

Emancipating the Place and Labor: Exploring a Possible Synthesis of David Harvey's Theory of Capitalist Production of Spaces and Marx-Engels' Emancipatory Class Politics

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Abstract

With the desperate usurpation of global spaces under the ever-expanding capitalist mode of production, the political struggle still necessitates an emancipatory class politics as aimed by Marx and Engels. This paper will be a synthesis of Marxist geographer David Harvey's theory of capitalist production of space and Marx-Engels' notion of freedom, and their notion of emancipatory class politics. According to David Harvey, its survival as a system is through its widescale control on the production of spaces. I will first expose the theory of the Marxist geographer David Harvey on how capitalism produces a space through his theory of the capitalist production of space. This necessary strategy of capitalism to own and extend to spaces is essential to its nature to increase capital and profit. According to him, capitalism always needs to expand territories to create new sources of labor, wealth, and new markets. This necessitates obtaining profits to sustain capital accumulation amidst its problem of crises. The spatial ontology of capital will be the springboard showing a possible construction of the type of freedom or emancipation that is necessary in forwarding a class politics of spatiality. In effect, emancipating the *place* is tied with the classical notion of the liberation of the proletariat. I conceptualize the concept of *place* as a signifier of the spaces that humanity produces—may it be their home, their work, or geometries of modern life—but have been put under the dictates and design of capital. Thus, I will go back to the classical notion of emancipatory politics of Marx and Engels. This synthesis combines the possibility of emancipatory class politics based on the ontology of the present capitalist production of space.

Keywords: capitalist production, emancipatory politics, freedom, spatial ontology, class politics



Introduction

The political and economic dominance of capitalism has colonized the planet in various forms of systems, sustaining its survival on the planet. Such a system that capitalism has controlled is connected to the production of space.¹ In this paper, I wish to expose three objectives as follows: First, I will show the theoretical background of David Harvey's framework of capitalist production of space and the necessary connection of geographic or spatial control of capitalism, Second, I will illuminate Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' framework of freedom based on their emancipatory class politics, Third, I will show a possible synthesis from these two frameworks of Harvey and Marx-Engels to construct the notion of emancipation of Place (and of labor). Harvey's theory of the present condition of capitalist spatiality will serve as the springboard to which I will synthesize with the classical Marxist notion of freedom from Marx and Engels towards the construction of emancipation of *place*.

The main argument that I want to address in this paper is that class emancipatory politics from Marx and Engels finds relevance in the age of imperial capitalist control of spaces, making the basis of Marxist emancipation of Place going dialectically necessary with the emancipation of labor. I conceptualize the concept of Place as a signifier of the spaces that humanity produces—may it be their home, their work, and other geometries of modern life—and these are all affected by the design of capital. Capital is dead labor as Marx describes, sucked from exploited surplus value from the labor of workers.² The spatial ontology of workers, their situatedness in everyday life has also been subdued by capital as Capital is the most dictatorial and totalitarian system to date. A total-global operating ontology, the empire of capital has gained depressingly unlimited usurpation of workers' bodies and places, thus nothing has changed the fact that the essence of political alteration

1 David Harvey, *Ways of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 245. Harvey explains that it was the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Survival of Capitalism*, constructs his famous notion of capitalist survival through production of spaces. Lefebvre is one of the key figures in the Marxist geography and critical urban studies, as he is also one of David Harvey's influences in theory.

2 Karl Marx, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy Vol. 1* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 342.

necessitates the praxis of emancipation. Emancipating the Place is not possible without emancipating the labor, and vice-versa. This makes updates about the possibilities of praxis that can situate the need of our class politics to grasp the geographic sensibilities of class struggle. Marxist emancipation of Place re-creates the French urban philosopher Henri Lefebvre's notion of 'right to the city,' describing it as "a cry and a demand... a transformed and renewed right to urbanity."³ Emancipation of Place encompasses the notion of a future where emancipated labor finds its sensibilities in the freedom of the working class to determine their ways of life and spaces, be it rural or in urban such as our cities. Emancipating labor entails emancipation of Place—Place is a signifier or any kind of space that capital has colonized, not only the city but the spaces created by the continuing medium of labor capacities. The concept of "right to the city" is an important spatial and political call for the inclusion of the working people to their right to define their ways in urban living, and such is also important in the emancipation of the Place. But the signifier Place that I refer to here is not limited to ways of living in urbanities and the cities—the Place denotes every space that we can imagine—in the rural, urban, residential, work, and even the natural spaces. Such emancipation of Place recognizes the negative dialectic or the Hegelian sublation⁴ wherein the Capitalist mode of production has been leading to the colonization of the planetary spaces. Emancipating the Place and labor means that we forward a framework that is anchored in the possibility of creating our present-and-future labor and Places beyond the design of exploitative and dispossessing political economy of global-imperial capital.

