

The Architecture of ‘Passive Revolution’: Society, State and Space in Modern Mexico

ADAM DAVID MORTON*

Abstract. This article analyses the political economy of Henri Lefebvre’s concept of ‘state space’ with specific attention directed towards the Monument to the Revolution in Mexico City, completed in 1938. The conditions of modernity can be generally related to the spatial ordering of urban landscapes within capital cities conjoining the specifics of national identity with imitative processes. Antonio Gramsci captured such sentiments through his understanding of the condition of

Adam David Morton is in the Department of Political Economy, University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales NSW 2000, Australia. E-mail: adam.morton@sydney.edu.au

* Many thanks to Eugenia Allier Montaño for facilitating my presentation of this paper as part of the ‘Historia del presente’ seminar of the Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales (Institute for Social Research) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Mexican National Autonomous University, UNAM), Mexico City (4 December 2015) and to Patricia Ramírez for comments and feedback. Pointers were also gratefully received from Andreas Bieler, Gareth Bryant, Barry Carr, Inés Duran Matute, Sujatha Fernandes, Chris Hesketh, Duanfang Lu, Emilio Allier Montaño, David Ruccio, Susanne Soederberg and Cemal Burak Tansel. The paper also benefited from earlier feedback during presentations in the Seminar Series of the School of Politics and International Relations, Queen Mary University of London (2 February 2011); at the 48th Annual Society of Latin American Studies (SLAS) Conference at the University of Sheffield (18–20 April 2012); at the First Spectrum Conference on Global Studies on ‘Historical Sociology, Historical Materialism and International Relations’, Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara (2–3 November 2012); at the 8th ‘Rethinking Marxism’ international conference ‘Surplus, Solidarity, Sufficiency’, University of Massachusetts, Amherst (19–22 September 2013); at the seminar series of the Department of Political Economy, University of Sydney (6 March 2014); at the seminar series of the Sydney University Research Community for Latin America (SURCLA), Sydney (6 October 2015); at the 7th Australian International Political Economy Network (AIPEN) annual workshop, University of Tasmania, Hobart (4–5 February 2016); at the seminar series of the School of Politics, Philosophy, International Relations and Environment (SPIRE) at Keele University (16 March 2016); and at the seminar series of the Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS), La Trobe University, Melbourne (16 September 2016). The paper is based on three research visits undertaken at the Archivo General de la Nación (National General Archive, AGN) in 2011, 2014 and 2015. I would like to thank Álvaro Ricardo Aréstegui for his research assistance in helping me avoid my own ‘labyrinth of solitude’ while working at the AGN and negotiating its idiosyncrasies. Where archival documents are not available for the more contemporary era, recourse was made to interviews, including with official representatives linked to the site of the Monument to the Revolution as well as a cross-section of everyday public visitors to the monument. Permission to reproduce images from the AGN was requested and received for the purposes of this paper.

‘passive revolution’. The key contribution of this article is to draw attention to forms of *everyday passive revolution*, recognising both cosmopolitan and vernacular aspects of modern architecture in relation to the Monument to the Revolution. A focus on the Monument to the Revolution thus reveals specific spatial practices of everyday passive revolution relevant to the codification of architecture and the political economy of modern state formation in Mexico. These issues are revealed, literally, as vital expressions in the architecture of everyday passive revolution in modern Mexico.

Keywords: Antonio Gramsci, Henri Lefebvre, passive revolution, space, modernism, Mexico, Monument to the Revolution

Introduction

As detailed by Karl Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, in periods of revolutionary crisis people conjure up ‘the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries, and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language’.¹ My focus in this article is the manner in which, echoing Marx again, ‘the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living’, by focusing on the Monument to the Revolution in Mexico. This monument is one of the foremost commemorative spatial sites of state power in Mexico City. Completed on 20 November 1938, the Monument to the Revolution has served ever since as the stage for official ceremonies remembering and honouring the Revolution and its heroes, protagonists and antagonists. As Thomas Benjamin states:

The Monument to the Revolution was built, primarily, to heal the wounds of memory that divided revolutionaries and retarded and weakened the development of a new institutional political order ... The monument’s primary purpose has always been and remains the legitimisation of state power and authority.²

In 2010, renovations to the site were announced by then Mayor of the Federal District, Marcelo Ebrard (affiliated to the opposition Partido de la Revolución Democrática – Revolutionary Democratic Party, PRD), who remarked that the recuperation of public space would be accompanied by the remembrance of the great achievements of the Mexican Revolution, including labour rights, agrarian reform, access to education and health, Mexican nationalism, and, of course, the oil expropriation (the nationalisation of petroleum reserves, facilities, and foreign oil companies). The Monument to the Revolution and the Plaza de la República in which the monument stands – a space of

¹ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1852/1984), p. 10.

² Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico’s Great Revolution as Memory, Myth and History* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000), pp. 135–6.

49,000 m² – has now been completely renovated. At a cost of US\$ 25 million, the restoration included a Mirador (Observation Deck) – reached via a new glass elevator located in the Monument's central axis – that offers 360° views of Mexico City; nocturnal illumination; the 'Adelita Café' and gift shop; water fountains that were now, finally, functional; the reopening of the National Museum of the Revolution; and, since 2013, the 'Paseo Cimentación', offering access to the foundations of the base of the monument.

On 20 November 2010, with the re-inauguration of the site, Marcelo Ebrard made a call to realise a 'new revolution' in the country but via a peaceful route based on democratic norms and the retaking of the ideals of the armed struggle that had exploded in 1910 for greater social justice. He declared: 'the new Plaza de la República will soon reunite us to celebrate the triumph of the left and the values advanced in Mexico'.³ As one contemporary tourist pamphlet linked to this icon of Mexico City also boasts, 'visitors can enjoy a rich spatial experience' at the Monument to the Revolution. But how are the multiple trajectories and everyday lived experiences of this space best understood? If space is conceived as the 'simultaneity of stories-so-far', following Doreen Massey, what does the Monument to the Revolution reveal about Mexico's 'grand performances of state' across time?⁴

The purpose of this article is to analyse the different functions of capitalist space in modern Mexico through the lived experience of the Monument to the Revolution and to assert a focus on monuments as a way of writing history about the urban landscape and the modern state.⁵ As Henri Lefebvre states,

societies thought that they received and transmitted natural space ... But if there is a history of space, if there is a specificity to space according to periods, societies, modes and relations of production, then there is a space of capitalism.⁶

But what is the space that capitalism produces in the built environment of the city form, as a cradle of accumulation, and what are the different functions of capitalist space in relation to modern state formation? My perspective is one that acknowledges that the extant literature has *either* crucially asserted the significance of space within the post-revolutionary state of Mexico *or*

³ 'Reinaugura Marcelo Ebrard la Plaza de la República con llamado a nueva revolución', *La Jornada*, 21 Nov. 2010, p. 8.

⁴ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 12 and Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 86.

⁵ Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernisation and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876–1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), p. 91 and Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. xv.

⁶ Henri Lefebvre, 'Space: Social Product and Use Value', in J. W. Freiburg (ed.), *Critical Sociology: European Perspectives* (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1979), pp. 286–7.

significantly focused on the Monument to the Revolution to understand how monuments transform space.⁷ Yet such endeavours have paradoxically done so in such a way as to produce a despatialised view of the development of capitalism, which means providing few theoretical signposts for dealing with social, political and economic differences across space despite the point that conceptions of spatiality, or their apparent absence, have had profound implications throughout history.⁸ My central argument, then, is that the ways in which the state organises space in our everyday lives through the streets we walk, the monuments we visit, and the places where we meet can be appreciated by an approach linked to Antonio Gramsci's understanding of the condition of 'passive revolution', referring to a set of constructed and contested class practices, where aspects of the social relations of capitalist development are either instituted and/or expanded, resulting in both 'revolutionary' rupture and a 'restoration' of social relations across different scales and spatial aspects of the state.⁹ But a critical questioning of the notion of passive revolution also needs to be maintained when engaging alternative contexts, which will be undertaken in this article. A set of theoretical departure points, derived from both Antonio Gramsci and Henri Lefebvre, will therefore assist in revealing modernism not simply as a Western implant, a derivative particularisation of a universal type, but as a universal process that can exist only in particularity. A focus on what is called here *everyday passive revolution*, linked to localised conditions of modernity and architectural codifications of power, thus breaks new ground by tying together state–civil society struggles in the production of space in modern Mexico. It does so by examining forms of state formation through the condition of everyday passive revolution; this becomes then a way of studying the spaces of class struggle as a correlate to

⁷ See, respectively, Mary Kay Vaughan, 'Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics in the Mexican Revolution', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 79: 2 (1999), pp. 269–305 and Benjamin, *La Revolución*, p. 118.

⁸ Neil Smith, 'The Geography of Uneven Development', in Bill Dunn and Hugo Radice (eds.), *100 Years of Permanent Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), p. 184.

⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971) (hereafter *SPN*), pp. 114–18, Q10I1\$61. The convention used for citing the *Prison Notebooks* throughout this article is that compiled by Marcus Green, available at the website of the International Gramsci Society: <http://www.internationalgramscisociety.org/> (date of last access 5 Aug. 2017). All citations comprise reference to the selected anthologies, notebook (Q) and section (§) numbers, to enable the reader to trace their specific collocation.

Two pieces might help a reader unfamiliar with the notion of passive revolution: 1) Adam David Morton, 'The Continuum of Passive Revolution', *Capital & Class*, 34: 1 (2010), pp. 315–42; and 2) the short blog post, Adam David Morton, 'What is this Thing Called Passive Revolution?', *Progress in Political Economy* (24 Feb. 2016): <http://ppesydney.net/what-is-this-thing-called-passive-revolution/>; accessed 1 Aug. 2017.

literature focusing on the historical sociology of the modern state.¹⁰ Moreover, how the force of capital comes to change the meaning of the production of space and place is significant in attempting to address the different functions of capitalist space across time. Architecture, as an expression of everyday passive revolution, may therefore reveal something meaningful about modernity's translation within the spatial context of peripheral geographies across different periods of history.

