

# Rebel Cities & Urban Resistance (parts 1 and 2)

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## Interview with David Harvey

**Emanuele:** In the Preface to *Rebel Cities*, you begin by describing your experience in Paris during the 1970s, "Tall building-giants, highways, soulless public housing and monopolized commodification on the streets threatening to engulf the old-Paris... Paris from the 1960s on was plainly in the midst of an existential crisis. The old could not last. Further, it was also in this year of 1967 that Henry Lefebvre wrote his seminal essay *On the Right to the City*." Can you talk about this period of the 1960s and 1970s? How did you become interested in the urban landscape? And what was the impetus for writing *Rebel Cities*?

**Harvey:** Worldwide, the 1960s is often looked at, historically, as a period of urban crisis. In the United States, for example, the 1960s was a time when many central cities went up in flames. There were riots and near revolutions in cities like Los Angeles, Detroit and of course after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968, over 120 American cities were inflicted with minor and massive social unrest and rebellious action. I mention this in the United States, because what was in-effect happening was that the city was being modernized. It was being modernized around the automobile; it was being modernized around the suburbs. Now, the Old City, or what had been the political, economic and cultural center of city throughout the 1940s and 50s, was now being left behind. Remember, these trends were taking place throughout the advanced capitalist world. So it wasn't just in the United States. There were serious problems in Britain and France where an older way of life was being dismantled---a way a life that I don't think anyone should be nostalgic about, but this old way of life was being pushed away and replaced by a new way of life based on commercialization, property, property speculation, building highways, the automobile, suburbanization, and with all these changes we saw increased inequality and social unrest.

Depending on where you were at the time, these were strictly class-inequalities, or they were class-inequalities focused on specific minority groups. For example, obviously in the United States it was the African American community based in the inner cities, who had very little in terms of employment opportunities or resources. So, the 1960s period was a time that was referred to as an urban crisis. If you go back and look at all the commissions from the 1960s that were inquiring what to do about the urban crisis, there were government programs being implemented from Britain to France, and the United States. Similarly, they were all trying to address this 'urban crisis.' I found this a fascinating topic to study and a traumatic experience to live through. You know, these countries that were becoming more and more affluent were leaving people behind who were being secluded in urbanized-ghettos and treated as non-existent human beings. The crisis of the 1960s was a crucial one, and one I think Lefebvre understood quite well. He believed that people in these areas should have a voice to decide what these areas should look like, and what kind of urbanization process should take place. At the same time, those who resisted wished to roll

back the wave of property speculation that was beginning to engulf urban areas right throughout the industrialized capitalist countries.

**Emanuele:** In Chapter One, you write, "The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what kinds of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of life we desire, or what aesthetic values we hold." However you prelude this notion by explicitly mentioning the neo-liberal context we're living within. Later in the chapter, you mention the Paris Commune as being an historical event to analyze and possibly help us conceptualize what the 'right to the city' might look like. Are there other historical examples, including the Paris Commune, that we can reflect upon? Can you talk about the challenges we face, specifically within the neo-liberal context?

**Harvey:** I think the proposition that the kind of city we wish to build should reflect our personal wishes and needs is a very important proposition. You know, our social, cultural, economic, political and urban environment is very important. How do we develop these attitudes and trends? This is important. So, living in a city like New York, you have to travel around the city, transport yourself, and deal with other people in a very certain way. As everybody knows, New Yorker's tend to be cold and brisk with one another. That doesn't mean they don't help each other, but in order to deal with the daily rush of things, and the massive amounts of people on the streets and in the subways, you must negotiate the city in a certain way. By the same token, living in a gated community in the suburbs leads to certain ways of thinking about what daily life should consist of. And these things evolve into different political attitudes, which often includes keeping certain communities gated and exclusive, at the price of what takes place at the periphery. These social and political attitudes are created by the kind of environment we create. That's a very important idea for me: revolutionary responses to the urban environment have many historical precedents. For example, in Paris in 1871, there was a kind of attitude where people wanted a different kind of urbanization; they wanted different kinds of people living there; it was a reaction to the upper-class, speculative-consumer development taking place at the time. So, there was an uprising that demanded different kinds of relations: social relations, gender relations, and class relations.

Accordingly, if you want to build a city, where say women feel comfortable, for example, you'd build a much different city than the ones we typically have. All of these questions are tied into the question of what kind of city we want to live in. We can't divorce it from the kind of people we want to be; what kind of gender relations, what kind of class relations, and the like. To me, the project of building the city in a different way, with a different philosophy, with different aims, is a very important idea. Occasionally that idea has been taken up in revolutionary movements, like the Paris Commune. And there are many more examples we could quote, such as the General Strike in Seattle circa 1919. The whole city was taken over by the people, and they started to set up communal structures. In Buenos Aires, 2001, these same things were happening. In El Alto, 2003, there was another kind of eruption. In France, we've seen the suburban areas dissolving into riots and revolutionary movements over the last 20-30 years. In Britain, we've seen these sorts of riots and uprisings now and again, which are really a protest against the way daily life is being lived.