3 Henri Lefebvre, *Writing in the Cities*, trans. and eds. Eleonore Kafman and Elizabeth Lebas (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2000), 158.

4 The concept of *aufhebung* or sublation is central in Hegelian dialectical framework of how the process of change or becoming takes place. This kernel of Hegelian dialectics has been of course influential in the dialectical thinking of Marx and Engels and to succeeding theorists within the Marxist and post-Marxist traditions. The capital, being taken as a total system—a form of *being* sublates or negates, or consumes social being, producing matrices of different becomings. As Hegel states in *Science of Logic*: "[B]ecoming is the vanishing of being into nothing, and of nothing into being, and the vanishing of being and nothing in general; but at the same time, it rests on their being distinct. It therefore contradicts itself in itself, because what it unites within itself is self-opposed; but such a union destroys itself." George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81.

So, to construct the emancipation of Place from the two frameworks of Harvey's theory of capitalist production of space and Marx-Engels' emancipatory class politics, I will formulate these three parts of the discussion into three sub-questions that shall be answered further:

- A) What are the spatial dimensions of the system of capital according to Harvey's theory of capitalist production of space?
- B) What is the concept of freedom based on the emancipatory class politics of Marx and Engels?
- C) What is the author's idea of the emancipation of place derived from the synthesis of Harvey's theory of space and capital accumulation in connection with Marx-Engels's notion of emancipatory class politics?

In the following section, I will first discuss David Harvey's theory of capitalist production wherein he traces spatiality in Marx's array of works and theorizing on the present dynamics of global capitalism and geography.

David Harvey's Theory of Capitalist Production of Space

In this section, I shall discuss Harvey's critique of political economy based on the geographic dimension of capital, wherein capital does not only control the production of commodities but also needs to control the dimensions of space. I will discuss how Harvey argues the capitalist system being prone to crises, the reason is due to its logic of production. In the last part of this section, I shall show Harvey's arguments on how this built-in crisis of capitalism pushes for its system to produce spaces at the global scale and maintain its control through his concepts of (a) time-space compression, (b) the exportation of capital towards a world market, and (c) urbanization as an absorber of surplus capital.

The Spatial Dimension of Capital Circulation

The influential French urban Marxist Henri Lefebvre argues in his book *Survival of Capitalism* that there is an "emphasis of shift"

in the discourse of sustaining the capitalist system. He argues that it “is no longer essential to describe the partial processes” of capitalism in terms of “biological reproduction...material production... or consumption and its various modalities... What is essential is to analyze thoroughly the relations of production.”⁵ These relations also reflect on the sub-systems that capitalism has been integrating, whether the older systems such as feudalism, agriculture, sciences, and other knowledge.⁶

For Lefebvre, spaces are not just a container of things and productive activities—spaces themselves are created, produced by human beings.⁷ Capitalism has exploited this spatial direction. Lefebvre argues that the world’s urbanization in the future will be the direction towards the development of space.

The production of space [...] is a reproduction of the relations of production, reproduction of the means of production (labour-power, tools, raw materials etc), the organization of “the environment” around the enterprises (i.e. of society as a whole), the layout of a jigsaw puzzle of towns and regions, the announcing of a “new social life...” all these are dependent on the “development” of space... the worsening contradiction between the conditions of capitalist domination and the conditions of capitalist domination...⁸

Lefebvre also serves as one of the theoretical influences of Harvey, wherein the latter argues that since capital is being a value in circulation within our physical society, it is, therefore, a spatial process.⁹ He notes that the “production of spatial configurations can be treated as ‘active moment’ within the overall temporal dynamic of accumulation

5 Henri Lefebvre, *Survival of Capitalism* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1976), 8.

6 Ibid.

7 Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, eds. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 215.