The article proceeds to deliver this argument by, first, detailing the theoretical departure points drawn from Antonio Gramsci and Henri Lefebvre in order to gain a purchase on Mexican modernity through the Monument to the Revolution as a condition of everyday passive revolution. In order to address the different functions of capitalist space, a second section chronicles a periodisation of the Monument to the Revolution in order to assess the political economy of space and place construction across different periods of history. Mentioning briefly the *antiguo régimen* of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship (1876–1910), the focus in this second main section moves from the legacies of the Porfiriato to how these concrete residues were configured into the subsequent Monument to the Revolution. My analysis then embarks on detailing several overlapping periods shaping everyday passive revolution linked to the Monument to the Revolution. These include the periods of (1) state power (1933–68); (2) state crisis (1968–80s); and (3) state rollback (1980s–present), albeit acknowledging that these are not discrete instances but, rather, to use Doreen Massey's term, co-implicated trajectories. The article then closes by offering some reflections on everyday passive revolution as an expression of wider forms of cosmopolitan modernism.¹¹ Overall, then, the aim is to 'describe, analyse, and theorise these distinctive meanings, practices, trajectories, transformations and consequences of modernist architecture in developing countries

¹⁰ See also Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Sujatha Fernandes, *Who Can Stop the Drums? Urban Social Movements in Chávez's Venezuela* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Adam David Morton, *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013); Massimo Modonesi, 'Revoluciones pasivas en América Latina: Una aproximación gramsciana a la caracterización de los gobiernos progresistas de inicio de siglo', in Massimo Modonesi (ed.), *Horizontes gramscianos: Estudios en torno al pensamiento de Antonio Gramsci* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2013); Chris Hesketh and Adam David Morton, 'Spaces of Uneven Development and Class Struggle in Bolivia: Transformation or *trasformismo*?', *Antipode*, 46: 1 (2014), pp. 149–69; Chris Hesketh, 'Producing State Space in Chiapas: Passive Revolution and Everyday Life', *Critical Sociology*, 42: 2 (2016), pp. 211–28; and Chris Hesketh, *Spaces of Capital / Spaces of Resistance: Mexico and the Global Political Economy* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2017).

¹¹ Sibel Bozdoğan and Esra Akcan, *Turkey: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), p. 9.

in the mid-twentieth century'.¹² Or, put differently, to reveal how modernist architecture in peripheral geographical spaces has a shared spatiality and temporality that is nevertheless also expressive of an active, original and unique (rather than simply imitative, derivative and imported) process.

Departure Points on Lived Space

As an opening proposition on conceiving space, any stark division that slices through space and time by diminishing their relationality is to be avoided in order to highlight space as a product of social relations coexisting across time. Time (history) and space (geography) should therefore be considered as co-implicated in order that we can recognise the open-ended multiplicities and trajectories of space–time.¹³ From this stance, a thread can be pulled to develop new thoughts on conceiving lived space and time by weaving together an understanding of the spatiality and history of power relations. The first of these strands comes from a hitherto neglected set of insights on lived space drawn from Antonio Gramsci.

Beyond the Territory-museum of History

With regard to the challenges posed by the fragmented process of state formation and hegemony in Italy during the Risorgimento (1860–1) – conditions that were themselves imposed by regionally distinct social contestations over territory – Gramsci drew attention to two types of foreign intellectuals within the peninsula. There were those that came to assimilate its living culture under the guidance of Italian intellectuals, with the latter attempting but failing to organise a national culture and acquire consciousness across Italy as a territory. In contrast, reference is then made to those intellectuals ‘who came to look at Italy as a territory-museum of history’ based on a cosmopolitanism divorced from national history.¹⁴ Akin to a foreign *flâneur* – the literary type of urban explorer and connoisseur of modern urbanism – the new intellectual ‘believes himself [*sic*] to be endowed with great social dignity; his mode of existence is “eloquence” that stirs the emotion’ as constructor, organiser and permanent persuader.¹⁵ Written across different notebooks in November 1930, these preliminary sketches on space and place construction by Gramsci can be related to one of his most fascinating vignettes on the scalar spaces of state power. Penned at the same time, again in 1930,

¹² Duanfang Lu, ‘Architecture, Development and Identity’, in Duanfang Lu (ed.), *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 3.

¹³ Massey, *For Space*, p. 59.

¹⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 2, ed. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) (hereafter *PNII*), pp. 351–2, Q5§100.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 243, Q4§72.

Gramsci's interest is drawn in this note to what he refers to as the 'material structure of ideology' referring to:

how the ideological structure of a ruling class is actually organised: that is, the material organisation meant to preserve, defend and develop the theoretical or ideological 'front'.¹⁶

Paramount here in his analysis is reference to the role played by the press in general, publishing houses, libraries, schools, the church, associations and clubs, as well as the very spatial grid and layout of streets and their names. As he goes on to indicate, all these factors should be evaluated in order to 'inculcate the habit of assessing the forces of agency in society with greater caution and precision'.¹⁷

In a further note from 1930 entitled 'The New Architecture', the changing character of cityscapes in rapidly developing contexts is remarked on, with Gramsci noting that skyscrapers in the United States, as 'great architectural art', can be born only after wider basic needs – as part of a broader sense of an architectural complex consisting of streets, squares, gardens and parks – have been fulfilled.¹⁸ This is where the context of passive revolution becomes relevant, because it is through the relationship between the urban and the rural that the reorganisation of state power and associated class relations is projected, which assists in understanding the expansion of capitalism as a mode of production.

In Italy there have been the beginnings of a Fordist fanfare: exaltation of big cities, overall planning for the Milan conurbation, etc.; the affirmation that capitalism is only at its beginnings and that it is necessary to prepare for its grandiose patterns of development.¹⁹

Captured here are the territorial, spatial and geographical dimensions of uneven development as well as the combined character of its crystallisation within a social formation. The reorganisation of the labour process enacted by the introduction of new methods of rationalisation, regulation and disciplining as well as their impact on familial arrangements, the gendered division of labour, and cultural and ideological forms that were all manifested within 'Americanism and Fordism', led Gramsci to a profound questioning of the spatial and temporal spread of capitalism.

According to Gramsci, now writing in 1932, there were at least two different but linked registers of the spatial and temporal spread of capitalism

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52, Q3§49.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53, Q3§49.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 125, Q3§155.

¹⁹ Gramsci, *SPN*, p. 287, Q22§2.

experienced through the condition of passive revolution. First there is reference to the ‘historical fact that popular initiative is missing from the development of Italian history’, or a recognition of elite-engineered social and political reform that draws on foreign capital and associated ideas while lacking a national–popular base.²⁰ At the same time, however, the notion of passive revolution is linked in this note to an alternate, second, sense to capture how a revolutionary form of political transformation is pressed into a conservative project of restoration while lacking a radical national–popular moment. It refers here to

the fact that ‘progress’ occurs as the reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and incoherent rebelliousness of the popular masses – a reaction consisting of ‘restorations’ that agree to some part of the popular demands and are therefore ‘progressive restorations’, or ‘revolutions-restorations’, or even ‘passive revolutions’.²¹

‘The problem’, as Antonio Gramsci states, ‘is to see whether in the dialectic of “revolution/restoration” it is revolution or restoration which predominates’.²² What is key to a passive revolution, then, is the manner in which state space, or the institutional materiality of the state, comes to bear on the developmental process. Hence the ‘significance of a “Piedmont”-type function in passive revolutions – i.e. the fact that a state replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle of renewal’.²³ Overall, then, a passive revolution is signposted by a ‘statisation’ of civil society, a situation when the ruling class is unable to fully integrate the people through conditions of hegemony, or when ‘they were aiming at the creation of a modern state ... [but] in fact produced a bastard’.²⁴

As alluded to earlier, though, there is the potential pitfall of diffusionist reasoning that can edge into the notion of passive revolution, meaning that capitalism is surveyed through a wave of diffusion unfolding outward from advanced centres of capitalist development to the non-European periphery without there taking place an examination of the conditions of social struggle, appropriation and assimilation in the latter.²⁵ This is most clearly expressed by Gramsci, when stating that

the impetus of progress is not tightly linked to a vast local economic development ... but is instead the reflection of international developments which transmit their

²⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 3, ed. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) (hereafter *PNIII*), p. 252, Q8§25.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 252, Q8§25.

²² Gramsci, *SPN*, p. 219, Q13§27.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 105–6, Q15§59.

²⁴ On ‘statisation’, see Hugues Portelli, *Gramsci y el bloque histórico* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1973), p. 33 and Gramsci, *SPN*, p. 90, Q19§28; Gramsci, *PNIII*, p. 378, Q8§236.

²⁵ James M. Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford, 1993).

ideological currents to the periphery – currents born of the productive development of the more advanced countries.²⁶

This opens up a challenge as to whether passive revolution can avoid a diffusionist reading and address the complexity of local everyday lived relations of state power. After all, for Gramsci with regard to passive revolution, ‘the conception remains a dialectical one – in other words, presupposes, indeed postulates as necessary, a vigorous antithesis’.²⁷ How, then, can the potential homogenising spaces of capitalism be revealed more dialectically as moments of rupture, which establish spaces of difference or differential space?

The Right to the Production of Space

The second thread to weave through a focus on space and how the modern state constitutes conditions of everyday passive revolution involves recourse to the dialectical production of capitalist space addressed by Henri Lefebvre. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre asserts that ‘any definition of architecture itself requires a prior analysis and exposition of the concept of space’ and, subsequently, that, ‘monumental buildings mask the will to power and the arbitrariness of power beneath the signs and surfaces which claim to express collective will and collective thought’.²⁸ Congruent with Lefebvre, capitalism produces an abstract space with the city form as a cradle of accumulation generating surplus value.²⁹ Dominant social practices therefore suffuse abstract space in order to reduce contradictions and diffuse legitimating ideology through the social fabric whereby ‘desire and needs are uncoupled, then crudely put back together’ by the articulation of ‘tranquillising ideas’.³⁰ The urban form is therefore replete with dominant class rule using abstract space as a mode of organising the means of production to generate profit.³¹ As such, the accumulation of capital within the urban form relies on the production of surplus value (for instance, through investments in urbanisation, in air space, or the tourism industry); the realisation of surplus value (for example, through the organisation of urban consumption and everyday life); and the allocation of surplus value (such as in ground rents).³² Having acknowledged

²⁶ Gramsci, *SPN*, p. 116, Q10II§61.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 114, Q15§62.

²⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1974/1991), pp. 15, 143.

²⁹ Lefebvre, ‘Space: Social Product and Use Value’, p. 287.

³⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 309.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

³² Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1970/2003), p. 35 and Henri Lefebvre, ‘Space and the State’, in Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1978/2009), p. 247.

the city form as intrinsic to the accumulation, realisation and distribution of surplus value, though, it would be mistaken to reduce this critique of political economy to urban space at the neglect of the rural–urban dialectic. As Lefebvre clearly puts it, ‘surplus value is initially formed in the countryside’.³³

However, it is the modern state that claims a right to the production of space. ‘The state uses space in such a way that it ensures its control of places, its strict hierarchy, the homogeneity of the whole, and the segregation of the parts.’³⁴ A logic of homogeneity is projected through state space and its claims to arbitrate, occupy, map, control, reproduce and contain. The state mode of production is specifically characterised by the hegemony of abstract space, according to Lefebvre. This is where ‘the state becomes more clearly the agent, even the guiding hand, of this production’ of space.³⁵ In answer to his own question, ‘Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched?’, Lefebvre responds by arguing that

the concept of hegemony was introduced by Gramsci in order to describe the future role of the working class in the building of a new society, but it is also useful for analysing the action of the bourgeoisie, especially in relation to space.³⁶

Through the abstract space of capitalism, then, a monument or work of architecture can be situated within the triumphal rise of the state, as a spatial support, engaged in the partitioning of space to subdue a class-divided civil society.³⁷ This is where ‘the state is consolidating on a world scale ... imposing analogous, if not homologous, measures irrespective of political ideology, historical background, or the class origins of those in power’.³⁸

The transformation of space also, of course, produces its own contradictions. Alongside them, the abstract space produced by capitalism, with its homogenising and repetitive tendencies is, then, also the intervention of class struggle in the right to the production of space and the snowballing of spatial differences.³⁹ This means addressing how the spatial role of the state also produces contradictions that shape counter-spaces attempting to thwart state strategies. Such contradictions unfold *in* space and therefore become contradictions *of* space when a place is marked as different within the urban complex. Differential space therefore refers to contrasts, oppositions, juxtapositions (or heterotopias) that are articulated within and against the homogenising structures of state space (or isotopies). Isotopies cover the long straight

³³ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 24.

³⁴ Lefebvre, ‘Space: Social Product and Use Value’, p. 288.

³⁵ Lefebvre, ‘Space and the State’, p. 228.

³⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 10–11.

³⁷ Lefebvre, ‘Space and the State’, p. 225.

³⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 23.

³⁹ Lefebvre, ‘Space: Social Product and Use Value’, p. 288.

lines, broad avenues, voids ('enormous plazas, nocturnal squares') and empty perspectives of the urban form that become increasingly subjected to the dynamics of capitalism, whereas heterotopias refer to the places of the other, the distant orders, the cuts and sutures across the urban grid where revolt, the presentation of counter-projects and violent protest may unfold.⁴⁰ The formation of spaces of difference, or differential space, thus represents for capitalism an antagonistic and ruinous tendency.

A political economy of space and its production thus necessarily draws our attention to the realm of the everyday as an extension *and* contestation of capitalist social relations of production. How capitalism survives and integrates space to produce the everyday through daily activities, stressing the homogenous, the repetitive, and segregation is therefore crucial. Yet the grid of urban space, across the street and the monument, can also be regarded as crucial places shaping the resistance to order in everyday life. Although reflective of repressive relations, or the seat of institutional power, monuments can equally be a site of collective redemption expressing an ethical and aesthetic power that can project a sense of alternative being, a differential space, an awareness of utopic space.⁴¹ 'Architecture oscillates', states Lefebvre, 'between monumental splendour and the cynicism of the "habitus"'.⁴² Part of the critique of everyday life, then, is about the exposure of *modernity* in order to reveal its pretention to newness, its concealment of regurgitation and aspects of everyday cultural repetition as part of the reproduction of the relations of production.⁴³ Equally, for Gramsci, the crucial issue (with reference to the contradictory forces within state-civil society relations, including intellectuals and political parties) was 'how they react against "habitude" [*consuetudine*]'.⁴⁴ This necessitates a recognition and reconsideration of monumental projects at the level of habiting and a need to situate that lived space within the dialectic of both revolution and restoration as therefore crucial to rethinking a political economy of state space.

Attention now turns to the horizon of meanings that is condensed in the Monument to the Revolution and how the stories-so-far at this location of state space may be considered as part of a periodisation of everyday passive revolution.

Periodising the Stories-so-far of the Monument to the Revolution

The Porfiriato was marked by an admiration and appeal to foreign capital, with the Porfirian elite obsessed with the architecture, urbanism and

⁴⁰ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, pp. 128–32, 131, 37–40.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴² Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production* (London: Allison & Busby, 1976), p. 88.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁴ Gramsci, *PNIII*, p. 209, Q7§77.

philosophical ideas of specifically European modern influences. As Eric Hobsbawm details, across Europe there was the mass production of traditions from 1870 onwards, so that in France the ‘mania for putting up monuments’ was paralleled by the invented traditions of Germany exemplified by the avenue of victory leading to the *Siegestsäule* (Victory Column) in Berlin, which witnessed the extraordinary Valhalla of Hohenzollern princes amidst an ‘accumulation of masonry and statuary’.⁴⁵ In France, ‘the opulent ensembles on the Place de la République and the Place de la Nation in Paris provided the ultimate version of such statuary’.⁴⁶ Hence, just as the French Third Republic embarked on a liberal tradition that was concentrated in symbolic institutionalisation, commemorative festivals, and monumentality, so too did the Porfiriato dictatorship. In 1892 the newspaper *El Universal* directly referred to the mania for assembling statues in Mexico that was reaching widespread proportions.⁴⁷

While Paris under Georges-Eugène Haussmann was shaped by a distinctive class project in which the state and financiers took the lead to transform a capital city shaped by bourgeois power into a city of capital, Mexico City was stamped with a similar model of modern urbanism.⁴⁸ There was a build-up of monuments on Paseo de la Reforma that included the placement of an equestrian statue of Carlos IV (1852); a Christopher Columbus statue (1876); the Monument to Cuauhtémoc (1887), dedicated to the last Aztec ruler of Tenochtitlán; and the Monument to Independence (1910), with its ‘Winged Victory’, itself evoking the *Siegestsäule* in Berlin. This was the projection of the ‘ideal city’ under the Porfiriato, which Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo regarded as a ‘frontier expansion’ of cosmopolitan, modern, imitative, mimetic and aesthetic advancement.⁴⁹ For ‘foreign *flâneurs*’ writing around this time of the *fin de siècle*, like Charles Macomb Flandrau in *Viva México!*, places such as Paseo de la Reforma marked a liminal territory, torn between European-style architecture marked by mansard roofs and ‘detached dwellings that seek to superimpose Mexican characteristics’. For Flandrau, this noblest of avenues in Mexico City conveys an ‘uncompleted modernity’.⁵⁰ Alternative chroniclers, a little later in the 1940s, such as Salvador Novo, take us to other places such as the Monument of the Revolution or buildings such as

⁴⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914’, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 270, 272, 275–6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁴⁷ ‘El arte y la historia: manía de estatuas’, *El Universal*, 6 Aug. 1892, as cited by Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, p. 77.

⁴⁸ David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 24 and Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Charles Macomb Flandrau, *Viva México!* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1908/1921), p. 284.

the Lotería Nacional skyscraper then under construction, or the trinity of the Hotel Regis, Hotel Reforma and Hotel del Prado, and various skyscrapers that were all elbowing their way along new, sweeping arteries. As Novo comments, 'Leaving behind the simple Monument to the Revolution ... the insoluble problem of naming the streets of our city has surely arisen from the pathologically rampant [*acromegálico*] and unforeseeable way in which it has scattered itself while growing.'⁵¹ According to Novo, the 'new grandeur' of Mexico is so much embedded within this process of blending that the country is seen as coming of age and taking its place among the cosmopolitan capitals of the world in the twentieth century. Novo sums up: 'some of us [that] live in Mexico look back in regret on colonial times, others sigh for Díaz and others still take pride living in skyscrapers'.⁵² Hence the importance of comprehending the particular within the project of modernism in Mexico – beyond the simple diffusion of Euro-American capitalism – to appreciate the 'entangled modernities' shaping global processes.⁵³

This grandeur of liminal space in Mexico City shaped during the *antiguo régimen* of the Porfiriato was, however, marked by foreign capital. Hence the 'streets were paved, sewers were laid, and lights were installed by American, Canadian, German and English firms'.⁵⁴ The city's flagship commercial stores at the time (and since) included El Puerto de Liverpool (The Port of Liverpool), founded in 1888, and El Palacio de Hierro (The Iron Palace), founded in 1891. Both were established under the aegis of foreign capital linked to the Banco de Londres y México (Bank of London and Mexico) and the important holdings of the Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas (Bank of Paris and the Low Countries). A dominant class fraction known as the Barcelonnette Group had ties to José Yves Limantour, Finance Minister under Díaz, and would come to shape the forming of the Banco Nacional de México (Mexican National Bank) in 1884 to span manufacturing, commerce, finance and some landowning and mining interests in Mexico.⁵⁵ Hence, from the way in which streets spatially resembled Parisian boulevards, to the wave of monumentalism and statue construction, to the novelists and poets who translated European influences, to the flattening out of the urban landscape with the appearance of European and American styles all within the orbit of the dominance of foreign capital, Mexico experienced the move

⁵¹ Salvador Novo, *Nueva grandeza mexicana* (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1947), p. 91.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵³ Duanfang Lu, 'Entangled Modernities in Architecture', in C. Greig Chrysler, Stephen Cairns and Hilde Heynen (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (London: Sage, 2012).

⁵⁴ Michael Johns, *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997), pp. 16–17.

⁵⁵ Nora Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 46–8.

to modernism alongside the pressures of developmental catch-up. This was a liminal position that can be apprehended within a wider ‘anguish of backwardness’, referring to the situation caught between the modernist aspirations of emerging bourgeois society and the constraints and limits of uneven development.⁵⁶ Hence, for Marshall Berman, ‘the modernism of underdevelopment is forced to build on fantasies and dreams of modernity, to nourish itself on an intimacy and a struggle with mirages and ghosts’.⁵⁷ In Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo’s inspired history of Mexico City at the turn of the twentieth century, this is grasped as the simultaneous and chaotic mixture of feelings, knowledges (*vivencias*, ‘lived moments’) and wonderings (*ensimismamientos*) that are produced by an urban walk, a building, a monument, a street, or a corner.⁵⁸ It is within this liminal space, betwixt and between, that Mexico experienced an exuberant form of modernism with an incomplete form of modernisation.⁵⁹ In this hybrid culture the Monument to the Revolution and the attrition of the utopia of revolution that it came to represent was born. Put differently, the contradictions of the Mexican Revolution became chiselled into its built environment to reveal its inner paradoxes in delivering an ‘incomplete modernity’, starting with the era of post-revolutionary state power.⁶⁰ Hence the turn to consider the following overlapping periodisation of the stories-so-far of the Monument to the Revolution to question how Mexican spatial and architectural expressions addressed the seemingly utopian call of revolution within a post-revolutionary period that presented the problem of ‘incomplete modernisation’.⁶¹

State Power, 1933–68

The site of the Monument to the Revolution was originally proposed in 1897 as the Federal Legislative Palace. The design was initially awarded to an Italian architect, Pietro Paolo Quaglia, who died before construction commenced. The government then selected French architect Émile Bénard to design the building in neo-Classical style to deliver a double cupola structure at the centre (made of iron), with the building situated along an axial line linking Avenida Madero to Avenida Juárez from the National Palace to the proposed

⁵⁶ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1982), pp. 231–2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁵⁸ Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, p. xvi.