Now, revolutionary movements in urban areas develop quite slow. You can't change the whole city overnight. What we see, however, is a transformation in the style of urbanization in the neo-liberal period. Before, say during the mid-1970s, urbanization was characterized by many of these protests; there was a lot of segregation; and the answer to a lot of those protests was in effect to redesign the city according to these neo-liberal principles of self reliance, taking personal responsibility, competition, the fragmentation of the city into gated communities and privileged spaces. So, to me, the redesign of the city is a long-term project. Fortunately, people are forced to think about some form of revolutionary transformation, which occurs during a particular point in time, such as Buenos Aires in 2001 where there were movements that led factory takeovers and held assemblies. Indeed, they were able to dictate, in many ways, how the city was going to be organized and started to ask serious questions: Who do we want to be? How shall we relate to nature? What kind of urbanization do we want?

**Emanuele: Can you talk about some of these terms? For instance, can you discuss suburbanization as a result of "a way to absorb surplus product and thereby resolve the capital-surplus absorption problem?" In other words, why have our cities been hollowed out in this particular fashion? This question is particularly prescient for our local listeners in the rust belt region, which has been completely devastated over the last 30-40 years. Or, for example, it now costs you about \$60 to park in downtown Chicago for the day, while the suburbs explode with heroin use, and the minority neighborhoods are plagued with violence, impoverishment and police oppression. Can you talk about these processes?**

**Harvey:** Again, this is a long, drawn-out process. Let me go back to the 1930s and the Great Depression. Let's ask the question: How did we get out of the Great Depression? And what was the problem during the Great Depression? One of the big problems that everyone identified was that there wasn't a strong market. Productive capacity was there. But there was not the income streams to mop up, if you like. So there was a surplus of capital around with nowhere to go. Now, right throughout the 1930s there were frantic attempts to try and find a way to spend that surplus-capital. You had things like the Roosevelt "Works Program." You know, building highways and things of that sort. Namely to try and mop-up surplus-capital and the surplus-labor that was around at the time. But there was no real solution found in the 1930s until World War II came along. Then, all the surplus was immediately absorbed into the war effort--producing munitions and so forth. A lot of people went into the military; a lot of labor was absorbed that way. So, World War II, on the surface, solved the problem of the Great Depression. Then you had the question after 1945: What would happen after the war is over? What was going to happen to all this extra capital? Well, you then have the suburbanization of the United States. Actually, the building of the suburbs, and at this time it was the building of affluent suburbs, became the way in which surplus-capital was mopped up. First they built the highway system; then everyone had to have an automobile; then the suburban house became a sort of 'castle' for the working-class population. All of this took place while leaving behind the impoverished communities in the inner cities. This was the pattern of urbanization that took place in the 1950s and 1960s. The surpluses, which capital always produces, function as such: at the beginning of the day capitalists start with a certain amount of money, and at the end of the

day they end up with more money. The question arises: What do they do with the money at the end of the day? Well, they have to find some place to invest it---expansion.

Capitalists always have this problem: Where's the expansion and opportunities to make more money? One of the big expansionary opportunities after World War II was urbanization. There were other opportunities such as the Military-Industrial-Complex, and so forth. But it was mainly through suburbanization that the surpluses were absorbed. Now this created many problems, such as the urban crisis of the late-1960s. Then you have a situation where capital actually goes back to the central cities and subsequently re-occupies the inner-city. It then reverses the pattern. So more and more of the impoverished communities are expelled to the periphery as affluent populations move back to the center of the city. For example, in New York City, 1970, you could get a place right in mid-town for almost nothing because there was a tremendous surplus of property around, and nobody wanted to live in the city. But that's all changed: the city has become a center for consumerism and finance. As you mentioned, it costs as much to house your car as it does to house a person. This is the transformation that has occurred. In short, this process of urbanization takes place throughout the 1940s, stretching through the 1960s. Then, you have an re-urbanization taking place in the period following the 1970s. After the 1970s, the center of the city becomes extremely affluent. In fact, Manhattan went from an affordable place in the 1970s to, in effect, a vast gated community for the extremely wealthy and powerful. In the meantime, the impoverished, often minority communities, are expelled to the periphery of the city. Or, in the case of New York, people fled to small towns in upstate New York, or Pennsylvania. This general pattern of urbanization has to do with this question of where do you find profitable opportunities to invest capital? As we've seen, profitable opportunities have been lacking in the past fifteen years or so. During this time, a huge amount of money was poured into the housing market, housing construction and all the rest of it. Then we saw what happened in the autumn of 2008 when the housing bubble crashed. So you have to look at urbanization as a product of the search for ways in which to absorb the increasing productivity and output of a very dynamic capitalist society that must grow at a 3% rate of compound growth if it's going to survive. That's the question for me: How are we going to absorb this 3% compound growth over the coming years so as to avoid the urbanization/suburbanization dilemmas of the past? It's interesting to conceptualize what that might look like.

