

Contours and Convolutions of Everydayness: On the Reception of Henri Lefebvre in the Federal Republic of Germany*

By Klaus Ronneberger

1. Introduction

In the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Henri Lefebvre's writings had a kind of "underground" status. This situation changed in the 1970s as social and cultural movements rebelled against the Fordist form of societalization (*Vergesellschaftung*)¹ and demanded more autonomy and participation. In the context of this "cultural revolution," Lefebvre's notion of a "critique of everyday life" attracted increased attention.² The "New Left" was drawn, in particular,

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¹The term *Vergesellschaftung* (societalization) refers to the processes by which practices of production and reproduction (such as those under the Fordist model of development) are generalized and diffused in everyday life.

²A German translation of Lefebvre's *Critique de la vie quotidienne* was produced only after a considerable delay. The first volume (and the introduction to the second edition of the first volume) and the second volume (initially published in 1947, 1958 and 1961, respectively) were not translated into German until 1974/1975 (*Kritik des Alltagslebens* (München: Hanser, 1974), *Kritik des Alltagslebens* (München: Hanser, 1975). These works were re-issued by Fischer in 1987. The third volume published in French in 1981 has not been translated. Other German translations of works by Henri Lefebvre are *Der dialektische Materialismus* (Frankfurt: 1966 [1940]); "Perspektiven der Agrarsoziologie" in Alfred Schmidt, ed., *Beiträge zur marxistischen Erkenntnistheorie* (Frankfurt: 1969, [1953]); "Zum Begriff der 'Erklärung' in der politischen Ökonomie und in der Soziologie" in *ibid.*, *Probleme des Marxismus* (Frankfurt: 1965 [1958]); *Aufstand in Frankreich. Zur Theorie der Revolution in den hochindustrialisierten Ländern* (Berlin: 1969 [1968]); *Die Revolution der Städte* (München: 1972 [1970]); *Soziologie nach Marx* (Frankfurt: 1972

to Lefebvre's understanding of radical political praxis not only as a transcendence of inherited forms of domination but as a transformation of the everyday.³

Lefebvre had, in fact, transcended the programmatic agenda of orthodox Marxism, which was oriented primarily towards a seizure of the state apparatus and the centralized planning of production through the collective power of the working class. By contrast, Lefebvre considered the everyday to be the decisive category linking the economy to individual life experiences. Whereas the economic had long played an overarching role under capitalism, the everyday was now acquiring the same significance. The declared goal of his intellectual project was, above all, a "revalorization of subjectivity"⁴ and the quest for spaces that allow for autonomy and creativity. The concept of the *oeuvre* plays a central role in this context; it is intended to replace the much narrower, Marxian concepts of labor. The notion of an *oeuvre* is not only equated with artistic practice, but signifies all activities of self-realization or collective self-management (to which Lefebvre referred as *autogestion*). Lefebvre believed that his critique of economic ideologies — which was directed against an excessively narrow concept of production and a notion of class struggle that was restricted to the

[1966]); *Das Alltagsleben der modernen Welt* (Baden-Baden: 1972 [1968]); *Sprache und Gesellschaft* (Düsseldorf: 1973 [1966]); *Die Zukunft des Kapitalismus* (München: 1974 [1973]); *Metaphilosophie Prolegma* (Frankfurt: 1975 [1965]); *Die Stadt im marxistischen Denken* (Ravensburg: 1975 [1972]); *Einführung in die Modernität. Zwölf Präludien* (Frankfurt: 1978 [1962]); *Die Revolution ist auch nicht mehr, was sie mal war* (München: 1979 [1978]); "Entwurf einer Theorie der Rythmoanalyse," *Neue Praxis*, 2, 1991; "Alltäglichkeit," in W. F. Haug, ed., *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*, vol. 1 (Hamburg/ Berlin: 1994).

³One of the key intellectual representatives of the student movement, Hans-Jürgen Krahl, underscored the importance of Lefebvre's critique of everyday life as follows: "The system of reproduction within organized capitalism is being thoroughly 'subjectivized' to the degree that alienation appears today in absolutized form, as totalitarian reification....As the production process becomes infused with ideology, the difference between base and superstructure gradually levels off: myths, images and symbols provide a certain orientation once they are formalized and summarized on a semiotic basis....The notion of metaphilosophy is the appropriate reaction to the transformed, ever more rigidly naturalized character of late capitalist social formations..." (Hans-Juergen Krahl, *Konstitution und Klassenkampf. Zur historischen Dialektik von bürgerlicher Emanzipation und proletarischer Revolution* [Frankfurt: 1971], p. 120).

