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*Traversare una strada per scappare di casa...
Cesare Pavese*

I. And the right to the city became real when it was reinvented by active citizenship

If Lefebvre was the creator god, Harvey was the son of God.

The ideas

First came the *creator god* of the right to the city, Henri Lefebvre. His book *Le Droit à la Ville* is widely quoted but, I fear, little read. Written in 1967, it contains just one chapter on the “right to the city”, which is full of ideas but deliberately lacks a deductive structure. The rest of the book is more structured and focussed on Marx. A nod is given to the centenary of *Capital*, published in 1867, and at the end Lefebvre proposes theses on the city, the urban and urbanism. In the 1970s he developed the concept, although always framed by other socio-political and urban issues. The stimulating Situationist atmosphere at the University of Strasbourg helped give his work, which has a philosophical grounding, a foundation in sociological impressionism. He edited the magazine *Espaces et Sociétés* and produced a set of works on urban matters. His seminal book not only recovers the idea of the “right to the city”, it also concludes that urban reforms will only be possible if they result in an “urban revolution”. In the words of David Harvey, “Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban ... or nothing at all (Harvey, 2008: 40).

At the beginning of the 21st century David Harvey's thinking about the “right to the city” started becoming influential. His Marxist and urban works began with *Social Justice and the City* (Harvey, 1973). But it was his structural reflection on the right to the city in the *New Left Review* (Harvey, 2008), subsequently developed in *Rebel Cities* (Harvey, 2012), that gave Harvey the opportunity – using concepts from Marx's *Capital* – to make a conceptual study. So, if Lefebvre was the creator god, Harvey was the son of God, not crucified but worshipped, who offered us a solid theoretical structural basis. In works such as *Spaces of Hope* (Harvey, 2000) and the later *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Harvey, 2014), as well as in his articles and interviews, he gives clues towards endowing citizens with instruments for intervention and making demands in urban territories. In this area, a particularly inter-

1. In this monography we publish a shortened version of the original manuscript provided by the author.

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esting work is the short but intense *La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri* (*The City of the Rich and the City of the Poor*) in which the great Italian urbanist Bernardo Secchi (2014) provides ideas to rally behind.

Since the 1970s and 1980s European intellectual output in this field has been considerable: from social scientists like Étienne Balibar, Manuel Castells, François Ascher and Christian Topalov in Paris, to the New York group of Harvey, Peter Marcuse, Neil Smith, Tom Angotti and the militant urban planners from Venice – Secchi, Marcelloni, Ceccarelli and Indovina, among others. All emerged in the same era and were contemporaries of architects and transformative politicians from Barcelona like Oriol Bohigas, Joan Busquets and Pascual Maragall. Through their work public space acquires importance across Europe (and to a lesser extent America), along with the culture of the “civic urban project” in France and Italy, the new Anglo-Saxon urbanism, regeneration and the invention of “centralities” and so on. Do they all lay the groundwork for realising the “right to the city”?

In Latin America, from the 1970s onwards, the scholarly work that emerged from universities and independent centres in coordination with FLACSO, Clacso and a range of networks in a number of cases resulted in collaboration with social activists. In the decades that followed, hundreds of academics, professionals and political and social activists developed political and legal criteria that they expressed in “rights”, which while not necessarily legal, were certainly legitimate. Then they realised that public policies were interdependent and from the 1980s and 1990s onwards they began to promote political and legal changes. The expectations raised in many cases ended in frustration because effects were targeted more than causes. Market mechanisms and weak or complicit governments led to their perversion. As we will discuss later, this was “urbanisation without a city”.

In Spain the CEUMT (Centro de Estudios Urbanísticos, Municipales y Territoriales) stood out. Linked to Red Flag and the PSUC (the Catalan Communist Party), it emerged in 1970s and 1980s Barcelona and spread throughout the country. It included professionals, social scientists, lawyers, architects, engineers, doctors, teachers, social workers and journalists. In Madrid, a centre was promoted by architects and some sociologists and jurists connected to the Workers’ Revolutionary Party (PRT in its Spanish initials).

