind. One would never guess from it that the author might become a committed radical.

Well, my politics at that time were closer to a Fabian progressivism, which is why I was very taken with the ideas of planning, efficiency and rationality. I would read economists like Oskar Lange, who were thinking along these lines. So in my mind, there was no real conflict between a rational scientific approach to geographical issues, and an efficient application of planning to political issues. But I was so absorbed in writing the book that I didn’t notice how much was collapsing around me. I turned in my *magnum opus* to the publishers in May 1968, only to find myself acutely embarrassed by the change of political temperature at large. By then, I

was thoroughly disillusioned with Harold Wilson's socialism. Just at that moment, I got a job in the United States, arriving in Baltimore a year after much of the city had burnt down in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King. In the US, the anti-war movement and the civil rights movement were really fired up; and here was I, having written this neutral tome that seemed somehow or other just not to fit. I realized I had to rethink a lot of things I had taken for granted in the 1960s.

What took you to the United States?

At that time, American universities were expanding their geography departments. Training in the discipline was much stronger in Britain than in the US, so there was quite an inflow of British geographers to fill the new positions. I had taught in the US on visiting appointments at various times, and when I was offered a job at Johns Hopkins, felt it was an attractive opportunity. The department there was interdisciplinary, combining Geography and Environmental Engineering. The idea was to put together a whole group of people from the social sciences and the natural sciences, to attack issues of environment in a multidisciplinary way. I was one of the first to come into the new program. For me, this was a tremendous situation, particularly in the early years. I learnt a great deal about how engineers think, about political processes, about economic problems: I didn't feel constrained by the discipline of geography.

What was the political atmosphere?

Hopkins is an extremely conservative campus, but it has a long history, of harboring certain maverick figures. For instance, someone who interested me a great deal when I first arrived there – his *Inner Frontiers of Asia* is a great book – was Owen Lattimore, who had been at Hopkins for many years, before he was targeted by McCarthyism. I spent a lot of time talking to people who were there about what had happened to him, and went to see Lattimore himself. Eventually I tried to get Wittfogel, who had been his accuser, to explain why he had attacked Lattimore so violently. So I was always fascinated by the political history of the university, as well as of the city. It's a small campus, which has always remained very conservative. But for that reason, even a small number of determined radicals could prove quite effective – at the turn of the 1970s, there was quite a significant anti-war movement, as well as civil rights activism around the university. Baltimore itself intrigued me from the start. In fact, it was a terrific place to do empirical work. I quickly became involved in studies

of discrimination in housing projects, and ever since the city has formed a backdrop to much of my thinking.

What is the particular profile of Baltimore as an American city?

In many ways, it is emblematic of the processes that have moulded cities under US capitalism, offering a laboratory sample of contemporary urbanism. But, of course, it has its own distinctive character as well. Few North American cities have as simple a power structure as Baltimore. After 1900, big industry largely moved out of the city, leaving control in the hands of a rich elite whose wealth was in real estate and banking. There are no corporate headquarters in Baltimore today, and the city is often referred to as the biggest plantation in the South, since it is run much like a plantation by a few major financial institutions. Actually, in social structure, the city is half Northern and half Southern. Two-thirds of the population are African-American, but there is nowhere near the level of black militancy you find in Philadelphia, New York or Chicago. Race relations are more Southern in pattern. Mayors may be African-American, but they are largely dependent on the financial nexus, and are surrounded by white suburbs who don't want anything to do with the city. Culturally, it is one of the great centers of American bad taste. John Waters's movies are classic Baltimore – you can't imagine them anywhere else. Architecturally, whatever the city tries to do it gets a little bit wrong, like an architect who builds a house with miscalculated angles, and then, many years later, people say, 'Isn't that a very interesting structure?' One ends up with a lot of affection for it. At one time, I thought I might write a book called *Baltimore: City of Quirks*.

Your second book, Social Justice and the City, which came out in 1973, is divided into three sections: Liberal Formulations, Marxist Formulations, Syntheses. Did you write these as a deliberate sequence from the start, to trace an evolution of your own, or did they just emerge en cours de route?

The sequence was more fortuitous than planned. When I started the book, I would still have called myself a Fabian socialist, but that was a label which didn't make much sense in the US context. Nobody would understand what it meant. In America, I would then have been termed a card-carrying liberal. So I set out along these lines. Then I found they weren't working. So I turned to Marxist formulations to see if they yielded better results. The shift from one approach to the other wasn't premeditated – I stumbled on it.

But you were engaged in a reading group studying Marx's Capital from 1971 onwards, not long after you got to Baltimore – an experience you have recently described as a decisive moment in your development. Were you the main animator of this group?

No, the initiative came from graduate students who wanted to read *Capital* – Dick Walker was one of them – and I was the faculty member who helped to organize it. I wasn't a Marxist at the time, and knew very little of Marx. This was anyway still a period when not much Marxist literature was available in English. There was Dobb, and Sweezy and Baran, but little else. Later, you people brought out French and German texts, and the Penguin Marx Library. The publication of the *Grundrisse* in that series was a step in our progression. The reading group was a wonderful experience, but I was in no position to instruct anybody. As a group, we were the blind leading the blind. That made it all the more rewarding.

At the conclusion of Social Justice and the City, you explain that you encountered the work of Henri Lefebvre on urbanism after you'd written the rest of the book, and go on to make some striking observations about it. How far were you aware of French thinking about space at this stage? Looking back, one would say there were two distinct lines of thought within French Marxism that would have been relevant to you: the historical geography of Yves Lacoste and his colleagues at Herodote, and the contemporary urban theory of Lefebvre, which came out of the fascination of surrealism with the city as a landscape of the unexpected in everyday life.

Actually there was another line in France, which was institutionally more important than either of these, connected to the Communist Party, whose most famous representative was Pierre Georges. This group was very powerful in the university system, with a lot of control over appointments. Their kind of geography was not overtly political at all: it focused essentially on the terrestrial basis on which human societies are built, and its transformations as productive forces are mobilized on the land. Lefebvre was not regarded as a geographer. Georges was a central reference point in the discipline.

Your response to Lefebvre's ideas strikes quite a distinctive note, one that recurs in your later work. On the one hand, you warmed to Lefebvre's radicalism, with a generous appreciation of the critical utopian charge in his writing; on the other hand, you point to the need for a balancing realism. This two-handed response becomes a kind of pattern in your work – one thinks of the way you

both imaginatively take up, and empirically limit, the notion of 'flexible accumulation' in The Condition of Postmodernity, or your reaction to ecological apocalypitics in your more recent writing: an unusual combination of passionate engagement and cool level-headedness.

