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The urban process under planetary accumulation by dispossession

Louis Moreno and Hyun Bang Shin

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There is no way that the world is totally colonized by a single system of spatiotemporalities.

Donna Haraway (Harvey and Haraway 1995)

Introduction

In June 2014 one of the richest men in the world listed the accumulations of matter that made his life possible. ‘The car I drive to work’ Gates (2014) said,

is made of around 2,600 pounds of steel, 800 pounds of plastic, and 400 pounds of light metal alloys. The trip from my house to the office is roughly four miles long, all surface streets, which means I travel over some 15,000 tons of concrete each morning. Once I’m at the office, I usually open a can of Diet Coke. Over the course of the day I might drink three or four. All those cans also add up to something like 35 pounds of aluminum a year.

What inspired this moment of self-quantification was a new book by the Microsoft founder’s favourite writer. In *Making the Modern World: Materials and Dematerialization* (2014), the climate scientist Vaclav Smil (an academic who helps Gates ‘understand the future’) shows why, in spite of the best efforts of Silicon Valley, the digital trajectory of contemporary capitalism results neither in the paperless office, nor a decline in the amounts of material people consume. This is because any efficiency gains that can be made through innovations in the material production of goods (using less aluminium in a can of Coke, for example) lead to lower costs, and cheaper products make the goods more widespread. Cheaper products mean more consumption of mobile phones, plastic bottles, paper, coffee cups, etc., and more consumption signals economic growth. As Smil (2014, 130) writes, ‘Less has thus been an enabling agent of more.’ Nowhere is this axiom more clearly shown, Smil demonstrates, than in the way China has intensified production of the largest things human beings construct — the built environment. As Gates (2014) summed up in his blog, the fact that China had ‘used more cement in the last three years [2011 - 2013]’ building cities and infrastructure ‘than the US used in the entire twentieth century’ left him completely ‘stunned’.

This ‘concrete fact’ (Harvey 2017, 178) has featured prominently in David Harvey’s lectures and writing in recent years. Like Gates, Harvey questions the environmental consequences of extracting and consuming such extraordinary quantities of sand, steel, iron ore, copper, and so forth. But unlike Gates, for Harvey, the urban question of sustainability goes deeper than the need to find ‘clean tech’ fixes for concrete and installing more sensors in buildings. Technological innovation, important as it is, will only ameliorate the situation, Harvey says, unless the conditions exacerbating the accumulation of capital are not confronted. Thus, the broader environmental question associated with the spread of so much concrete around the planet, belies an urban process of accumulation sustaining what Marx called the ‘endless and limitless drive to go beyond [capital’s] limiting barrier’ (Marx 1973, 334; cited in Harvey 2017, 178). The planet’s concretisation is, simply put, symptomatic of the urbanisation of capital. And when accounting for the destructive effects the production of cement has on the environment (5% of all global carbon dioxide emissions), Harvey (2017) suggests, that the almost pathological inability to respond is because the accumulation process is hardwired into the social, governmental and physical infrastructure which makes urban society possible.

Accumulation, dispossession, urbanisation

The urbanisation of the planet indicates not just a vast covering of the earth in concrete and the movement of human beings into cities. It also indexes the planetisation of a more abstract material: financial capital. Harvey (1978) contends that financial intermediaries have been key to the switching of surplus capital from the primary to the secondary circuit of accumulation, and that capitalism builds its own financial institutions as a precondition of investments in the built environment. In this regard, urbanisation through the rise of the secondary circuit of the built environment at the planetary scale brings with it a vast centralisation of power in the credit system, and a massive concentration of wealth in political and economic elites (see also Lees, Shin and López-Morales 2016, Chapter 2; Merrifield 2013). Thus, the city, idealised by Western philosophy as the space of democratic politics, becomes an apparatus constructed to neutralise political resistance to what Harvey (2017) calls the ‘madness of economic reason’. Or, according to Hannah Arendt — who influenced on Harvey’s political thought — the combined centralisation and extension of capitalist command becomes the means to a ‘never ending accumulation of property [...] based on a never-ending accumulation of power’ (Arendt [1951] 1968, 23).