8 Lefebvre, *Survival of Capitalism*, 27.

9 Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Development* (London: Verso, 2019), 78.

and social reproduction.”¹⁰ He further explains that capitalism “adapts to new conditions...one of the more outstanding things about capitalist historical geography is its flexibility and adaptability.”¹¹ This means that capitalism is an active producer and shaper of its own space according to its purpose, as a system that reproduces a type of society oriented to facilitating its goal of greater capital accumulation possible.¹²

There cannot be a possibility of setting up a capitalist production without a space to hold production. Harvey argues that capital must start somewhere in space:

The circulation of capital also entails spatial movement. Money is assembled from somewhere and brought to a particular place to utilise labour resources that come from somewhere else. [...] The means of production (including raw materials) have to be brought from yet another place to produce a commodity that has to be taken to market somewhere else.¹³

The activity of capital accumulation happens in space, just like other human activities. Services, commodities, and properties are spatial objects as they occupy physical spaces. For the capital accumulation process to sustain, there should be a good spatial movement of capital such as the commodities. To picture a scenario: commodities are created somewhere, transported into the market, and someone buys it through paying money and uses it somewhere else again. Such a scenario makes us imagine that the capital invested should become profit value in the end. That is the reason capital circulation is essentially a spatial process, as it flows within the spaces of the society.¹⁴

10 Harvey, *The Limits To Capital* (London: Verso, 2005), 374.

11 Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Development*, 81.

12 Ibid., 82.

13 Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 42.

14 Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Development*, 81.

Crises of Overproduction and the Absorption Problem

Following the classic crisis theory of Marx, Harvey argues that the inherent nature of capitalist production of commodities is always an *overproduction* or *overaccumulation*, as capitalists desire to maximize the surplus-value production of their workers. This case of the omnipresence of devalued capital due to commodities failing to be sold in just time concretizes the capitalist problem of overproduction. We are surrounded by commodities that wait further just to be converted into the monetary exchange in the market.¹⁵ The problem is that the available capacity of consumption cannot absorb all of the values produced by capitalists. Thus, obstructing capital accumulation. This is the crucial basis of crisis in the capitalist system—there are not enough social capacities to absorb these grand excesses of production. Harvey calls it the *absorption problem*.¹⁶

With some capitalists failing to solve their absorption problems, the coercive laws of competition¹⁷ drive their capital accumulation to be dismantled, devalued, and finally destroyed. These capitalists who cannot manage to compete anymore within the harsh competition among the bourgeoisie class will withdraw from the harsh business competition; and thus, the few bigger capitalist win the game. This leads

15 As the researcher of this study would want to emphasize, overproduction exists absurdly in side with looming poverty, unemployment, widening disparity of wealth and income. Because the economic system is directed by “accumulation for accumulation’s sake” (a phrase from Karl Marx in *Capital*) or profit for the capitalist class, there capitalist produce and produce a lot of commodities even all of these cannot be consumed in time, making capitalism a big systematic waste of natural resources as materials for the production of commodities come from Nature. For the connection of capitalism and ecological destruction, see John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, “The Ecology of Consumption,” in *Ecological Rift: Capitalism’s War on Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 377-394.

16 *Ibid.*, 84.

17 The “coercive law of competition” is a concept from Marx which means the harsh competition that happens between capitalists, resulting for the other capitalist to die out or appropriated by the winning capitalist. Marx, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy Vol.1*, 739.

to the monopolization of ownership of capitalist means of production, including the spatial assets of lands and infrastructures.¹⁸

There is also devaluation towards capitalist crises because the value of some capital invested also in physical infrastructures cannot further help facilitate capital circulation within a given locality. As capital circulation should be a smooth movement in space to accumulate profit for the capitalist, with this build environment and land-rents that cannot contribute to capitalists' agenda of accumulation, they face a loss of profit, another form of devaluation. So, the concrete manifestation of this problem of overaccumulation is how to make this ever-present overaccumulated and overproduced commodities circulate so they accumulate profit value? As a predicament of almost all big capitalists, Harvey argues that this absorption problem can still be solved by moving the capital at a greater distance in space. This is the reason that the monopoly capitalists' aim now is to expand its territorial scope nationally, and finally, globally.

The Spatial Reconstruction of Global Capitalism

Due to its inherent problems as a system such as overaccumulation and devaluation, Harvey claims that spatial reconstruction is the final frontier of big capitalists to solve their absorption problem.¹⁹ Capitalists seek for an expansion the geographic scope of capitalist production opens new markets and sources of labor and resources as they control the spaces.²⁰

18 Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*, 99.

19 Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, xxiv.