⁵⁹ Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 41.

⁶⁰ Patrice Elizabeth Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution: Architecture, Society and Politics in Mexico City, 1920–1940* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), pp. 128–33.

⁶¹ Luis E. Carranza, *Architecture as Revolution: Episodes in the History of Modern Mexico* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), p. 4.

Legislative Palace, which was to resemble the United States Capitol.⁶² Among the public works undertaken by the government from 1877 to 1910, the Legislative Palace was one of the highest in terms of total investment, amounting to some 10 per cent of the total outlay of MX\$ 83.9 million that was exceeded only by public works for the distribution of drinking water and of the telegraph system throughout the Federal District, and by the construction of what would become the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Palace).⁶³ With the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, the specific attempt of the Legislative Palace to project state space and reorganise the geography of state territory remained unfulfilled. Nevertheless, one recent revisionist assessment has attempted to recover the 'inconclusive dream' of Émile Bénard to argue that the 'artist builder commemorates the essential foundations of independence and revolution to feed a reflection on the values, principles and virtues still in force on which this model of modernity rests'.⁶⁴

But it was not until the post-revolutionary period that the iron skeleton was to become part of the construction of a new articulation of state space. Initially it was suggested as early as 1925 that the old palace would become a 'cathedral of work' celebrating national and international worker productivity, still linked to the architect Émile Bénard.⁶⁵ 'It was supposed to be a sort of Napoleonic grave for all the nation's heroes.'⁶⁶ The remnants of the Legislative Palace, it was proposed, would be used 'under restrained economic conditions, in a complete architectural composition with monumentality and extraordinary commemorative force'.⁶⁷ Yet it was only in 1932 that the Mexican architect Carlos Obregón Santacilia appealed to the Minister of the Treasury, Alberto J. Pani, to end the demolition of the site and consider a commemorative initiative as a monument to *La Revolución*. As Thomas Benjamin explains, spaces of state power were sought at this time to legitimate the liberal and revolutionary past as part of the institutionalisation of the revolution and its conflictual fractions.⁶⁸ Of most interest here is a document

⁶² Archivo General de la Nación, Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas (AGN-SCOP), 'Informe sobre el estado probable de las obras el 16 de septiembre de 1910', Palacio Legislativo, exp. 530/733.

⁶³ Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, p. 87.

⁶⁴ Javier Pérez Siller and Martha Bénard Calva, *El sueño inconcluso de Émile Bénard y su Palacio Legislativo, hoy Monumento a la Revolución* (Mexico City: Artes de México, 2009), p. 14.

⁶⁵ Salvador Villaseñor, Letter to President Plutarco Elías Calles, 'La Catedral del Trabajo debe surgir del Palacio Legislativo' (21 May 1925), Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Presidentes, Abelardo L. Rodríguez (1932-4) (AGN-ALR), file 017/44. This letter was related to a newspaper column surrounding these proposals; see Salvador Villaseñor, 'Las Obras del Palacio Legislativo Federal', *El Observador* (3 May 1925), AGN-ALR, exp. 017/44.

⁶⁶ Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, p. 37.

⁶⁷ Plutarco Elías Calles and Alberto J. Pani, 'Iniciativa para la construcción de un Monumento a la Revolución', presentada al C. Presidente de la República por los C. C. Gral. don Plutarco Elías Calles e. Ing. don Alberto J. Pani (15 Jan. 1933), AGN-ALR, exp. 017/44.

⁶⁸ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, p. 127.

written on 15 January 1933 to President Abelardo Rodríguez, from Alberto Pani and Plutarco Elías Calles (Jefe Máximo, or Chief Executive), that details how the new building should contrast with the ‘rich and lavish appearance’ but ‘detestable taste’ of the new Teatro Nacional (National Theatre) (or delayed Palacio de Bellas Artes). The latter was considered detestable because it was of ‘a *pâpier maché* [*sic*] architecture executed in Carrara marble’,⁶⁹ which heralds from Italy and also adorns the Benito Juárez Hemicycle (1911) and the statues of Miguel Hidalgo and other heroes at the base of the victory column of the Monument to Independence (1910).⁷⁰ The eventual *recinto* stone of the Monument of the Revolution – solidified lava known for its rustic appearance and porous finish common in the manufacture of *molcajete* (pestle and mortar) – could not be in more direct contrast. As Obregón Santacilia later noted, the monument would fuse Mexican themes with Art Déco motifs, in a style of ‘modern regionalism’ to become a ‘triumphal arch’ arising from the ruins of the *antiguo régimen* to perpetuate the social revolution that defeated it.⁷¹ Indeed, Obregón Santacilia captured the Art Déco mode of composition in a series of major public buildings, monuments and private residences without jettisoning national symbolism.⁷² ‘The Monument to the Revolution’, therefore, ‘acts as a “gateway”, an urban portal, and a pure space of transition’ between the condition of its immediate past and its attempt at revolutionary memorialisation.⁷³

Equally significant was the contracting of Oliverio Martínez, the sculptor known for his equestrian statue of Emiliano Zapata in Cuautla, to design four sculpture groups to be placed at each corner of the base of the monument’s double dome. Thought to represent National Independence, Reform, the Redemption of the Peasant and the Redemption of the Worker, these sculptures further enforce a distinctly Mexican mode of composition blending the state ideology of *mexicanidad* with conceptions of modernism. The monument was intended to be paid for through national subscription; letters were sent in 1933 to state and territorial governors across the country via the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público (Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit, SHCP) to create a commission for its funding.⁷⁴ This garnering of such local state patronage, at the inception of the

⁶⁹ Calles and Pani, ‘Iniciativa para la construcción de un Monumento a la Revolución’.

⁷⁰ Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, pp. 105, 108; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, pp. 22, 32.

⁷¹ Carlos Obregón Santacilia, *El Monumento a la Revolución: Simbolismo e historia* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1960), pp. 42–3, 73.

⁷² See Kathryn O’Rourke, *Modern Architecture in Mexico City: History, Representation and the Shaping of a Capital* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016).

⁷³ Carlos G. Mijares Bracho, ‘The Architecture of Carlos Obregón Santacilia: A Work of Its Time and Context’, in Edward R. Burian (ed.), *Modernity and Architecture of Mexico* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. 157.

⁷⁴ ‘A los C. C. Secretarios de Estado y Jefes de los Departamentos del Ejecutivo Federal’ (15 Jan. 1933), AGN-ALR, exp. 017/44.

Monument to the Revolution, was pivotal. It demonstrates the various geographical scales of statecraft, i.e. the multiscalar projection of state power across its internal scalar divisions (traversing central, metropolitan, regional, subnational and local territorial boundaries).⁷⁵ Funds were also received from the National Army, the Asociación de Bancos de México (Association of Mexican Banks, ABM) and state employees including from within the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas (Secretariat of Communications and Public Works, SCOP) alongside smaller donations from workers and businesses.⁷⁶ There were still problems in financing the Monument to the Revolution, with debts amounting to MX\$ 10,000 per month, paid through the Banco de México, and repeated controversies surrounding payments to contractors and the laying-off of workers linked to the monument.⁷⁷ With the funds created by the *colecta* (collection) covering only 10 per cent of the cost of construction, the remainder came from the Federal Government and the ruling Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR), precursor to the subsequent ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI).⁷⁸ Nevertheless the Monument to the Revolution was completed on 20 November 1938, Revolution Day, albeit without an official inauguration ceremony (see [Figure 1](#)). Commenting at the time on the spatiality of Mexico City, with its parallel streets and 'elongated and lopsided' arrangement on its mountain plateau, Graham Greene, another foreign *flâneur*, recognised how 'Juárez is closed by the great Arch of the Republic.'⁷⁹ His contemporary, Evelyn Waugh, did not display such diffidence, and described the 'formidable structure' of the 'triumphal arch' of the Monument to the Revolution with its 'startling ugliness' as 'certainly one of the most tediously hideous buildings in the New World'.⁸⁰

Since then the Plaza de la República has been the spatial site for official ceremonies and the Monument to the Revolution has witnessed the coalescence of annual sports festivals. 'The twentieth of November commemorations evolved

⁷⁵ The multiscalar dimensions of state power, or the wider geographical scales and territorial contours of statecraft, are today captured at the site surrounding the Monument to the Revolution by: (1) the presence of a series of individual plaques along Avenida de la República representing all thirty-two federal entities (including Mexico City) that constitute the republic of the United Mexican States; and (2) the equivalent presence at the opposite end of Plaza de la República of a series of individual plinths or columns representing all the capitals of those federal entities along Calle Valentín Gómez Farías.

⁷⁶ Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution*, pp. 79–81.

⁷⁷ Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1934–40) (AGN-LC), exp. 545.3/146 (4 April 1935) and AGN-LC, exp. 562.2/6 (25 Feb. 1935).

⁷⁸ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, p. 132.

⁷⁹ Graham Greene, *The Lawless Roads* (London: Penguin, 1939/2006), p. 62.

⁸⁰ Evelyn Waugh, *Robbery under Law: The Mexican Object-Lesson* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1939), pp. 31–2. I would like to thank Alan Knight for bringing this *aperçu* to my attention.