Arendt was not referring to urban processes, of course, but for Harvey, the insight elucidates capitalism’s geographical method. Though the rhetoric of globalisation of the 1990s and 2000s promoted the liberal discourse of freedom, in reality this was an impoverished understanding of freedom. What globalisation manifested was the increasing freedom of the power of private property to dispossess wealth and the rights associated with such wealth held in individual or collective ownership. The neoliberal synthesis of market force and state

power, under the rubric of globalisation, carried forward — ‘from sea to shining sea’ — capitalism’s categorical imperative, what Harvey succinctly called *accumulation by dispossession*. What this formula represents is a violent process where the growth in the capital value of private property is structurally dependent on an unbounded enclosure and privatisation of common wealth (Harvey 2003, 158). For Harvey, the accumulation by dispossession is not simply dispossession of physical or financial assets: The key to understanding this process of accumulation by dispossession is how it ‘entails the loss of rights’ (Harvey 2005, 178). Dispossession occurs through the use of both extra-economic and economic means, clearing the obstacles that hinder the process of accumulation (see also Shin 2016). In other words, ‘The formal distinction between extra-economic and economic power does not work in practice’ (Harvey 2006, 159). It is in this regard we see the connection between Harvey’s earlier work on the urbanisation of capital and later writing on accumulation by dispossession, as evidenced in his statement below:

Urbanization [...] has played a crucial role in the absorption of capital surpluses and has done so at ever-increasing geographical scales, but at the price of burgeoning processes of creative destruction that entail the dispossession of the urban masses of any right to the city whatsoever. (Harvey 2012, 22)

Originally presented in *The New Imperialism*, Harvey argues that what the explosive violence of the new millennium announced was a realisation, that the liberal ethos of new technology and cosmopolitan culture was driving an economic system of environmental destruction and social deprivation. All of which was a process driven to tear apart the fabric of social space in order to absorb the surpluses generated by the unrestrained expansion of capitalist production. Viewed from this perspective, one could ‘discover within th[e] tangle of political violence and contests of power’ what Rosa Luxemburg called ‘the stern laws of the economic process’ (Luxemburg [1913] 2003, 432). The fusion of muscular realpolitik and the market’s invisible hand was, therefore, not confined to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the commodification of publicly provided housing and utilities in Britain and the mortgage foreclosures in the aftermaths of the subprime crisis in the US, to the expulsion of peasant populations in China, Bangladesh and Mexico, what globalisation manifested was an extraordinary intensification in the enclosure of natural, social and human resources, evidence for which could be found in the increasing concentration of global wealth in both financial and non-financial (real estate) assets.

With the identification of the credit system as the critical vehicle of operation, Harvey mined a rich seam of political philosophy — spanning Lenin and Hilferding as well as Luxemburg and Arendt — who all identified financial capital as the armature calibrating the territorial expansion of the capital market with the rise of the imperial state. What made Harvey’s

contribution distinctive, though, was to position the rise of financial capitalism in the context of the urbanisation of capital, insisting that in the recent period, financial practices had become increasingly autonomous, urbanised and globalised. This was not to say that financial services had become independent of the state and society; rather the state, its representatives and the people they politically represent, had become an apparatus which serves finance and makes use of the urban as the 'unit of accumulation' (Shin 2015, 974-976). Accumulation by dispossession as a key apparatus of capital accumulation, based around the system of centralisation and concentration of power, finds its social, political and geographical expression in the production of urban space.