⁴Lefebvre, *Einfuehrung*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

factory — contained important implications for the conceptualization of revolution. With the complete urbanization of society, the industrial proletariat found itself in the midst of a process of dissolution that also undermined its role as the agent of transformation. Lefebvre introduced “lived space” (*espace vécu*) as a new subversive category: this refers to a realm that is essential to everybody but that becomes increasingly deficient for its users as social space is integrated ever more directly into processes of capital valorization. On this basis Lefebvre envisioned the emergence of a new revolutionary subject who would revolt not only against the exploitation of its labor-power but against the destruction of its entire living environment.⁵

Lefebvre’s *Critique de la vie quotidienne* focused not only upon the sphere of reproduction but took into consideration the processes through which society as a whole is produced. In this manner, Lefebvre’s project included a critique of political economy but also simultaneously transcended the latter. In modern industrial societies, the everyday is clearly molded in fundamental ways by economic-technological imperatives that colonize space and time. However, collective social praxis cannot be subsumed completely under this systemic logic: there always remains something that escapes domestication.⁶ This ambiguity generates conflicts that configure everyday life as a contradictory relationship between productive activity and passive consumption, between everydayness and creativity. For Lefebvre, therefore, the analysis of the extant must always take into consideration insurgent forces and the question of liberation. Insofar as the critique of everyday life shows how people live, it articulates at the same time an indictment against the strategies from which the everyday emerges and reveals the arbitrariness of the dominant order.⁷

According to Lefebvre, the reproduction of modern everydayness occurs through a three-fold movement. First, societalization is accomplished through a “totalization of society.” Second, this process is accompanied by an “extreme individualization” which eventually leads to a “particularization.”⁸ The “bureaucratic society of controlled consumption” is grounded upon the parcelization of social praxis and the shredding of social contexts:

⁵Lefebvre, *Revolution*, *op. cit.*

⁶U. Müller-Schöll, *Das System und der Rest. Kritische Theorie in der Perspektive Henri Lefebvres* (Mössingen-Thalheim: 1999).

⁷Lefebvre, *Kritik des Alltagslebens (I)*, *op. cit.*

⁸Lefebvre, *Einfuehrung*, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

What are the shared features of these realms that have been separated from one another through an inexorable analytical praxis? In the realm of work, it is passivity, the unavoidable acceptance of decisions made elsewhere; in the realm of private life, there are the many forces which manufacture the consumer through the manufacture of objects; in the realm of leisure, it is the transformation of the “world” into images and spectacles. In short, everywhere one finds passivity, non-participation.⁹

Third, capitalist societies atomize people into isolated consumers. The critique of the “society of the spectacle” was grounded upon the premise that this system could not pacify its class contradictions over the long term. Oppositional movements against the banality and homogeneity of the functional city would be unleashed against an alienation process that is no longer confined to the realm of work but increasingly seizes everyday life as well.

Fordist societalization did indeed produce openings in social space. While the extension of the wage relation functioned as a form of social integration, reductions of labor time and more generous vacation benefits helped liberate subjectivity. Enhanced economic security, prolonged socialization within the family and an extension of cultural activities led — at least for certain social groups — to new, increasingly self-determined ways of life. A new “culture of stimulation” emerged, saturated with commodities and distractions and oriented towards self-realization, pleasure and hedonism. As work discipline was gradually corroded by mass consumption, Fordist societalization became increasingly dysfunctional — for it hinged upon the link between the

⁹Lefebvre, *Kritik des Alltagslebens (II)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120ff. Nearly at the same time, and with direct reference to Lefebvre, the Situationists too spoke of the “colonization” of everyday life (Guy Debord, *Die Gesellschaft des Spektakels* [Hamburg: 1978 [1967]]). Even the Left in the FRG interpreted the entrenchment of the Fordist welfare state as a process of colonization or as a process of “internalization” (*innere Landnahme*). It is in this sense, for instance, that the social psychologist Peter Brückner criticized Fordist societalization with reference to Lefebvre: “In a second colonization, nearly every subsystem — be it the region, the municipality, education — is being regulated directly in a statist manner. Thanks to new technologies of planning and domination, the state imposes its framework upon all interconnected social processes — for only a homogenous medium can be governed” (P. Brückner, *Psychologie und Geschichte* [Berlin: 1982], p. 266).