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*Vince Emanuele is the host of the Veterans Unplugged Radio program, which airs every Sunday, from 5-7pm(Central) in Michigan City, Indiana on **1420AM "WIMS Radio: Your Talk of the South Shore."** ([www.veteransunplugged.com](http://www.veteransunplugged.com)) Vince is also a member of Veterans for Peace, and serves on the board of directors for Iraq Veterans Against the War. Emanuele: You talk about the geographical distribution of economic crises. Namely, how crises spread from one part of the globe, to the other. You mention that people shouldn't have been surprised by the economic collapse of 2008. For example, right now we have economic crises in the EU zone and North America, yet you mention exploding GDP growth*

*in Turkey, and various parts of Asia. You also mention a paradox: For instance, with China, while they've been going through a tremendous process of urbanization over the past twenty years, those same industrial projects that yield massive profits have displaced millions of Chinese people and destroyed the natural environment. All the while, many of these projects, and entire cities, sit utterly empty, as only a very small percentage of the Chinese population can afford such luxuries and accommodations. Can you talk about these phenomena and contradictions?*

Harvey: Well, China is doing it the same way the United States got out of the Great Depression—by suburbanization after World War II. I think the Chinese, when faced with the question of what they're going to do, particularly in a global economic down-turn, and in light of sluggish economic gains circa 2007-08, decided they were going to get out of their economic difficulties by urbanization and infrastructure programs: high-speed railways, highways, skyscrapers and so forth. These became the means by which the surplus capital was absorbed. Of course anybody who was supplying China with raw materials did very well, because Chinese demand was very high. China absorbs half the world's steel supplies. So that means if you're producing iron ore or other metals like Australia has been, then of course Australia does very well as they haven't been experiencing much of a crisis over the past few years. The Chinese have in effect taken a leaf out of the book on United States economic history by repeating the post-1945 economic development program of the US.

In short, China figured it could save itself with the same sort of strategy and avoid any economic stagnation or decline. You know, the United States and Europe are both mired in low-low growth, as opposed to the Chinese who have enjoyed very rapid rates of growth. But, again, it's about absorbing the surplus-capital in ways that are productive. That's the question: I say hopefully, because we don't know if the Chinese boom will go bust. If the Chinese boom goes bust, like the housing market and financial markets did in the US circa 2008, then global capitalism will be in serious trouble. Right now, the Chinese are trying to limit their growth rate. So, instead of aiming for that 10% GDP growth rate, they're shooting for 7-8% growth in the coming years. They'll try and "cool-off." I mean, come on, the Chinese have over four empty cities. Can you believe this? Completely empty cities. What happens in the coming years? Do these cities become productive urban areas? Will they just sit there and rot? In which case, a lot of money would be lost and a great depression would hit China as well.

In this case, some very uncomfortable political decisions would be made, and surely we could expect severe social unrest amongst the Chinese working classes and poor. The world looks very different depending on which part of the world you're in. For example, I was just in Istanbul, Turkey; and there's construction cranes all over the place. Plus, Turkey's growing at 7% a year, so it's a very dynamic place right now. When you're standing in Turkey, you really can't imagine the rest of the world being in crisis. Then, I flew two and half hours to Athens, Greece; I don't have to tell you what's going on there. Greece is like going into a disaster-zone where everything is stopped. All the shops are closed and there's no construction going on anywhere in the cities. Here, you have two cities that are 600 miles from one another, yet they're two completely different places. This is what you should expect to see in the global economy right now: some places boom, others bust. There's

always an uneven geographical development of economic crisis. To me, this is a very fascinating story to be told.

*Emanuele: In Chapter Two, "The Urban Roots of the Crisis," you discuss the link between economic crisis in the United States, homeownership and individual property rights, which are both important ideological components within the American Dream, but you're also quick to point out that such "cultural values" become quite prominent when subsidized by state policies. What are those policies? And how can we talk about these trends through an ideological scope? Moreover, later in the chapter, you mention that we must move beyond Marx, while utilizing his more prescient insights. How should we "move beyond Marx?"*

Harvey: Well, if you go back to the 1930s, you'll find that less than 40% of Americans were homeowners. So, around 60% of the population in the US were renting. This was particularly the case with lower-class, or middle-class populations. They typically rented. Now, these populations were rather restive populations. So the idea had grown up over the previous 40-50 years that you could stabilize relatively restive populations and make them pro-capitalist and pro-system by cutting them into homeownership possibilities. So there was plenty of state support for what we used to call saving and loan institutions, which were separate from banks. These were places where people would put their savings, and those savings were used to promote homeownership for low-income populations. The same thing was true in Britain's "Building Society." In the 1890s this trend starts as the business-class was wondering how to get lower-income populations stabilized and less restive. There was a wonderful phrase the business-class used to use, "Incumbent homeowners don't go on strike!" Remember, people had to borrow to become owners. There's your control mechanism. Overall, this system was very weak all the way through the 1920s, until the 1930s when the US government and business-classes decided to strengthen it. To begin with, when you took out a mortgage in the 1920s you could usually only get it for about three years, then you would have to renew, or renegotiate the mortgage. Then, in the 1930s, they created the 30 year mortgage. But in order for that 30 year mortgage to work, it had to be guaranteed in some way. So this led to the establishment of state-institutions that would guarantee the mortgages.