Figure 1. *The Monument to the Revolution soon after its completion in 1938 as represented in an everyday postcard from the period. The imposing scale of the monument – prior to the disruption of the surrounding urban context by state agencies under construction in the background – is conveyed in this image. Private collection of the author*



from low-key civic rituals into a grandiose state-sponsored spectacle.⁸¹ Beginning in 1942, by order of Congress, the ashes or mortal remains of revolutionary ‘heroes’ have been interned in the bases of the monument, with documents confirming that a contradictory and conflictual pantheon of heroes of the revolution be situated there.⁸² Hence Venustiano Carranza (1942), Francisco I. Madero (1960), Plutarco Elías Calles (1969) and Lazaro Cárdenas (1970) have all been transferred to the pillars of the monument; and Francisco ‘Pancho’ Villa has been assumed to have joined them (1976).⁸³

Yet despite magisterial analysis of the manner of construction of the monument from the ruins of the old regime to the transformation of the revolution into government, how the monument transforms space is commented on only *en passant* in the extant literature.⁸⁴ This leaves further room for reflection on

⁸¹ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, p. 115.

⁸² Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Presidentes, Manuel Avila Camacho (1940–6) (AGN-MAC), exp. 545.22/549 (13 April 1946).

⁸³ This has been contested recently, with controversies about the removal of Villa’s cadaver to the site and disputes about the identity of the body then interred there: see Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *Pancho Villa: Una biografía narrativa* (Mexico City: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, 2006), pp. 838–44.

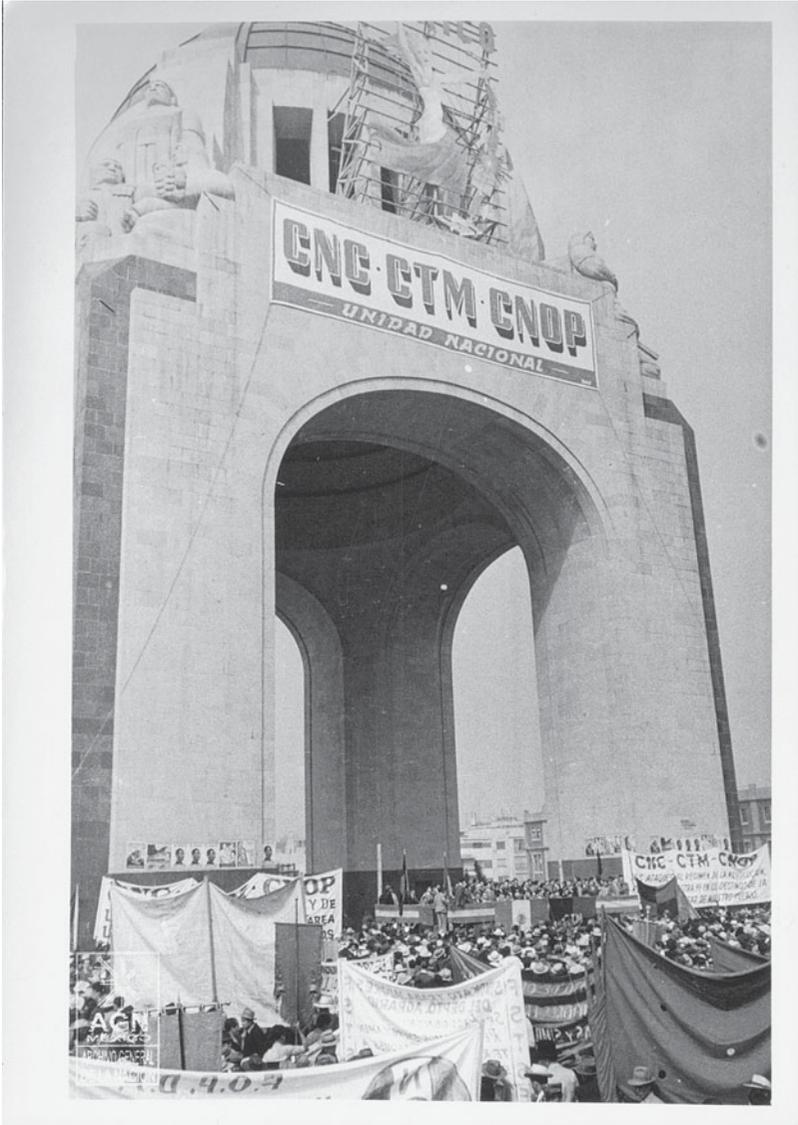
⁸⁴ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, p. 118; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, pp. 41–2.

the role of the Monument to the Revolution in the organisation of space, the spatial logistics of state power, and the contradictions of space. Missing from wider commentaries is the recognition that state space too itself was and is bound to the site surrounding the monument at the Plaza de la República. This was so because the form of state at this time had not yet secured the formal *appearance* of the separation of the 'purely economic' mechanisms of the relations of production embedded in the market from the 'purely political' coercive aspects of state organisation. This means that there was still a partial fusion of economic and political powers whereby surplus extraction was bound up in an 'extra-economic' way with the state and its juridical and administrative functions. The direct 'extra-economic' – or purely political – pressures of overt coercion resting on juridical and political coercive instruments therefore remained necessary to compel the appropriation of surplus labour.⁸⁵ Hence, in an 'extra-economic', or purely political, sense the state was clearly present in this phase around the site of the Monument to the Revolution through the location of various agencies. These have included, directly opposite the monument, the location from 1947 until 1985 of the offices of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (Federal Security Directorate, DFS) – the Mexican intelligence agency central to the prosecution of the 'dirty war' against left-wing guerrilla movements and students across the 1960s and 1970s – with direct ties to the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States. Also, various features and legacies of the Mexican corporatist state, reinforcing the spatiality of the site in a purely political sense, have included most prominently the offices of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Mexican Workers' Confederation, CTM), present since 1936, celebrating its 80th anniversary in 2016. Also, in this era of state power, aspects of the developmental state were reproduced at this spatial site including the Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado (Institute for Social Security and Services for State Workers, ISSSTE), established in 1959, that administers health and social security systems to federal workers, as well as the offices of the Congreso del Trabajo (Workers' Congress, CT) and the Banco Obrero (Workers' Bank) that were both at one stage located around the Plaza de la República. For these reasons it can be argued that the Monument to the Revolution was constructed metaphorically and literally within the shadow of the state (see [Figure 2](#)). Along with Octavio Paz it is possible to state that, at the end of this period, both 'Moscow and Mexico City are full of gagged people and monuments to the Revolution.'⁸⁶ The

⁸⁵ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 28–31.

⁸⁶ Octavio Paz, 'Olimpiada y Tlatelolco' [1969], in Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), p. 247.

Figure 2. Meeting at the Monument to the Revolution in defence of the 'revolutionary spirit' (16 December 1945). Speakers included Vicente Lombardo Toledano; the monument is bedecked with the acronyms of the leading organisations of the corporatist state to project 'national unity'. Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Hermanos Mayo Cronológico (AGN-HMCR), no. 1.925.



spatial dimension is therefore realised when viewing how the site of the Monument to the Revolution was intrinsic to the extension of the state mode of production where 'the state becomes more clearly the agent, even the guiding hand, of this production' of space.⁸⁷ Yet, although the monument may have served as a place of pilgrimage and the legitimation of state power under conditions of passive revolution, it has also been perceived anew through the lens of protest and confrontation, by proponents of both reform and revolution, becoming a fulcrum for the rebuke of state power.⁸⁸ The significance therefore emerges of considering the Monument to the Revolution not just as a space of state control but also as a fractured space of difference representing an antagonistic and ruinous tendency for the capitalist state.

State Crisis, 1968–80s

So far, it has been argued that there is a plural temporal dimension to space, that space is a simultaneity of stories or wonderings (Tenorio-Trillo's '*ensimismamientos*'), which enables recognition of several overlapping periods shaping the spatial history of the Monument to the Revolution. Space can never be closed. It is a sphere of multiplicity in which ongoing social relations are constantly under construction as they draw together different trajectories. Moments of crisis and violent suppression of workers' and students' struggle existed in earlier periods – including those of the railway workers and students (1958–9), teachers and oil workers (1960) and telephone operators (1962) – but it was the subsequent student movement and labour struggles that marked a new sequence of spatial contradictions at the Monument to the Revolution.⁸⁹ The general background here includes the massacre of some 300 students on 2 October 1968 at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco alongside the renewed *insurgencia obrera* (labour insurgency) and disaffection among the middle classes with import substitution industrialisation (ISI) in the 1970s. These struggles unfolded in a wider context of urban and rural guerrilla movements in the same decade that was also stained by the Corpus Christi massacre, on 10 June 1971: following a march by 10,000 students to the Monument to the Revolution, an estimated

⁸⁷ Lefebvre, 'Space and the State', p. 228.

⁸⁸ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, pp. 161–2.

⁸⁹ Rodrigo Moya's famous photograph of the Monument to the Revolution captures one such scene from 1958, with a burning bus underneath the arch of the monument following two weeks of protests by students, teachers and discontented bus drivers; see Archivo Fotográfico Rodrigo Moya, <http://archivo fotograficorodrigomoya.blogspot.com.au/search/?q=monumento>; accessed 1 Aug. 2017. The photography of Héctor García also wonderfully captures the unrest of the 1958 student and teacher protests; see Raquel Navarro Castillo, *Héctor García en ojo! Una revista que ve* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2012).

150 were killed and ‘disappeared’ as a result of the actions taken by *Los Halcones* (‘The Falcons’), a paramilitary black (covert) operations group trained by the DFS.⁹⁰ These social movements further underline how struggles over state space and the right to the production of space impacted on the site of the Monument to the Revolution under conditions of everyday passive revolution.

The counter-spaces designed to thwart state strategies of hierarchy and contest the ruling-class hold on the hegemony of abstract space snowballed in the wake of the student movement. Paco Ignacio Taibo II writes that the student movement ‘dwelled in a smaller city within a vast metropolis’: to the east their enclave’s border was marked by the statue of General Zaragoza (now Zaragoza metro station); to the north, on Avenida Insurgentes, by the statues of Indios Verdes (also on the metro); to the west the former H. Steele y Compañía factory in Polanco indicating the border of the ‘industrial’ section; and to the south the laboratories of Tlalpan that signalled the extremities of the known city.⁹¹ Within this territory, the students were masters of Del Valle and Navarte, San Rafael and Santa María, Condesa and Roma. ‘To us reform and revolution’, argues Paco Ignacio Taibo II, ‘were just avenues. All other neighbourhoods were foreign to us: places you might pass through, but where you never lingered.’⁹² The student mobilisation gave birth to Vietnam solidarity demonstrations and *brigadismo* (in which mobile action groups would hold flash rallies anywhere in the city), as well as the occupation of schools and the creation of libertarian common spaces based on gatherings. In 1975 a protest led by students, members of the Partido Comunista Mexicano (Mexican Communist Party, PCM), and the Taller de Gráfica Popular (People’s Graphic Workshop, TGP) against the dictatorship of General Franco in Spain was held at the Monument to the Revolution following the assassination of activist members of Euskadi ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom, ETA). The protesters can be seen hanging banners under the plaque that is an architectural tribute at the monument to Carlos Obregón Santacilia.⁹³

Meanwhile important groups in the independent labour movement started to form in the 1970s, with democratising mobilisations including the Tendencia Democrática (Democratic Tendency, TD), a dissident movement within the Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana (United Syndicate of Electrical Workers of the Mexican Republic,

⁹⁰ Judith Adler Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983), pp. 202–3.