Primitive accumulation here and now

The inspiration for the idea of primitive accumulation originates in Marx's critique of Adam Smith's assumption that 'the accumulation of stock must, in the nature of things, be previous to the division of labour' (Smith [1776] 1999, 371-372). For Marx, the backstory behind capitalism's world transforming power was pure fantasy. The notion of some natural dependency between, on the one hand, thrifty savers and ingenious investors and, on the other, the weak and indigent who relied on wealth creators, masked a terrible secret. What the chauvinistic tale of 'primitive accumulation' concealed, Marx said, was the horrific source of modern economic power: the violent transformation of the commons into capital. By highlighting accumulation by dispossession, Harvey proposes that 'primitive accumulation' is not simply a historical process confined to the origin of capitalism, but is embedded in the systems underpinning capitalism's own existence and survival. And since 2008, as the identification of processes of enclosure, expulsion, land clearance, theft, murder, corruption have been revealed to be vital to contemporary capitalism, the notion of primitive accumulation situates Marx's critique of economic reason at an intersection of planetary activisms and re-conceptualisations of regional resistance to capitalist power (see Tilley, Kumar and Cowan 2017).

While widely applauded as a welcome update of the primitive accumulation concept, Harvey's account has been questioned on strategic political and geographical grounds. We can survey these in broad terms by highlighting two specific criticisms. The first comes from within the Marxist tradition, and questions the tactical ramifications of Harvey's re-reading of primitive accumulation. Once accumulation by dispossession becomes the *modus operandi* of global capitalism, Robert Brenner (2006) asks, what is left of the analysis of production and daily life? In other words, 'inflating' primitive accumulation as the fundamental driver of globalisation means losing the ability to explain the role that the division of labour, technological change, economic policy and so forth play in creating the world of suffering, degradation and inequality that define 'contemporary neoliberal imperialism'. Celebrating Harvey's revitalisation of the concept of primitive accumulation, Brenner says its real

potential is to demonstrate the limits ‘to which [capitalism] can create the conditions for its own expansion’ (Brenner 2006, 99). While this is a strategic insight, Brenner (ibid.) argues Harvey undercuts this critical move by:

assimilat[ing] to accumulation by dispossession [...] a virtual grab bag of processes — by which claims to assets are transferred from one section of capital to another, exploitation of the working class is made worse, or the state moves to privilege its own capitalists at the expense of others — that are quite normal aspects or by-products of the already well-established sway of capital.

More recently, in a CITY special feature, it has been argued that Harvey’s geographical rendering of the term is too tightly embedded in a Western ‘metromarxism’ and thus ‘fails to provide a full account of the political and contested nature in which contemporary urban processes, dispossession, gentrification and privatisation, are carried out’ (Tilley, Kumar and Cowan 2017, 422). More to the point, in a penetrating analysis of the experience of indigenous people in south-east Mexico, Pacheco (2017) argues that the accumulation by dispossession analytic tends to assume the inevitable destruction of socio-spatial assemblages like the Maya *solar*. The critique of global superpower, thus, fails to grasp the infrapolitics of people who have made resisting neoliberalism a daily praxis. What is in question is not the melancholia of theory versus the vitality of activism, but a more specific demand to decolonise the critique of political economy. If the Euro-American worldview has proved to be inadequate to the task of freeing nature, technology, cities and society from the web of capitalism, perhaps mesoamerican and other indigenous ‘cosmovisions’ can refresh the political senses.

Reduced to their elements we have on the one hand the view that the ‘accumulation by dispossession’ analytic is too widely applied, thereby blunting the precision of the critique of economic reason. On the other, the geographical conceptualisation of urbanism tends to ‘screen out’ a wider horizon of regional struggles and conceptions of social resistance. Although these criticisms say different things, because they have different objectives they can be placed alongside one another with no danger of contradiction. In fact, when aligned they map a range of broader controversies within urban studies about how to think about cities and urban processes while, as Spivak (2012, 338) says, seizing ‘the imperative to re-imagine the planet’. Though we might hesitate about making this connection as the sporadic bouts of *methodenstreit* over the ‘planetary turn’ seem, so far at least, to have generated not so much more heat than light, but a freezing of perspective.