One of the lessons I learnt in writing *Social Justice and the City* has always remained important for me. I can put it best with a phrase Marx used, when he spoke of the way we can rub different conceptual blocks together to make an intellectual fire. Theoretical innovation so often comes out of the collision between different lines of force. In a friction of this kind, one should never altogether give up one's starting-point – ideas will only catch fire if the original elements are not completely absorbed in the new ones. The liberal formulations in *Social Justice and the City* don't entirely disappear, by any means – they remain part of the agenda that follows. When I read Marx, I'm very aware that this is a critique of political economy. Marx never suggests that Smith or Ricardo are full of nonsense, he's profoundly respectful of what they had to say. But he's also setting their concepts against others, from Hegel or Fourier, in a transformative process. So this has been a principle of my own work: Lefebvre may have some great ideas, the Regulationists have developed some very interesting notions, which should be respected in their own right, but you don't give up on everything you've got on your side – you try to rub the blocks together and ask: is there something that can come out of this which is a new form of knowing?

What was the reception of Social Justice in the discipline? The early 1970s were a time of widespread intellectual shift to the left – did it get a sympathetic hearing?

In the US there was already a radical movement within geography, built around the journal *Antipode* produced at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts – traditionally one of the major schools of geography in the country. Its founders were strongly anti-imperialist, hating the history of geography's entanglement with Western colonialism. The journal spawned strong interventions at national meetings in the US, and the formation of a group called Socialist Geographers. In Britain, Doreen Massey and others represented a similar sort of movement. So I'd say, at the beginning of the 1970s, there was a very widespread kind of movement amongst younger people in geography, to explore this particular dimension. *Social Justice and the City* was one of the texts which recorded that moment, becoming a reference point, as time went on. It was also read outside the discipline, particularly by urban sociologists, and some

political scientists. Radical economists, of course, were interested in urban questions, too – they had become central political issues in the US. So the setting was quite favorable for the reception of the book.

The Limits to Capital appeared some nine years later, in 1982. It is a major work of economic theory – a startling leap from your previous writing. What is the history of this mutation?

I had some background in neoclassical economics and planning theory, from Cambridge. For any geographer, von Thünen's location theory was a very important point of reference, from the start. Then, of course, in writing *Explanation in Geography* I had steeped myself in positivist discussions of mathematical reason, so that when I came across works by Marxist economists like Morishima or Desai, I had no major difficulties in understanding what was going on. Morishima's work and, naturally, Sweezy's *Theory of Capitalist Development* were very helpful to me. But to be honest, in writing *The Limits to Capital* I stuck with Marx's own texts most of the way. What I realized after *Social Justice and the City* was that I didn't understand Marx, and needed to straighten this out, which I tried to do without too much assistance from elsewhere. My aim was to get to the point where the theory could help me understand urban issues – and that I couldn't do without addressing questions of fixed capital, which no one had written much about at the time. There was the problem of finance capital, fundamental in housing markets, as I knew from Baltimore. If I had just stopped with the first part of the book, it would have been very similar to many other accounts of Marx's theory that were appearing at the time. It was the later part, where I looked at the temporality of fixed-capital formation, and how that relates to money flows and finance capital, and the spatial dimensions of these, that made the book more unusual. That was hard to do. Writing *Limits to Capital* nearly drove me nuts; I had a very difficult time finishing it, also struggling to make it readable – it took me the best part of a decade. The book grounded everything that I've done since. It is my favorite text, but ironically it's probably the one that's least read.

What was the response to it at the time? NLR certainly paid no attention, but what about other sectors of the Left?

I can't really recall anyone who would call themselves a Marxist economist taking it seriously. I always found that guild spirit odd, because it is so unlike Marx's own way of proceeding. Of course, there were some circumstantial reasons for the blank reaction. The controversy over Sraffa

and Marx's concept of value was still going on, which I think put off many people from any attempt to consider Marx's theories of capitalist development. There were other versions of crisis theory available – Jim O'Connor's or John Weeks's. The ending of the book could be made to seem like a prediction of inter-imperialist wars, which was easy to dismiss. The only real debate about the book occurred when Michael Lebowitz attacked it in *Monthly Review*, and I replied, some time after it appeared. Overall, the book didn't seem to go anywhere.

Well, you were in good company. After all, Marx was so short of responses to Capital he was reduced to writing a review of it under a pseudonym himself. In retrospect, what is striking is the extent to which your theory of crisis anticipates later work by two Marxists, who also came from outside the ranks of economists: Robert Brenner, from history, and Giovanni Arrighi, from sociology. In both, space becomes a central category of explanation in a way nowhere to be found in the Marxist tradition, prior to your book. The register is more empirical – detailed tracking of postwar national economies in one case, long-run cycles of global expansion in the other – but the framework, and many of the key conclusions, are basically similar. Your account offers the pure model of this family of explanations, its tripartite analysis of the ways in which capital defers or resolves tendencies to crisis – the structural fix, the spatial fix and the temporal fix – laid out with unexampled clarity.

Looking back, you can say it was prophetic in that way. But what I hoped to be producing was a text that could be built on, and I was surprised that it wasn't taken in that spirit, but just lay there, rather flat. Of course, it had some currency among radical geographers, and maybe a few sociologists, but no one really used it as I'd have liked it to be. So today, for example, I might take this account of crisis and rub it against, say, world systems theory – in fact, that's probably what I will try to do in a course next year.

*The deeper obstacle to a ready acceptance of what you were doing must lie in the difficulty Marxists have always had in confronting geography as a domain of natural contingency – the arbitrary shifts and accidents of the terrestrial crust, with their differential consequences for material life. The main propositions of historical materialism have a deductive structure independent of any spatial location, which never figures in them. The curious thing is that your theory of crisis in *The Limits to Capital*, in one sense, respects this tradition – it develops a beautifully clear deductive structure. But it builds space into the structure as an ineliminable element of it. That was quite new. The geographically undifferentiated categories of Capital are put to work on natural-historical terrain – still represented abstractly, of course, in keeping with the demands of*

a deductive argument. That combination was calculated to throw conventional expectations.

My own intention was, originally, to bounce some historical enquiries into urbanization off *The Limits to Capital*, but this became too massive a project, and I eventually decanted this stuff into the two volumes of essays that appeared in 1985, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* and *The Urbanization of Capital*. Some of the material in them predates *Limits* itself. In 1976–7 I spent a year in Paris, with the aim of learning from French Marxist discussions, when I was still struggling with *Limits* – but it didn't work out that way. To tell the truth, I found Parisian intellectuals a bit arrogant, quite unable to handle anyone from North America – I felt a touch of sympathy when Edward Thompson launched his famous attack on Althusser, a couple of years later. On the other hand, Castells – who was not part of the big-name circus – was very warm and helpful, along with other urban sociologists, so my time was not lost. But what happened, instead, is that I became more and more intrigued by Paris as a city. It was much more fun exploring that than wrestling with reproduction schemes, and out of this fascination came the piece on Sacré-Coeur and the Commune, which appeared in 1978. Then I backed into the Paris of the Second Empire, a wonderful subject, which became the topic of the longest essay in the two volumes. My interest was: how far might the sort of theoretical apparatus in *The Limits to Capital* play out in tangible situations?