Of course this led to the Federal Housing Administration. At the same time, the banks needed a way to pass the mortgages on to someone else, so they created this organization called Fannie Mae. Again, this is what you have throughout this time period: State organizations being used to encourage and guarantee homeownership, particularly for the middle to lower-classes, which of course discouraged these people from striking or stepping out of line. Now they're in debt. These institutions really took off after World War II. During this period, there was plenty of propaganda about the "American Dream" and what it meant to be American. The mortgage tax-deduction came into play, which allowed you to deduct the interest on your mortgage. Remember, this is a huge subsidy to homeownership. There was state-subsidy of homeownership; there were state-institutions promoting homeownership. So, all of this becomes crucial when connected with the GI Bill, which gave privileged homeownership rights and incentives to soldiers returning from World War II. There was an incredible push from the state apparatus to encourage and guarantee homeownership. Remember, this was taking place within the context of suburbanization. These institutions became very critical to the housing market, and they still exist of course.

Everybody was talking about how Fannie May and the new one, Freddy Mac were government run, but partially privately owned, yet we see they in essence have become nationalized. So, throughout time, the government has promoted homeownership and has played a tremendous role in creating these sub-prime mortgages.

This was done during the Clinton Administration in 1995, as they were trying to promote homeownership amongst minority populations in the United States. The development of the "sub-prime crisis" was very much connected to both what the private sector was doing, but also what government policies were guaranteeing. For me, this is a crucial aspect of American life, where people move from 60% of the population being renters, to the high-point in 2007/08 when over 70% of the population becomes homeowners. This, of course, creates a different kind of political atmosphere. A political atmosphere where the defense of property rights and property values starts to become very important. Then you have neighborhood movements where people try to keep certain people out of neighborhoods because they perceive those people as driving down property values. You get a different kind of politics because housing becomes a form of savings for middle and working-class families. Of course, people tap into those savings by refinancing their houses. There was a lot of refinancing going on during the property boom in the US. A lot of people profited from high housing prices. This promotion of homeownership is now treated as if it were some long-standing dream of those living in the United States. However, to be sure, there's always been this sort of idea in the United States with migrant worker populations, that if you get a bit of land, grow some things on it, and so forth, you could end up having a nice life. Yes, this was part of the immigrant dream. But this has been transformed into suburban homeownership, which is not about having cows and chickens in your backyard, it's about having symbols of consumerism all around you.

Now, the reason why Marx is important in all of this is because Marx had an acute understanding of how capital-accumulation works. He understood that this perpetual growth machine contains many internal contradictions. For example, one of the foundational contradictions Marx talks about is between "use-value" and "exchange-value." You can see this worked out in the housing situation very clearly. What's the use-value of a house? Well, it's a form of shelter, a place of privacy, it's where one can create a family life, and we can list a few other use-values of the house, but the house also has an exchange-value. Remember, when you rent the house, you're simply renting the house for what it's worth. But when you buy the house, you now view this home as a form of savings, and after a while, you use the house as a form of speculation. As a result of this, housing prices start shooting up. So in this context, the exchange-value starts to dominate the use-value of the house. The relationship between exchange and use-value starts to get out of hand. So when the housing-market busts, suddenly five million people lose their homes and the use-value disappears. Marx talks about this contradiction and it's an important one. We must ask the question: What should we be doing with housing? What should we do with healthcare? What are we doing with education? Shouldn't we be promoting the use-value of education? Or should we be promoting the exchange-value of these things? Why should life necessities be distributed through the exchange-value system? Obviously we should reject the exchange-value system, which is caught up in speculative activity, profiteering, and actually disrupts the ways in which we can acquire necessary products and services. That's the kind of contradiction Marx was well aware of.

*Emanuele: In the next chapter, "The Creation of the Urban Commons," you try and re-conceptualize what the "commons" might look like in the coming century. Further, you go on to reference the work of Tony Negri and Michael Hardt throughout the book. Now, Michael Hardt is someone who's been on the program a couple of times in the past, and I've found much of his work to be very insightful and quite interesting. As all of you mention, we must begin conceptualizing how we're going to transfer, promote, develop and utilize the "commons." However, this also includes cultural affects—images, meanings, symbols, etc., which must be re-conceptualized. You go on to mention the work of Murray Bookchin: ideas of social order, process, hierarchy, and so forth become very important when attempting to envision alternatives. Recently, Christian Parenti wrote a great article entitled, "Why Climate Change Will Make You Love Big Government," which I found to be particularly interesting and prescient as it deals with social organization, and the political and economic ramifications of climate change in a very serious manner. Particularly, it addresses the question of how to use the state apparatus? Simultaneously, we're trying to do this in a sustainable fashion, while understanding that we're living in an extremely complex society with over seven billion people inhabiting the planet. Can you talk about some of these ideas? What are some of your ideas as to how we can re-conceptualize the commons?*

Harvey: Well, the conceptualization of the commons, from what I've seen and read, is rather small in scale. So, a lot of the writings on the commons have dealt with the commons on a micro-level. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that—having a communal garden in your neighborhood—but it seems to me that we must start caring and talking about large-scale issues with the commons, such as the habitat of an entire bio-region. For example, how do we begin to conceptualize what sustainability looks like for the entire Northeastern United States? How do we manage things like water resources on a national level? Let alone globally? Water resources should be considered a common property resource, but often there's conflicting demands for the water: urbanization, industrial agriculture, and all sorts of other natural habitat preservations and the like. I'm glad you mentioned Christian Parenti's piece because climate change should make us re-conceptualize the global commons. So the question is how to deal with this problem? And how do we manage these issues in the future? You need enforcement mechanisms between nation-states in order to combat these trends, or ward off future threats. What happens to international treaties if governments are shredded? Who's going to stop other states from pouring carbon into the atmosphere? You can't do that by holding "collective meetings" or "potlucks."