20 Harvey argues that rent "confronts... the problem of spatial organization." Because of rentier class or the land-owning class, capitalism has designed the resources to be source of extraction of profit, even though land properties do not directly create services and commodities. Harvey argues that rent provides "forms of social control over the spatial organization and development of capitalism." Basing from Marx's notion of *ground-rent*, ground-rent is a feature of capitalism that gives monetary equivalence to use of land. Land is the space used for a capitalist to place their means of production, and the costs of such. Thus, land has become a purely financial asset. It has become a commodity. Thus Harvey argues, the landlord and rentier class have played the role "in the process of geographical structuring and restructuring," as they need to

As a geographer as well, Harvey's studies of actual spatial developments of capitalism have been the basis of the synthesis of his geographic knowledge and Marxist critique. In this way, he has derived the concepts of, *time-space compression*, *international export of capital towards a world market*, and *urbanization as a surplus capital absorber*. I have selected only these three concepts to show Harvey's concept of spatial reconstruction of global capitalism, which will be the focus in this last part of this section.

Time-Space Compression

Harvey argues that as capital operates spatially, it also carries its contradictions and crises with it in its circulation as its problems as a system become worldwide at scale.²¹ The capitalist crises are problematic, but they reopen the very possibilities of a dialectic of progress for capitalism itself.²² Harvey argues that "crises are essential to the reproduction of capitalism, it is in the course of crises that the instabilities of capitalism are confronted, reshaped and re-engineered to create a new version of what capitalism is about".²³

Despite crises and harsh competition, capitalists' show must go on. Amidst the harsh competition, Harvey argues that capitalist always tries to keep up with what Harvey calls the *socially necessary turnover time*, or the "average time taken to turn over a given quantity of capital...under the normal conditions of production and circulation."²⁴

push for greater stimulus to "diminish the circulation time of commodities, to extend markets geographically and so simultaneously to build the possibility for cheapening raw material inputs, expanding the basis for realization while accelerating the turnover time of capital." This has been the drive of the improvement of transportation technology and spatial mobilities, the reason that also adds up to the value of land along with these transformations under the dictates of capital accumulation. Their aim of profit from long-term rents makes them a distinct class whose primary source of value is their lending of landed property. Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 337-339.

21 Harvey, *The Limits To Capital*, 416-18.

22 Harvey, *Ways of the World*, 307.

23 Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2014), ix.

24 Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 319.

With this in capitalists' mind, Harvey argues that is essential for them to always improve production and consumption through integrating the spaces into the logic of accumulation, helping to obtain profit in the necessary turn over time.²⁵ This has been through the introduction of improvement of speed processes which means controlling the proximities of production sites and mobilities within spaces. Everything has to be quick; efficiency and effectiveness are proven through a fast-paced turnover of outputs.²⁶

Harvey conceptualized time-space compression based on the drive of capital to overcome space through time.²⁷ This is the reason capitalists invest so much in building new environments and transportation-communications technology to make better conditions and mobilities for circulation of capital and commodities, therefore a relatively quicker accumulation cycle.²⁸ Manipulating space has been the key to introduce more efficient management of the time dimension of this desired turnover. Furthermore, Harvey explains this speed-based concept of time-space compression:

25 Ibid., 323-5.

26 A sidenote to this, the researcher comments that there is always a supposed need to keep up with this speed processes, as we operate under the current of capital accumulation that also wants fast turnover of profit. This also reflects in the daily life that we somewhat need to keep pace with the quickly changing society in terms of technology, trendy stuff, and other concrete signs in times we are always pushed by the present system that we should always adapt to these fast changes that happen around. The working-class ought to increase their productivity otherwise they can be laid off from work. Performance rating from the job bosses will pressure their employees in time for a higher profit output. The irony is that even we are always pushed to synchronize with the logic of speed, there has been slow regression in the condition of humanity. Worsening mental health problems, dissatisfaction with job and careers, aggravating quality of life due to low wages and salary amidst skyrocketing prices of goods and services. For perspectives on capitalist obsession to speed, see *Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader* eds. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanesian (UK: Urbanomic, 2014). For the interrelation of capitalism, human condition, and mental health, see Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* UK: Zero Books, 2009.