A notable departure in the Second Empire essay – which could have been published as a short book – is the sudden appearance of so many literary sources, quite absent in your writing up till then. Now they cascade across the pages: Balzac, Dickens, Flaubert, Hardy, Zola, James. Had you been holding back a side of yourself, or was this in a sense a new horizon?

I'd always been reading this literature, but I never thought of using it in my work. Once I started to do so, I discovered how many historical ideas poetry or fiction can set alight. And once I made that turn, everything came flooding out. This had something to do with my position in academia: by then I was fairly secure; I didn't feel I had to stay within any narrow professional channels – not that I'd done that too much anyway. But I certainly felt a liberation in deliberately breaking out of them, not to speak of the pleasure of the texts themselves, after the hard grind of *Limits*.

It looks as if the change also prepared the way for the panoramic style of The Condition of Postmodernity. Presumably by the mid-1980s your antennae

were starting to twitch a bit, as talk of the postmodern took off. But what prompted the idea of a comprehensive book on the subject?

My first impulse was one of impatience. Suddenly, there was all this talk of postmodernism as a category for understanding the world, displacing or submerging capitalism. So I thought: I've written *The Limits to Capital*; I've done all this research on Second Empire Paris; I know a certain amount about the origins of modernism, and a lot about urbanization, which features strongly in this new dispensation; so why not sit down and produce my own take on it? The result was one of the easiest books I've ever written. It took me about a year to write, flowing out without problems or anxieties. And once I embarked on it, of course, my response became more considered. I had no wish to deny the validity of some idea of postmodernity. On the contrary, I found the notion pointed to many developments to which we should be paying the closest attention. On the other hand, this shouldn't mean surrendering to the hype and exaggeration which was then surrounding it.

The book brings together your interdisciplinary interests in a remarkable way, starting, logically enough, from the urban in its strictest sense, with a discussion of redevelopment in Baltimore that makes two fundamental points against the uncritical celebrations of postmodernism as an 'overcoming' of the blights of architectural modernism. The standard argument of the time – blend of Jacobs and Jencks – went: modernism ruined our cities by its inhuman belief in rational planning, and its relentless monolithism of formal design; postmodernism, by contrast, respects the values of urban spontaneity and chaos, and engenders a liberating diversity of architectural styles. You displace both claims, pointing out that it was not so much devotion to principles of planning that produced so many ugly developments, but the subjection of planners to market imperatives, which have continued to zone cities as rigidly under postmodern as modern conditions; while greater diversity of formal styles has been as much a function of technological innovations, allowing use of new materials and shapes, as any aesthetic emancipation.

Yes, I thought it was important to show the new kinds of serial monotony that the supposed flowering of architectural fantasy could bring, and the naïveté of a good many postmodernist staging effects – the simulacra of community you often find them striving for. But I also wanted to make it clear that to understand why these styles had taken such powerful hold, one needed to look at the underlying shifts in the real economy. That brought me to the whole area most famously theorized by the Regulation School in France. What had changed in the system of relations between

capital and labor, and capital and capital, since the recession of the early 1970s? For example, how far could we now speak of a new regime of 'flexible accumulation', based on temporary labor markets? Was that the material basis of the alterations in urban fabric we could see around us? The Regulationists struck me as quite right to focus on shifts in the wage contract, and reorganizations of the labor process; one could go quite a way with them there, but not to the notion that capitalism itself was somehow being fundamentally transformed. They were suggesting that one historical regime – Fordism – had given way to another – Flexible Accumulation – which had effectively replaced the first. But empirically, there is no evidence of such a wholesale change – 'flexible accumulation' may be locally or temporarily predominant here or there, but we can't speak of systemic transformation. Fordism plainly persists over wide areas of industry, although of course it has not remained static, either. In Baltimore, where Bethlehem Steel used to employ 30,000 workers, it now produces the same quantity of steel with less than 5,000, so the employment structure in the Fordist sector itself is no longer the same. The extent of this kind of downsizing, and the spread of temporary contracts in the non-Fordist sector, have created some of the social conditions for the fluidity and insecurity of identities that typify what can be called postmodernity. But that's only one side of the story. There are many different ways of making a profit – of gaining surplus value: whichever way works, you are likely to find increasing experiments with it, so there might be a trend towards flexible accumulation; but there are some key limits to the process. Imagine what it would mean for social cohesion if everyone was on temporary labor – what the consequences would be for urban life or civic security. We can already see the damaging effects of even partial moves in this direction. A universal transformation would pose acute dilemmas and dangers for the stability of capitalism as a social order.

That goes for capital-labor; what about capital-capital relations?

What we see there is a dramatic asymmetry in the power of the state. The nation-state remains the absolutely fundamental regulator of labor. The idea that it is dwindling or disappearing as a centre of authority in the age of globalization is a silly notion. In fact, it distracts attention from the fact that the nation state is now more dedicated than ever to creating a good business climate for investment, which means precisely controlling and repressing labor movements in all kinds of purposively new ways: cutting back the social wage, fine-tuning migrant flows, and so on. The state is tremendously active in the domain of capital-labor relations. But

when we turn to relations between capitals, the picture is quite different. There the state has truly lost power to regulate the mechanisms of allocation or competition, as global financial flows have outrun the reach of any strictly national regulation. One of the main arguments in *The Condition of Postmodernity* is, that the truly novel feature of the capitalism that emerged out of the watershed of the 1970s is not so much an overall flexibility of labor markets, as an unprecedented autonomy of money capital from the circuits of material production – a hypertrophy of finance, which is the other underlying basis of postmodern experience and representation. The ubiquity and volatility of money as the impalpable ground of contemporary existence is a key theme of the book.

Yes, adapting Céline's title, Vie à Crédit. Procedurally, The Condition of Postmodernity actually follows Sartre's prescription for a revitalized Marxism very closely. He defined its task as the necessity to fuse the analysis of objective structures with the restitution of subjective experience, and representations of it, in a single totalizing enterprise. That's a pretty good description of what you were doing. What do you regard as the most important upshot of the book?

The Condition of Postmodernity is the most successful work I've published – it won a larger audience than all the others put together. When a book hits a public nerve like that, different kinds of readers take different things away from it. For myself, the most innovative part of the book is its conclusion – the section where I explore what a postmodern experience means for people in terms of the way they live, and imagine, time and space. It is the theme of 'time-space compression', which I look at in various ways through the last chapters, that is the experimental punchline of the book.

The Condition of Postmodernity came out in 1989. Two years earlier, you had moved from Baltimore to Oxford. What prompted the return to England?

