

Henri Lefebvre on State, Space and Territory

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Abstract

In this article, we offer an account of how the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre can be read as a theorist of territory. While Lefebvre's writings on state space have generated some interest in recent years, the territorial dimensions of his thinking on this issue have not been explored. Meanwhile, the question of territory has been oddly undertheorized in the post-1970s literatures on international relations and spatialized political economy. Against this background, we suggest that Lefebvre's work contains some insightful, if unsystematic, observations on the relationship between states, space and territory. Following consideration of Agnew's (1994) influential injunction that social scientists transcend the "territorial trap", we develop this reading of Lefebvre with reference to three key dimensions of his approach to state space as territory—first, the production of territory; second, state territorial strategies; and third, the "territory effect," namely, the state's tendency, through its territorial form, to naturalize its own transformative effects on sociospatial relations. Thus construed, Lefebvre's approach productively raises the issue of how the territorial trap is actually constructed and reproduced.

Keywords

Lefebvre, state theory, space, territory, territorial trap, territory effect

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Henri Lefebvre

on State, Space and Territory

Introduction

In this article, we offer an account of how the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) can be read as a theorist of territory. While Lefebvre is well-known as a theorist of space, his works on the state are only now beginning to be discussed in English language literature. During the last decade, in the context of a broader intensification of scholarly interest in the geographies of state space (Brenner et. al. 2003), Lefebvre has been appropriately credited for his pioneering, reflexive attention to the spatial articulations of state power (Brenner 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Elden 2004). To date, however, the territorial dimensions of Lefebvre's thinking on state space have not been explored. Meanwhile, despite its centrality to any understanding of state space, the question of territory has been oddly undertheorized in the post-1970s literatures on international relations and spatialized political economy (see Agnew and Corbridge 1995; Painter 2009). While Lefebvre did not conceptualize territory in systematic terms, he did offer some insightful, if incomplete, observations on its relation to modern state power that, we argue, have considerable relevance to the contemporary social sciences.

In a first step, building upon John Agnew's (1994) influential challenge to transcend the entrenched "territorial trap" within international political economy, we advocate a more sustained theoretical interrogation of the relationship between states, space and territory. This entails not only a more systematic consideration of the state in spatialized approaches to political economy, but also an explicit, reflexive theorization of territory itself as an essential feature of modern state space. Second, we offer a reading of Lefebvre as a theorist of the state-space-territory relation, and more specifically, of state space *as* territory.

Third, we consider Lefebvre's largely implicit ideas on the production of territory. This in turn facilitates an interpretation of his approach to the politics of space as a way to conceptualize what might be termed state territorial strategies. Finally, we suggest that his work offers a valuable perspective on what we shall term the "territory effect"—the state's tendency, through its territorial form, to naturalize (at once to mask and to normalize) its own transformative, intensely patterning effects upon sociospatial relations. Thus construed, Lefebvre's approach productively raises the issue of how the territorial trap is actually constructed and reproduced, whether in social science, statecraft, politics or everyday life.

Revisiting the Territorial Trap

Fifteen years ago, John Agnew (1994) challenged social scientists to transcend the "territorial trap"—a set of intellectually constraining notions regarding the role of territory in political-economic life. According to Agnew, the territorial trap entailed three uninterrogated geographical assumptions—(i) that the state commands sovereignty over its entire territorial jurisdiction, including the economic processes that unfold "within" it; (ii) that political-economic life is neatly separated into "domestic" and "foreign" (or "international") realms; and (iii) that the state "contains" economy and society (or that economy and society are defined by state boundaries).¹ Agnew argued that such assumptions are problematic because they underpin a pervasive tendency in international political economy to naturalize—that is, to take for granted—the territorial extension, constitution and boundedness of state power and political-economic life more generally.

Agnew questioned these assumptions not to imply that they have no purchase on the geographies of modern capitalist development, but to suggest that they

¹ In developing these arguments, Agnew is drawing upon the pioneering work of R.B.J. Walker (1993), who questioned the artificial divide between political theory and international relations, and the intellectual division of labor this produced.

preclude inquiry into the processes through which territorially configured political-economic formations have been produced and transformed historically. In particular, Agnew maintained that the territorial trap is a serious intellectual constraint in the contemporary period of intensified geoeconomic integration and accelerated politico-regulatory restructuring. Under these conditions, Agnew argued, territory remains fundamental, but is being qualitatively transformed in ways that cannot be grasped on the basis of inherited geographical assumptions. Territory, he suggested, is not the only or primary spatial dimension of capitalist political economies, and most capitalist political-economic configurations are not uniformly or comprehensively territorial. Therefore, Agnew proposed, the geographical assumptions of international political economy need to be fundamentally rethought: the territorial trap must be escaped.

Even prior to Agnew's intervention, reflexively spatialized approaches to the study of capitalism were being developed and applied with considerable sophistication within fields such as critical geography and urban and regional studies.² But for the most part, until the early 1990s, such approaches had exercised a minimal influence beyond the relatively circumscribed disciplinary milieux and interdisciplinary interstices from which they emerged. The publication of Agnew's article coincided with, and productively accelerated, an expanding scholarly interest in reflexively theorizing and investigating the spatial dimensions of state power across the social sciences. Indeed, since the mid-1990s, there has been a veritable outpouring of innovative theoretical and empirical work devoted to denaturalizing the historical and contemporary geographies of state power. Increasingly, this agenda has been pursued not only within interstitial and postdisciplinary intellectual locations, but also within a range of disciplinary or transdisciplinary epistemic communities such as

² This occurred not least due to the extraordinarily creative, influential contributions of scholars such as Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells, David Harvey, Doreen Massey, Nigel Thrift, and Edward Soja, among others. For overviews of these contributions, see Gregory and Urry 1985; Katznelson 1993; Soja 2000.

critical international relations, political and historical sociology, and political and historical anthropology.³ The new literature on state space is still in its relative infancy, and scholars have appropriately focused their attention on specific theoretical, historical and empirical issues rather than attempting prematurely to construct a grand intellectual synthesis. Nonetheless, the consolidation of this literature during the last fifteen years would seem to offer powerful evidence that Agnew's injunction to escape the territorial trap has been vigorously pursued. It would also seem to suggest that escape routes from this trap have now been plotted out and effectively implemented across significant strands of heterodox political economy.

And yet, even as studies of state space are published with increasing frequency, a paradox presents itself: while much of the new research on state space has been animated by a concern to escape the territorial trap, the problematic of territory *as such* has not been systematically interrogated. Instead, territory tends to be explored indirectly, or in a partial manner, through consideration of its concrete-empirical expressions—for instance, the evolution of bordering regimes; modalities of sovereignty under so-called Westphalian or post-Westphalian formations; or putative processes of deterritorialization.⁴ These studies have productively demonstrated that many inherited territorial structures of power are currently being challenged, reconfigured or transcended. But, oddly enough, such research initiatives have not always been grounded upon a clear sense of what precisely "territory" means, either in conceptual or in practical terms. Insofar as it is generally understood simply as a bounded space, or as a strategy to achieve bounding, the theorization of territory in recent discussions of

³ For a recent overview see, among other works, Brenner et. al. 2003; and Ferguson and Jones 2000.

⁴ In a wide literature, see for example, Linklater 1998; Newman 1999; Scholte 2000; and for discussions see Elden 2005; Agnew 2009.

state space represents a significant analytical blind-spot.⁵ Indeed, a careful examination of this emergent literature reveals that many otherwise reflexively spatialized accounts frequently take for granted the very dimension of political space they are concerned to investigate. It is as if, in their concern to spatialize the analysis of state institutions and practices, theorists assume that their territorial dimensions are already self-evident, and then move on to explore other, purportedly more foundational issues.⁶ Escape routes from the territorial trap have thus generally been pursued through analyses of *other* dimensions of state space—such as place/region (Allen, Cochrane and Massey 1999), scale (Smith 2004; Swyngedouw 2000; Brenner 2004) and governance/networks (Castells 1996; Cooke and Morgan 1999; Perkmann and Sum 2002). As a result, even as studies of the politics of place, state rescaling and networked governance have acquired increasing theoretical sophistication in the fast-growing literatures on state space, the reciprocal relations between territory and state power have received surprisingly little theoretical attention. As Painter remarks, “[...] the nature of territory itself—its being and becoming, rather than its consequences and effects—remains under-theorised and too often taken for granted” (2009: 2). In effect, amidst an otherwise impressive proliferation of scholarly efforts to escape from the territorial trap, the issue of territory itself has remained stubbornly elusive.