motivation to work and productive performance.¹⁰ Although Lefebvre insisted repeatedly that everyday life represented a site of the “actual and the possible,” this tension evaporated in his concrete studies of capitalism. He was able to conceptualize and represent the consolidation of Fordism only as impoverishment, leveling and flattening. His proposed dialectic of “alienation” and “appropriation” was thus subordinated to a perspective in which collective social praxis appears to be almost completely reified and normalized.

2. Culture and Consumption

Henri Lefebvre could not or would not recognize the ambiguity of Fordist mass consumption. His denunciation of consumer society as pure domination represented a fairly typical attitude among Left intellectuals during that period. In the FRG, this included the Frankfurt School’s concept of the culture industry, the Marxian concept of alienation as well as bourgeois objections to the loss of meaning under the “dictatorship of consumption.” In contrast to the US, mass consumption was first consolidated in the FRG only in the late 1950s. Subsequently, the boundaries between popular and elite culture — which had previously been clearly demarcated — became increasingly blurred. Erstwhile objects of luxury consumption, such as cars, single-family houses and electronic appliances thus gradually became part of everyday life. This “mass dissemination” (*Vermassung*) of culture through consumption generated a contentious debate during this period. For instance, Jürgen Habermas¹¹ viewed culture and consumption as two irreconcilable entities — culture was a critical category, whereas consumption was a term affirmative of the social order. He viewed culture not as a ready-to-use product but as style and life-form which could be appropriated and acquired only through self-discipline; by contrast, he viewed consumption as a form of stimulation to which one passively surrendered. Cultural ideals such as exertion, asceticism, leisure and refinement were alien to the consumer society, whose goal was relaxation and stress-relief. In this manner, consumption continually produced a promise of happiness that could never be fulfilled, and thus generated frustrations that would be contravened through still further consumption. The irreconcilable opposition between culture and consumption Habermas explained with reference to

¹⁰R. Lüscher, *Henry und die Krümelmonster. Versuch über den Fordistischen Sozialcharakter* (Tübingen: 1988).

¹¹Jürgen Habermas, “Notizen zum Mißverhältnis von Kultur und Konsum,” *Merkur*, 97, 1956; “Konsumkritik — eigens zum Konsumieren,” *Frankfurter Hefte*, 12, 1957.

the fundamental contradiction between culture and production. Consumption is immanent to the logic of production because the *habitus* of producing determines the *habitus* of consuming. Consumption takes place much like a labor process that is evaluated according to the criteria of instrumental rationality and efficiency. Even though it is released from the constraints of the labor process, “leisure” becomes a continuation of production by other means. This type of “produced” consumption generates a renewed subjection to the alienated world of scientific-technological rationality, which cannot create anything that contradicts its own logic. From this perspective, consumer culture is not merely the regrettable result of the hypertrophy of consumption under the affluent society which saturates and trivializes cultural styles. On the contrary, consumption is itself a symptom of a “loss of style” which was made possible by the transformation of profane areas of knowledge into a technological rationality that was now threatening the culture sphere itself.

In his *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics*,¹² the Marxian critic Fritz Haug speaks of a “technocracy of sensuousness” that dominates humans through their fascination with technologically produced, artificial forms. Dominated by the law of value, the social order risks losing all sensuality and turns into pure abstraction. Above and beyond its function as a use-value, according to Haug, the commodity symbolizes a “world” in its aesthetic orientation, which becomes an object of fantasy among individuals who constitute themselves as self-normalizing consumer-subjects. Haug’s critique of commodity aesthetics is grounded in the notion that consumerism is a form of group conformity that inverts the masses’ need for collective solidarity. The dichotomy between use-value and exchange-value often appears within, or even serves as the basis for this critique of consumption as manipulation.¹³ The world of consumption is interpreted as false consciousness, as a manipulative appearance, which prevents individuals from recognizing their authentic and objective needs and interests. This distinction is grounded not least in assumptions derived from theories of revolution and philosophy of history. Objective interests represent historical interests insofar as they hinge upon a movement of history that can be confirmed by scientific knowledge. However, this belief in a teleological unfolding of time belongs to an outmoded and ineffective epistemology; it no longer has any significance as an action-

¹²Wolfgang Frieder Haug, *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (Frankfurt: 1971).