I felt I was spinning my wheels a bit in Baltimore at the time, so when I was asked if I would be interested in the Mackinder Chair at Oxford I threw my hat into the ring, for a different experience. I was curious to see what it would be like. I stayed at Oxford for six years, but I kept on teaching at Hopkins right the way through. My career has, in that sense, been rather conservative compared with most academics – I've been intentionally loyal to the places I've been. In Oxford, people kept treating me as if I'd just arrived from Cambridge, which I'd left in 1960 – as if the intervening twenty-seven years had just been some waiting-room in the colonies, before I came back to my natural roosting-place at Oxbridge,

which drove me nuts. I do have strong roots in English culture, which I feel very powerfully to this day. When I go back to the Kentish countryside that I cycled around, I still know all its lanes like the back of my hand. So in that sense, I've got a couple of toes firmly stuck in the native mud. These are origins I would never want to deny. But they were ones that also encouraged me to explore other spaces.

What about the university or city, themselves?

Professionally, for the first time for many years I found myself in a conventional geography department, which was very useful for me. It renewed my sense of the discipline, and reminded me what geographers think about how they think. Oxford doesn't change very fast, to put it mildly. Working there had its pleasurable sides, as well as the more negative ones. By and large, I liked the physical environment, but found the social environment – particularly college life – pretty terrible. Of course, you quickly become aware of the worldly advantages afforded by a position at Oxford. From being seen as a kind of maverick intellectual sitting in some weird transatlantic department, I was transformed into a respectable figure, for whom various unexpected doors subsequently opened. I first really discovered class when I went to Cambridge, in the 1950s. At Oxford I was reminded of what it still means in Britain. Oxford as a city, of course, is another matter. Throughout my years in Baltimore, I always tried to maintain some relationship to local politics: we bought up an old library, and turned it into a community action center, took part in campaigns for rent control, and generally tried to spark radical initiatives; it always seemed to me very important to connect my theoretical work with practical activity, in the locality. So when I got to Oxford, the local campaign to defend the Rover plant in Cowley offered a natural extension of this kind of engagement. For personal reasons, I couldn't become quite as active as in Baltimore, but it provided the same kind of connection to a tangible social conflict. It also led to some very interesting political discussions – recorded in the book, *The Factory and the City*, which Teresa Hayter and I produced around it – a fascinating experience. Soon afterwards I read Raymond Williams's novel, *Second Generation*, which is exactly about this, and was astonished by how well he captured so much of the reality at Cowley. So one of the first essays in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* became a reflection on his fiction.

Isn't there a range of affinities between the two of you? Williams's tone was always calm, but it was uncompromising. His stance was consistently radical, but it was also steadily realistic. His writing ignored disciplinary frontiers,

crossing many intellectual boundaries and inventing new kinds of study, without any showiness. In these respects, your own work has a likeness. How would you define your relationship to him?

I never met Williams, though of course I knew of his writing from quite early on. *The Country and the City* was a fundamental text for me in teaching Urban Studies. At Hopkins I always felt an intense admiration for him, in a milieu where so many high-flying French intellectuals were overvalued. Williams never received this kind of academic validation, although what he had to say about language and discourse was just as interesting as any Parisian theorist, and often much more sensible. Of course, when I got to Oxford, I re-engaged with his work much more strongly. The account Williams gives of how he felt on arriving as a student in Cambridge matched almost exactly my own experience there. Then there was this powerful novel, set in Oxford, where I was now working, with its extraordinary interweaving of social and spatial themes. So I did feel a strong connection with him.

There seems to be an alteration of references in Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference in other ways, too. Heidegger and Whitehead become much more important than Hempel or Carnap. It is a very wide-ranging collection of texts. What is its main intention?

It must be the least coherent book I've written. There may even be some virtue in its lack of cohesion, since the effect is to leave things open, for different possibilities. What I really wanted to do was to take some very basic geographical concepts – space, place, time, environment – and show that they are central to any kind of historical-materialist understanding of the world. In other words, that we have to think of a historical-geographical materialism, and that we need some conception of dialectics for that. The last three chapters offer examples of what might result. Geographical issues are always present – they have to be – in any materialist approach to history, but they have never been tackled systematically. I wanted to ground the need to do so. I probably didn't succeed, but at least I tried.

One of the strands of the work is a critical engagement with radical ecology, which strikes a characteristic balance. You warn against environmental catastrophism on the Left. Should we regard this as the latter-day equivalent of economic Zusammenbruch theories of an older Marxism?

There was quite a good debate about this with John Bellamy Foster in *Monthly Review*, which laid the issues out very plainly on the table. I'm

extremely sympathetic to many environmental arguments, but my experience of working in an engineering department, with its sense for pragmatic solutions, has made me chary of doomsday prophesies, even when these come from scientists themselves, as they sometimes do. I've spent a lot of time trying to persuade engineers that they should take the idea that knowledge, including their own technical ingenuity, is still socially constructed. But when I argue with people from the humanities, I find myself having to point out to them that when a sewage system doesn't work, you don't ring up the postmodernists, you call in the engineers – as it happens, my department has been incredibly creative in sewage disposal. So I am on the boundary between the two cultures. The chapter on dialectics in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* was designed to try to explain to engineers and scientists what this mystery might be about. That's why it is cast more in terms of natural process than philosophical category. If I had been teaching dialectics in a Humanities program, I would, of course, have had to talk of Hegel; but addressing engineers, it made more sense to refer to Whitehead or Bohm or Lewontin – scientists, familiar with the activities of science. This gives a rather different take on dialectical argumentation, compared to the more familiar, literary-philosophical one.

Another major strand in the book – it's there in the title – is an idea of justice. This is not a concept well-received in the Marxist tradition. Historically, it is certainly true that a sense of injustice has been a powerful, if culturally variable, lever of social revolt, as Barrington Moore and others have shown. This hasn't seemed to require, however, any articulated theory of rights or justice. In modern times, there have been many attempts to found these, without much success. Marx, following Bentham, was withering about their philosophical basis. Why do you think these objections should be overridden?

Marx reacted against the idea of social justice, because he saw it as an attempt at a purely distributive solution to problems that lay in the mode of production. Redistribution of income within capitalism could only be a palliative – the solution was a transformation of the mode of production. There is a great deal of force in that resistance. But in thinking about it, I was increasingly struck by something else Marx wrote – his famous assertion in the introduction to the *Grundrisse*, that production, exchange, distribution and consumption are all moments of one organic totality, each totalizing the others. It seemed to me that it's very hard to talk about those different moments without implying some notion of justice – if you like, of the distributive effects of a transformation in the mode of production. I have no wish to give up on the idea that the fundamental

aim is just this transformation, but if you confine it to that, without paying careful attention to what this would mean in the world of consumption, distribution and exchange, you are missing a political driving-force. So I think there's a case for reintroducing the idea of justice, but not at the expense of the fundamental aim of changing the mode of production. There's also, of course, the fact that some of the achievements of social democracy – often called distributive socialism in Scandinavia – are not to be sneered at. They are limited, but real gains. Finally, there is a sound tactical reason for the Left to reclaim ideas of justice and rights, which I touch on in my latest book, *Spaces of Hope*. If there is a central contradiction in the bourgeoisie's own ideology throughout the world today, it lies in its rhetoric of rights. I was very impressed, looking back at the UN Declaration of Rights of 1948, with its Articles 21–4, on the rights of labor. You ask yourself: what kind of world would we be living in today if these had been taken seriously, instead of being flagrantly violated in virtually every capitalist country on the globe? If Marxists give up the idea of rights, they lose the power to put a crowbar into that contradiction.