⁵ There is, of course, a more extensive literature on territoriality. Territoriality and territory need to be carefully distinguished, even if, of course, they are closely related. Territoriality is generally understood to entail some form of spatial enclosure (see Sack 1986, and especially 1997 where the term is difficult to dissociate from that of “place”; and the exchange between Cox 1991 and Steinberg 1994). By contrast, we suggest below and elsewhere that territory is best conceived as an historically and geographically specific form of political organization and political thought (Elden, 2009, 2007, 2005). As used in much of the international relations discourse, the notion of territoriality lacks the historical and geographical specificity that we see as being central to territory, both as a practice and as a politico-spatial form.

⁶ An important, if partial, exception to this generalization can be found in the historical literature on the territorialization of modern state power (e.g., Agnew 2005; Arrighi 1995; Escolar 2003; Mann 1993; Spruyt 1994; and Teschke 2003). By contextualizing modern territory as an historically specific form of politico-spatial organization, this literature begins to open up the underlying theoretical issues that concern us here.

Particularly in light of the centrality of territory to all major social-scientific definitions of the modern state—from Weber’s classic (1968) formulation to more recent writings by scholars such as Mann (1986), Giddens (1985) and Sassen (1996, 2007)—this is a thoroughly problematic circumstance: it suggests a need further to enrich our understanding of territory—at once as an historically specific form of politico-spatial organization, and as a key modality of modern statecraft and as a strategic dimension of modern politics—in light of the theoretical and methodological insights gained during the last decade or so of work on the production of state space. Accordingly, while affirming and building upon this recent work, we contend that the state/space relationship cannot be understood adequately without a more systematic, historically specific interrogation of the problematic of territory. In particular, its historical and geographical conditions of possibility, its specificity, its particularities, its periodicity, its institutional and symbolic expressions, its strategic roles and its actual and potential limits remain to be comprehensively investigated.

Lefebvre as State Theorist

For purposes of this article, our inroad into this complex, wide-ranging intellectual agenda involves reconstructing and reinterpreting the state-theoretical ideas of Henri Lefebvre, who we regard as a pioneering, if largely neglected, thinker of the state/space/territory relation.⁷ In Anglo-American social science, particularly since the 1991 translation of *The Production of Space* (originally published in 1974), Lefebvre has probably been best known for his pioneering contributions to sociospatial theory. His writings on cities and urbanization also exercised a seminal influence upon some of the founders of critical urban and regional political economy in the post-1970s period, David

⁷ While this analytical strategy precludes, in the present context, a detailed engagement with the history of territory or a concrete-empirical account of historical or contemporary territorial transformations, it is intended to generate conceptual tools and methodological orientations for confronting those tasks elsewhere. See Elden 2009 for an interpretation of the contemporary “state of territory”.

Harvey (1989, 1982, 1974) and Edward Soja (1989) being foremost among them. However, while Lefebvre has been appropriately championed as an innovative thinker of social and urban space (Gottdiener 1985; Soja 1989, 1996; Shields 1999; Schmid 2005), his equally provocative, pioneering studies of state power and state space of the 1970s are much less known.⁸ *The Production of Space* has accordingly been widely understood as the theoretical culmination of Lefebvre's earlier studies of rural-urban transformation and political struggles under late Fordist capitalism in Europe (1970a; 1996; 2003b). Certainly, the urban was one of Lefebvre's central concerns, particularly from the late 1960s. Nonetheless, it is equally plausible to interpret *The Production of Space* as an expression and extension of many of his other abiding intellectual and political interests, and thus as a moment of thought-in-progress, rather than as a stand-alone study or as the culmination of his previous research trajectory. A case could be made, for instance, for reading *The Production of Space* in relation to Lefebvre's earlier, three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* (2008); and also as a way-station in the evolution of his life-long engagement with European philosophy. Indeed, Lefebvre's reflections on sociospatial theory and his important treatises on *La fin de l'histoire* (1970b; 2003a, 177-87) and *Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche* (1975; 2003a, 42-9) were products of the same, extraordinarily creative period.

All of these concerns, from the question of philosophy and its overcoming to the commodification of everyday life, the process of urbanization and the politics of space, relate in turn to one of Lefebvre's life-long projects—namely, the critique

⁸ This is in part because his key writings on these topics have remained largely untranslated into English. Although Lefebvre had written several important commentaries on Hegelian and Marxian state theory prior to the 1970s, his key works on state theory and state space were produced in that decade, in *De l'État* (1976-78) and in a wide range of books, journals and magazines. The former has long been out of print, and the shorter pieces often in rather inaccessible publication outlets; thus this work has remained relatively obscure even in France. Some key writings from this time are now newly translated under the title *State, Space, World* (2009). For initial English-language engagements with Lefebvre's work on state space, see Brenner 1997a, 1997b; 2004; 2008; Elden 2004; Goonewardena et. al. 2008; Brenner and Elden 2009.

of political economy. The exploration of this problematic, understood as a continuation and updating of Marx's agenda in *Capital*, traverses Lefebvre's entire career, but it was not until the mid-1970s that Lefebvre began to consider, in systematic terms, its spatial and state-theoretical dimensions. In a remarkable sequence of books from this period—especially *The Survival of Capitalism* (1976 [1973]); *The Production of Space* (1991 [1974]) and *De l'État* (1976-78)—Lefebvre offers a detailed analysis of state strategies to manage the crisis-tendencies of modern capitalism through the production of space. Indeed, each of these books advances the shared proposition that space must be a central element within the critique of political economy. *The Survival of Capitalism* does this in polemical and political form; and *The Production of Space* does so in a more theoretically nuanced, systematically philosophical form. But it is only within the volumes of *De l'État*, where the *state's* role in the production of (capitalist) spatiality is more systematically explored, that Lefebvre elaborates his fully developed, mature approach to this problematic.

As of the mid-1970s, then, Lefebvre's critique of political economy is not simply an effort to underscore the role of the production of space in the survival of capitalism. At this juncture, Lefebvre goes further, insisting that even a reflexively spatialized political economy—a *geopolitical* economy—is fundamentally flawed unless it also elaborates a critique of the state form (2009: ch. 4). In his 1980 volume on the contemporary relevance of Marx's thought, Lefebvre criticizes Marx himself for failing to recognize this point, and thus for an excessively economic understanding of space: "Space appears to Marx only as the sum of the sites of production, as the territory of various markets" (2009: 211). This theoretical emphasis is evident not only in Lefebvre's major writings on state space, such as *De l'État*, but also in his other major texts of the 1970s on urbanization and the production of space, which were likewise infused with a concern to decipher the nature of modern state development, state power and

state space (see, for instance, 1991 [1974], 2003b [1970], 1970a, 1996 [1968]).⁹

State Space: *l'espace étatique*

Lefebvre's account of state space aspires to decipher a broad range of processes, transformations, conflicts and struggles associated with the modern state at all spatial scales. Like other theorists, historians and sociologists, Lefebvre emphasizes that modern states emerged from the mottled institutional landscapes inherited from precapitalist social formations in early modern Europe (1974: 322-4; 1991: 280-281; 2009: ch. 11). However, Lefebvre emphasizes the spatial dimensions of this transformation more systematically than most other accounts, showing how states profoundly transform inherited political-economic landscapes, contributing in turn to the production of a qualitatively new framework for national and, eventually, worldwide sociospatial organization. As he indicates in a key chapter in the final volume of *De l'État* (1976-78: IV, 261-2; 2009: 225):

As the product, the child, of a space, the so-called national territory, the State turns back towards its own historical conditions and antecedents, and transforms them. Subsequently, the State engenders social relations in space; it reaches still further as it unfurls; it produces a support, its own space, which is itself complex. This space regulates and organizes a disintegrating national space at the heart of a consolidating worldwide space (*l'espace mondial*).

⁹ As we have argued at length elsewhere (Brenner and Elden 2009), Lefebvre's writings of the 1970s provide the basis for a contemporary state-theoretical critique of geopolitical economy, a field that has only relatively recently (see, for example, MacLeod 2000; Hudson 2001; Brenner 2004) begun to consider the state's role in processes of sociospatial restructuring under capitalism. On this reading, Lefebvre's writings contain insights that can be mobilized to expose, and possibly even to transcend, some of the limitations of the very approaches they have, in a partial reading, inspired.