Without being proclaimed, in Latin America and Spain the right to the city was expressed, more or less explicitly, in more practical than theoretical terms. The number and quality of experts, academics and professionals in Latin America who have produced multiple texts, both theoretical and analytical, should be highlighted. Among others, I would like to mention Enrique Ortiz, Alicia Ziccardi, Antonio Azuela (Mexico), Fernando Carrión (Ecuador), Manuel Dammert (Peru), Ana Sugranyes, Alfredo Rodríguez (Chile), Horacio Corti, Eduardo Reese, Marcelo Corti (Argentina) and Raquel Rolnik, from the Instituto Pólis (Brazil).

Urban policies

Well-intentioned discourses are at best ambivalent. Urban policies can improve the compact city and create areas of citizenship; however, social, legal and economic mechanisms generate exclusions and increasing

inequalities. If public spaces and their surroundings are rezoned, land, housing and business prices skyrocket. If the physical fabric is regenerated, accessibility and mobility are improved while achieving a safer environment. But the downside is that the middle and upper classes gradually expel the working classes. Gentrification is not limited to the elites. In a more widespread process, lower and middle-class groups tend to move from cities to suburbs. The intellectual discourse of professionals and (mainly local) government political programmes and their good intentions generate perverse effects. Due almost always to forgetfulness or inability, their measures accentuate inequalities, the opposite of what is sought. The main responsibility does not lie with the actors involved, but with the politico-legal framework that produces social injustice. For their part, local governments and professionals must condemn this scandal and propose technical and legal instruments for guaranteeing the objectives of democratic citizenship. To do this they require active social support.

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These theoretical rights were not real but programmatic,

The right to the city was constructed by citizen mobilisation. Urban, neighbourhood and citizen movements emerged out of the intellectual ferment and urban development projects of the 1960s and 1970s. It was the working classes and, to some extent, the middle class, that made the concepts their own – they intuited them without having learned them – and appropriated the instruments of transformation. With the exception of a few who joined the social activists, neither professionals nor politicians adopted them. Latin America was the continent where working class social movements that generated mass mobilisation with considerable continuity and organisation developed most. It is worth highlighting the National Urban Reform Movement in Brazil, which made politico-legal proposals, and the struggle for housing and the recognition of place in Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador and Peru, among others, which managed to influence public policies, although often those who got a roof over their heads ended up without a city.

From the events in Europe in 1968 urban movements grew out of previously intermittent, fragmented structures that supported local governments, who carried out the political mediation. In the years that followed, citizen mobilisations made a range of demands and claims: housing, transportation, public services (water, energy, facilities), security and the environment, among others. They also claimed socio-cultural and political rights, such as the feeling of being represented and recognised in public space and in terms of references or icons, in accountability and popular initiatives, in the control of governments and in political participation beyond elections.

II. From catalogues to instruments

The catalogue of citizens' rights

Citizens' rights derived from the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and from demands that were given greater or lesser recognition in national constitutions: housing, education, health, social protection and work, among others. They underwent a boom in the 1990s and at the start of the 21st century. Yet, these theoretical rights were not *real* but *programmatic*, as they could not be recognised or demand-

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ed before the judiciary or public administration. In practice, government public policies recognised some more or less universal rights, such as education, but not others, such as housing. What is more, in many cases these basic or necessary rights for all, such as water or energy, require monetary payment. Programmatic rights guide governments but they are not mandatory, which means they are not genuine rights. To exercise them you have to win them. The clearest historical example of this is the union movement of salaried workers which earned the right to strike, to union recognition within the company, to collective bargaining on wages and working conditions, and to rights on working hours, among others.