Interventions

Nonetheless in this special feature we ask, if accumulation by dispossession has become a planetary condition, what has been the role of urbanisation and particular cities in this process? In posing this question our intention is not merely to drag Harvey through various debates, or seek rapprochement by establishing some heterodox synthesis. Instead, what we suggest is that the critique of the impoverished spatial ontologies and over-expanded urban epistemologies diagnose a problem that is more than academic. The need to conceptualise the urban multiplication and planetary diversification of dispossessions is necessary to confront the shapeshifting apparatuses that reproduce capitalist power. Therefore, in this special feature, our primary aim is not to reject, defend or enlist certain positions and methods in relation to the 'planetary'. Rather the following articles track the limits of theory when confronted with world-forming and world-destroying processes of accumulation by dispossession.

Forming the analytical core of this special feature are three articles that — while surveying the complex intellectual, ecological and political dimensions of urban questions — succinctly guide us through a few critical keywords. Beginning with 'planetary,' Alex Loftus (this issue) asks what is lost when this category is sought as an escape from the various perceived constraints of the theory of uneven geographical development. In a deft and even-handed summary of the various positions, Loftus says that the core question cannot be resolved through discursive restructuring. Moving to the planetary to resolve old nominalist questions about the universal and the particular, or the insufficiency of the global-local distinction, or the structuralist versus postcolonial impasse, only reshuffles the terms of debate. In actual fact, Loftus suggests, the planetary seems less like a decisive move than a hedging position which 'militate[s]' further 'against an immanent critique of the everyday grounded in concrete, lived realities'. And while recent ecological 'patches' for the critique of political economy — largely constellated around Jason Moore's work — indicate promising routes to critique the racial, gendered, and natural sources of exploitation, they do so by stripping the analysis of the 'fleshy, messy and indeterminate practices' upon which capital is 'utterly reliant'. Similarly, the tendency of 'planetary urbanisation' while often namechecking Lefebvre, does so at the expense of Lefebvre's dedication to the residual qualities of everyday life. A habit, Loftus notes, that can also be levelled at Harvey's tendency to revert to a 'certain kind of ontology security, or reductionism'. Loftus's contribution provides a note of caution towards planetary abstraction, making a call for a more attention to concrete everyday life for methodological abstraction and theory generation. In other words, instead of positing the planetary as the *point of departure* for urban epistemology, Loftus argues for the planetary as the *point of arrival* for a praxis which springs from the manifold 'sentiments, hopes and fears' nearly all living creatures face under the pressure of capital accumulation.

The claim is echoed by Matthew Gandy (this issue), who addresses the relationship between environmental destruction and what is understood by the notion of 'urban process'. Though

Harvey's work is not central to Gandy's socio-ecological concerns, he nevertheless suggests that a 'methodological globalism' underlying Marxian urban theory tends to make capitalism and urbanisation 'fully synonymous' aspects of the same logic. What is therefore criticised in Gandy's paper is a largely under-defined and ambivalent drawing of the concept of urbanisation. Or, put in more architectural terms Gandy perceives a 'naive functionalism' latent in critical urban theory which inhibits a deeper spatio-temporal sensitivity to the 'kinds of alternative socio-ecological or technological pathways [which] might serve as intimations of a different future'. Instead, then, of abandoning the category of 'city,' Gandy argues that it is important to 'make a distinction between the city, as a particular kind of social and political arena, and urbanisation, as a broader set of socio-ecological and socio-technical entanglements'. Without such a distinction, Gandy concludes, it becomes impossible to acknowledge the ecological heterogeneity present in the urban landscape. Moreover, the catastrophe of lost biodiversity is compounded by a narrowing of urban imagination, threatening to lose the ability to challenge the 'conception of what the city is, what it can be, and how it relates to the wider political dynamics of the capitalist technosphere'. Gandy, like Loftus, does not reject the critique of political economy, but appeals for more imaginative re-articulations. Marx's interest in the connection between chemical experimentation with the fertility of soil and capital investment in land offers, for Gandy, an opportunity to more clearly define the urban process in the span of 'a fundamental tension' between the infinity of accumulation and a finite environment.¹ In this context, 'metabolic rift' becomes a fecund concept to conceptualise the city not just in the tragic mode of a temporality trapped in the space of capitalism, but also to think more deeply about how cities flow in the glacial drift of geological time.