What is this “support,” this new space, which is produced by the state during the transition to capitalist modernity? In key chapters of *The Production of Space* (1974/1991: ch. 4) and *De l'État* (1976-78: Vol IV, ch. 5; 2009: ch. 11), Lefebvre characterizes this new framework of social space with reference to its “abstract” quality. He terms it “abstract space,” and suggests that it represents a qualitatively new matrix of sociospatial organization that is at once produced and regulated by the modern state. In contrast to the “absolute” spaces of precapitalist social formations, which were organized with reference to politico-religious differentiations among sacred and profane locations, abstract space *appears* to be homogeneous, and thus devoid of differences (1974: 278-9, 328; 1991: 240, 285).¹⁰ According to Lefebvre (1974: 328; 1991: 285), this appearance of homogeneity is instrumental for both capital and the modern state—“it serves those forces which make a *tabula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them – in short, of differences.” Abstract space “destroys its (historical) conditions, its own (internal) differences, and any (emergent) differences, in order to impose an abstract homogeneity” (1974: 427; 1991: 370; translation modified). In this way, abstract space permits continuous, rational economic calculation in the spheres of production and exchange, as well as comprehensive, encompassing control in the realm of statecraft. For present purposes, three aspects of Lefebvre’s account deserve to be underscored.

First, Lefebvre argues that space generally, but abstract space especially, is inherently political (1974: 321-5, 402-3; 1991: 278-282, 349). While abstract space figures centrally in enabling processes of capital accumulation, it is, Lefebvre explains, “instituted by a state, it is institutional;” and it is “politically instrumental” (1974: 328, 402-3; 1991: 285, 349). Abstract space is, in short,

¹⁰ As we shall see below, Lefebvre emphasizes that this is merely an “appearance” of homogeneity, not its actualization, and that the state figures centrally in producing this effect.

the political product of state spatial strategies—of administration, repression, domination and centralised power.

Second, Lefebvre contends that the production of abstract space entails transformations not only in political practices and institutional arrangements, but also in political imaginaries: it involves new ways of envisioning, conceiving and representing the spaces within which everyday life, capital accumulation and state action are to unfold. For this reason, Lefebvre elaborates his analysis of the modern state in part through a detailed reading of theorists of modern statecraft, including Hobbes, Locke and especially Hegel, as well as through discussions of philosophers (e.g., Spinoza, Leibniz, Heidegger, Axelos) and literary figures (e.g., Dante, Rabelais, Hugo, Romanticism), whose ideas are invoked to demarcate the *longue durée* epistemic shifts in question (see 1974: 325-33; 1991: 282-291; 1976-78).

Third, Lefebvre argues that abstract space is inherently violent and geographically expansive. He suggests that it provides a framework for interlinking economic, bureaucratic and military forms of strategic intervention, “not only at the scale of every State, but also at the international and worldwide scale, the scale of the planetary state system” (1980: 153; 2009: 214). According to Lefebvre, the modern state mobilizes “a unitary, logistical, operational and quantifying rationality which would make economic growth possible and draw strength from that growth for its own expansion to a point where it would take possession of the entire planet” (1974: 322-3; 1991, 280, translation modified; see 1974: 133; 1991: 112).

While Lefebvre devotes considerable attention in *De l'État* to the geohistory of modern state formation (especially in Volumes 1 and 2), some of his most provocative arguments in that book concern twentieth century transformations of state space (above all in Volumes 3 and 4). Lefebvre’s notion of the “state mode

of production" (hereafter SMP), elaborated in the third volume *De l'État*, is an attempt to grasp the increasingly central role of state institutions in facilitating the survival of capitalism during the course of the 20th century. The SMP concept has many analytical functions in Lefebvre's work (see Brenner and Elden 2009; Elden 2004, ch. 6; Brenner 2001), but he consistently mobilizes it to characterize the changing geographies of state power and state intervention during the second half of 20th century capitalism. In Lefebvre's conception, the SMP has profoundly spatial elements. Its variegated institutional structures encompass the full range of spatial scales on which state action occurs, from the local and the regional to the national and the worldwide. At the same time, insofar as its strategies of intervention are oriented towards the reorganization of specific places, scales and territories, they are profoundly spatially selective. According to Lefebvre, the SMP mobilizes its strategic capacities continuously to shape and reshape the spaces of capital accumulation and commodity exchange, subjecting them, simultaneously, to processes of fragmentation, hierarchization and homogenization. One of Lefebvre's key concerns, in developing the SMP concept, is to decipher the historically and contextually specific spatial strategies through which states have attempted, during the course of the 20th century, at once to facilitate capital accumulation and to enhance political domination.¹¹

Lefebvre develops his ideas about state space not only through substantive and historical arguments about the trajectory of 20th century state development, but also through a sustained critique of the underlying geographical assumptions within both Marxist and liberal political theory. In his view, within both of these intellectual traditions, there has been a pervasive tendency to neglect, underplay, marginalize and even ignore the spatial aspects of political processes.

¹¹ It is worth pointing out, however, that Lefebvre's concept of the SMP is not only a basis for his spatialization of state theory. He also mobilizes this notion to decipher a broad range of political power configurations, from the state socialism of the Soviet Union and China to western European fascism, liberal-democratic regimes and social-democratic coalitions. Lefebvre thus describes the consolidation of the SMP as *the* significant event in the geohistory of the twentieth century (1976-78: III, 300; IV, 22).

In a central passage of the final volume of *De l'État*, which is worth quoting at length here, Lefebvre states this point bluntly:

Curiously, space is a stranger to customary political reflection. Political thought and the representations which it elaborates remain 'up in the air', with only an abstract relation with the soil [*terroirs*] and even the national territory [...] Space belongs to the geographers in the academic division of labor. But then it reintroduces itself subversively through the effects of peripheries, the margins, the regions, the villages and local communities long abandoned, neglected, even abused through centralizing state-power. Classical liberalism [...] thinks and reasons 'non-territorially [*exterritorialement*]', as a pure abstraction [...] Even the legal rule [*le droit*] of the State over the (national) territory is poorly defined; sovereignty is exercised over people, rather than over things [...] The State is conceived in itself and by itself, as a real abstraction, without spatial body, without concrete support other than 'subjects' or 'humans'. In the conception proposed here, these *relations have social space (spaces) for support*. This requires a *spatialization* of political theory, not without a critique of its deterritorialized abstraction, which, at the same time, takes into account localities and regions, differences and multiple (conflictual) associations, attached to the soil [*sol*], to dwelling, the circulation of people and things, in the practical functioning of space, This similarly entails a reconsideration of the economy in terms of space, of the flux of stocks, of mobile elements and stable elements, in short, of the production and reproduction of (social) space (1976-78: IV, 164-5; italics in original).

This passage contains several insights that deserve careful consideration. On the most general level, Lefebvre is taking issue with the pervasive tendency of political thought to abstract from the concrete ground on which social relations

unfold. A decade later, in an interview, Lefebvre (1996: 215) suggested that courses in history and sociology that omit consideration of urban and spatial questions seem ludicrous, in that they lack an analysis of their material base. As Lefebvre acknowledges, the discipline of geography naturally addresses such issues. But Lefebvre contends that geography—understood here as a *problematique* and condition rather than as an academic discipline—is too important to be left solely to geographers.¹² Indeed, Lefebvre goes on to question whether a despatialized social science is even epistemologically possible. For, despite their ostensible disinterest in spatial questions, inherited approaches to political studies are persistently haunted by their unexamined geographical assumptions, which assert themselves subversively to unsettle established methods of analysis and taken-for-granted claims about states, politics and political struggles. Lefebvre contends that this lack of reflexive attention to spatial questions is as pervasive within classical formulations of liberalism as it is within more recent studies of state sovereignty and the law.

Today, as we have seen, the new literatures on state space have begun to address such concerns. But Lefebvre's work of the late 1970s offers a salient methodological reminder: the task, in his view, is not simply to describe the spatial aspects of political life, but to elaborate a systematic, comprehensive "*spatialization* of political theory" itself. This intellectual procedure would problematize, among other issues, the pervasive orientation of political studies towards conceptual abstractions, its ungrounded or "deterritorialized" methodological assumptions and its concomitant failure to explicate its own spatial conditions of possibility. Lefebvre articulates the same contention with reference to the broad field of political economy, of both Marxian and non-Marxian varieties, which in his view have likewise failed to illuminate the

¹² Interestingly, Lefebvre's claim anticipated an argument that was subsequently made by geographers themselves (see, for instance, Harvey 1996; Soja 1989; Massey, Allen and Anderson 1984; Gregory and Urry 1985; Gregory 1994).

production of social space and the spatial conditions for modern politics. Lefebvre is thus advocating, simultaneously, the development of a spatialized analysis of political-economic processes under modern capitalism *and* a spatialized critique of the conceptual abstractions deployed within the modern social sciences. Lefebvre's critique of political theory thus presents a significant challenge: reflexively to investigate the spatial and, as we now suggest, the *territorial*, aspects of state power.