Conversations about whether to turn a piece of land into a community garden are not going to combat the issues we face as a species. We have to think of the commons as existing on different scales. I'm interested in the metropolitan-regional scale. How do you organize people in these regions to defend common property rights at various scales? Well, this level of organizational capacity is not going to take place through assemblies or other forms of organization that people are utilizing today. The problem is coming up with a democratic way to respond to the opinions of vast populations of people from around the globe in order to manage common property resource rights. This would include things like air and water quality throughout the region. It would include bioregion sustainability. These things don't happen through assemblies, and just because people come up with some great plans on a local level, that doesn't mean those plans work on a regional level, or global scale. So I

would like to inject the notion of different "scales" of organization into our collective conversation about development, sustainability and urbanization. We have to develop organizations, mechanisms, discourses and apparatuses capable of dealing with these problems at a global scale. I don't think it does us any good to discuss "the commons" if we're not going to be specific about the scale of which we're discussing. Are we talking about the world? If so, I'm suggesting we must talk about the state apparatus and its functions. Again, particularly at the bio-regional and global levels.

*Emanuele: It seems to me that some of the only people willing to look at these issues at a global-scale are climate scientists, oceanographers, biologists, ecologists—with very few intellectuals, let alone the activist community, or population at large discussing the global natural environment. Some scientists are telling us that by 2048 almost all the large fish will go extinct. At the very least, scientists are telling us to expect a two degree (Celsius) increase in the globe's temperature by the end of the century. These are extremely disturbing predictions and analyses. So, here's what worries me: Even if we can effectively organize say, at the bio-regional level, what happens if other regions refuse? Aren't we going to need a global apparatus to hold nations accountable? This seems to be the major question of our time.*

Harvey: Well, there's a few ways in which a practice can become hegemonic: one is by coercion, which none of us want, but may very well be a necessity. Then, there's consensus, which is what we see at these climate change conferences, but as we see, that's not working either. The third, is what you might call "by example." This is why I think a region like Cascadia is so interesting, among the reasons you mentioned, because Cascadia put in place some very, very progressive policies. For example, California has done so with several aspects of environmental legislation. On a local scale, California started to impose things like mandatory car mileage or fuel capacity, and that's one small example. Interestingly, it can also be shown that you're not going to fall apart, economically, if states enact these measures. Right now, none of this happens. I think leading by example can be very significant. It's easier to achieve consent when you can provide examples to people as to how this would work. For instance, we've seen this at the urban level with cities like Curitiba, Brazil, which is rather well known for its environmental design. So, many of the things people are doing in Curitiba are now being carried out around the world in various urban environments. I think we're going to have a combination of working by example, consensus and coercion. My hope would be that we could primarily use examples, then it's easier to reach consensus, and rather difficult to move in the direction of coercion. However, that's just my hope. It doesn't necessarily happen that way.

*Emanuele: In Chapter Four, "The Art of Rent," you mention that, "art colleges were hotbeds for political discussion, but their subsequent pacification and professionalization has seriously diminished agitational politics." Can you talk about the special character of cultural production and reproduction? In addition, can you draw out this concept of "monopoly rent?" How has this process been aided by what you call "urban entrepreneurialism?" You call these processes the "Disneyfication" of society and culture. What is collective-symbolic-capitalism? You mention the tourism industry, but also the marketing of specific cities, cultural affects and the "branding of cities." Can you talk about these dynamics?*

Harvey: My interest in this derives from a very simple contradiction: We're supposed to live under capitalism, and capitalism is supposed to be competitive so you would expect that capitalists and entrepreneurs would like competition. Well, it turns out that capitalists do everything they can to avoid competition. They love monopolies. So, whenever they can, they try to create a product that is monopolizable, which, in other words is "unique." For example, take the Nike swoosh, which is a perfect example of capitalists extracting a monopoly price on a particular logo because there's all this baggage attached to what that logo means, what it stands for, and how people should interact with it. An identical shoe, which costs much less money, can be sold for far cheaper because it simply doesn't have the swoosh on it. So, monopoly pricing is terribly important. You will find many places where this is a crucial component of how markets work. In that chapter I mention the wine trade, which intrigues me a lot. People try and extract monopoly rent because this vineyard has special soils, or this vineyard has a special geographical location. Therefore it creates a unique "vintage" wine, which tastes better than anything in the world---except it doesn't.

There's a great interest in trying to acquire monopoly rent by making sure your product is marketed as unique and very, very, very special. Then, at the city level, this means that cities try to "brand" themselves. There's a whole history now, particularly over the past 30-40 years, where cities try to brand themselves and sell a piece of their history. What is the image of a city? Is it attractive to tourists? Is it trendy? So a city will market itself. You'll find cities that have high reputations like Barcelona, Spain, or New York City. One of the ways you can bolster a city's uniqueness is to market something about the city's history, which is very specific, because you can't enjoy the historical parallel elsewhere. So, for instance, you go to Athens because of the Acropolis, or you go to Rome because of the old ruins. So you start to market the history of a city as being unique and profitable. On the other hand, if you don't have a particular history, you simply invent some stories. There's a lot of cities with invented histories in today's world. Then, you tell people that the culture of the place is very special. You know, things like unique food styles, or dances become very important. You have to promote the "street life" as being unique—no other place like it exists and all that sort of stuff.