27 Harvey, *Ways of the World*, 42.

28 Ibid., 42-47.

Accelerating turnover time in production entails parallel accelerations in exchange and consumption. Improved systems of communication and information flow, coupled with rationalizations in techniques of distribution (packaging, inventory control, containerization, market feedback, etc.), made it possible to circulate commodities through the market system with greater speed.²⁹

Harvey explains that speeding the processes of accumulation happens through the “annihilation of space through time.”³⁰ This is not the literal tearing down of a physical barrier, but a reconstruction of spatial environments that will allow capital to extend its market of reach, as it heads toward better facilities of capital circulation. Capitalists annihilate space through innovating new various ways of transportation, communication, and organization of productions.³¹

Exportation of Capital Towards World Market

Another way for capitalists to organize their spatial control to solve their crises at home is the exportation of capital to far places in the world. Harvey argues that the overaccumulation or surplus capital such as money and commodities that cannot be absorbed in a national market “can be lent abroad to create fresh productive powers in new regions.”³² Harvey adds that “capitalist needs to create the world market, to intensify the volume of exchange, to produce new needs and new kinds of products, to implant fresh productive powers in new regions and to bring all labor, everywhere, under the domination of capital.”³³

But Harvey observes that such exportation of capital, being exportation of the crisis of capitalism itself, is just a temporary

29 Ibid., 110.

30 Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, 242. The term ‘annihilation of space by time’ was retrieved by Harvey from the Marx’s pre-*Capital* notebooks compiled in his work of *Grundrisse*. This concept has been the keyword for Harvey’s early attempts of extrapolating the geographic dimension from Marx’s theory.

31 Harvey, *Ways of the World*, 41.

32 Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, 302.

33 Ibid.

solution. The same laws of capital accumulation will take place in that region, thus the tendency of *another overaccumulation* will just start again. Another thing, the new excess capital competitive threat to the region where it has sent its capital. Whereas different capitalists are competing in a place, the capitalists who would win the competition will monopolize the ownership of capital; therefore, the crises implicated in the surplus capital should happen to be inherited by the monopolizing capitalist. Then, the cycle of the capitalist problem of devaluation due to overaccumulation starts again. As capital is towards the accumulation for the sake of accumulation because of its ideology of growth, its logic needs to *always* expand so it can solve its crises of overaccumulation. But this spatial expansion, as long as it follows the capitalist crisis-prone and growth-direction, just transports its crises into the whole globe.

Harvey conceptualized this spatial orientation of capital on Marx's argument that it has internal capital to construct market geography that is worldwide in scope, thus a world market. As capital always faces crises that transcend its home country, its system could not sustain itself unless it expands, finding new market territories for production and consumption. It is part of the logic of capital to operate globally, as it needs a wider scope of geographical extension of its crisis-prone and accumulationist directives.

This accumulationist orientation of capital has driven its imperial and colonial conquest of other geographies.³⁴ Foreign trade and exportation of capital expands scales of production and quickens the process of accumulation.³⁵ Harvey explains:

The temptation for capitalists to engage in interregional trade, to lever profits out of unequal exchange, and to place surplus capitals wherever the rate of profit is highest is in the long run irresistible... tendency towards overaccumulation and the threat of devaluation will force

34 Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 417. The theory of imperialism of capitalism has a long history in Marxism. For other accounts of colonization's connection to capitalism, see Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2010).

35 Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 417.

capitalists within a region to extend its frontiers or simply to move their capital to greener pastures.³⁶

The systematic global exportation of capital has ensured the production of new markets by integrating the new territories to be either absorbers of surplus capital and also new populations to be consumers of the surplus commodities. This picture of rich countries being able to export their surplus capital has ensured what Harvey calls *uneven geographic development*, where spatial territories are divided into what are the economically developed regions and the economically underdeveloped and backward regions.³⁷ The exportation of capital has made a differentiation and assignments of role to countries, being the importer of surplus capital, which are the under-developing countries, while on the other hand, the exporter of the surplus capital is the richer and more developed countries. This has resulted has been sustained in the history of colonialism and neocolonialism that have divided countries into countries that benefit more and countries that get less.

Urbanization as Absorber of the Surplus Capital

Cities are spaces produced by the process of urbanization. Harvey explains that cities are “formed through the geographic concentration of a social surplus product, which the mode of economic integration must therefore be capable of producing and concentrating.”³⁸ The process of urbanization, Harvey argues, has been utilized by capitalism “to absorb surplus product it perpetually produces,” and it is apparent that the “growth of capitalist output over time is broadly paralleled by the” increase of “urbanization of world’s population.”³⁹ Capitalism has maximized the existence of a surplus population in concentrated city spaces that could absorb the surplus. Capitalists need profitable terrains to sustain the logic of production and accumulation, hence,

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 415-17.