State Space as Territory

Despite Lefebvre's prescient anticipation of contemporary concerns with the production of state space, the category of territory has an ambiguous status in his thinking. An initial survey of Lefebvre's state-theoretical writings might appear to suggest that, much like more recent scholarship on state space, he does not directly theorize the problematic of territory as such, but instead treats this issue primarily in descriptive or concrete-historical terms.¹³ Against such an interpretation, we here undertake a reading of Lefebvre's work on state space that reveals several potentially fruitful theoretical, methodological and substantive insights into the nature of territory.

In the passage quoted above, Lefebvre hints at the fundamental importance of the (national) territory to state theory. However, his remarks are primarily directed against those intellectual traditions that attempt to operate, as he puts it, "non-territorially (*ex-territorialement*)," and consequently ground themselves upon bad abstractions. Neither in this passage, nor elsewhere within his writings of the 1970s, does Lefebvre venture a definitional or foundational statement regarding the positive features of territory within modern political life. Instead, his remarks about territory are dispersed among diverse texts in which he

¹³ This is certainly the case in his study of the Campan valley in the Pyrenees, where a chapter is devoted to the "struggle for territorial integrity"; tracing the spatial development of the community (1963, Ch. II).

addresses certain territorial aspects of topics such as the trinity formula, state formation, nationalism, state development, state-capital relations, nationalism and political mobilization.

Lefebvre occasionally uses the notion of territory in a loose, almost metaphorical sense. For instance, he characterizes the feudal domain in which capitalism first emerged as a territory (2009: 56), and he also writes generically of the “overlapping territorialities” of the primitive community (2009: 230). In other, more explicitly political writings, Lefebvre mobilizes the concept of territory to describe the site and the target of contemporary struggles for *autogestion*—a term that, in his idiosyncratic usage, denotes not only workers’ self-management at the level of a factory, but also grassroots or popular democratic control over a spatial area or jurisdiction (see, for example, 2009: 110, 147, 151, 163, 250-1).

In a suggestive but easily overlooked passage of *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre briefly alludes to a more historically specific conceptualization by underscoring the semantic, historical and substantive relation between “*le terroir et le territoire*” (1974: 280). Although we might translate these terms into English simply as “soil and territory,” *terroir* and *territoire* share a common etymology. Donald Nicholson-Smith offers the felicitous “land-as-soil and land-as-territory” (1991: 242), thus highlighting the relation of both terms to the notion of land, *la terre*. With this link in mind, Lefebvre proposes that the notion of land must be understood not simply as agriculture, but also with reference to the resources of the subsoil; and, most crucially here, as the articulation between the nation-state and its territory (1974: 374-5; 1991: 325; see also 1974: 102; 1991: 85). This conceptualization informs Lefebvre’s engagement with Marx’s famous “trinity formula” of land-capital-labor (Marx 1981: III, 955). Here, Lefebvre insists on the centrality of land as the third term within this formula, while also distancing himself from some of the narrow, economistic readings that endure within doctrinaire Marxist accounts (1974: 374-5; 1991: 325; see also Gottdiener

1985). Lefebvre's account of land-as-soil and land-as-territory also informs his critique of classical liberalism, as elaborated in the passage quoted earlier. This tradition, Lefebvre argues, obliterates the territorial diversity of the land controlled by the state, conceiving state institutions not just "extra-territorially," but even non-territorially (*ex-territorialement*). Within such a framework, a matter as fundamental as the spatial extent of the law or state sovereignty is consistently underplayed; it is presupposed but not properly interrogated, for instance, within Max Weber's famous definition of the modern state. Through such critiques, Lefebvre begins to articulate an important insight: the national territory results from an historically specific, mutually transformative articulation between the state, the continually contested processes within it, and the land or soil that it inhabits, owns, controls and exploits.

Once such arguments are excavated from some of Lefebvre's often meandering analyses, it becomes increasingly apparent that territory is, in fact, integral to his understanding of the state and space, and indeed, of state space itself.¹⁴ In Volume IV of *De l'État*, Lefebvre articulates the bold claim that "the State and territory interact in such a way that they can be said to be mutually constitutive" (1976-78: IV, 278; 2009: 228). In proposing this idea, Lefebvre is insisting that there is no state without a territory, and concomitantly, that there is no territory without a state. Lefebvre is equally suggesting that territory is the political *form* of space produced by and associated with the modern state.¹⁵ He

¹⁴ In several insightful essays, Christian Schmid (2003, 1996) has productively explored the interface between Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and the regulationist-inspired concept of the "territory relation" (*Territorialverhältnis/ rapport territorial*). While Schmid does not engage systematically in these texts with Lefebvre's state-theoretical writings, he is the only commentator on Lefebvre's work to acknowledge the specifically territorial dimensions of his analysis. As Schmid (2003: 236) correctly indicates, Lefebvre's conception of social space as the "material support" for social relationships presupposes an understanding of territory as the basis for "embedding processes of social interaction within a societally produced spatial order."

¹⁵ Lefebvre is not always consistent, however, since on at least one occasion he directly opposes the state-space relation to that of the nation-territory (1980: 153; 2009: 213-4).

elaborates this contention programmatically in a key chapter in volume four of *De l'État*.

The production of a space, *the national territory*, a physical space, mapped, modified, transformed by the networks, circuits and flows that are established within it—roads, canals, railroads, commercial and financial circuits, motorways and air routes, etc. Thus this space is a material—natural—space in which the actions of human generations, of classes and of political forces have left their mark, as producers of durable objects and realities (rather than only of isolated things and products, of tools and of goods destined for consumption) (1976-78: IV, 259; 2009: 224).

This is a complex passage that lends itself to various interpretive possibilities. For instance, in a text published shortly after Lefebvre's, the Swiss political geographer Claude Raffestin invokes the above passage in order to develop his conception of territory as space mediated through power. On this reading, space functions as a pre-existing reality, which is subsequently transformed into territory through various political mechanisms, strategies, interventions and representations (Raffestin 1980: 129-30). By contrast, we suggest that Lefebvre is here making a strongly constructivist argument not only about territory, but about space itself, which he likewise views as a social and historical product. For Lefebvre, this co-production of space and territory is mediated through diverse strategic-political projects associated with modern capitalism and the modern state; it unfolds simultaneously along perceived, conceived and lived dimensions. Thus understood, territory represents an historically specific political *form* of (produced) space—territorial space—whose precise conditions of possibility, contours and consequences require careful excavation, historicization and theorization. In Lefebvre's analysis, therefore, territory is a particular form rather

than a general one. As such, it is comprehensible only through its relation to the state and processes of statecraft.

Elsewhere in *De l'État*, as well in various passages of *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre relates the political form of state territory to the project of nationalization. Here he suggests that there is a process of the "production of the nation by the State, dominating a territory" (1976-78: IV, 202; see also 1974: 132-3; 323-4; 1991: 111-112, 281). This includes a range of political actions concerning the mobilisation of nationalism as an ideology, but also a whole range of state projects designed to shape and reshape territorial spaces into nationalized, nationalizing unities within a broader context defined by "the world market, imperialism and its strategies, and the operational spheres of multinational corporations" (1974: 133-4; 1991: 112; see also Poulantzas 1978; Goswami 2004). Through such arguments, Lefebvre begins to interrogate the underlying political rationality that is associated with such nationalization projects and their ensuing effects upon sociospatial relations.¹⁶ In Lefebvre's terms, this political rationality involves not only the mapping and measuring of worldwide, national and local spaces, but also the state's strategic deployment of a whole range of calculative political techniques oriented towards the intensification of market relations. Lefebvre suggests that such techniques entail the creation of "a political power controlling and exploiting the resources of the market or the growth of the productive forces [...]" (1974: 133; 1991: 112). Elsewhere, in closely analogous terms, Lefebvre describes state space as being, in part, "tactical-strategic" insofar as its consolidation entails "the subordination of a territory's resources to political ends" (2009: 244). For Lefebvre, the consolidation of a modern notion of (national) territory was inextricably

¹⁶ For a complementary account, drawing on Foucault, see Elden 2007. Strongly influenced by Lefebvre's analysis of nationalization strategies in *The Production of Space*, Goswami (2004) provides a detailed theoretical engagement with this problematic in the context of a study of the production of "India" as a national economic space through a dialectic of British colonial rule and nationalist anti-colonial opposition.

intertwined with the state's mobilization of such techniques to control economic resources embedded in its land and landscape, all in the context of a rapidly expanding capitalist world economy. As he explains at length in volume four of *De l'État*:

Nation states, attached to a territory, managers of this space, arbitrate and act as dominant power from and by this space. They manage it as *eminent* owners, almost in the way this word meant under the *ancien régime*, whereby the written rights and powers of the nobles and the king were superimposed upon the common rights of the peasants, 'commoners', holders of perpetual usufruct. An analogous superimposition governs the modern State and its relationship to its space (territory). Methods (sometimes compelling and sometimes violent) and multiple procedures, the best known of which is 'expropriation', give concrete expression to this eminent right which we know extends itself to under the ground and to air space, forests and water sources, rivers and coasts, maritime territories and to recently extended territorial waters (1976-78: IV, 415; 2009: 275).