Wouldn't a traditional Marxist reply be: but precisely, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. You can have all these fine lists of social rights, they've been sitting there, solemnly proclaimed for fifty years, but have they made a blind bit of difference? Rights are constitutionally malleable as a notion – anyone can invent them, to their own satisfaction. What they actually represent are interests, and it is the relative power of these interests that determines which – equally artificial – construction of them predominates. After all, what is the most universally acknowledged human right, after the freedom of expression, today? The right to private property. Everyone should have the freedom to benefit from their talents, to transmit the fruits of their labours to the next generation, without interference from others – these are inalienable rights. Why should we imagine rights to health or employment would trump them? In this sense, isn't the discourse of rights, though teeming with contrary platitudes, structurally empty?

No, it's not empty, it's full. But what is it full of? Mainly, those bourgeois notions of rights that Marx was objecting to. My suggestion is that we could fill it with something else, a socialist conception of rights. A political project needs a set of goals to unite around, capable of defeating its opponents, and a dynamic sense of the potential of rights offers this chance – just because the enemy can't vacate this terrain, on which it has always relied so much. If an organization like Amnesty International, which has done great work for political and civil rights, had pursued

economic rights with the same persistence, the earth would be a different place today. So I think it's important that the Marxist tradition engage in dialogue in the language of rights, where central political arguments are to be won. Around the world today, social rebellions nearly always spontaneously appeal to some conception of rights.

In the first essay of your new book, Spaces of Hope, 'The difference a generation makes', you contrast the situation of a reading group on Capital in the early 1970s with a comparable one today. Then, you remark, it required a major effort to connect the abstract categories of a theory of the mode of production with the daily realities of the world outside where, as you put it, the concerns of Lenin rather than those of Marx held the stage, as anti-imperialist struggles and revolutionary movements battled across the world. By the 1990s, on the other hand, there was little or no revolutionary ferment left, but the headlines of every morning's paper, as corporate acquisitions or stock prices relentlessly dominated the news, read like direct quotations from Theories of Surplus Value. Reviewing the contemporary scene at the end of the essay, you criticize the over-use of Gramsci's adage – taken from Romain Rolland – 'optimism of the will, pessimism of the intellect', arguing for the validity of a robust optimism of the intellect, too. The conclusion is quite unforced, it comes as entirely natural. But it casts an interesting light on your development. For what it suggests is that the whole Communist experience, unfolding across a third of the earth's land-mass, scarcely registered in your line of sight at all – as if you were neither anti-communist, nor pro-communist, but developed your own very energetic and creative Marxism, while bypassing this huge drama altogether. If the collapse of the USSR, and the hopes once invested in it, has been the principal background to pessimism of the intellect on the Left, it is logical that you would be rather unaffected. But it still raises the question, how you could mentally avoid such a large object on the horizon?

Part of the answer is circumstance. I had no background in Soviet geography, and though I was interested in China, I was never involved in anything to do with it. But if that was in a sense fortuitous, there was a temperamental preference as well. Marx was my anchor, and what Marx wrote was a critique of capitalism. The alternative comes out of that critique, and nowhere else. So I was always more interested in trying to apply the critique and see the alternative where I actually was, in Baltimore, or Oxford, or wherever I happened to be. That may be my own form of localism. On the one hand, I develop a general theory, but on the other, I need to feel this rootedness in something going on in my own backyard. Marxism was so often supposed to be mainly about the Soviet Union or China, and I wanted to say it was about capitalism, which is rampant in

the US, and that must have priority for us. So one effect of this was to insulate me a bit from the fall-out of the collapse of Communism. But I should also concede that this is a real limitation of my own work. For all my geographical interests, it has remained Eurocentric, focused on metropolitan zones. I have not been exposed much to other parts of the world.

In your most recent writing, you turn a number of times to the theme of evolution, engaging with E. O. Wilson's work in a sympathetic if critical spirit, very unlike most responses to his writing on the Left. His notion of the 'consilience' of the sciences might well appeal to anyone once attracted to Carnap, though you make clear your own reservations. But it is Wilson's emphasis on the genetic dispositions of every species that offers the occasion for a remarkable set of reflections on human evolution, which you suggest has left the species a 'repertoire' of capacities and powers – competition, adaptation, cooperation, environmental transformation, spatial and temporal ordering – out of which every society articulates a particular combination. Capitalism, you argue, requires all of these – not least its own forms of cooperation – yet gives primacy to a particular mode of competition. But if competition itself could never be eliminated, as an innate propensity of humanity, its relations with the other powers are in no way unalterable. Socialism is thus best conceived as a reconfiguration of the basic human repertoire, in which its constituent elements find another and better balance. This is a striking response to the claims of sociobiology on its own terrain. But a committed champion of the existing system would reply: yes, but just as in nature the survival of the fittest is the rule whatever the ecological niche, so in society the reason why capitalism has won out is its competitive superiority. It is competition that is the absolute center of the system, lending it an innovative dynamic that no alternative which relativized or demoted the competitive drive into another combination could hope to withstand. You might try to mobilize competition for socialism, but you would want to subordinate it as a principle within a more complex framework, whereas we don't subordinate it – that is our unbeatable strength. What would be your reply to this kind of objection?

My answer is – oh, but you do: you do subordinate competition in all kinds of areas. Actually, the whole history of capitalism is unthinkable without the setting-up of a regulatory framework to control, direct and limit competition. Without state power to enforce property and contract law, not to speak of transport and communications, modern markets could not begin to function. Next time you're flying into London or New York, imagine all those pilots suddenly operating on the competitive principle: they all try to hit the ground first, and get the best gate. Would

any capitalist relish that idea? Absolutely not. When you look closely at the way a modern economy works, the areas in which competition genuinely rules turn out to be quite circumscribed. If you think of all the talk of flexible accumulation, a lot of it revolves around diversification of lines and niche markets. What would the history of capitalism be without diversification? But actually the dynamic behind diversification is a flight from competition – the quest for specialized markets is, much of the time, a way of evading its pressures. In fact, it would be very interesting to write a history of capitalism exploring its utilization of each of the six elements of the basic repertoire I outline, tracing the changing ways it has brought them together and put them to work, in different epochs. Kneejerk hostility to Wilson isn't confined to the Left, but it is not productive. Advances in biology are teaching us a great deal about our make-up, including the physical wiring of our minds, and will tell us much more in the future. I don't see how one can be a materialist and not take all this very seriously. So in the case of sociobiology, I go back to my belief in the value of rubbing different conceptual blocks together – putting E. O. Wilson in dialogue with Marx. There are obviously major differences, but also some surprising commonalities, so let's collide the two thinkers against each other. I'm not going to claim I've done it right, but this is a discussion we need. The section of *Spaces of Hope* which starts to talk about this is called 'Conversations on the Plurality of Alternatives', and that's the spirit in which we should approach this. I have questions, not solutions.