⁹¹ Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *'68* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 1991/2006).

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁹³ Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Hermanos Mayo Cronológico (AGN-HMCR), no. 31.223.

SUTERM). Led by Rafael Galván, this dissident movement of electrical workers organised key protests, meetings and rallies at the Monument to the Revolution across 1975 and 1976. Allied with the student movement, the TD was subjected to police repression, with strikebreakers and agitators deployed at their protests, resulting in arrests, injuries and deaths. 'The percentage of all democratic labour conflicts involving physical violence increased from 14.3 per cent in 1970 to 22.9 per cent in 1976, peaking in 1977.'⁹⁴ The archives reveal that a demonstration numbering approximately 150,000 at the Monument to the Revolution on 20 March 1976 led by the TD, but with links to students, academic staff and members of the SUTERM across the states of Mexico, was monitored by *Los Halcones* alongside some 27,000 policemen.⁹⁵ State power here was supported by 15 riot trucks and 25 army tanks in order to combat opponents of the regime who were using the mythic image of the Monument to the Revolution and its symbolism against the state itself.⁹⁶ Newspapers at the time propagated the untruth that protesters would be armed, in order to legitimise the potential for armed conflict, while the DFS took photographs of the event whilst reporting on the speeches and monitoring the procession through to the Zócalo.⁹⁷ Although the struggle was defeated, leading to the virtual elimination of the electrical workers' mobilisation within the TD, protests continued at the monument (Figure 3). These included the anniversary student protest of 1977 against the earlier 1971 Corpus Christi Massacre, protests by the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (Mexican Electricians' Syndicate, SME) against attacks on the union's rights to freedom of association (1978), further protests by students and parties of the left in solidarity with Vietnam demonstrations (1979), and a march by members of the Sindicato Unitario Nacional de Trabajadores Universitarios (National United Syndicate of University Workers, SUNTU), the Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (Workers' Authentic Front, FAT) and elements of the Fourth International to announce a university strike (1980).⁹⁸

Taken as a whole, this era displays the site of the monument as essentially a void that is contested by the logic of repressive space where the remains of the revolution are buried. But it also demands or calls forth a concrete space of habiting organised around an alternative set of spatial practices that are

⁹⁴ Enrique de la Garza Toledo, 'Independent Trade Unionism in Mexico: Past Developments and Future Perspectives', in Kevin J. Middlebrook (ed.), *Unions, Workers and the State in Mexico* (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies, 1991), p. 160.

⁹⁵ Archivo General de la Nación, Sección de la Dirección Federal de Seguridad y Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (AGN-SCDFS-IPS), caja 1951 A (1975–7), exp. 2.

⁹⁶ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, p. 162.

⁹⁷ AGN-SCDFS-IPS, caja 1951 A, exp. 3.

⁹⁸ AGN-HMCR, no. 32.324; AGN-HMCR, no. 33.468; and AGN-HMCR, no. 33.995.

Figure 3. *Preparing for student protests at the Monument to the Revolution on the anniversary (11 June 1977) of the Corpus Christi massacre of 1971, AGN-HMCR, no. 32.324*



neglected, namely the explosion of new spaces of difference in the struggle for the right to space. As Lefebvre reminds us:

An existing space may outlive its original purpose and the *raison d'être* which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one.⁹⁹

As a social space, then, the Plaza de la República was at the centre of this struggle over state space. This struggle was not settled. This is because, ‘rather than resolving the contradictions of space, state action makes them worse’.¹⁰⁰ The struggle for a different space became repressed but not suppressed. By the 1980s, the labour insurgency merged into a new tendency with the formation of the Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (National Coordinating Committee of Teachers in Education, CNTE), an active teachers’ opposition movement located in Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero, while the ’68 student movement remained latent, another ever-vigilant

⁹⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁰ Lefebvre, ‘Space and the State’, p. 238.

element of popular resistance. Nevertheless, the empty spaces of the Monument to the Revolution that were meant to signify the promises of the revolution became increasingly abandoned from the 1980s onwards. Octavio Paz notes that architecture is a society's 'incorruptible witness' and in edifices such as the Monument to the Revolution in the twentieth century there was represented the vulgar and heavy architecture of state megalomania, the production of a cement giant, that came to represent the revolution that had defeated itself.¹⁰¹ As one commentary on the Monument to the Revolution speculates, the original architect Carlos Obregón Santacilia would no doubt have complained about the state of neglect into which the site had fallen by the 1980s, including the poor lighting, the cables and ropes just left hanging from lamps, and the low quality of superimposed government images on the building façades. Yet, continuing with Víctor Jiménez's observations, the monument was destined to last, not least because Obregón Santacilia was careful for it to be so:

the rhetoric that served for decades to legitimise the discourse of the Revolution and many governments could be abandoned. But the stone is a huge reminder of the significance of this monument ... [that is] here to stay for a long time.¹⁰²

The plurality of meanings expressed by the Monument to the Revolution thus far took on a new basis in the period up to the present. A pertinent sub-question in this third era – when space is no longer solely the site of repression – therefore becomes: 'Where then is the architecture of enjoyment?'¹⁰³

State Rollback, 1980s to the Present

By the 1980s the Plaza de la República and the Monument to the Revolution increasingly looked like a forlorn space, occupied by elements of the purely political state, a status that continued into the 1990s with the unfolding of neoliberalisation. Here neoliberalisation refers to an accumulation strategy and attempted hegemonic project to further the continuance of the capital relation and secure the state as a social form in its apparent separation from the economy. As Bob Jessop highlights, 'the crucial factor in the success of accumulation strategies remains the integration of the circuit of capital and hence the consolidation of support within the dominant fractions and classes', that is, class struggle over hegemony.¹⁰⁴ In Mexico, the conflicts of interest that

¹⁰¹ Octavio Paz, 'Vuelta a "El laberinto de la soledad"' [1975], in Paz, *Laberinto de la soledad*, pp. 345, 338.

¹⁰² Víctor Jiménez, *Carlos Obregón Santacilia: Pionero de la arquitectura mexicana* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2001), pp. 135–6.

¹⁰³ Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, ed. Łukasz Stanek (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1973/2014), p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 201.

eventually culminated in such neoliberalisation – reflected especially in the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–94) – were pursued while attempting to reconfigure a renewed hegemonic project of the then ruling PRI.¹⁰⁵ The state creates the conditions for the structural power of capital under neoliberalisation through the rollout of market-oriented disciplinary processes involving regulatory priorities favouring the interests of capital. The process of rollback, then, refers to the initial onset of neoliberalisation, when restructuring projects are focused on dismantling specific institutions in the name of deregulation and democratisation while attacking labour unions, planning agencies, entitlement systems and public bureaucracies through funding cuts, the downsizing of organisations and privatisation. Yet it should be clear that neoliberalisation processes of market-oriented reform are also a form of re-regulatory restructuring to secure the rule of capital.¹⁰⁶ Mexico's neoliberalisation involved a policy paradigm shift from the developmentalism of ISI to the implementation of fiscal and monetary austerity associated with structural adjustment and a set of institutional reforms to the state initiated through the mid-1980s onwards.¹⁰⁷ The result was a struggle-driven process that nevertheless secured a capitalist type of state dominated by the logic of accumulation so that the form of the modern state came to be increasingly distinguished by its apparent institutional separation from the economy. As Ellen Meiksins Wood clarifies, in such circumstances this differentiation means that the powers of surplus appropriation and distribution do not rest on 'purely political' forms of extra-economic coercion.¹⁰⁸ Instead, the coercive power of capitalist exploitation is conducted through consolidation of private property and mediated by conditions of market compulsion. In such instances, the contractual relation between formally 'free' producers (who have only their labour power to sell) and appropriators (who control the means of production) are subjected to conditions of 'purely economic' exchange. Neoliberalisation can therefore be understood as a struggle-driven process to consolidate the appearance of the separation of the economic (private) sphere and the political (public) sphere of the state in capitalism.

The new consolidation of the basis of state power under neoliberalisation in Mexico has had profound consequences for the social function of the Monument to the Revolution following the recent renovations. The social relations of production of neoliberalisation have been projected onto the space of the monument, becoming inscribed there, to reproduce that space

¹⁰⁵ Morton, *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico*, pp. 113–20.

¹⁰⁶ Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 22–3.

¹⁰⁷ Sarah Babb, *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 172–83.

¹⁰⁸ Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism*, pp. 28–31.

itself in new circumstances. Although the commodification of the monument had been present in earlier periods (witness souvenir postcards available from the 1930s onwards, the four-centavo stamp from 1934, or the MX\$ 200 old peso coin from 1985 that was matched by the MX\$ 100 new peso banknote in 2010), the hundred-year anniversary initiated a step change in the deployment of state power in controlling space through new forms of surplus value transfers. In the multiplicity of overlapping trajectories marking the periodisation of the monument, it is the era of neoliberalisation that unlocks the massification of the Monument to the Revolution. Here the role of monopoly rent in providing a spatial fix for capital accumulation comes to the fore in terms of extracting surpluses from local differences and aesthetic meanings that have become commodified. As Lefebvre recognises, programmed consumption is intrinsic to the political economy of space and the reproduction of the social relations of production in everyday life.¹⁰⁹ Monopoly rent comes to the fore for at least two reasons: (1) because of the way the state controls a specific resource, commodity, or location in relation to a certain kind of activity, which enables the extraction of monopoly rents from those desiring to use it; and (2) when the land, resource, or asset and its proximate surroundings are directly traded upon so that scarcity can be created by withholding land, creating monopoly rent out of uniqueness.¹¹⁰ David Harvey therefore argues that:

the knowledge and heritage industries, the vitality and ferment of cultural production, signature architecture and the cultivation of aesthetic judgements have become powerful constitutive elements in the politics of urban entrepreneurialism.¹¹¹

It is still the case that, as part of the sports festival on Revolution Day (20 November), with activities organised under the aegis of the Instituto del Deporte del Distrito Federal (Federal District Sports Institute, IDDF), anything from squash to taekwondo, badminton, tennis, table-tennis, wrestling, football, netball, gymnastics or basketball can be played for free at the Plaza de la República. Yet it is now matched by the commodification of the Monument to the Revolution through a private concession granted to Grupo MYT as a consequence of the renovation. As the Assistant Director of the National Museum of the Revolution has revealed, the explicit plan of the renovation was to create a tourist corridor from Avenida Juárez to Avenida Reforma and the *centro histórico* (historic centre) in an attempt to reactivate the political economy of Colonia Tabacalera, which surrounds the site.