Work, or productive activity, has led to a conflict of interests between employers (public and private) and employees. Social reproduction, or indirect wages (housing, transport, education, urban services, etc.), is enacted by a highly diverse range of institutions and companies. And the citizens making demands are a very complex group that differs according to income and needs, location in the city, capacity in terms of resources and influence, and so on. However, if property and enterprise frame the workers, the city frames the vast majority of the population. And the city requires not only the totality of infrastructure, equipment and services, but also their coordination and universality. Citizens' rights are interdependent: housing, transport, access to work and income, health, social protection, education, public space, coexistence, security and all political rights and recognition are, or should be, for all of a city's inhabitants.

Catalogues or charters for the right to the city remain abstract statements that foster a sense of helplessness in citizens. The rights mentioned do not only depend on those offering them, be they public administrations or private companies. A politico-legal framework is required to enable the construction of a concrete set of rights. Obviously, social reproduction affects the entire population, but to proclaim the "right or rights to the city" requires legal and financial frameworks. In the vast majority of countries, housing production and land, energy and water management are controlled by private ownership and profit-making. To enforce citizens' rights, public goods must be appropriated or publicly controlled. Even classical economists from Adam Smith to Léon Walras considered such goods to be public in nature and necessary for the entire population. Some have been basic goods since ancient times, such as energy, water, land and air; but banks, transport, education, health, housing and others should be remembered too. They depend not only on governments and parliaments, but also on professionals and citizen culture. On the one hand, professionals must provide practical tools to enable access to common goods and, on the other, citizen culture must legitimise collective ownership. On this, citizens are very often ambivalent: "what belongs to everyone also belongs to me, but what is mine is mine alone".

Professionals, technicians and academics versus policymakers. Do an ethics of the urbanist exist?

The culture of discipline led to urbanism becoming the city's "functionality" in order to make all collective goods and services accessible to the entire population. Urbanism promotes citizen freedom. As they said in the late Middle Ages "city air makes you free". And the urbanism of the industrial city approaches the city as the coexistence of large, diverse populations in

equality of conditions (such as Cerdà's idea of projecting "the egalitarian city"). In professional practice however, urban planners comply with laws and adopt public policies that facilitate inequalities and exclusions. Most professionals adapt to the needs of public or private clients to develop infrastructure or facilities located in quality areas of the city or in areas in the process of urbanisation that lack what the city has to offer (meaning spaces that are limited and deficient). Currently, exclusive cities and urbanisation without citizenship are promoted. Urbanistic ethics do not exist. We must revalue the ethical foundations of urbanism as well as the means of applying them.

Technicians and researchers must propose technical and legal instruments to policymakers and active citizens. Examples vary substantially. It is possible to regulate the supply of urban or developable land, but what about making the land public? It could be revolutionary, but political power is able to regulate land use. Taxation might also be applied to disused land to categorise it for uses of collective interest. If non-urbanised land is put up for sale, its price would be that of rural land, or little more. Planning should require at least 50% be given to public spaces, facilities and roads. Housing supply must be mixed to cater for all social levels. One example of this was the public housing policy implemented after World War II in the United Kingdom by the Labour Party government in 1945.²

At best, policymakers can promote sectoral actions, housing, infrastructure and large facilities, but they do not make cities.

Citizen culture, politics and economics

Urban planners, professionals and academics can spread their own culture in their own media, but their influence is highly relative. Those in power, for the most part, do not understand the territory and cities even less. They know the state, an abstract entity. The city is concrete, material and sensual, as Darhendorf (1990) wrote. At best, policymakers can promote sectoral actions, housing, infrastructure and large facilities, but they do not make cities. Each ministry or department acts in its area of speciality and within a legislative framework of civil law that almost always prevails over administrative law. "Beware of words": I saw this motto painted on a large wall on Rue Belleville in Paris, very close to the Le Genre Urbain bookshop. The idea that speech is one thing and action another is often applied to politics. Economic agents almost always tend to act as predators in the territory and their competitive discourse generates unsustainability and inequality. Hope comes in the form of active citizenship, emerging from the neighbourhoods and from the cities in a range of forms: associations and movements, social or cooperative economies, accountability campaigns and popular initiatives. The dialogue between professionals and citizen movements can build a practical ethics.