The marketing of cultural and historical aspects of a city is now a crucial component in the economic process. Some cities simply invent unique culture. For example, some cities will use "signature architecture." For instance, not many people knew about the city of Bilbao in Spain until the Guggenheim Museum became the hot spot for a particular brand of architecture. Moving along, we can look at Sydney, Australia and the Opera House, which is the first thing people recognize when they see a picture of the city, and we can see how important this has become. So, architecture itself gets caught up in the marketing and branding of a city. You know, even the paintings and music scenes become significant aspects of culture to then market and sell—towns like Austin, Texas become "music scenes." Additionally, you have places like Nashville, or so on. So, cities begin to use cultural production as a way to market their city as being unique and special. Of course, the problem with this is that much of culture is very easy to replicate. The uniqueness begins to disappear. Then, we have what I call the "Disneyfication" of society. You see in Europe, for example, while many cities have serious cultural/historical histories, everything becomes "Disneyfied."

Some people, myself for example, become extremely turned off by this. It's yet another "Disneyfication" of Europe's history and I simply don't wish to be bothered with this anymore. This is the contradiction: You market a city as unique, yet through marketing the city becomes replicable. In fact, the simulacra of the history becomes as important as the history itself. There's a tension around looking for monopoly rent, gaining it for a little while and then losing it to the simulacra. This becomes significant. Now, this also creates a situation where cultural producers become terribly important. I went to live in Baltimore in 1969 and there were about three museums there. Now, there's over thirty museums there! This becomes the way you market the city. However, again, if every city has thirty museums, then you can forget about having a monopoly advantage. Then, it really doesn't matter whether I'm in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, or Detroit: It all becomes a replicable experience. They begin to lose their monopolistic power.

*Emanuele: In Chapter Five, "Reclaiming the City for Anti-Capitalist Struggle," you write, "two questions derive from urban-based political movements: 1) Is the city, or system of cities merely a passive site, or preexisting network? 2) Political protests frequently gauge their success in terms of their ability to disrupt urban economies." What are some examples of these disruptions? How do you think protestors in today's work can more effectively disrupt urban economies?*

Harvey: Hurricane Sandy really disrupted the lives of those living in New York City. So, I don't see why organized social movements couldn't disrupt life as usual in big cities and therefore cause damage to ruling-class interests. We have seen many historical examples of this. For example, in the 1960s, the disruptions that occurred in many cities in the United States caused massive disruptions to business. The political and business classes were quick to respond because of the level of disruption and destruction. I mention in the book the immigrant workers demonstrations in the spring of 2006. The demonstrations were in response to Congress attempting to criminalize illegal immigrants. Subsequently, people mobilized in places like Los Angeles and Chicago, and significantly disrupted city business. You could take the idea of a strike, usually aimed at a particular firm or organization, and translate those tactics and strategies to city centers. So instead of striking against a particular business or firm, people would aim their actions towards entire urban areas.

Then, there are events like the Paris Commune, or the general strike in Seattle in 1919, or, the Cordobazo uprising in Argentina circa 1969. This doesn't have to be a revolutionary movement overnight. These things can happen very gradually by reforms. An interesting example is participatory budgeting is happening in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where the Workers Party developed a system through which local populations and assemblies decide what money should be spent on. So, they had popular assemblies, and so forth, which decided how to utilize public funds and services. Again, here's a democratic reform that initially took place in Porto Alegre, but has since been passed along to European cities. It's a great idea. It involves the public and gets people involved in the process. It democratizes decision making throughout society. These decisions are no longer made by city councils, bureaucrats, or behind closed doors. Now, these things are out there for public debate. So, on the one end, you have very fast interventions in the form of strikes and disruptions. On the other hand, you have a slow process of reform taking place through democratic assemblies and so forth.

*Emanuele: As an organizer, I've been working with folks who operate within the union sector, folks who are unemployed and those operating within what's commonly called the "black economy." Specifically, I'm interested in organizing those who work in the service-sector industries, or "big-box" stores such as Applebee's or Best Buy. In Chapter Five, you write, "In the Marxist tradition, urban struggles are often ignored or dismissed as being devoid of revolutionary potential or significance. When a city-wide struggle does acquire an iconic revolutionary status, as it did during the Paris Commune of 1871, it is claimed, first by Marx, and even more emphatically by Lenin, as being a proletarian uprising, rather than a much more complicated revolutionary movement animated as much by the desire to reclaim the city itself from its bourgeois appropriation, as by the desired liberation of workers from the travails of class oppression in the work place. I take it as symbolic importance that the first two acts of the Paris Commune were to abolish night work in the bakeries, a labor question, and to impose a moratorium on rent, an urban question." Can you talk about the privileging of industrial workers in Marxist ideology? With less than 12% of America's workforce unionized, how can we begin to re-conceptualize the proletariat?*