One question we might ask in response to these questions is how to imagine — let alone realise — a deeper spatio-temporal sense of daily life given the gravitational forces imposed by the history of colonial violence. This disturbing question is at the centre of Nasser Abourahme's lucid genealogy of 'dispossession' (this issue). For Abourahme the realisation that dispossession is the true message of neoliberal power, requires us to recognise that racial violence is a systemic element of capital accumulation. Thus, if Robert Brenner asked what is left of capitalism when dispossession is no longer a peripheral condition, Abourahme's answer is chillingly concise. Those monstrous apparatuses of colonisation, which swept the earth and caused cities to 'evaporate at the edge of the sword' (Césaire 2000, 41), are *interior* to what Abourahme calls the infrastructure of the 'late liberal city'. With this formula Abourahme blends Elizabeth Povinelli's *geontology* with Achille Mbembe's *critique of black reason*, to offer a stunning inversion of the urban question of accumulation by dispossession. The violence of dispossession does not serve the accumulation of capital, rather the system of dispossession is its own servant. Though, Abourahme says, what we are experiencing today with the resurgence of populisms and incipient fascisms is not political atavism on a hideously engorged scale. How could they be atavisms, Abourahme asks, as the advance of

capitalism was always measured by the ability to perpetuate ‘the original sin of simple robbery’? The urban inflation and planetary diffusion of ‘law-making robbery’ — i.e. the land grabs, privatisations, racketeering, evictions and expulsions which salt the earth — indicates a realpolitik that is post-liberal and, for Abourahme, utterly consistent with the historical spirit of capitalism’s global ambition. The success of absolute capitalism comes at the cost of modernity’s great inspiration: the liberal city is a desiccated husk, and what is left is the colonial apparatus scaled up, diversified and made all encompassing. Abourahme’s reference to the relationship between contemporary capitalism and populism raises a further question about the scale of anti-capitalist praxis, and compels us to ask what it means to see the rise of nationalism. As accumulation by dispossession occurs at a planetary scale, and calls for, as Harvey often advocates, a broader cross-class alliance with internationalist orientation, the recent rise of territorially bound populisms brings fore the question of whether the globalisation has ever removed nationalism, and what new challenges progressive movements are to address to reconcile struggles over urban spaces where value gets both produced and realised with struggles that address racism and nationalism that transcend class interests.

The other three essays in the special feature either explore new urban frontiers of accumulation by dispossession or ask how to arrest the acceleration of privatisation through the system of urban planning as it is currently configured. The latter question is posed by Ilse Helbrecht and Francesca Weber-Newth (this issue) and in some sense is intended to examine how to make use of Harvey’s ideas within the world of actually existing policy making, especially when Harvey (2012, 163) notes that ‘The freedom to exploit and dispossess others must be severely curbed, and ultimately outlawed’. Helbrecht and Weber-Newth situate their discussion of developer’s contribution as a means to resurrect politics in planning. Developer’s contribution is a planning tool that allows the state to tap into private developer’s profit gains in the process of land development. As Harvey notes (2012, 28), ‘land is not a commodity in the ordinary sense. It is a fictitious form of capital that derives from expectations of future rents’. This is where we begin to think of the need of charging development tax on new developments, as a way to think of redistributive justice. Such capturing of value increments assumes a certain role of the state that acts as an arbiter of conflicting class interests in order to redistribute surplus, reflecting a certain degree of social democratic traditions of the state. It is in this context Helbrecht and Weber-Newth refer to the developer’s contributions ‘as both a sign of hope and as a disaster’. In other words, they are also ‘a prime example of both post-political handing (and thus handmaiden to a neoliberal apparatus) *and* tool for progressive social change (signaling socially progressive politics)’. For Helbrecht and Weber-Newth, developer’s contributions are seen as an example of how progressive politics can retain a degree of pragmatism in order ‘to extricate the possible within the real’. How much the concept of developer’s contributions can be applicable to

other places where social democratic forms of the state are weak or non-existent is a question that warrants more investigations.