¹³Many critics of capitalism came to view “use-values” as the “good” element within all human beings.

guiding ideology. Above and beyond this, as Jean Baudrillard¹⁴ correctly indicates, the “thesis of manipulation” fails to call into question the false, essentialist premise of fundamental human needs. From this point of view, the production process does not generate individual, isolated and concrete needs but a “system of needs” which lacks a clear relationship to particular consumption practices. This is because that system is not composed of interactions between people and things but rather of social relations in which desires for difference, adaptation or status are articulated. The type of fulfillment associated with consumption is thus dependent upon the entire system of needs and not upon objects that lack a clear purpose or that do not serve predefined needs. At the same time, the activities of consumption must be understood as an active process of producing and combining symbols — in short, as a form of cultural and social praxis. In this sense, one might argue that consumption was established as the dominant form of culture under Fordism and became a motor of social development.

3. Lefebvre and the Poverty of German Urban Studies

Lefebvre’s short-lived importance to the “New Left” in the FRG¹⁵ can be attributed to a specific historical configuration: following the

¹⁴Baudrillard, *Das System der Dinge. Über unser Verhältnis zu den alltäglichen Gegenständen* (Frankfurt: 1991 [1968]); *The Consumer Society* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1998 [1970]).

¹⁵Without claiming to be exhaustive, the following list of sources provides an overview of the German-language reception of Lefebvre during the 1970s: R. Bentmann and M. Müller, *Nachwort zur zweiten Auflage: Die Villa als Herrschaftsarchitektur. Versuch einer kunst- und sozialgeschichtlichen Analyse* (Frankfurt: 1971); H.-E. Bahr, ed., *Politisierung des Alltags: Gesellschaftliche Bedingungen des Friedens* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: 1972); K. Meyer, *Henri Lefebvre: Ein romantischer Revolutionär* (Vienna: 1973); A. H. Arenz, J. Bischoff and U. Jaeggi, *Was ist revolutionärer Marxismus?* (Berlin: 1973); G. Gischner, “Sozialisationstheorie und materialistische Ästhetik,” in *Das Unvermögen der Realität* (Berlin: 1974); P. Gorsen, “Transformierte Alltäglichkeit oder Transzendenz der Kunst?,” in *ibid.*; R. Paris, “Befreiung vom Alltag?,” *Kursbuch*, 41, 1975; T. Kleinspehn, *Der verdrängte Alltag: Henri Lefebvres marxistische Kritik des Alltagslebens* (Gießen: 1975); T. Leithäuser, *Formen des Alltagsbewußtseins* (Frankfurt: 1976); A. Krovoza, *Produktion und Sozialisation* (Frankfurt: 1976); G. Treusch-Dieter, “Revolution der Städte?,” *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, 26, 1977; W. Durth, *Die Inszenierung der Alltagswelt. Zur Kritik der Stadtgestaltung* (Braunschweig: 1977); L. Hack, *Subjektivität im Alltagsleben. Zur Konstitution sozialer Relevanzstrukturen* (Frankfurt: 1977); H. Berndt, *Die Natur der Stadt* (Frankfurt: 1978); H. Joas, “Einleitung,” in A. Heller, ed., *Das*

consolidation of the welfare state, the hierarchy of production and reproduction tended to be overcome insofar as this development subjected both realms to new forms of discipline and homogenization. Consequently, social struggles in the sphere of reproduction developed into a central field of conflict. Militant activist organizations and subcultural networks emerged in the struggle against the rigid regulatory practices of the Fordist “Planning State” (Toni Negri)¹⁶ and its restrictive moral and cultural conditions. These organizations attacked predominant forms of normalization, not least the “nucleus of the state” — the family — and thus contributed to the crisis of Fordist societalization. This rebellion was provoked “less by the forms of exploitation associated with property relations than by the consequences of industrialization for the lifeworld, less by class oppression than by the modern state’s drive towards centralization and sociocultural homogeneity.”¹⁷

While Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life attracted a certain following in the FRG during the 1970s, his thesis that the “urban” rather than the industrial represented the foundational tendency of social development did not resonate well. For Lefebvre, the totalizing process of urbanization entailed a fundamental epistemological shift: “It can be argued that the urban (in contrast to urbanism, whose ambiguity is becoming obvious) is rising on the horizon, slowly permeating the