III. Will the urban revolution be a revolution? Can the right to the city be won in the current political and economic frameworks?

Revolution and democracy in urbanised societies

"The revolution has to be urban ... or nothing at all": we have already mentioned David Harvey's acceptance of Henri Lefebvre's assertion. But

2. See: *La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri (The City of the Rich and the City of the Poor)* by Bernardo Secchi (2014).

The potential power of cities lies in their ambivalence.

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revolutions are not invented, they are produced, and very infrequently. More fail than succeed. And they are made by social majorities, not intellectuals or politicians. Intellectuals and professionals stay in their institutional fields; politicians, in public office and in their organisations. Clearly, the mobilisations, revolts and revolutions include intellectuals and politicians when they join the majorities. But revolutions are not born in social explosions – though they may provide the spark, trigger, or an accumulation of inequalities, privileges and injustices. But some revolutions are silent: transformations in social relationships that become more egalitarian when political institutions open up to the working classes and democratising ideas reign in society as a whole. At this moment in history, revolutions, noisy or otherwise, are not emerging from democratising processes, rather the opposite. We are living through a period of *de-democratisation*, as Europe and America quite clearly show.

Is the right to the city the concept that can explain the urban revolution? The theoretical basis of the right to the city is formed of citizens' demands for social reproduction within a framework of multidimensional democracy (spatial, political, social, cultural, economic and environmental). Democratising urban processes achieve rights that are linked to social reproduction and indirect wages and they interlink with social production. Whether these processes culminate in breakdowns or revolutions that occur progressively or with advances and setbacks will depend on the relationship between political and economic forces, and on whether more or less conflictive circumstances pertain. In fact, over recent decades – and today – the “urban revolution” that has taken place has been more of a “counterrevolution”, as it has formed in opposition to what the “right to the city” advocates. *De-democratisation* has largely materialised in urbanised territories and cities via spatial injustice and societies of contempt. Cities are subject to the laws, powers and financial resources of central states, while globalised financial capitalism colonises and dispossesses the urban social world. The potential power of cities, however, lies in their ambivalence: they have a representative political institutional base and an active society that puts pressure on political and economic forces. The revolution will be either ground-breaking and noisy or gradual, silent conquest. The synthesis will be the theoretical banner of the “right to the city”.

Making the city and making citizenship

With no city, there is no citizenship and what occurs is a *capitis diminutio* of rights, even in urbanised territories. Acting as citizens involves coexistence, diversity and recognition of others. Citizenship is co-citizenship, not atomised habitation. In the compact city there is also a citizenship deficit, as access to goods and services for social reproduction is very unequal. A basic relationship exists between city-citizenship-social reproduction and rights. But the city continually tends towards exclusions. Those who miss the train feel dispossessed of full citizenship. Social reproduction continually generates old and new inequalities, whether social, economic or spatial. New demands and emerging rights appear. Citizenship is won every day, social reproduction extends and rights must be exercised continuously; if not, they are perverted. Making the city and citizenship is not just a competence of public authorities and local governments.

IV. The space that lies between production and reproduction: reorganising the territory

Production and the city as a space for social reproduction

Social production and reproduction form a whole. The working and salaried classes require direct wages and indirect wages that are linked to social reproduction. Businesses – whether in industrial or commercial production or public or private services – may exist within the territory, but most are in other areas of it. The *producers*, on the other hand, live in the same territorial area, be that the city, the metropolitan area or the urbanised region. Their demands and their rights are closely related to their wages, jobs, mobility, housing and other factors. The vast majority of the salaried or self-employed population are both workers and citizens. Territories for citizens and territories for production are constructed and almost always mixed. The social conflicts in production and in reproduction unite in the social majorities. There is no need to separate generic citizens from specific workers. In both conditions a range of social classes exists that have diverse interests, but the vast majority of the population shares certain needs (monetary income, access to housing, collective services, public space, etc.). Active citizenship and the working population form a majority that can demand their citizens' and union rights.