Interestingly, such attention to the pragmatic need of redistributing profits for addressing social justice agenda has recently been witnessed in mainland China, where the municipal government's experiment provides an interesting parallel case. In Chongqing, land-related revenues and the profits of state-owned enterprises are pooled together by the municipal government to finance projects of infrastructure and additional social expenditure (including social housing provision) incurred by the urbanisation of rural villagers. Interpreted by its proponents as a liberal socialist model following James Meade's thesis (see Cui 2011), the state appropriation of profits and land value increments can be interpreted as a move that mitigates the profit-maximising behaviour of capital. However, such practices also call for cautious attention to the characteristic of the state itself, and the positioning of the state in the context of shifting state-society relations. Harvey also notes of the progressive potential of such an approach, stating that 'It is an antidote to the private developer-led projects of gated communities for the rich', but he still remains cautious, for 'it accelerates the dispossession of land from rural uses and pushes peasant populations into a forced urbanisation that underpins swelling protest and discontent, which in turn leads to a repressive if not authoritarian response' (Harvey 2012, 64; see also Shin 2014, 2016).

Elvin Wyly and Jatinder Dhillon (this issue) explore the emergent pathways of capital's pursuit of what they refer to as the *accumulation by cognitive dispossession*. Harvey's accumulation by dispossession arguably centres on, by and large, the material process of value production and realisation, its spatial manifestation in the context of uneven development at multiple geographical scales, and the use of economic and extra-economic means to search for new avenues of accumulation. Harvey's discussions of the 'urbanisation of consciousness' and his references to the 'madness of economic reason' exhibit his attention to how capitalism accompanies the restructuring non-material process of ideological construction and its re-production to facilitate and justify the 'neoliberal', capitalist world order (Harvey 1989, 2017). Wyly and Dhillon take it further to examine how the rise of 'cognitive capitalism' captures the non-material labour, especially the process of 'valorization and devalorization of embodied human capital', and reconfigures it around three key moments - capital, code and competition - to consolidate 'a planetary ethos' that aims to expand the extant capitalist order. Universities were identified earlier by Logan and Molotch (1987) as 'auxiliary players' that constitute local growth machine, but Wyly and Dhillon's grim depiction of on-going exploitative control of higher education compels us to question if universities have now seen the (near) end of serving the function of co-producing progressive knowledge and acting as a bastion of progressive/liberal agendas.

The essay concluding this special feature focuses on the keyword of ‘accumulation’. Acting as a companion piece to an earlier CITY article (Moreno 2014) on financialisation, Louis Moreno (this issue) argues that real estate today is a virulent urban artifact of the monetary crisis of 1971. Re-reading the restructuring of New York City in that period — through Christian Marazzi’s 1976 analysis of the collapse of Bretton Woods and Samuel R. Delany’s critique of the sexual ‘remediation’ of Times Square — the urbanisation of real estate has, ever since, Moreno says, formed the locus of the transformation of money into capital and capital into culture. As such it has acted as the financial system’s mode of spatial cognition, global computation and aesthetic evaluation. The worldwide spread of neoliberalism and the intensification of urbanisation is, thus, no coincidence. They are the spatial form of money capital’s search to financialise whatever value the planet can produce. In this respect, Moreno agrees with Gandy’s call for greater precision about what is understood by the term ‘urbanisation’, but suggests that the reduction of the city to an accumulation system is not simply due to academic functionalism. Reducing the manifold forms of life to a monotonic profit pattern is the function of urban real estate. This view supports Abourahme’s bleak survey of the post-liberal city and Wyly and Dhillon’s equally grim dispatch from cognitive capitalism’s education frontline, although Moreno argues that capitalism is breaking a new frontier, testing to the point of destruction the psychic bonds individuals invest in social networks. Equipped by the theory of human capital and the always-on infra-culture of smartphones, subjectivity becomes a new space that estate agents are, as they are often fond of saying, ‘delighted to bring to the market’.