Crucially, however, Lefebvre insists that the process is not simply a one-way, instrumental one, with the state making and remaking a purportedly pregiven, malleable space. In Lefebvre's conception, the state is continually reconstituted through its variegated, historically specific roles in the tendential nationalization and worldwide extension of territorial space. Concomitantly, the territory associated with national state space and the world interstate system is likewise not a static form or fixed container, but must be viewed as a contextually embedded medium and outcome of ongoing transformations, strategies and struggles.¹⁷ The state thus operates as a site for contested processes, projects

¹⁷ It is worth emphasizing here that it is not only in recent times, in the context of "globalization," that territory has been subjected to processes of destabilization, restructuring and

and strategies; it is a social relation that is produced and transformed through continual struggle.

On our reading of Lefebvre, then, the concepts of state, space and territory are ineluctably intertwined: each term reciprocally implies the others, both analytically *and* historically. Lefebvre thus insists not only on a spatialized and territorialized understanding of state power, but also on the crucial role of the state in the operations of power over territorial space. His spatialization of the state centrally underscores both its intrinsically territorial parameters as an institutional apparatus; and its strategic, if contradictory, role(s) in producing and transforming the territorialized spatial grids that underpin the modern capitalist world order.

This means that, in the absence of a theory of territory, no account of state space can be complete. At the same time, in Lefebvre's terms, it is logically impossible to understand the vicissitudes of territory in the modern world except in relation to the conflictual, uneven evolution of state institutions, practices and strategies. Just as an account of territory must inform any theory of state space, no theory of territory can be complete without an account of both the (modern) state and its role in the production of space.

In sum, Lefebvre is suggesting that once capitalism has been consolidated as an historical-geographical system, territory comes to serve as the site, medium and outcome of statecraft, operating in distinctive ways but nonetheless pervasively at all spatial scales. Just as importantly, he is proposing that, within the geohistorical framework of capitalist modernity, state power comes to serve as

transformation. On the contrary, Lefebvre's perspective suggests that territory must never be viewed as having a static, fixed or ossified character. Consequently, his approach productively anticipates more recent works which emphasize the contemporary reconstitution of territory rather than its erosion or dissolution (see, for example, Brenner 1999; Elden 2009; Newman and Paasi 2002; Sassen 1996; and Scholte 2000).

the institutional site, medium and outcome for the production of territory. Territory enables, facilitates and results from the evolution of state action; and concomitantly, state action produces, facilitates and results from the evolution of territory.

This account of Lefebvre's approach to the mutually constitutive, three-way relation between state, space and territory opens up of a number of interpretive hazards. In the first place, it runs the risk of suggesting an ahistorical argument, when in fact, as Lefebvre himself recognizes, each of these three terms has not only a history but also a pre-history. By this we mean not simply that the state, space and territory are combined in specific ways at different times, but that the social forms denoted by each of these terms emerge only at particular historical junctures, and are mediated through tangled yet distinctive lineages.¹⁸ As Lefebvre suggests, "like everything that 'exists', the State was born, and grew up. One can assume that it will decline and disappear" (2003a: 62). The mutual constitution of state, space and territory is, therefore, at once a precondition, a medium and an outcome of capitalism.

Second, this emphasis on the status of territory in Lefebvre's state theory is not intended to suggest that he privileges territory, either ontologically or historically, over other dimensions of state space. On the contrary, a careful reading of Lefebvre's diverse writings on state spatial development from the 1970s reveals his profound interest, for instance, in the place-specific, scalar and networked dimensions of the state apparatus; he also underscores the modern state's pervasive role in shaping and reshaping places, inter-place relations, interscalar

¹⁸ This approach thus contrasts with that of Saskia Sassen (2006), who takes 'territory', 'authority' and 'rights' as relatively static, ahistorical, effectively transcendental, categories in terms of which to frame her otherwise careful historical analysis. She sees these terms as "building blocks" which are "navigators inside the two black boxes that are the national and the global. Each evinces the analytic capability for dissecting these two master categories" (p. 6). As she explains, her concern is "not historical evolution but developing an analytics of change using history" (p. 27). Our approach, in distinction, takes 'territory' itself as a term that requires historical examination in order to illuminate these other problematics.

hierarchies, and various sorts of networks, for instance of commerce and communication, as well as human/nature relations (Brenner and Elden 2009). Accordingly, just as Lefebvre insists on the “hypercomplexity” of social space in general under modern capitalism (1974: 104-7; 1991: 87-89), so too does he emphasize the polymorphic, multifaceted geographies of state space. Our claim here is simply that, for Lefebvre, state space and territory are mutually constitutive politico-institutional forms. Lefebvre’s remarks about the local, scalar, networked and environmental geographies of state space thus necessarily presuppose the role of territory as the site, medium and outcome of statecraft.

We may therefore conclude that, in Lefebvre’s writings, the notion of “state space”, *l’espace étatique*, often functions as a synonym of territory. While Lefebvre never explicitly articulates this formulation, much of the analytic framework he brings to bear on the question of *l’espace étatique* directly implies a conceptualization of state space *as* territory.

The Production of Territory

In his study of the production of space, an analysis we would insist cannot be confined simply to the book of that title, Lefebvre engages in a number of useful conceptual maneuvers that are directly relevant for elaborating his conception of state space as territory. We begin by considering an obvious, yet ultimately incomplete means to mobilize Lefebvre’s ideas towards this end, before then pursuing a more complex but potentially more comprehensive strategy.

Lefebvre’s opening schema in *The Production of Space*, with its distinction between the perceived, conceived and lived dimensions of social space, is one of his most well-known and influential ideas (1974: 48-49; 1991: 38-39). Clearly, this schema might be brought to bear productively on the question of territory, with the dimensions of the perceived, conceived and lived giving rise to those of territorial practices; representations of territory; and territories of

representation.¹⁹ Territorial practices would be the physical, material spaces of state territory, from the borders, fences, walls and barriers erected to mark its external limits, to the creation and maintenance of large scale infrastructure enabling flows of people, goods, energy and information. Representations of territory would include a range of imagined senses of the body of a nation translated into political practice, including maps and charts; abstract ways of representing territory through cartography, and otherwise diagrammatically. These representations are dependent on a whole range of techniques from geometry and astronomy to, more recently, GIS and remote-sensing.

Clearly territorial practices and representations of territory are not distinct, just as spatial practices and representations of space are never separate for Lefebvre. The process of boundary-making, for instance, in the standard typology, has a stage of allocation—the most abstract moment, with diplomats in France and Britain carving up the Ottoman Empire following World War One; the Berlin conference of the late 19th century partitioning Africa; or the Treaty of Tordesillas in the late 15th century which divided Portuguese and Spanish claims to the New World—but these are always followed by processes of delimitation which require some degree of knowledge of the material physical landscape; and practices of demarcation where ditches are dug, boundary markers placed, fences or walls built. Processes dependent on advances in geometry get translated into material practices through techniques such as triangulation. Land-surveying is a material practice used to translate an abstract division onto the ground—the surveying of the Mason-Dixon line being one of the classic examples. But then, just as Lefebvre insists with his notion of lived space, territories of representation are created, both as the intersection of territorial practices and representations of territory, but also as something that exceeds these narrow definitions. Territory

¹⁹ This has been suggested, for instance, by Jones (2007: 33-4).

takes on a meaning through the everyday practices and lived experiences that take place within and beyond it.