38 David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), 216.

39 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), 5.

cities have been the strategic sites for the capital absorption of power and for their large populations to foster high levels of consumption. As such, cities sustain and stabilize the accumulation and growth of capital as urban spaces foster capital accumulation processes.⁴⁰

Surplus capital that cannot be absorbed can be devalued or destroyed. Because of this destruction, they need to reinvest no matter what. Since the “coercive laws of competition force them to reinvest, because if one does not reinvest then another surely will.” The tendency is to expand more productive capacities and also expand their surplus commodities. With capitalism’s internal problem of overproduction, they solve it with another overproduction! This is because, without overproduction or surplus commodities, they cannot attain their desired profits.⁴¹ But ironically, producing surplus commodities will eventually lead to devaluation because these commodities cannot all be absorbed in a given market.

Urbanization is a way to solve this absorption problem.⁴² Capitalists can export surplus money capital or lend in form of a loan, reconstructing the urban spaces to use such excess capital and commodities. Harvey has written case studies on the debt-financed geographic reconstructions that happened in some places. He cites the example of the debt-financed construction under the public official George-Eugene Haussmann in Napoleon Bonaparte’s Second Empire Paris during 1848 where massive construction of infrastructures such as railroads, highways, harbors, ports, and the Suez Canal took place. A large surplus of labor was dramatically employed during this massive project of high constructions. Haussmann also spearheaded the redesigning of the whole city of Paris to become a city of a lifestyle conducive to consumerism, which is favorable for further capital accumulation.⁴³

Reconstructions of large spaces highlight the ability of capitalist crises to shape space productions. In another case study, Harvey has

40 Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, *ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*, 6

43 Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, 7-8.

shown how China managed its way out of the Great Financial Crises of 2008 through fixing its own spaces in form of investing in big urban projects. During the 2008 Great Financial Crisis, China found it hard to export its surplus capital to other countries, resulting in the laying off of 30 million works because the demand in the market in the United States fell. At that time, millions of people in the US were jobless and homeless. As capitalist production operates globally, its crises shall also be worldwide. A crisis in one place results in a crisis in another.⁴⁴ A surplus of capital that cannot be absorbed is a glut in capital accumulation as capital circulation cannot run smoothly. Such capitalist crises result in massive labor unemployment.

MARX-ENGELS CONCEPTION OF PROLETARIAN CLASS EMANCIPATION

In the previous section, we have shown Harvey's theoretical description of the spatial structures of capitalist production. The problem of geographic expansion of capital magnifies the usurpation of places on a global scale as capital is a spatial phenomenon. This is the present *Necessity* of capital—it is necessarily colonizing spaces because of its logic of expansive growth. With this global-spatial operation, the necessity of capitalist unfreedom of labor also spreads all over the planet. Nonetheless, this unfreedom of labor produces its dialectical negativity: labor can only be emancipated through the recognition of its unfreedom in the first place. This is the ontology of labor as Marx and Engels have exposed through a dialectical framework: labor is fetishized, commodified, and alienated under the dominance of capital. In this section, I will show Marx and Engels's concepts on freedom based on emancipatory class politics.

Freedom, Capitalist Necessity, and Necessity of Emancipatory Class Politics

The capitalist necessitates the global usurpation of spaces in many areas. Its logic is oriented toward obsession with growth at the expense of anything, including the destruction of proletarian humanity and labor which is the negative necessity of the capital as a system. Even

44 Ibid., 7-8.

capitalism has gone more ultra-global in the present day compared to the time of Marx and Engels, I argue that their emancipatory class politics are compatible and relevant in negating the negative necessity of capitalist spatial colonization.

The author's conceptual framework in understanding the emancipatory class politics of Marx and Engels' rests on the twofold meaning of freedom: 1) the freedom that is based on the knowledge of Necessity and 2) the freedom that is based on understanding necessity, working according to it, and struggle to achieve the vision of emancipation of the working-class. The first concept of freedom is on the recognition of the laws of the necessity of the structure of class society. The second freedom is toward a deeper form of freedom, which is the social, economic, and political freedom, or proletarian emancipation, the freeing of labor to come back again to its real owners and rendering them to have collective freedom to dictate their destiny as people. The discussion of this dialectical framework of freedom is detailed below.

Freedom that is based on the knowledge of Necessity

The necessity must be first recognized, as we cannot work the transformative freedom with the idea of what we work on. That the antithesis of slavery, any form of slavery, is freedom. Engels agrees with the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Hegel that the meaning of freedom is the recognition of necessity.⁴⁵ Engels further elaborates this dialectical relation of freedom and necessity: "Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends."⁴⁶ This meaning of freedom coincides with the great Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza's concept of freedom—the power to do based on nature's determinism, or Laws of Necessity: "a thing is free if it exists and acts from the necessity of its nature alone, and compelled if it is determined by something else to exist and produce effects in a certain and determinate way."⁴⁷ Labor

45 Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collected Works* Volume 25 (International Publishers, 1987), 105.