¹⁰⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 89 and Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism*, p. 85.

¹¹⁰ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), pp. 90–2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

From the space of the monument as ‘a plaza of the PRI’, the concession to Grupo MYT in administering tourist access to the Monument to the Revolution has resulted in the site becoming a ‘Holy Land of Jerusalem’ of competing vested interests.¹¹² While the Secretaría de Cultura (Culture Secretariat) of the City of Mexico is responsible for the Museum of the Revolution, Grupo MYT administers the Monument to the Revolution from the gift shop to the café to the observation deck and has launched an array of representational spatial products from monument mugs to 3D puzzles and more that are now readily available in the gift store where previously there was no such outlet.¹¹³

In Mexico the minimum wage is officially MX\$ 70 a day (or US\$ 4) with 6.5 million workers or 13 per cent of the workforce believed to be earning this figure.¹¹⁴ However, Mexico’s hourly wages are about a fifth lower than China’s, and the percentage of the labour force that does not receive any income, or receives only twice the minimum wage, was estimated at about 65 per cent in 2009.¹¹⁵ It would require then at least a week’s salary to pay for a sunrise breakfast visit at the Monument to the Revolution (MX\$ 300); or a t-shirt (MX\$ 195), with a female-only size announcing across the chest ‘*Arriba la revolución*’ (‘Up with the revolution’); or a general admission ticket to the 360° observation deck, the panoramic elevator and summit, and the foundation gallery (MX\$ 110).¹¹⁶

This is in stark contrast to the control over the Museum, exercised by the Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda (Secretariat of Urban Development and Housing, SEDUVI) – a further public space authority – that has kept the fee for public access to the Museum at a far more affordable MX\$ 28, which attracts 350,000 visitors per annum and over 6,000 visitors on a Sunday (when entrance is free). As Miguel Ángel Berumen Campos, the former Director of the National Museum of the Revolution, has confirmed, ‘the Monument is ruled by private concession’, revealing a tense standoff between the Museum and the Monument authorities.¹¹⁷ Despite the

¹¹² Personal interview with Alan Llanos Velázquez, Assistant Director of the Museo Nacional de la Revolución (National Museum of the Revolution) (Plaza de la República, Mexico City, 2 Dec. 2015).

¹¹³ See Grupo MYT, <http://www.grupomyt.com/>; accessed 2 Dec. 2015.

¹¹⁴ Wall Street Journal, ‘Mexico Raises Minimum Wage for 2015 by 4.2%, in Line with Inflation’, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/mexico-raises-minimum-wage-for-2015-by-4-2-in-line-with-inflation-1419049866> (19 Dec. 2014); accessed 20 Nov. 2015.

¹¹⁵ Susanne Soederberg, *Debtfare States and the Poverty Industry: Money, Discipline and the Surplus Population* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 197–8.

¹¹⁶ Monumento a la Revolución, <http://www.mrm.mx>; accessed 20 Nov. 2015.

¹¹⁷ Personal interview with Miguel Ángel Berumen Campos, Director of the Museo Nacional de la Revolución (Plaza de la República, Mexico City, 10 Dec. 2015). There is even a spatial conflict over the entrances to the two attractions. The public has to enter through the one entrance of the Monument to the Revolution in order to access the Museum at the back of

Museum also providing a crucial social function through its control over the Galería de Arte Contemporáneo (Contemporary Art Gallery) and free music evenings through the Tabacalera Jazz Club at the base of the site, this is dwarfed by events held at the Monument to the Revolution. The latter include the 'bread and circus' attractions held in recent years such as free concerts at the monument, with the appearance of Britney Spears in December 2011 attracting some 50,000 people to start the seasonal celebrations, or the Festival Internacional de las Luces de México (Mexican International Festival of Light, FILUX), featuring the monument (10–13 November 2016). But equally it would include events such as rallies at the site of the monument organised by the Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico (Secretariat of Economic Development, SEDECO) precisely to promote, since 2015, registrations for its Programa de Fortalecimiento a los Micronegocios (Programme of Strengthening Small Businesses), which is aimed at enforcing greater market discipline and extending credit to the wider population (through 'debtfarism', i.e. lending to social groups who are usually excluded from it).¹¹⁸ Also, many of the everyday visitors to the Plaza de la República – who came to enjoy the water fountains, walk the dog, relax on a break from work, skip school, skateboard, play football, dance, fly a drone, or hang around on a date – confirmed that they had not been to the Museum.¹¹⁹

Surrounded by the offices of Banamex and Teletech, the still crumbling El Frontón building, and new convenience store outlets such as Oxxo, 7 Eleven, and the Don Porfirio Caffé [*sic*], members of Sección XXII of the CNTE, active in their occupation of the Plaza de la República to contest education reforms, confirmed the 'class divisions' that dissect the surrounding site. On one side of the Plaza, locations to eat or use basic facilities (toilets, laundrettes) would be affordable – in Tabacalera around the streets of Edison and Mariscal close to the Revolución metro station. On the opposite side of the Plaza, towards Avenida Reforma, restaurant meals would be in excess of MX\$ 100 (compared to MX\$ 40 and less towards the metro), indicating how space is

the complex. In the Director's phrasing people 'get captured' by attending the observation deck and miss the experience of the Museum.

¹¹⁸ Soederberg, *Debtfare States*, p. 46.

¹¹⁹ Reflective of a typical few hours on any day, some 15 interviews were conducted at the site of the Plaza de la República across different times to include a cross-section of people including families, friends and couples visiting the location as well as workers, including street cleaners, city police and employees of nearby office; see Ray Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016). Such interviewees were from Mexico City but also wider parts of the country such as Hidalgo (killing time during a hospital visit) and across the broader Estado de México (Plaza de la República, Mexico City, 2 December 2015).

divided.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, developments such as the completion in 2014 of the remodelling of the Revolución metro station at a cost of some MX\$ 74 million, alongside the existence of new offices like the Instituto del Fondo Nacional para el Consumo de los Trabajadores (Institute of the National Fund for Workers' Consumption, INFONACOT) – a government entity that grants debtfare to affiliated employees – adjacent to the CTM headquarters, all give presence to the ongoing neoliberal transformation of space at the Plaza de la República (see Figure 4).

Yet it would be mistaken to assume that these past and present forms of spatial control are somehow lost on the collective consciences of everyday life in constructing and contesting the spatiality of the Monument to the Revolution. We can agree with Lefebvre when he writes, 'today more than ever, the class struggle is inscribed in space'.¹²¹ For just as capital in movement has attempted to destroy the uniqueness of the *centro histórico* of Mexico City and its neighbouring locales, differential space has also been reasserted to contest its smooth functioning. In immediate everydayness, the Plaza de la República has been reclaimed as a social space of leisure through the renovation of the water fountains at the base of the monument. Hijacking its original monumentality and altering space, the result of such enjoyment has been a thorough appropriating and repurposing – or *détournement* – of the architecture.¹²² Youthful expressions of enjoyment and frivolity have returned to the site – a temporary Ferris wheel was once located at the monument, as depicted in the 1966 photograph by Hector García entitled 'Rueda de la Fortuna'¹²³ – with adolescents chasing each other through the fountains and hawkers selling street toys as passers-by look on.¹²⁴ Yet it is within these same spaces that oppositional movements have also still formed to undermine the forces of capital and provide moments of rupture by asserting the collective power of bodies in public space. The latter have included the mobilisation of trade unionists and *campesinos* at the Monument to the Revolution, in support of the 44,000 sacked workers of the SME who struggled against the closure of the state-owned *Compañía Luz y Fuerza del Centro* (Central Light and Power Company), since October 2009.¹²⁵ Also, there has been the response

¹²⁰ Personal interview with a representative of Sección XXII of the CNTE (Plaza de la República, Mexico City, 2 Dec. 2015).

¹²¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 55.

¹²² Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, pp. 95–8.

¹²³ Luis Humberto González, 'Hector García, Fotógrafo de la Ciudad (Fragmentos)', in *Luna Córnea*, no. 8 (Mexico City: Centro de la Imagen, 1995), p. 61.

¹²⁴ Again, personal interviews affirmed the site of Plaza de la República as a social space for the enjoyment of younger people within a secure environment that is cleaned regularly, is supported by medical staff, and offers the presence of city police (Plaza de la República, Mexico City, 2 Dec. 2015).

¹²⁵ 'Campesinos arribarán en caravana para apoyar al SME en la *toma* del DF', *La Jornada*, 2 Dec. 2009, p. 8.