Harvey: There's a long history of this. The tendency in Marxist circles, and not only in Marxist circles, but generally on the left, is to privilege the industrial worker. This idea of a vanguard struggle leading to a new society has been around for some time. However, what's fascinating is the lack of alternatives to this vision. Or at least variants on its intent and purpose. Of course, a lot of this comes from Marx's *Vol. I of Capital*—emphasizing the factory worker. This idea that the vanguard workers party is going to take us to the new promise land of anti-capitalist, let's call it "communist" society has been persistent for over one hundred years. I've always felt that this is too limited a conception of who is the proletariat and who's in the "vanguard." Also, I've always been interested in class-struggle dynamics and its relationship with urban social movements. Clearly, for me, urban social movements are far more complicated. They run all the way from bourgeois neighborhood organizations, which engage in exclusionary politics, to a struggle of renters against landlords because of exploitative practices. When you look at the wide range of urban social movements, you'll find some are anti-capitalist and others are the opposite.

But I would make the same remark about some forms of traditional union organizing. For example, there are some unions who look at organizing as a way to privilege the privileged workers of society. Of course I don't like this idea. Then, there are others who are attempting to create a more just and equitable world. I think there's an equal array of distinction within industrial worker forms of organization. In fact, the industrial worker forms of organization, sometimes, because they're dealing with special groups and special interests, are more reactionary to general politics than one would expect. It's in this regard that I take up Antonio Gramsci's forms of organization. He was very concerned with factory councils. He did follow the Marxist line that factory organization is crucial in the struggle. But he then pushed people to also organize along neighborhoods. That way, in Gramsci's thinking, they could get a better picture of what the entire working-class looks like, not just those who are organized in factories and so forth. Including people like the unemployed, temporary workers and all of the people you previously mentioned who were not in traditional industrial sector jobs. So, Gramsci proposed that these two kinds of political organizing methods should be intertwined in order to truly represent the proletariat. In

essence, my thinking reflects Gramsci's in this regard. How do we begin to care for all of the working people within a city? Who does this?

Traditional unions tend not to do this. Whereas there are movements within the union movement who are conducting such organizing practices. For example, the Trade Union Councils in Great Britain, or the Labor Councils in the United States, both of which attempt to organize somewhat outside the scope of traditional union organizing. Now, those sides of the union movement have not been empowered. We have to come up with new forms of organization which capture the progressive side of what goes on within urban social movements, and puts it together with what remains of the traditional industrial sector union model. We have to recognize that many workers operating in the US economy couldn't officially organize under a union with the current labor laws. So you need a different form of organization, outside the traditional union model.

There is an organization in New York, which is actually national, but very strong in New York, which is called the Domestic Workers Organization. It's very difficult to organize domestic workers. But they have a rights-based organization and they continue to organize and fight. Let's be honest, if you're an illegal immigrant in the United States, you're being treated in despicable ways. So, organizing groups like taxi drivers, or restaurant workers then led to what's called a Workers Congress. They're trying to put together all these forms of organization. You know, even Richard Trumka came out to one of these national conferences and told the workers that the traditional union movement would at least like to have a relationship with them. In short, I think there's a movement growing now that recognizes the importance of all kinds of different work that takes place within the urban environment. I took up the question posed to me by many union people, "Why don't we organize the whole damn city?"

There's already movements in place to organize taxi drivers, but why not delivery workers? This is a huge workforce and the city absolutely relies on these sectors of workers to keep business functioning as usual. What if these groups got together and started to demand a different kind of politics in cities? What if they had a say in the way funds and resources were used? Are there ways to counter the incredible inequality that exists in New York City? I mean, last year's tax returns reported that the top 1% of people in New York City earn \$3.57 million a piece, compared to 50% of the population that tries to get by on less than \$30,000. It's one of the most unequal cities in the world. So what can we do about that? How can we organize to change this inequality? To me, we should displace this notion that the factory worker will be the vanguard of the proletariat, and begin envisioning those who engage with the production and reproduction of urban life as the new vanguard. This would include domestic workers, taxi drives, delivery workers, and many more from the poor and working-classes. I think we can build political movements that operate in totally different ways than the past. We can see this in cities around the globe, stretching from Bolivian cities, to Buenos Aires. By combining the work of urban activists, with those working in factories, we begin to develop a completely different element of political agitation.

*Emanuele: Can you talk about some of those cities, such as Al Alto, Bolivia? Also, I was in Madison, Wisconsin in 2011 during the big labor protests, and I must say, it's been interesting to me to see the dynamics of labor unions and how they interact with non-*

*unionized workers and citizens. Unfortunately, many times it seems as though the union movement stifles serious dissent and resistance. So, for instance, while many of the workers in Madison were unionized, those who physically occupied the capitol building and initiated the occupation were non-unionized. Then, the big unions came in and immediately redirected the conversation towards Gov. Scott Walker's recall election, and other liberal-reformist measures. Of course, in hindsight, we see what a disaster that turned into: Gov. Walker won the recall vote. In my thinking, those moves by the unions and the Democratic Party took the energy right out of the movement. What are your thoughts on these issues?*

Harvey: The unions have gone through a bad time. They're not being very progressive. So, overall I agree with where you're coming from. Now, the reason I mentioned Trumka was because I think Trumka and many of those within the organized union movement understand that they can no longer go it alone, and require the help of the entire workforce, unionized or otherwise. This is always the challenge when organizing: How much support do we want from these large entities? And how much of what they're doing is out of a true sense of solidarity? How much of it is for personal gain? My own experience in Baltimore, surrounding living wage campaigns, mirrors your experience to some extent. The unions were generally hostile to these campaigns and didn't help, generally speaking. However, we did receive a lot of help from local unions. So, again, we must separate these two entities. Individual locals did help the campaigns. So, the union movement has been very, very conservative in this country, in many ways—particularly in the fifty years or so.