Alltagsleben. Versuch einer Erklärung der individuellen Reproduktion (Frankfurt: 1978); R. Neugebauer, *Alltagsleben: Zur Kritik einer politisch-historischen und dialektischen Kategorie* (Frankfurt: 1978); B. Waldenfels, “Im Labyrinth des Alltags,” in B. Waldenfels *et al.*, eds., *Phänomenologie und Marxismus 3* (Frankfurt: 1978); K. Hammerich and M. Klein, “Alltag und Soziologie,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, Sonderheft 20: Materialien zur Soziologie des Alltags*, 1978; B. Dewe, W. Ferchhoff, H. Sücker, “Perspektiven einer Kritik des Alltagslebens heute — ein Nachwort,” in *H. Lefebvre: Kritik des Alltagslebens* (Frankfurt: 1987). Lefebvre’s work was read above all in a context shaped by materialist approaches to theories of socialization and consciousness, approaches to aesthetic theory and cultural revolution, as well as in the margins of urban studies. In contemporary Germany, Lefebvre has disappeared from the radar screen; he never became as well-known in Germany as Michel Foucault or Gilles Deleuze. His books have disappeared even from the shelves of second-hand bookshops — a fate that Lefebvre shares with Marxists such as Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas.

¹⁶Negri, *Krise des Plan-Staats, Kommunismus und revolutionäre Organisation* (Berlin: 1973).

¹⁷P. Brückner, “Vorwort” in Brückner, *Produktion und Sozialisation* (Köln: 1976), p. 10.

epistemological realm, until it becomes the episteme of the epoch. History and the historical become less and less relevant. Like political economy, psychology and linguistics have reached their high point and have begun to decay. The urban is emerging.”¹⁸ Lefebvre views the urban as the core of the “realm of possibility” which can supersede parcelized everydayness. Yet his call for the development of a critical spatial theory found little resonance within German urban studies. This can be explained by the fact that the “historical” and the “temporal” dominated postwar German social science, for the category of “space” was ideologically tainted during the Nazi era with slogans such as “people without space” (*Volk ohne Raum*) and “territorial expansion policy” (*Großraumpolitik*). Although a lecture by Lefebvre — which was grounded upon the argument of *La production de l'espace*¹⁹ — appeared in a German journal of architecture and urban planning,²⁰ a more comprehensive examination of this text has not yet occurred.²¹

There are still other reasons for the short-lived reception of Lefebvre’s work within German urban sociology. The culture industry thesis of the Frankfurt School played a central role within studies of socialization and education, and thus provided multiple potential linkages to Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life; by contrast, critical theory was hardly acknowledged at all within the registers of urban studies.²² While some authors did attempt to ground their work upon Marxian terminology, only the economy and the law of value were recognized as universal reference points for understanding urban space (as, for instance, in the German “derivationist” tradition). Lefebvre’s rejection of economism, his foundational assumption that the social totality could only be experienced and conceptualized in a fragmented manner as well as the terminological and conceptual inconsistency of his writings (along with a paucity of competent translations) discouraged many critical, anti-capitalist urban sociologists from attempting to integrate his insights into their research. While Lefebvre’s category of the “everyday” was eventually accepted even

¹⁸Lefebvre, *Revolution*, *op. cit.* p. 48.

¹⁹*The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991 [1974]).

²⁰“Die Produktion des städtischen Raums,” *arch+*, 34, 1977 (1975).

²¹For exceptions, see Hajo Schmidt, *Sozialphilosophie des Krieges. Staats- und subjekttheoretische Untersuchungen zu Henri Lefebvre und Georges Bataille* (Essen: 1990); and Walter Prigge, “Die Revolution der Städte lesen,” in Martin Wentz, ed., *Stadt-Räume* (Frankfurt: 1991).