The city in all its dimensions is an institutional entity and a physical and social body.

Political organisation and the recovery of the active society

The urban territory has different levels: the neighbourhood, the district, the city, the metropolitan surroundings, the urbanised spaces without cities and the urban region. At each level, there are forms of cooperation and coexistence, of providing formal or informal services, delegations of the public administrations and political participation. But the hegemonic protective realm is multidimensional: the metropolitan city, the urban region or the network of cities, depending on the configuration of each territory. The representative, normative political power that manages the grand projects and major services must be unified. But it is desirable that forms of citizen association (formal or non-formal) exist at the different territorial levels for the agents of production, for public or private companies and for the representatives of public administrations.

The *city* in all its dimensions is an institutional entity and a physical and social body. Citizens come together in their diversity to defend and win their rights. The city in its different dimensions and active urban society must adopt "the right to the city". This multidimensional city must have a powerful political organisation in the normative, executive, judicial, decentralised and participatory senses. In terms of citizenship, an active urban society is in itself a force for cooperating with the government of the city or urban region, or for confronting it. Together they are able to establish contractual (rather than hierarchical) relations with the state. And, if necessary, they can stand up to it. They can also become allies in a much more positive sense and choose to stand up to the "global power" of financial capitalism and large multinationals (whether industrial, commercial or services). The multidimensional city is, or should be, a global actor. To achieve this, "the right to the city" must really be won.

V. Reference bibliography

First, I will mention the works (books or articles) that led to my work on the right to the city. I refer to the work done from the 1970s–1990s on “the right to the city” and its corollaries, such as “citizenship”, “citizens’ rights” and “the city is a public space”, among others, which emerged mixed with other issues. Some of my own books and articles that refer to rights and the city are *Movimientos sociales urbanos* (Borja, 1975), “Movimientos urbanos y cambio político” (Borja, 1981), *Estado y ciudad* (Borja, 1988), “Urbanismo y ciudadanía” (Borja, 1991), “Ciudadanía europea: derechos civiles y sociales desde la perspectiva local” (Borja, 1997), “Los desafíos del territorio y los derechos de la ciudadanía” (Borja, 1999).

In my works from the current century, I go more deeply into the subject of the right to the city: *Espacio público: Ciudad y ciudadanía* (Borja and Muxí, 2003); *La ciudad conquistada* (Borja, 2003); and *Revolución urbana y derechos ciudadanos* (Borja, 2013). Then there are my collaborative works as a co-author: “Ciudades, una ecuación imposible” (Belil, Borja and Corti, 2012); “Ciudades resistentes, ciudades posibles” (Borja, Belil, Carrión, Cohen and Corti, 2016); and “Derecho a la ciudad: conquista política y renovación jurídica” (Corti and Borja, 2018).

The works cited at the start of the text form part of my reading of key authors such as Lefebvre, Harvey and Balibar’s *Ciudadanía* (2013), among many others (geographers, sociologists, urbanists, architects, engineers, environmentalists, jurists, political scientists, philosophers, historians, as well as social activists and public officials).

The Right to the City Charters set out the objectives well, but do not always specify the means. Among the interesting and diverse charters, without underestimating the rest, it is worth mentioning, for example, the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (2005), the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City (Saint-Denis, 2000), the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (2010), the Council of Europe’s European Urban Charter (1993) and many others. UNESCO and UN-Habitat promoted the publication of *Urban Policies and the Right to the City* (Jouve, 2009).

The Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya has published seven volumes on emerging rights, the last being a text prepared by the Observatori DESC (2011). I will mention three highly relevant but lesser-known works. One is historical in nature: “Labour and Human Rights” in Eric Hobsbawm’s *Worlds of Labour* (2015). The second, political in nature, is *Cities for All: Proposal and Experiences towards the Right to the City*, published by the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) and edited by Ana Sugranyes and Charlotte Mathivet (2011), which is also available in Spanish and French. And finally, a social philosophical work, *La sociedad del desprecio* by Axel Honneth (2006).

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