To take a contemporary and practical example, a whole set of material territorial practices, representations of territory, and territories of representation are at stake in the planning, construction and everyday contestations around the Israeli 'wall' built in Palestinian territory. Indeed, the very naming of this project, from that of a wall or a fence to its description as a 'security barrier' or 'apartheid wall' are contestations not simply at the level of language, but also in terms of its materiality, symbolism and daily practice. Its territorial situation can be understood in terms of its materiality—its height, position in the landscape, its supporting infrastructure of roads, watchtowers and electrification—through its translation of abstract and imagined geographies into a situation on the ground; through the daily life that conditions its use, and is prevented or disrupted by its existence and operation; and the legal and cartographic representations that consider, support or challenge its political status. Of course, the wall also has spatio-temporal dimensions in terms of its closure at certain significant times of the year such as Yom Kippur or in response to the political situation; through the time of day and the operation of curfews; and through the slowing of time created by the creation of distance in circumventing the checkpoints, checkpoints that are not confined simply to the wall as barrier, but operate much more generally within the fractured, disjointed and contested territory that comprises the West Bank.²⁰

Whatever its potential insights, however, such an appropriation of Lefebvre's tripartite schema to think the production of territory would be seriously incomplete. Perhaps most obviously, it neglects the profoundly historical dimension to Lefebvre's work. All-too-often, *The Production of Space* is read

²⁰ Among many references that could be given here, the work of Weizman (2007) is central.

primarily through the lens of the first chapter, where Lefebvre proposes the aforementioned triad, only to omit consideration of the substantial subsequent chapters in which these categories are comprehensively, systematically historicized.²¹ However, Lefebvre's historicizing impulse applies not only to material-institutional transformations, but also to concepts, epistemologies and modes of understanding. For Lefebvre, therefore, the very differentiation among lived, perceived and conceived dimensions of social space is not simply an analytical or methodological issue, for it is inextricably embedded within historical practices associated with the evolution of capitalism as a mode of production. On this reading, then, any differentiation among territorial practices, representations of territory and territories of representation would likewise need to be understood in relation to processes of capitalist development as well as with reference to transformations of state strategies, of practices of thought, and in the uses of techniques such as geometry and statistics.

Lefebvre's *De l'État* confronts this challenge explicitly because, as noted above, it privileges the spatial aspects of state formation. In the first few chapters of the first volume, and in the long recapitulation at the beginning of the second, Lefebvre provides an historical overview of the emergence of the modern state that emphasizes the spatial dimensions of these different political formations (1976-78: I, 3-18; II, 7-48). As well as offering a history of state space (and, by implication, of territory), Lefebvre is here able to offer the beginnings of a spatial or territorial history of the state. Territory, like the state and space, has a history rather than an absolute determination, and this as a concept as well as a practice. Space and territory are never simply objects of analysis, but rather taking a spatial and territorial approach fundamentally affects the way we would recount the history of the state. The power of Lefebvre's analysis is that he offers a way to think state, space and territory together; to conceptualise them

²¹ Such a criticism could be applied to the readings of Soja (1989, 1996) and Shields (1999), for instance.

through the relations between practices, representations and lived experience; to see them as historically interrelated rather than determined; and to enable a powerful set of conceptual categories to be utilized in grasping both their historical lineage and their contemporary deployment. There is, therefore, a continual production of territory, rather than an initial moment that creates a framework or container within which future struggles are played out. Territory is always being produced and reproduced by the actions of the state and through political struggles over the latter; yet at the same time, in the modern world, territory also conditions state operations and ongoing efforts to contest them. States make their own territories, not under circumstances they have chosen, but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are confronted.

State Territorial Strategies

In 1970, Lefebvre (2009: ch. 8) wrote a brilliantly polemical essay on “the politics of space” (*la politique de l’espace*). Here, and elsewhere in Lefebvre’s writings of the 1970s, this oft-cited phrase has a double meaning. First, for Lefebvre, the “politics of space” refers to the general proposition that sociospatial organization under modern capitalism is intensely, fundamentally contested: it is at once a site and a stake of political strategies and struggles. Lefebvre suggests, in particular, that the sociospatial relations of contemporary society are produced and transformed through a perpetual, conflict-laden interaction among opposed spatial strategies. Whereas the state and capital attempt to “pulverize” space into a manageable, calculable and abstract grid, diverse social forces simultaneously attempt to create, defend or extend spaces of social reproduction, everyday life and grassroots control (*autogestion*).

Second, Lefebvre deploys the notion of a *politique de l’espace* in a more contextually embedded sense to characterize the nation-wide system of spatial management that had been developed during the high Fordist period in postwar

France through the DATAR and other national planning agencies.²² In this sense the phrase has a meaning more like 'spatial policy', since Lefebvre viewed the activities of such public agencies as expressions of increasingly comprehensive national state strategies to manage the postwar process of capitalist urbanization, which was being generalized across France and much of western Europe during this period. In his writings of the 1970s, Lefebvre elaborated several detailed analyses of these state spatial strategies; their relationship to patterns of local, regional, national and worldwide industrial development; their consequences for everyday life in cities, towns and regions; and the diverse conflicts and struggles they were producing across Europe, the United States and beyond (Lefebvre 2009).

Lefebvre's double-edged analysis of the politics of space underscores the key role of state institutions in ongoing struggles over sociospatial organization under modern capitalism. For Lefebvre, the geographies of state space are themselves arenas, stakes and outcomes of such struggles. Within this conceptual framework, *spatial strategies* represent powerful instruments of intervention for all social and political forces concerned to mobilize state power as a means to reorganize sociospatial relations (Brenner 2004). Most crucially here, Lefebvre's account of the politics of space suggests a fruitful basis for extending the conception of state space as territory introduced above. It generates an analytical perspective through which to investigate how the territorial spaces inherited from earlier rounds of state regulation, capital accumulation and political contestation are continually appropriated, rewoven and transformed through diverse strategies, both institutional and extra-institutional, across a range of geographical sites and scales.

²² The DATAR was a French central government agency for spatial planning and development that had been created in 1963; it played a key role in developing and implementing various housing, infrastructural and regional development policies throughout the high Fordist period. The acronym stands for Delegation for Regional Development and Territorial Planning (*Délégation pour l'Aménagement du Territoire et l'Action Régionale*).

On our reading, much of Lefebvre's account of the politics of space, in both senses of this phrase outlined above, is focused directly upon the problematic of territory. Interestingly, in describing the politics of space, Lefebvre repeatedly uses the term "strategy," but he rarely unpacks its specific spatial content. Nonetheless, building on our preceding discussion of the state/space/territory nexus in Lefebvre's work, we suggest that his analysis of the politics of space is focused not only on state *spatial* strategies but also, more specifically, on state *territorial* strategies. Whatever their social base, political valence and substantive orientation, state territorial strategies are distinguished by their goal of mobilizing state institutions to shape and reshape inherited territorial structurations of political-economic life, including those of state institutions themselves. A systematic reading of Lefebvre's writings of the 1970s along these lines reveals several potentially fruitful analytical openings into the theorization and investigation of state territorial strategies in the modern world. State territorial strategies operate in relation to the question of what Lefebvre calls *mondialisation*, the becoming-worldwide of political and social phenomena, including the state; and their role as a focal point for oppositional political mobilizations, especially those oriented towards intensified grassroots democratization (*autogestion*) that offer alternative political projects and visions to extant forms of state power. Lefebvre was sharply critical of the technocratic and apolitical veneer associated with such strategies, which he viewed as an ideological projection of hegemonic power. Accordingly, Lefebvre devoted considerable attention to the struggles, conflicts and crises that are produced through such state strategies of spatial homogenization. For him, despite the state's efforts, the spatial relations of capitalism cannot be subsumed under any fixed planning framework or regulatory system; spatial organization is thus inherently political and always contested, not least by grassroots initiatives

oriented towards *autogestion* or self-management, which continually unsettle and disrupt state programs of regulatory control.²³

State territorial strategies encompass, of course, the large-scale project of the determination, consolidation and organization of the state's territory at the moment of the emergence of the state in Early Modern Europe, alongside the emergence of capitalism and the development of state markets. This is a broad, historically and geographically specific, set of processes, particularly evident at determined moments, but still ongoing and subject to continual contestation. To sketch even the crudest contours of such processes is beyond the scope of what can be achieved here, but it would include, at a minimum, the role of the state in advocating comprehensive land-surveying and cartographic projects, the development of fortifications and demarcated boundaries, the establishment of transportation and other collective infrastructures, and the spatial practices of centralized and devolved administration. The territorial dimensions for the incorporation of new parts of these emerging states, projects of territorial cohesion and integration, and mechanisms for addressing territorial inequalities are crucial here. Such state territorial strategies facilitate the production of the territory of the state, and often, in turn, that of the nation-state.