Only connect

If in the 1970s the demonetisation of gold paved the way for the urbanisation of financial capital, today the dematerialisation of money is enabled by a new urbanism of digital platforms, advanced analytics and geocomputation. All competing to privatise, what Marx (1973, 84) called, the human animal’s need to individuate itself in the midst of social space. Which begs the question — where to go from here, when *here* means any kind of *where* susceptible to enclosure? Another way to phrase the question is to ask what the conditions of political possibility of geographical knowledge are right now. This was a question at the centre of a remarkable public dialogue between David Harvey and Donna Haraway at the annual meeting of the then Association of American Geographers in Chicago in 1995. The debate is fascinating because it is a reminder both of the level of connectivity in their work — eg. ‘the body as an accumulation strategy’ — and of how much work still needs to be done to think through the mutually compatible, but radically different accounts of the ‘spatialisation’ and ‘corporealisation’ of history and nature.

For our purpose in this special feature, what is useful is Haraway’s response to Harvey’s question of producing spatial knowledge. If, for Harvey, the situated ‘relationship that

individuals have to the circulation process' maps onto, what Haraway calls, the circulation of sexualised and racialised 'bodies that inhabit [...] the spatial temporalities of the world' (Harvey and Haraway 1995, 510), then the question becomes what are 'the possibilities of political action in relationship to these processes?' (ibid., 514) And given that urban accumulation tends to deprive people of the space to live, think and act politically, we have to acknowledge that the difficulty to imagine 'what a world that is not capitalist looks like' is not some industrial byproduct. As Fisher (2009) argued, capitalism works by subordinating each human element of the political unconscious to a 'reality test'. As long as your creative capacities to imagine, to think and feel realise economic growth your individual future is, so capitalist realism goes, secure.

Faced with such a paranoid situation, Haraway says, 'rule number one' is to avoid 'wallowing in the sublime of domination' and retreating into academic 'citation networks'. Instead, she asks what 'kinds of connectivity globalize?' Because when you map the elements which make planetarisation possible, you begin to understand how capital is spatialised and corporealised. In doing so, it becomes possible to see that under all that steel, plastic, cement, light metal alloy, and aluminium what is being manipulated is the desire to connect. Haraway recommends asking how do:

transuranic elements globalize; transgenic organisms globalize;
environmental issues globalize [...] this curious historical subject
called the 'global indigenous person' globalize. Technoscience with a
vengeance, globalizes; labour movements, socialist internationals (if
there are any of them left) globalize. (ibid., 511)

Because when asking these questions, we map the conditions which make capitalism itself possible. Which prompts a further question: *what are the spatiotemporal conditions which can make capitalism impossible?* And from a state of overwhelmed helplessness, drowning in plastic, cemented to credit, submerged in capitalist realism, unable to comprehend what is going on, it becomes possible to grasp how the spatialisation of capital ties down 'life-worlds', incorporating living bodies into the gravitational 'force translations' of value in motion. With this kind of world cognition, it is possible to produce a strategic knowledge of space, whose point of departure asks 'what possible kinds of cracks in the system of domination could one imagine' (ibid., 514). In doing so, in the break of what Ralph Ellison called all these urban monopolies of light and power, we catch a glimpse — not of some outside to capitalism — but a sense of the 'multiple lived worlds' that the accumulation process is moved to dispossess. While creating the urban conditions which make capitalism impossible may seem the stuff of fantasy, as a first principle Haraway's epigram, opening this special feature, feels like a blast of pure common sense.

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Endnote

¹ This appeal to Marx, not as a return to the critique of modernity, but as a re-discovery of Marx's late fascination with the peasant/agrarian fulcrum of revolution, has been a feature of Bob Caterall's recent writing, which provides fresh interdisciplinary stimulus for a bio-social, planetary consciousness of everyday praxis (see 2014 for a summary).

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