46 Ibid.

47 Baruch Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (New Jersey:

being a free thing owned by human beings is a necessity in the possible construction of the development. Harnessing the labor power is a form of freedom based on necessity, but recognizing *more* necessities that determinate labor means opening more spaces, strategies, and praxes toward greater forms of emancipation.

Freedom in accordance with necessity towards the emancipation of the working-class

Freedom is working according to a Necessity—the objective conditions of ontology, as well as against Necessity which makes the capitalist system work, a system based on alienation, on universal unfreedom. The early Marx in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* argues that labor is an absolute relational mediation between people and materials of nature in the creation of development of humans' species-being.⁴⁸ While in the *Capital*, Marx notes labor “as the creator of use-values, as useful labour, is a condition of human existence which is independent of all forms of society; it is an eternal natural necessity which mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself.”⁴⁹ It has created the possibility of the development of human consciousness towards their creation of knowledge and understanding of their world. Labor is the ontological necessity of human life as we cannot survive as species without this productive capacity.

Labor is a form of power, but the class society has a been a long history of enslaving labor, depriving its benefits of the humans who own it. If the culprit lies in the workers' enslavement to their labor instead of labor empowering them as individuals and as a society, the proletarian ownership of their destiny must be the negation of this enslavement, toward real human freedom, the proletarian emancipation, where the real condition of better freedom is possible. In a passage from the third volume of *Capital*, Marx states that:

Princeton University Press, 1994), 267.

48 See Karl Marx “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” in *Marx and Engels Collected Works* Volume 3 (Great Britain: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010).

49 Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 133.

The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends ... Freedom, in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis.⁵⁰

This supplements Marx and Engels' idea of a classless society where knowledge of necessity has greater freedom of flourishing: "Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community."⁵¹ As capital operates in a certain Necessity over our spaces, a dialectic of contradictory laws of accumulation and devaluation, the way to transcend and critique this system is an alternative plan based on freedom of the proletariat class to organize a system that is founded on human needs. Thus, it is a system based on worker's democratic plan and freedom.

SEEKING PLACES FOR / OF EMANCIPATED LABOR: A POSSIBLE SYNTHESIS

As part of the productive mode of capital are the spaces, there lies the subsistence of production bodies of labor and the products of labor. In this last section of this paper, I will draw a possible synthesis of two theoretical frameworks of David Harvey's ontological description of capitalist spatial production and Marx-Engels emancipatory class politics.

50 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume 3* (London: Penguin, 1991), 959.

51 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology" in *Marx Engels Collected Works Volume 5 Marx and Engels Collected Works Volume 3* (Great Britain: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 78.

What is the sense of emancipating the Place? Labor cannot exist without nature and bodies which shape it, as labor is a creative spatiality. It exists in the spatial continuum of the body of the worker and the sustenance from labor as human's metabolic activity with the world.

The critical geographer Edward Soja argues for a “socio-spatial dialectic”, a framework to grasp the socio-material dynamics within the spatiality of daily life. He elaborates that: “Once it becomes accepted that the organization of space is a social product – that it arises from powerful social practices – then there is no longer a question of its being a separate structure with rules and construction and transformation that are independent of the wider social framework.”⁵² This dialectical view covers that labor exists within a given spatiality determined by the forces in the society. Soja recognizes the relevance of a spatialized sensible politics of class but critically recognizes that class struggle is a more primary form of emancipation.⁵³ It is thus important that we now recognize the necessity of emancipating places cannot be detached from the emancipation of labor.

If space is a social product of labor power, we must recognize that the class power in society has its determinations of spaces, the class that decisively works on the production. The Place that workers ought to emancipate is also a space where the ontologies of labor and the capacities of labor create values for the capital. This calls for a radical takeover of our places, be it in the rural or the urban. To avoid a one-sided framework of spatial fetishism⁵⁴ is to recognize the primacy of class struggle as Soja admonishes, but sensible in the spatial needs of a future to come. Class struggle is still the engine of this reterritorialization of our places. The development of productive forces, technology, sciences, and political organizations have disclosed many forms of freedom to people at some level. Spaces are the ontological extension of our being, and it is a complex constructive continuum composed of technologies

52 Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 80.