Lefebvre's concept of the SMP, already discussed above, provides a basis on which to explore the role of state territorial strategies in the promotion of historically and geographically specific regimes of capitalist growth. As indicated, Lefebvre introduced the concept of the SMP to label some of the major transformations of state power that had been unfolding on a world scale during the course of the 20th century. The essence of the SMP concept, in Lefebvre's work, is the proposition that states have come to play a key role in the

²³ The perpetuation of this contextually specific politics of territory under capitalism underscores the limits of some of the more static, ahistorical and structuralist notions of territoriality that persist in the contemporary literatures on international relations and political sociology.

management and maintenance of capitalist growth at all spatial scales, from the local to the worldwide. Lefebvre describes the consolidation of the SMP as *the* significant event of the twentieth century, since it provides a basis for understanding fascism, Stalinism and Western liberal-democratic models such as the US New Deal and European social democracy (1976-78: III, 300; IV, 22). In elaborating his account of the SMP, Lefebvre is concerned with a wide range of state developmental strategies, that is, strategies to promote various spaces as sites for capital accumulation. Such strategies, Lefebvre emphasizes, necessarily involve the construction, deployment and political management of spatial configurations—from industrial estates, infrastructural arrangements and transportation/communication grids to regional and national exchange networks—as productive forces.

Crucially, even though such developmental strategies may target particular scales (for instance, local, regional, national or European) or types of places (for instance, cities, suburbs, industrial or agricultural sites, small- and medium-sized towns, marginalized peripheries), they have generally assumed a distinctively territorial form insofar as they are elaborated with reference to relatively discrete, delineated zones within the state's boundaries, whether with reference to the state's territory as a whole, to specific jurisdictional areas therein, or even with reference to extra-territorial spheres of influence, administration or domination (for instance, colonies, which were a key concern of Lefebvre's in various passages of *De l'État*). Whatever their concrete historical form or scale of operation, the *differentia specifica* of such state developmental strategies is their mobilization of a territory as a discrete, integrated, bounded and coherent unit in and through which a sustained process of economic growth is to occur. In each case, state institutions are mobilized to consolidate, coordinate, manage and reproduce large-scale, long-term productive capacities within a particular territorial arena, be it an urban region, a national economy or a supranational zone. The territorial character and extent of such state strategies has become so

pervasive during the last century that the very concept of “development” has come to be widely understood in territorial terms—that is, as a self-evident property of a relatively bounded unit, generally a national state, an urban region or, under contemporary capitalism, a supranational zone such as the European Union (EU), NAFTA or ASEAN (McMichael 1996).²⁴

Lefebvre also devotes sustained analytical attention to exploring the role of state territorial strategies in imposing a semblance of order, stability and coherence upon the volatile sociospatial relations of modern capitalism, which are often further destabilized through the developmentalist projects of the SMP. Lefebvre confronts this issue above all in his writings on French postwar spatial planning, especially in some of his political texts as well as, more systematically, in Volumes 3 and 4 of *De l'État* (1976-78). As Lefebvre argues, the project of establishing and maintaining a modicum of fixity, stability and predictability within the chaotic flux of economic relations under capitalism lies at the heart of the process of modern state development:

In the chaos of relations among individuals, groups, class fractions and classes, the State tends to impose a rationality, its own, which has space as its privileged instrument (2009: 226).

²⁴ The strategic and ideological link between territory and developmentalist state projects arguably remains as robust and pervasive as ever today, even if its scalar architecture is being reshuffled in the context of processes of geoeconomic restructuring and state spatial restructuring. This link is expressed in a striking manner, for instance, through the logic of worldwide inter-territorial competition, in which state institutions mobilize locational policies and zoning technologies to promote specific territorial jurisdictions as optimal, customized sites for transnational capital investment (Brenner 2004; Ong 2006; Bunnell and Coe 2005). This territory-based logic of developmentalism is today also expressed with reference to the world scale in the form of reports by the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF, which survey the developmental prospects of the global economy as a whole. In such discussions, and their associated modes of policy intervention, the world economy is treated as a world-encompassing territorial matrix in which, although internally differentiated among other units, the process of economic growth is to be at once unleashed and contained.

The concept of “structured coherence” has been developed at length and with considerable influence in Harvey’s (1989, 1982) studies of capitalist urbanization, where it refers to the provisional stabilization of processes of capital accumulation, state regulation and sociopolitical life to facilitate the durable reproduction of an urban region. Lefebvre discusses this set of processes from a slightly different, if broadly complementary angle. He emphasizes the key role of the state, at various spatial scales, in imposing its “own” rationality to secure this coherence. In his analysis, moreover, the coherence in question need not be rooted within urban regions, but may also be sought and secured at supra-urban scales as well, especially at the national scale, which he views as the key site and animator of the political rationality in question. Most centrally here, Lefebvre’s analysis suggests that such projects of state rationalization, ordering and control are inherently, pervasively territorial: they entail the classification, partitioning and management of political-economic life within clearly delineated jurisdictional zones; they tend to treat such zones as cohesive, relatively self-contained targets for specific types of strategic intervention; and they impose diverse forms of monitoring, information-gathering, revenue extraction, regulation, control and discipline upon it. Such state strategies to impose and maintain the coherence, boundedness and identity of territorial arrangements are always fragmentary, contested and mutable. In sum, the main thrust of Lefebvre’s writings on the politics of space is to suggest that, at all spatial scales, state spaces are neither pre-given nor simply transferred across generations, but are always in the process of being shaped and reshaped through various types of territorial strategies.

The Territory Effect

As indicated above, Agnew (1994) criticizes the tendency within international relations theory and political sociology to assume that state power necessarily assumes a territorial form, and by consequence, their employment of a reified, ahistorical and relatively static notion of territory. As the preceding discussion indicates, Lefebvre developed a closely analogous, if inadequately appreciated,

methodological agenda roughly two decades prior to Agnew's intervention. He did so, on the one hand, by advocating a comprehensive, historically reflexive spatialization of political-economic categories. At the same time, Lefebvre explicitly confronted the question of how territorially configured state spaces and state-organized territorial spaces are produced in and through the social relations of modern capitalism.

Crucially, however, Lefebvre's account of state space as territory is not only an effort to transcend fetishized projections of state (territorial) space through the elaboration of a more historically reflexive analysis, for instance, of the production of territory and of state territorial strategies. Additionally, his work begins to investigate how such reified, ideological conceptions are produced and sustained, whether in scholarly analysis, statecraft, political discourse or everyday life. In other words, Lefebvre not only proposes methodological strategies for avoiding the territorial trap, but actively explores how such traps emerge and persist in diverse fields of social knowledge and practice. In Lefebvre's terms, to the extent that any state territory—or more generally, any territorially configured social space—appears as pre-given, self-evident or natural, this state of affairs must be understood as an outcome of historically specific forms of political-economic intervention that simultaneously mask their own transformative impacts upon social life. The vicissitudes of such self-masking interventions, and their consequences for spatial practices, discourses and representations, must then be subjected to close critical analysis.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1974: 36; 1991: 27) discusses this "illusion of transparency" at length and begins to elaborate a state-theoretical interpretation of its conditions of possibility. Here he suggests that, even though social space can be shown to be a medium and outcome of social practice, it nonetheless often "appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free reign" (1974: 36; 1991: 27). Anticipating Agnew's (1994) terminology, Lefebvre

refers to this illusion of transparency as appearing to be without “traps or secret places [*sans pièges, ni cachettes profondes*]”, but actually operating as a “lure or deception [*une leurre*]”, understood as an epistemological dead-end, a “transcendental illusion” in which appearance and reality are systematically conflated (1974: 37-38; 1991: 28-29). The question, for Lefebvre, is how and why such traps emerge and persist in social life.

Lefebvre’s answer builds upon Marx’s critique of commodity fetishism, now applied to the equally mystified view of space as innocent, as free of traps, illusions or deceptions. Just as Marx interprets commodity fetishism as a structurally induced form of mystified consciousness (see also Lefebvre and Guterman 1999 [1936]), so too does Lefebvre analyze the illusion of transparency as a *real abstraction* (see also Stanek 2008). In other words, the conception of space as being transparently self-evident is not merely a cognitive, logical or empirical error; it is, rather, structurally conditioned by the (capitalist) social formation in which it occurs. Insofar as the space in question appears autonomous from the social relations and conditions that actually produced it, it represents a fetish (1976-78: II, 123-124). For Lefebvre, therefore, the illusion of transparency is intimately tied to the historically specific form of abstract space associated with capitalism and the modern state.