There are similar problems in British labor unions as well. To be fair, the impression I had from some of the local leadership in New York City is that they understand they can't call the shots anymore. I doubt you're saying we shouldn't organize with unions, and anyone who says this we should be wary of, but believe me, I'm well aware of the limitations of modern unions. In fact, I heard much of what you told me from friends who were participating in the events in Madison, Wisconsin. You know, I've been reading as much as I could about Al Alto, Bolivia, and what's really fascinating to me are the forms of organization taking place there. There is a union component, with a strong teachers union leading the way. But there's also a lot of ex-union members who used to be in the Tin-Mines but became unemployed through the neoliberal restructuring of the 1980s. These folks ended up living in this city of Al Alto and there's a political activist tradition of socialism. In the union movement they used to be in were mainly Trotskyists, which is significant. However, the more important organizations were the neighborhood organizations.

Plus, there was an overarching assembly of neighborhood organizations called the Federation of Neighborhood Organizations. For example, there were organizations of street vendors, which we also have in New York City, in addition to transport people. These different groups met quite regularly. The interesting dynamic of these organizations is that they don't all see eye-to-eye on every single issue. I mean, what's the point of going to a meeting where everyone agrees? They had to attend the meetings in order to make sure their interests weren't shafted. That's what happens when you have lively debates and political discourse: progress. So, the activism of the neighborhood federations resulted from very competitive organizing methods. Then, when the police and army started murdering people in the streets, there was an immediate show of solidarity amongst the groups who were organizing in the city. And they shut down the city and blocked roads. So, the people

of La Paz, Bolivia were unable to receive goods and services because three of the main routes went directly through Al Alto, which was shut down by these organizations.

They did this in 2003, and the result was the President got thrown out. Then, in 2005 the next President was thrown out. Finally, they got Evo Morales. All of these elements came together and effectively organized poor and working-class people in Bolivia. This is where I got the title for my book *Rebel Cities*. Quite literally, Al Alto became a revolutionary city within the matter of a few years. The forms of organization in Bolivia are fascinating to study and look at. I'm not saying this is "the model" everyone should copy, but it's a good example to look at and study.

*Emanuele: You mention a movie that is dear to my heart, Salt of the Earth, which I first saw as a freshman in college. My teacher, Dr. Kim Scipes, taught a racial and ethnic diversity class at Purdue North Central University where we watched the film as required viewing material for the course. In referencing this movie in your book, you mention, "Only when unity and parity is constructed with all forces of labor will we be able to win. The danger this message represented for capitalism is measured by the fact that this is the only US film to be systematically banned for political reasons from being shown in any commercial venue for many years." Can you talk about why this film is important? What can it teach us about struggle?*

Harvey: Well, I first saw the film some time ago now. It was a while back and I can't remember exactly when. But, like you, I've always treasured the memory of it. So when I was sitting down to write this book, I went back and saw it again. Naturally, I watched it a couple more times. I think it is a very human story. But this is a wonderful story of a zinc-mine, which is based on a real situation, written by people who were banned by Hollywood for their communist leanings. It's a great film where class, race and gender all come together to form a great story and narrative. There's a moment in the film that's somewhat funny: The guys can't picket anymore because of the Taft-Hartley legislation, so the women take over the picketing because there's nothing banning them from picketing. Then, the men have to take over the household jobs. Interestingly, the men quickly begin to understand why the women were asking them to demand running water, and other things from their employer that would make daily life much easier. Quickly, of course, the men find out just how difficult it is to be at home all day. It puts together the kind of gender questions that are important today. It deals with solidarity across ethnic lines, which is crucial. The film does a great job of highlighting this in a very non-didactic way. I've always been very fond of that film so I thought it was appropriate that I bring it back into the context of *Rebel Cities*.

*Emanuele: Any parting words of advice for those listening or reading this interview?*

Harvey: Unfortunately, I'm not an organizer; I'm a commentator about the limits of capital and how we might go about conceptualizing alternative visions for society. I've drawn a great amount of strength, motivation and intellectual ideas from those who actually engage everyday in the struggle. I participate and assist, if I can. So my advice to everybody would be to go out as much as possible and deal with social inequality and environmental degradation because these issues are increasingly prescient. I would hope people would get

active; go outside; get moving along now. This is a crucial time. You know, massive wealth and capital haven't budged one bit, so far. We have to give it a huge push if we want to see something different in our society. We need to create mechanisms and forms of organization which reflect the needs and wants of society as a whole, not just a privileged-oligarchic class of individuals.

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