What is your view of the present prospect for the system of capital? Limits set out a general theory of its mechanisms of crisis – over-accumulation, tied to the rigidity of blocs of fixed capital, and of its typical solutions – devalorization, credit expansion, spatial reorganization. Postmodernity looked at the way these surfaced in the 1970s and 1980s. Where are we now? There seem to be two possible readings of the present conjuncture, of opposite sign, allowed by your framework, with a third perhaps just over the horizon. The first would take as its starting-point your observation in The Condition of Postmodernity that the devalorization necessary to purge excess capital is most effective when it occurs, not in the classic form of a crash, but rather slowly and gradually, cleansing the system without provoking dangerous turmoil within it. On one view, isn't this what has been imperceptibly happening, through successive waves of downsizing and line-shifting, since the start of the long down-turn of the 1970s – the kind of cumulative transformation you cited at Bethlehem Steel; finally unleashing a new dynamic in the mid-1990s, with a recovery of profits, stable prices, surge of high-tech investment and increase in productivity growth, giving the system a new lease of life? On another view, equally

compatible with your framework, this is not the underlying story. Rather, what we have mainly been seeing is an explosion of the credit system, releasing a tremendous wave of asset inflation – in other words, a runaway growth of fictitious capital – one that is bound to lead to a sharp correction when the stock bubble bursts, returning us to the realities of continued and unresolved over-accumulation. There is also a third alternative, which would give principal weight to the fall of Soviet Communism in Eastern Europe and Russia, and the Open Door to foreign trade and investment in China. These developments pose the question: isn't capitalism in the process of acquiring, in your terms, a gigantic 'spatial fix' with this sudden, huge expansion in its potential field of operations? This would still be in its early phase – as yet the US has a large negative trade balance with China – but aren't we witnessing the construction of a WTO order that promises to be the equivalent of a Bretton Woods system for the new century, in which for the first time the frontiers of capitalism reach to the ends of the earth? These are three different scenarios, all of which could be grounded in your work. Do you have a provisional judgement of their relative plausibilities?

I don't think there's any simple choice between these explanations. Both a process of steady, ongoing devalorization – downsizing, reorganizing and outsourcing – and of spatial transformation, along lines traditionally associated with imperialism, are very much part of the real story. But these massive restructurings wouldn't have been possible without the incredible power of fictitious capital today. Every major episode of devalorization or geographical expansion has been imprinted by the role of financial institutions, in what amounts to a quite new dynamic of fictitious capital. Such capital is, of course, no mere figment of the imagination. To the extent that it brings about profitable transformations of the productive apparatus, running through the whole cycle of money being transformed into commodities and back into the original money plus profits, it ceases to be fictitious and becomes realized. But to do so it always depends on a basis in expectations, which must be socially constructed. People have to believe that wealth – mutual funds, pensions, hedge funds – will continue to increase indefinitely. To secure these expectations is a work of hegemony that falls to the state, and its relays in the media. This is something the two great theorists of the last world crisis understood very well – it is instructive to read Gramsci and Keynes side by side. There may be objective processes that block devalorization, or resist geographical incorporation; but the system is also peculiarly vulnerable to the subjective uncertainties of a runaway growth in fictitious capital. Keynes was haunted by the question: how are the animal spirits of investors to be sustained? A tremendous ideological battle is necessary to

maintain confidence in the system, in which the activity of the state – we need only think of the role of the US Federal Reserve in the 1990s – is all-important. Someone who has written well about this, in a non-economic way, is Žižek. So the three explanations are not mutually exclusive: they need to be put together, under the sign of a new drive for hegemony. This is a system that has withstood the shocks from the East Asian financial crisis of 1998–9 and the collapse of a major New York-based hedge fund, Long-Term Capital Management, owing billions of dollars. But, each time it was a near-run thing. How long it will last no one can say.

But while the adaptability of capitalism is one of its prime weapons in class struggle, we should not underestimate the vast swathe of opposition it continues to generate. That opposition is fragmented, often highly localized, and endlessly diverse in terms of aims and methods. We have to think of ways to help mobilize and organize this opposition, both actual and latent, so that it becomes a global force and has a global presence. The signs of coming together are there: think only of Seattle. At the level of theory, we need to find a way to identify commonalities within the differences, and so develop a politics that is genuinely collective in its concerns, yet sensitive to what remains irreducibly distinctive in the world today, particularly geographical distinctions. That would be one of my key hopes.

PART 1

**GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGES/
POLITICAL POWER**

CHAPTER 2

What kind of geography for what kind of public policy?

*First published in Transactions of the Institute of
British Geographers, 1974.*

Can geographers contribute successfully, meaningfully and effectively to the formation of public policy?

General Pinochet is a geographer by training, and by all accounts he is successfully putting geography into public policy. As President of the military Junta that overthrew the elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile on 11 September 1973, General Pinochet does not approve of 'subversive' academic disciplines such as sociology, politics and even philosophy. He has asked that 'lessons in patriotism' be taught in all Chilean schools and universities and he is known to look with great favor upon the teaching of geography – such a subject is, he says, ideally suited to instruct the Chilean people in the virtues of patriotism and to convey to the people a sense of their true historic destiny. Since the military have taken full command of the universities and frequently supervise instruction in the schools, it appears that geography will become a very significant discipline in the Chilean educational system.

General Pinochet is also actively changing the human geography of Chile. An example is here in order. The healthcare system of Chile has, for some time, comprised three distinct components: the rich paid for services on a 'free-market' basis; the middle classes made use of hospital-based medicine financed by private insurance schemes; while the lower classes and poor (some 60 per cent of the population) received free medical care in community-based health centers paid for out of a National Health Service (Navarro 1974). Under Allende, resources were switched from the first two sectors into the community health services which had previously been poorly financed and largely ignored. The geography of the healthcare system began to be transformed from a centralized, provider-controlled, hospital-centred system catering exclusively to the middle and upper classes, to a decentralized, community-controlled, free healthcare system primarily catering to the needs of the lower classes and the poor. This transformation did not occur without resistance – the

providers of hospital-based medicine organized strikes to preserve the old social geography of healthcare against the emergence of the new. But during the Allende years the community health centers grew and flourished. Also, community control through the creation of community health councils had a profound political impact and many aspects of life began to be organized around the community health centers. The emphasis also shifted from curative medicine (with all of its glamour and expensive paraphernalia) to preventive medicine which sought to treat medical care as something integral to a wide range of environmental issues (water supply, sewage disposal, and the like). The human geography of social contact, political power and distribution changed as hitherto never before, as the lower classes and poor people began to realize the potential for controlling social conditions of their own existence.