53 Ibid., 92.

54 Spatial fetishism is the tendencies of theories to see space as purely determinant in socio-ontological transformation over other more decisive determinants such as class struggle and other forms of human agency.

and another organizational mechanism that are necessary and the creation of alternative political economy and truly democratic spaces.

The organization of labor that recognizes their necessity in transforming the political and economic relations cannot exist in a vacuum, as it is situated in a place where demystification of capitalist defined social relations shall take place. The freedom based on knowledge of necessity again resurfaces in this section, where Engels argues that

Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with knowledge of the subject. Therefore the *freer* a man's judgment is in relation to a definite question, the greater is the *necessity* with which the content of this judgment will be determined; while the uncertainty, founded on ignorance, which seems to make an arbitrary choice among many different and conflicting possible decisions... Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature, a control founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development.⁵⁵

Thus, the emancipatory project of labor has been coinciding with the recognition space is a vital category in imaging the present praxis and future of work. Spatial dimensions of capital add more necessities that we need to recognize. Recognizing the spatiality of social relations empowers capacities of class struggle in the democratic usurpation of present-and-future spaces of possible socialist society until the creation of communism. As Marx and Engels clarify that "Communism is for us, not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise."⁵⁶

The hardworking proletariat class deserves to command over spaces they have developed as the historical unit of production. The importance of the political dimension of emancipating the places

55 Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Collected Works*, 106.

56 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology," 49.

developed by historical labor lies in emancipatory praxis as a whole: spaces and labor are a dialectical continuum. Capitalist totality would not exist without millions of workers deprived of their labor power and as well as dispossessed from their places and control of spaces. Workers own their labor and their places. The global capitalist mode of production has gone far sustaining its survival because of its control over the labor power and spaces. The necessity of dialectically intertwined emancipation of place and labor is a corollary to the construction of a future world wherein labor and spatial control are also a necessity. The difference is that the communist ontology recognizes the development that should be immanent to the real contributors of social-ontological progress. In such communist ontology, the right to development correlates with the praxis of enjoyment of the places they produce.

Conclusion

The power of capital to survive its ontological entirety lies in its usurpation of global spaces. Capital necessitates a geographic system thriving in the creation of the world according to its image almost endless accumulation; thus, necessitating the perpetuation of labor exploitation, huckstering of natural resources, maintaining the global division of labor and wealth, worsening the spatial inequalities in terms of access to quality housing, transportation, and violation of our rights to determine our own rural and urban living. The working population is the creator of wealth under the regime of capital but they get less enjoyment of values produced. Part of the values produced under the regime of capital is the social spaces that are built upon the totality of labor. Capital has sustained due to the necessity of labor it has absorbed and spaces it has usurped.

Capital being a spatial process has usurped everyday life according to its 'accumulation for accumulation' sake to use the phrase of Marx. Recognizing this spatial necessity of capital shows our way to forward class struggle rich in the creation of spatialization through the acting repossession of the geometries of everyday life. Every site and location of social being and becoming is a potential of class reappropriation, as spaces are an ontological necessity of capital. Thus, recognizing such necessity of totalitarian capital means that we work according to the necessity of emancipation.

The resistance against the capital means the politics of retaking, reterritorializing, reoccupying the Places signifying the total labor value alienated, exploited, dispossessed from the people. Because in retaking spaces, there should be a recognition of the necessity that the classes responsible for the repossession are the classes who hold the potential of revolutionary emancipation—the classes who hold the creative power of labor, the engine of the development of the spaces under the regime of capital. The political emancipation of Places is a working-class project whose essence is in the reclaiming of their freedom of organizing their control over the dispossessed spaces of being, towards a better spatial ontology in the communist future.

Since the capitalist mode of production has been radical in stealing the geometries of life, a radical politics of class emancipation should sustain in challenging the present conditions and relations. These emancipatory class politics has become a greater visionary project against an ever-increasing totalitarian scope of Capital since the time of Marx. Capital has been proven that it cannot do without spatial ontologies, thus it is a necessity to confront them in the social continuum where it has been actively placing the social relations based on alienation, exploitation, and dispossession. Replacing the dominant social relations under the capitalist mode of production requires a *re-placing* of the emancipatory politics in the framework of class struggle. Only with the active politics of replacement of capitalist relations can open the possibilities of *re-placing* the lost geometries of labor, returning the creative spatial possibilities of human beings to the real owners. This emancipation of labor, in the long run of class struggle, will open the possibilities of a greater Place of immanent freedom in which the basis of the development is the free development of all.

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