²²For important exceptions see, for example, the works of Hans G. Helms in Helms und J. Jansen, eds., *Kapitalistischer Städtebau* (Neuwied und Berlin: 1970), Werner Durth, *op. cit.*, and Heide Berndt, *op. cit.*

within the discipline of urban studies, the same cannot be said of his concept of space. The German translation of an essay by David Harvey in the late 1980s presented another, albeit indirect, opportunity for interested readers to acquaint themselves with Lefebvre's complex spatial theory.²³ By this time, German urban studies was in the midst of a paradigm shift, however: political economy approaches were declining in importance and marginalized in favor of a new culturalist approach. The discipline of urban studies opened up to postmodern sociological concepts even as the discourse-theoretical and semiotic methods associated with the latter were largely ignored. German urban studies remains completely unaware of research on the power-knowledge complex (e.g., Foucault). In this manner the "romantic revolutionary"²⁴ fell through the cracks a second time: with the increasing institutionalization of social movements (for instance, the Greens) and the ebbing of militant struggles, interest in a fundamental critique of state and society likewise diminished. In light of the predominant mentality to accept the state as the unquestioned parameter of life, Lefebvre's reflections on the "state mode of production" no longer had "use-value" for German urban studies (Lefebvre's four volumes on state theory, *De l'Etat* (1976-78) remain known only among a few specialists). His "triadic" model of space, which emphasizes the importance of symbolic processes, was once again dismissed by the discipline as incomprehensible French prose.²⁵ The work of Walter Prigge remains an important exception in his respect.²⁶

²³"Flexible Akkumulation durch Urbanisierung: Überlegungen zum 'Postmodernismus' in den amerikanischen Städten," *PROKLA*, 69, 1987.

²⁴Meyer, *op. cit.*

²⁵It remains to be seen whether Neil Brenner's innovative essays on Lefebvre's spatial theory and state theory will leave behind any traces within German urban studies — but this seems doubtful (Brenner, "Die Restrukturierung staatlichen Raums. Stadt- und Regionalplanung in der BRD 1960–1990," *PROKLA*, 109, 1997; "Städte und die Politik des Raumes," *WeltTrends*, 17, 1997).

²⁶Walter Prigge, *Zeit, Raum und Architektur. Zur Geschichte der Räume* (Aachen: 1986); "Hegemonie des urbanistischen Diskurses," in Prigge, ed., *Die Materialität des Städtischen* (Basel/Boston: 1987); "Die Revolution der Städte lesen," *op. cit.*; "Städte Bauen oder Sätze Bauen?" *Kulturrevolution*, 17/18, 1988; *Urbanität und Intellektualität im 20. Jahrhundert. Wien 1900, Frankfurt 1930, Paris 1960* (Frankfurt: 1996).

4. The New Spirit of Capitalism

And today? Can Lefebvre's approach help us understand the "contours and convolutions" of post-Fordist everyday life?

First it is necessary to review the transformations that have unfolded during recent decades. The Fordist growth model experienced a double crisis during the 1970s. On the one hand, the productivity of Taylorist work organization was exhausted. On the other hand, the effectiveness of Keynesian welfare state policies was undermined by increased economic internationalization.²⁷ As Fordist regulatory practices and institutions were subjected to ever more powerful critique, the disjuncture grew between the actual potential for conflict within society and the state's problem-solving capacities. Neoliberalism builds upon this critique and re-directs it against individual subjects. The new technologies of power associated with neoliberalism attempt to individualize social risks, dismantle erstwhile social rights and subject people to self-regulation. Reacting to growing demands for more individuality, the new regime "invites individuals and organizations to participate more actively and help solve particular issues and problems which until then had been the responsibility of specialists and authorized state institutions."²⁸ Whereas a new form of "objective domination" replaced the authoritarian-paternalistic regime at the beginning of the last century, a new form of social regulation currently appears to be crystallizing which is grounded in the demand for "controlled autonomy."

Gilles Deleuze argues that this development entails a transformation of the earlier society of discipline into a society of control.²⁹ In his view, the social meaning of inherited realms of enclosure such as the school, the family or the factory is changing. Whereas the goal in the previous period was the constitution of reliable individuals, social control no longer aims at sanctioning the subjects' morality; instead it strives to regulate places and situations in a depersonalized manner. According to Felix Guattari, "globally integrated capitalism" tends to concentrate its activities on structures of production

²⁷This discussion does not take into consideration that these shifts did not happen simultaneously and invariably among western European states and the US, in particular as it pertains to the consolidation of neoliberalism.

²⁸Th. Lemke, *Eine Kritik der politischen Vernunft. Foucaults Analyse der modernen Gouvernementalität* (Hamburg: 1997), p. 254.