But military power and General Pinochet have changed all that. The community health councils have been disbanded and many of those who participated in them have been imprisoned or executed. The community health centers have been severely curtailed in their operation. The administration of the healthcare system has been given back to the providers of medicine; and the system is reverting to a centralized, hospital-based system catering to the upper and middle classes. Curative medicine is once more the order of the day and open-heart surgery for the few replaces sanitation for the many as the primary goal of medical care. The old geography has been reasserted and the new has been effectively dismantled. Thus has the intervention of the geographer, General Pinochet, become a determining force in the human geography of the healthcare system of Chile.

Chile may seem a long way from Britain. My purpose in quoting this example is not, however, to seek parallels with Britain (although it is disconcerting to note that the government of a country which so actively resisted the advance of fascism from 1939–45 has so hastily extended the hand of friendship to General Pinochet, and that the reorganization of the British National Health Service in the summer of 1973 eliminated all trace of community control and placed the provision of healthcare firmly in the hands of the providers who favor a centralized, hospital-based, healthcare delivery system). I am concerned, rather, to use this example of the successful injection of geography into public policy to pose two very basic questions that must be asked prior to any kind of commitment of geography to public policy: 'What kind of geography?' and 'Into what kind of public policy?'

These are profoundly difficult questions to answer. It is perhaps useful to begin by asking why we might feel the urge to put any kind of geography into any kind of public policy in the first place. If we reflect upon our motivations for a moment, it seems that this urge arises out of an odd

blend of personal ambition, disciplinary imperialism, social necessity and moral obligation. Some of us may be governed (or think we are governed) more by one factor than another, but none of us, surely, can claim total immunity from any of these motivations.

Personal ambition is very significant for us all since we are raised in an economic and social system that is inherently both individualistic and competitive. Since much of the power in society (both economic and political) resides in the public domain, it is natural for academics to be drawn to the locus of that power. Vaunting personal ambition is probably the most significant of all motivating factors in explaining individual behavior. But it does not explain too well the behavior of the geographer as distinct from any other academic and it is to be doubted if an academic possessed of enormous personal ambition would choose to start from what, in Britain at least, must surely be a disadvantageous base in the pecking order of academic disciplines.

The reputation and status of the discipline is, in a way, personal ambition mediated by group consciousness. Disciplines inevitably serve to socialize individuals to the point where they come to locate their identity in terms of 'geography', 'economics', 'biology', etc. In reply to the question 'who are you?' we frequently reply, 'I am a geographer (economist, biologist, etc)'. Disciplines are important for they help us to understand our role and to feel secure. But geography is one amongst many disciplines which compete for status and prestige in the public eye. Disciplines also compete for public funds. The security of these who identify themselves as 'geographers' is, as a consequence, wrapped up in the position of geography with respect to other disciplines. And so we come to think, 'what is good for geography is good for me' and to recognize that 'a threat to geography is a threat to me'. By promoting geography we promote ourselves and we defend ourselves by defending geography.

Personal ambition and disciplinary imperialism explain a great deal when it comes to understanding individual and professional behaviors. But as explanations they are, I believe, far too simplistic. In what follows, therefore, I shall largely ignore the question of personal ambition and concentrate on the deeper problems of social necessity (mediated by disciplinary imperialism) and moral obligation.

Geography and social necessity

The evolution of geography as a discipline has to be understood against a background of changing social necessities. Since these necessities vary somewhat from society to society I shall confine attention, for the most part, to the recent history of geography in Britain.

In Britain an 'epistemological break' occurred in geographical thinking and activity somewhere around 1945. This break was perhaps best symbolized, first by Professor Wooldridge's influential invocation of the slogan 'the eyes of the fool are on the ends of the earth', and, second, by the foundation of the Institute of British Geographers as a breakaway organization from the Royal Geographical Society. Prior to the Second World War, geography had been more of a non-academic, practical activity than a strong academic discipline. It was oriented, primarily through the activities of the Royal Geographical Society, to what can best be called 'the technics and mechanics of the management of Empire'. The university-based component of geography was relatively weak, while much of what there was (the tie to the Colonial Survey being a good example) related to the concern for Empire. This situation has now changed quite remarkably. Professional university-based geography, strongly aspiring to the status of a distinctive intellectual discipline, is now in the ascendant. Geographers now seek, by and large, to contribute to what can best be called 'the technics and mechanics of urban, regional and environmental management'. Like all such epistemological shifts, elements of the new can be discerned in the old (Dudley Stamp's Land Use Survey of the 1930s surely being the most outstanding example) and residuals from the old are still with us today. But there is no doubt that a major shift in style and in focus has occurred.

How and why did this shift occur? We certainly cannot attribute it to an inner struggle within the intellectual tradition of geography itself (in the fashion, say, of certain shifts in the paradigms of mathematics). It has to be viewed, rather, as an adaptation within geography to external conditions. The end of Empire is in itself sufficient to explain the demise of the old-style geography of the Royal Geographical Society (and it was the end of this era that Wooldridge was heralding). But how are we to explain the transformation to the new style of geography? What were the social necessities that pushed us into concern for the technics and mechanics of urban, regional and environmental management? And why did we move to a professional stance and a university base? To answer these questions we need to say something about our own contemporary history.

If we could return to earth in some future century and if the inhabitants at that time still care (or are able) to write history, then what will the textbooks say of the period 1930–70? I suspect that the relevant chapter will be headed: 'The birth-pangs of the corporate state'. The prototype for the corporate state began to be designed by Bismarck. Mussolini's Italy (particularly in the early years) developed the model while the appalling excesses of Hitler's Germany tend to conceal from us the real meaning of

the Fascist Form. Today we sit quietly by and observe Spain, Uruguay, Greece, Brazil, Guatemala, Chile . . . and at home we accept a growing state interventionism in the name of economic stability (Lord Keynes) and distributive justice (Lord Beveridge). It should be clear to us that Western capitalism is undergoing some sort of radical transformation. Each of the advanced capitalist nations has been fumbling its way to some version of the corporate state (Miliband 1969). Exactly how this is manifest in any particular nation depends upon its existing institutional framework, political traditions, ruling ideology, and opportunities for economic growth and development.

How can we characterize the general form of the corporate state as a mode of sociopolitical organization? It appears as a relatively tightknit, hierarchically ordered structure of interlocking institutions – political, administrative, legal, financial, military, and the like – which transmits information downwards and ‘instructs’ individuals and groups down the hierarchy as to what behaviors are appropriate for the survival of society as a whole. The slogan for such an operation is ‘the national interest’. The corporate state is dominated by the ethics of ‘rationality’ and ‘efficiency’ (the two concepts being regarded as interchangeable). Since neither efficiency nor rationality can be defined without a goal, the national interest – the survival of the corporate state – becomes the *de facto* ‘purpose’. Within the corporate state a ruling class emerges which, in the advanced capitalist nations, is almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of the industrial and financial interests. In the communist nations, many of which have assumed the corporate state form, the ruling elite is drawn from the party.