Figure 4. *The Monument to the Revolution in the twenty-first century. The spatial impact of this landmark building is somewhat diminished by the taller buildings that now surround it, including private financial institutions, such as Banca Afirme, in the background, where previously the Congreso del Trabajo (in the 1970s) and the Banco Obrero (in the 1980s) were located. (In his typology on monuments, García Canclini, Hybrid Cultures, pp. 217–25 notes how urban sprawl may neutralise or alter a monument's significance through disruption of scale or commercial saturation of the context.) Private collection of the author*



of the #YoSoy132 student movement that gathered space during the 2012 election to protest against Enrique Peña Nieto and wider issues of media manipulation surrounding the presidential election. An annual 'Lesbian March' in support of respect for women's human rights, ending at the monument on Plaza de la República, organised by the Comité Organizador de la Marcha Lésbica (Coordinating Committee of Lesbian Marchers, COMAL) and 22 other feminist groups is an alternative example of lived space and reveals another different claim on the right to the city, i.e. that not to be excluded from its centrality and movement.¹²⁶ The largely unsolved murder and disappearance of 43 students from a teachers' college in Ayotzinapa, in

¹²⁶ 'Marcha de lesbianas exige respeto a los derechos humanos de ese sector', *La Jornada*, 20 March 2011, p. 33.

the southern state of Guerrero, in September 2014, has sparked rallies at the Monument to the Revolution, while angry *gasolinazo* protests in January 2017, over the 20 per cent hike in state-set fuel prices, have also been held at the site. The *plantón* (encampment) of teachers from Sección XXII of the CNTE, since 2013, also persisted at the base of the Monument to the Revolution, despite state pressure for the teachers to clean up the site and move on. These teachers, many from Oaxaca, Chiapas and Guerrero, were protesting against the state's education reform proposals to introduce market forces into the hiring and promotion of teachers, and the provision of basic services to schools.¹²⁷ In response to a question as to how long the *plantón* might remain in the Plaza, even in reduced form, one Oaxacan representative from the CNTE stated 'in order to defend our rights it could take a lifetime; that is the only limit'.¹²⁸ Whether it be the resurrection in part of the student movement, or the militant return of independent trade unionism linked to the CNTE after its displacement from the 1970s following the SUTERM demonstrations, or the presence of petroleum protests, the ghosts of the past have contested the everydayness of new state space at the Monument to the Revolution. How these struggles over spaces of difference can move from organising in and dominating place to *commanding space* remains a key challenge for social movements aiming to articulate another space.¹²⁹

Conclusion: The Monument to Passive Revolution

In his classic exposition, Le Corbusier provocatively exclaimed: 'Architecture or Revolution. Revolution can be avoided.'¹³⁰ Mexico avoided neither. It experienced what has been termed a sinuous Latin American modernity, marked by an unevenness of development, a hybrid culture, containing the utopian promises of revolution and the failures of an exuberant modernism.¹³¹ These multiple logics mean that modernity in Mexico and Latin America more generally was not a simple transplant of or diffusion from Euro-American influences. There is a specific liminal profile to the processes of 'modernism without modernity' in Latin America, linked to the upheavals of revolution and counter-revolution and the mimetic combination of foreign trends with

¹²⁷ 'Limpian campamento de CNTE en Monumento a la Revolución' *La Jornada*, 10 Nov. 2015, online: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/ultimas/2015/11/10/retiran-carpas-del-planton-de-cnte-en-monumento-a-la-revolucion-8660.html>; accessed 20 Nov. 2015.

¹²⁸ Personal interview with a representative of Sección XXII of CNTE (Plaza de la República, Mexico City, 2 Dec. 2015).

¹²⁹ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), p. 324.

¹³⁰ Le Corbusier, *Towards an Architecture* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 1924/2008), p. 307.

¹³¹ García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 54.

more vernacular adaptation into the everydayness of local particularities. In terms of monumentalism, this was marked as much along Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City, as along Avenida Central in Rio de Janeiro, in Praça dos Três Poderes in Brasília, or along Avenida de Mayo in Buenos Aires.¹³² As Henri Lefebvre states, 'inasmuch as global space bears the inscriptions and prescriptions of power, its effectiveness redounds upon ... the levels of the architectural (monument/building) and the urban'.¹³³

My aim in this article has been to examine the horizon of meanings that have surrounded the contemporary history and modernism of the Monument to the Revolution in order to reveal an overlapping periodisation of the social functions that the Plaza de la República has had in the past and continues to perform in the present. In so doing, I have argued that an understanding of the multiplicity of meanings projected by a periodisation of the Monument to the Revolution 'inculcates the habit of assessing the forces of agency in society with greater caution and precision', as Gramsci advises.¹³⁴ Such an overlapping periodisation assists in the endeavour to avoid a flattened or undifferentiated spatial and temporal perspective on the monument's significance, or despatialised presentation.

On the 'world-historical necromancy' of representing the past in the present of bourgeois society, Karl Marx noted that 'the resurrection of the dead in those revolutions served the purposes of glorifying the new struggles; not of parodying the old'.¹³⁵ But in Mexico there has been a unique configuration of *both* glorifying the new struggles stemming from the revolution *and* parodying the old. This has unfolded by conjuring up the spirits of the past to service the present so that the dead generations *do* weigh on the brains of the living, sometimes with nightmarish remembrances. In the choice between architecture and revolution, revolution cannot be avoided. The contradiction between revolution and restoration has been presented here as a defining characteristic of the condition of passive revolution, referring to how processes of revolutionary rupture become displaced, thwarted, domesticated and averted, leading to a continuation of the previous political order of capital. The crucial point of the analysis is that the condition of passive revolution captures both elements of 'revolt' and 'revival' to 'express the concept of a return to a condition that had already existed before'.¹³⁶

¹³² Mauro F. Guillén, 'Modernism without Modernity: The Rise of Modernist Architecture in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, 1890–1940', *Latin American Research Review*, 39: 2 (2004), pp. 6–34; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, p. 11; and James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 117–30.

¹³³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 228.

¹³⁴ Gramsci, *PNII*, p. 53, Q3§49.

¹³⁵ Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 12.

¹³⁶ Gramsci, *PNII*, p. 387, Q5§136.

My argument has been that the Monument to the Revolution is a unique spatial site offering a material symbolisation of the dialectical tensions of the Mexican Revolution. It carries the social pathologies induced by the collective forces of revolution alongside the modernism induced by the post-revolutionary state mode of production. As Henri Lefebvre questions, though, with pertinence to the Monument to the Revolution: ‘Would such a project, with its post-revolutionary appearance and intent, be counterrevolutionary when expressed in a pre-revolutionary manner?’¹³⁷ My focus has been on the specific spatial practices, the form of the codifications of architecture, that have contributed to the construction and reproduction of the modern state through the site of the Monument to the Revolution in conditions of passive revolution. In terms of the synthesis of revolution and restoration, then, ‘el Monumento a la Revolución’ is best understood as ‘el monumento a la revolución pasiva’ in Mexico. The slogan ‘To the Revolution, of yesterday, of today, of tomorrow, of always’ was originally intended for inclusion at the site of the Monument to the Revolution in the 1930s.¹³⁸ However, with no loss of irony, it would become embossed on glass panels surrounding the restored observation deck following the completion of the centenary renovations in 2010 by the private company Grupo MYT. The Monument to the Revolution therefore represents a congealed form of the Mexican Revolution, chiselled into the legacy of its built environment, to retain both the old Porfirian structure and a form of monumentalisation flowing from the revolution as an expression of Mexico’s incomplete entrance into an entangled modernity. Additionally, as argued, the spatial and historical consolidation of the Monument to the Revolution is embedded in the transition from the purely political ‘extra-economic’ pressure, or overt coercive presence, of the state to the consolidation of the ‘purely economic’ rise of the powers of market compulsion in capitalism, which is still of course backed by the coercive armour of the state. Within that transition is the rise to prominence of the site of the Monument to the Revolution as a place for the realisation of monopoly rent within the logic of capital accumulation, or how surpluses can be extracted from its history, heritage and aesthetic meaning through commodification. The commodification of the monument within the context of neoliberalisation is thus the latest manifestation of this transition. As Marx states in his account of the circulation of commodities as exchange-value: ‘Not even are the bones of saints and still less are more delicate *res sacrosanctae, extra commercium hominum* able to withstand this alchemy’.¹³⁹ Yet, at the same time, the

¹³⁷ Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, p. 54.

¹³⁸ Calles and Pani, ‘Iniciativa para la construcción de un Monumento a la Revolución’.

¹³⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1887/1996), p. 142. The Latin phrase alludes to the doctrine of *res extra commercium* in Roman law, whereby certain things may not be subject to

Monument to the Revolution is a profoundly ambiguous carrier of utopian promise, even today. How the present generation communicates with the redemptive hopes of past generations in shaping the future is still a key vector forming the struggles over differential space in, around, and beyond the Plaza de la República. In accord with García Canclini, then:

We must rejoice that the city is not merely a pristine continuation of tidy spaces where historical landmarks are quietly integrated into contemporary life but, rather, a living organism capable of merging its past and present struggles.¹⁴⁰

The significance of the Monument to the Revolution then, in terms of the 'habiting' of everyday passive revolution, may still turn on the effective participation of the present generation in shaping the utopian desires from past generations, as future struggles may attest.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Este artículo analiza la economía política del concepto de Henri Lefebvre del 'espacio estatal' con atención específica en el Monumento a la Revolución en la Ciudad de México, terminado en 1938. Las condiciones de la modernidad pueden relacionarse en general con el ordenamiento espacial de los paisajes urbanos al interior de las capitales definiendo lo que es específico de la identidad nacional con procesos imitativos. Antonio Gramsci capturó tales sentimientos por medio de su entendimiento de la condición de la 'revolución pasiva'. La contribución clave de este artículo es el llamar la atención a las formas de revolución pasiva cotidiana, reconociendo tanto los aspectos cosmopolitas como los vernáculos de la arquitectura moderna en relación al Monumento a la Revolución. Un enfoque en el Monumento a la Revolución, entonces, revela las prácticas relevantes espaciales específicas de la revolución pasiva cotidiana con la codificación de la arquitectura y la economía política de la formación estatal moderna en México. Estos temas se revelan, literalmente, como expresiones vitales en la arquitectura de la pasiva revolución cotidiana en el México moderno.

Spanish keywords: Antonio Gramsci, Henri Lefebvre, revolución pasiva, espacio, modernismo, México, Monumento a la Revolución

Portuguese abstract. Este artigo analisa a economia política do conceito de Henri Lefebvre do 'espaço estatal', dando atenção especial ao Monumento à Revolução na Cidade do México, finalizado em 1938. As condições da modernidade podem, em geral, ser relacionadas à organização das paisagens urbanas nas capitais, combinando as especificidades da identidade nacional com processos imitativos. Antonio

private rights (such as the air or the high seas), and cannot therefore be traded; the whole phrase means 'sacrosanct things, excluded from human commerce'.

¹⁴⁰ García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 227.

Gramsci conseguiu capturar essa essência através de seu entendimento da condição de ‘revolução passiva’. A contribuição principal deste artigo é chamar a atenção à formas de *revoluções passivas cotidianas*, reconhecendo ambos os aspectos cosmopolitas e vernaculares da arquitetura moderna em relação ao Monumento à Revolução. Assim sendo, o foco no Monumento à Revolução revela práticas espaciais específicas de revoluções passivas cotidianas relevantes à codificação da arquitetura e da economia política de formação do estado moderno no México. Tais elementos são revelados, literalmente, como expressões vitais na arquitetura das revoluções passivas cotidianas no México moderno.

Portuguese keywords: Antonio Gramsci, Henri Lefebvre, revolução passiva, espaço, modernismo, México, Monumento à Revolução