As indicated previously, Lefebvre views abstract space as a fundamental dimension of the modern world, but he insists forcefully that it “*is not* homogeneous; it simply *has* homogeneity as its goal, its sense, its ‘objective’... in itself it is multiform” (1974: 330; 1991: 287; italics in original, translation modified). According to Lefebvre, the illusion of transparency emerges within any form of thought that, “*reflects* in place of challenging or refusing. And what does such a specular representation reflect? It reflects the result sought” (1974: 331; 1991: 287; italics in original, translation modified). In the remainder of this key passage, as at several other key junctures of *The Production of Space* and *De*

l'État, Lefebvre presents his view that the state figures crucially in the production and maintenance of this affirmative, mystified representation of social space. It is above all the state, Lefebvre argues, that represents the complex, polymorphic social spaces of modern capitalism as if they were transparent, self-evident and pre-given. By projecting this "illusory clarity of space" throughout society as a whole, the state attempts at once to manipulate political-economic relations more effectively and to mask its own pervasive role in such interventions (1974: 369-70; 1991: 320-321). Lefebvre insists repeatedly, however, that "behind the curtain" of this "illusory transparency" lurks nothing other than "the apparatus of power and knowledge" (1974: 63, 330; 1991: 51, 287) which, like Hegel's philosophy of history, promotes "the fetishization of space in the service of the state" (1974: 30; 1991: 21). For Lefebvre (1976-78: I, 205), then, this double-process of *fetishism* (the politically induced mystification of spatial practices) and *occultation* (the systematic self-masking of state spatial interventions) lies at the heart of the modern state form (see also, more generally, Lefebvre 1976-78: I, 191-238; II, 123-125).

Given the state's massive role in its production and perpetuation, the "illusion of transparency" may be described more precisely as a *political illusion of transparency*. Particularly as 20th century states engage ever more extensively in the production and manipulation of capitalist spatiality (2009: ch. 11), the political illusion of transparency comes to figure centrally in the everyday operations of modern statecraft—what Painter (2006) has recently termed the "prosaic geographies of stateness". Within the large-scale bureaucracies of the state technostucture, Lefebvre suggests, mystified representations of space serve to enhance state capacities for increasingly audacious, far-reaching forms of strategic intervention in the landscapes of capital accumulation. Evidently, "the production of space 'on a grand scale'" (2009: 238) can be pursued most effectively when that space is thought to be transparent and readily malleable,

and treated as such within the field of strategic intervention.²⁵ At the same time, through a process of “occultation,” states attempt systematically to hide or at least to mask their own role in producing and reorganizing social space (1976-78: I, 205). In this way, the intensely commodified, homogenized and fragmented social spaces of modern capitalism acquire the mystified aura of pre-given, natural landscapes or apolitical, technical environments. The imprint of the many strategic decisions, political interventions, ideological negotiations and social struggles that underpinned the production of such spaces is magically hidden; the operations of statecraft, whether grandiose or mundane, are thus insulated from political interrogation. Lefebvre’s notion of *l’espace étatique* therefore refers not simply to a materially given institutional ensemble; it equally represents a realm of politically induced mystification, in short, of spatial ideology. Such considerations help illuminate Lefebvre’s provocative, if tantalizingly open-ended, rhetorical question posed in one of the final chapters of *De l’État*: “Is not the secret of the State, hidden because it is so obvious, to be found in space?” (2009: 228)

While the political illusion of transparency permeates all dimensions of state space, we would argue that it is tied in particularly central ways to territory, which may be viewed as its site *par excellence*. As Agnew suggests in his critique of the territorial trap, territory is the dimension of state space that is most commonly taken for granted (1994). Similarly, Lefebvre’s contemporary Paul Allières emphasizes the ways in which notions of territory engender fetishized representations of state space: “territory always seems linked to possible definitions of the state; it gives the state a physical basis which seems to render it inevitable and eternal” (1980: 9). While Lefebvre does not himself systematically explore this connection, his approach fruitfully suggests that the

²⁵ As James Scott (1998) has more recently demonstrated, such “state simplifications” have powerful, transformative effects on the texture of social life even when they are grounded upon thoroughly problematic ontological and empirical foundations.

state's territorial form—state space *as* territory—is in fact quite crucial to the political illusion of transparency, as outlined above. One of the most wide-ranging impacts of state space as territory is precisely to naturalize—at once to normalize and to mask—the diverse forms of spatial intervention that are mobilized through state interventions. It is above all this *territory effect*, we argue, that enables states to represent the impacts of their manifold spatial interventions as pre-given features of the physical landscape or as purely technical dimensions of the built environment rather than as politically mediated manipulations (compare Jessop 1990 and Mitchell 1997 on the “state effect”).²⁶

Conclusion

Through a systematic reconstruction of Lefebvre's writings on state space, we have suggested that his work avoids some of the problematic geographical assumptions that have long been presupposed within studies of historical and contemporary capitalist political economies. Most important among these is the proposition, most famously stated by Max Weber, that the state extends its power over a more or less pre-given, bounded territorial area or region (*Gebiet*). Insofar as economic processes and regulatory strategies have been presumed to be enclosed within such units, the Weberian assumption has underpinned much of mainstream political economy as well (Mitchell 1997). It remains as essential as ever to examine, and to challenge, such unquestioned geographical assumptions, not least by historicizing them in relation to the broader political-

²⁶ Thus understood, the state territorial strategies discussed in the preceding section operate not only in the realm of materiality, but also in terms of the “mental spaces” of popular representations of state power and its associated geographies, which serve to engender the territory effect. This aspect of such strategies includes the official cartography of the state—as embodied, for instance, in the British Ordnance Survey, the Office of the Geographer in the US State Department or the US census bureau (see, for instance, Hannah 2000). It also encompasses the rationalizing territorial projects of the French Revolution, leading to the geometric division of the country into *départements*, and subsequent post-Napoleonic projects of territorial administrative division throughout the world inter-state system (Bennett 1989). Finally, the imagined or representational aspect of state territorial strategies also includes the more insidious forms of the projection of state territorial normality in weather maps, tourist information and advertising campaigns, which starkly embody the process of “occultation” discussed above.

economic formations in which they became plausible, if not doxic, for social scientists (Goswami 2004).

While affirming the importance of recent work on the politics of place-making, bordering, rescaling and networking in confronting this multifaceted task, we have focused here on the largely neglected problematic of territory. Unless this question is confronted explicitly, we suggest, the territorial trap analyzed so incisively by Agnew (1994) over a decade ago cannot be escaped. Through a systematic excavation of Lefebvre's insights into the production of territory, state territorial strategies and the territory effect, we have attempted to show how a genuine escape from the territorial trap hinges upon a reflexive theorization and investigation of territory as a precondition, medium, mechanism and outcome of modern state power.

Of course, Lefebvre's categories, methods and analyses provide only one possible inroad into the complex tasks associated with the theorization of territory. We have attempted here to excavate his work for insights that can be mobilized towards this end, but much historical, conceptual and political work remains to be done. From an historical point of view, Lefebvre's work suffers from a common oversight: beginning his analysis of political thought with Machiavelli and Hobbes, and thus neglecting the enormously important changes that occurred in the late Middle Ages concerning the object of secular, temporal power. From a conceptual point of view, Lefebvre rarely confronts the question of territory directly. Instead, as we have shown, he favors an approach that explores territory primarily in terms of its relation to other, often more theoretically diffuse ideas. And finally, from a political point of view, Lefebvre's work is to a large extent a conjunctural diagnosis of the period of high Fordism in postwar France in which he lived and worked. Consequently, Lefebvre's key concepts and analyses must be pushed, challenged, updated and rearticulated in order to be made relevant for the contemporary moment of globalized

neoliberalization, hyperfinancialized capital and crisis-induced geopolitical restructuring. While we believe that Lefebvre's work offers ways out of these various challenges, it is best viewed as a spur to further thinking rather than as a comprehensive analysis of the issues at stake. Our goal in this contribution has been to excavate the aspects of his work that appear most salient in relation to current and, we hope, future thinking about the relation between states, space and territory.

Perhaps most crucially of all, it is essential to note that rather than simply criticizing political economy for its neglect of space, Lefebvre's work challenges geopolitical economy to properly *account for* the state and its territory—or, in the terms proposed here, state space *as* territory. The task, from this point of view, is not simply to "spatialize" political-economic analysis, but to analyze the historically specific *form* of political-economic space—namely, territory—upon which modern state action has been premised and which it has in turn produced and reproduced on a world scale. It is through thinking the various relations and configurations of state, space and territory, we argue, that many of the crucial moments of contemporary, historical and future spatial politics can be deciphered.

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