In Britain, much of the infrastructure for the corporate state was laid by the Labour Party in the name of distributive justice. But it soon became apparent that ‘the social good’ could not be achieved without subsuming it under ‘the national interest’. It has taken the bureaucratic and technocratic conservatism of Edward Heath to demonstrate how far we have come since 1945 and how easily an infrastructure created in the name of distributive justice can be converted into an instrument for class war. There is, of course, resistance. The free-market capitalism promoted by Enoch Powell coincides with deep misgivings on both the left and right as the law, education, research, the social services, all became subservient to the needs of the corporate state. Even the *Financial Times* (14 January 1974) argues that:

We are now only a decade away from the kind of modern state, with its technological and bureaucratic capacities, that can create and sustain an Orwellian control of the citizen's life. If we are to avoid the totalitarian

systems, so chillingly depicted in Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*, the law as declared from the courts will need to be deployed ever-increasingly to protect the individual's rights.

The legal decisions, which were the focus of the *Financial Times*' concern, went in favor of the government and against the individual's rights.

Consistent with this trend towards a corporate-state form of social and political organization, education has increasingly come to be regarded purely as investment in manpower. Concern for individual health, welfare and sanity has been notably lacking in our calculations. We have been forced, as a consequence, to market the graduate in geography as a commodity. The corporate state requires a technically proficient bureaucracy if it is to function. The commodity we now produce is in part tailored to fit the needs of this market in addition to the market for teachers. We also had to ensure appropriate mechanisms for quality control over the production of this commodity – hence the growth of professional standards within the discipline. Research has likewise become a commodity. National priorities and needs (the pervasive national interest once more) condition the market, and we are progressively pushed to sell research to a client who has a specific need – and the client is, increasingly, the government itself.

And what are these 'national needs and priorities'? Within the overarching concern for the survival of the corporate state itself, we can distinguish the need for designing and implementing a variety of techniques of manipulation, control and co-optation, such that: (1) economic growth, the rate of accumulation of capital, and the competitive position of the state in world markets, are preserved and enhanced; (2) cyclical crises in the economy can be managed; and (3) discontent can be contained and defused. Geographers have sought to respond to these needs by contributing, in both research and education, to the discovery and diffusion of such techniques in the sphere of urban, regional and environmental management. The tightening structure of the corporate state during the 1960s put more and more pressure on us to move in these directions. We are, by now, more subservient to the state in Britain than ever before. We have, in short, been co-opted. Yet there has been virtually no sign of any resistance on our part. Indeed, it looks as if we have been eager to participate in such a process. We certainly have spent little time worrying about the possible consequences.

The reasons why we have not worried are complex. In the first place, the co-optation of the academic into the corporate-state structure provided certain channels through which the academic could approach the locus of power in society. Whether or not the geographer, *qua* academic, could

exercise real power or not is beside the point – the illusion was enough to gain the acquiescence of that part of us that responds to vaunting personal ambition. More crucial, however, is the mediating power of disciplinary imperialism. Geographers had to demonstrate that geography did indeed have something to contribute to the fulfillment of national needs and priorities. Much of the debate over the nature of geography in the 1960s was, in fact, a debate over how best to fulfill that tacit commitment. This was a question of survival, for universities were by no means persuaded of the necessity to invest in geography. We had to compete with other disciplines and in the process we were forced, if we were to survive as a collectivity, to carve out a niche, to establish a 'turf' which it was distinctly ours to command.

And it was, of course, the job of the profession (and the Institute of British Geographers in particular) to establish such a niche. There were plenty of fights and some interminable arguments over where that niche should be. In order to demonstrate that geography was an academic discipline occupying a certain turf of academic knowledge, we had to be seen to know what geography was and to present a united front on the matter. The consequences of this were legion. Strong constraints had to be placed on what could or could not be done within the discipline. The Kantian conception of 'synthesis in space' was far too broad and unspecific and so the tortuous search was begun for an analytical methodology which we would call our own. The tendency for geographers to spin off in all directions had to be controlled and the profession sought means to suppress its own dissidents. A corporate structure arose within the discipline – a mini-corporate state within geography that faithfully replicated the corporate structure of the state. We equipped ourselves with power-brokers within the discipline, self-appointed arbiters of good taste and ultimately with the loosely hegemonic power of the Institute itself.

By such adaptations we have come to define a niche for ourselves to facilitate our own survival in a world of changing social necessities. In the process we have learned to be good citizens, to prostrate ourselves and to prostitute our discipline before 'national priorities' and 'the national interest'. We have survived, in short, by adopting an Eichmann mentality. The only solace to be gained, apart from our survival, is that this mentality is on a clear collision course with our sense of moral obligation.

Geography and moral obligation

Most geographers seem to go about their work with an easy conscience. The self-image of the geographer at work appears to be one of doing good. Tune into any discussion among geographers and as likely as not

the discussion unfolds from the standpoint of the benevolent bureaucrat, a person who knows better than other people and who will therefore make better decisions for others than they will be able to make for themselves. The self-image of benevolence appears to contradict the actual behavior of the geographer battling the social necessities laid out in the preceding section. How can we interpret this self-image?

To some degree, it has its source in the broad tradition of humanistic creative scholarship that has permeated Western thought since the Renaissance. The dynamism of the capitalist economic order required technological and social innovation to sustain it. The tradition of creative individualism which grew with the evolution of capitalism (hindered here and artificially fostered there) was functional to the sustenance of the capitalist order and it applied as much to scholarship as it did to practical invention. And this tradition was regarded as an essential ingredient to the progress of mankind (which is some times regarded as a euphemistic phrase for the accumulation of capital). We have undoubtedly been affected by this tradition; the more so as we have created a base within the universities. Western humanism as an intellectual tradition is still quite strong. It has its negative features of course; it is strongly elitist and therefore paternalistic. But it is in this tradition that a good deal of unalienated truly creative scholarship lies.

The source of humanism within the geographic tradition is more problematical. While it is possible to point to some writings in the humanistic vein, the more traditional geographical literature is dominated by racism, ethnocentrism and, at best, a strong paternalism. Even someone as lauded as Humboldt had a quite appalling perspective on 'the natives' which Malthus gleefully quoted in later editions of his celebrated *Essay on Population*. The geography textbooks of today continue in this vein and they are something of which we cannot be proud. Attitudes gleaned from many years devoted to the technics and mechanics of the management of Empire have yet to be expunged from our school texts. Although there is more of which to be ashamed than proud in the geographic tradition, there is a thread to geographic thinking which, at its best, produces an acute sensitivity to place and community, to the symbiotic relations between individuals, communities and environments. This sensitivity to locale and interaction produces a kind of parochial humanism – a humanism that is, in certain senses deep and penetrating, but which is locked into the absolute spaces generated by the regional concept.

But our move away from concern for Empire and into the technics and mechanics of urban, regional and environmental management has brought us into contact with another tradition which has strong humanistic roots. The tradition of Edwin Chadwick and Ebenezer Howard is a strong one