²⁹Deleuze, "Postskriptum zu den Kontrollgesellschaften," in Deleuze, *Unterhandlungen* (Frankfurt: 1992).

that serve to establish signs and subjectivities.³⁰ On both an individual and a collective level, this reconstitution of the labor process increasingly requires a “creative” form of subjectivity that can be produced only through continual education and the permanent delegation of authority. While the goal in the industrial era was to layer and to serialize the wage-dependent classes, a new form of postindustrial subjectivity is emerging in the era of the “information revolution” and biotechnology.

Even if one disagrees with these theses, fundamental transformations of living and working conditions are difficult to overlook. For instance, the model of the large corporation with its internal division of labor and its rigid form of mass production is being superseded by “lean” companies grounded in flexible forms of production and work organization. The Fordist organization of production recognized (despite the ideology of partnership) the different interests of capital and labor. But post-Fordist firms tend to abolish this difference and to subsume wage laborers completely under the logic of capital. The ideological ideal-type which results from this development is the worker-entrepreneur (*Arbeitskraftunternehmer*) who is self-reliant, ready to perform, and loyal to the firm. These shifts in work organization also require a restructuring of intra-firm social relations. While Fordist enterprise culture emphasized the functional division between the company and the lifeworld, post-Fordist conceptions propagate an exclusively business-oriented lifeworld and the establishment of “total communities.” According to this agenda, at least, the separation of “work” and “everyday life” is to be superseded. This agenda is difficult to grasp in Marxian terms as a form of alienation. Rather, this mobilization of subjectivity attempts to absorb and valorize the individual’s capacities to cooperate and communicate. As the Italian “post-operaist”³¹ Maurizio Lazzarato correctly underscores, we are dealing with a new technology of power:

³⁰Guattari, *Die drei Ökologien* (Wien: 1994).

³¹The designation “operaist” (workerist) refers to association with radical currents of the Italian New Left that pushed for workers’ autonomy (self-organization) from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. Operaist groups left of the Communist Party that emerged out of Italy’s “hot autumn” in 1969 included Potere Operaio (Workers’ Power), Lotta Continua (Struggle Continues), and Avanguardia Operaia (Workers’ Vanguard). After 1973, workerist strategies of autonomy were replaced with broader “social” conceptions of self-organization in a variety of social movements that focused their energies less on workers in factories of mass production than on marginal workers, the unemployed, women, youth, and squatters.

“Be subjects” is thus an order which does not in any way dissolve the antagonism between hierarchy and cooperation, between autonomy and command....Here we encounter directly an authoritarian discourse: one must express oneself and give one’s opinion; one must communicate and cooperate....The new slogan for management — “be communicative subjects” — threatens to be even more totalitarian than the rigid separation of mental and manual labor, of conception and execution. The capitalist strives to instrumentalize the producer’s subjectivity and the personality in the process of producing value. Command and control must be anchored in the subject and in communication.³²

These basic transformations of living conditions have rendered obsolete inherited conceptions of work and class identities, and have globalized fields of conflict. The social bearers of the earlier class compromise have been “dissolved,” but no new collective counter-project has developed out of the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism. Hopes for a radical transformation of capitalist society have not only collapsed; the models of the “Fordist” and the “post-Fordist” Left have lost their explanatory power and thus their capacity to mobilize opposition. Marginalized socially through processes of capitalist restructuring, the Left does not appear to have developed a coherent response to the neoliberal attacks. It would appear, on the contrary, that opposition to “casino capitalism” is occurring mainly on the basis of a displaced Fordist logic.³³ Such a critique demands “social justice” and highlights the tyranny of the globalized market and the crises of “social integration” which it causes. In the face of these intensifying social hardships, even former critics of Fordism have apparently begun to yearn, to some degree, for the “golden age,” even though this is neither possible nor desirable. At the same time, the “post-Fordist” Left finds itself confronted with the fact that its demands for self-realization and autonomy have now become key elements within flexible social technologies. “To the degree that capitalism can simultaneously absorb critical counter-positions, schematically repeating otherwise legitimate

³²M. Lazzarato, “Immaterielle Arbeit. Gesellschaftliche Tätigkeit unter den Bedingungen des Post-Fordismus,” in Th. Atzert, ed., *Immaterielle Arbeit und Subversion* (Berlin: 1998), pp. 42ff.

³³See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, *Gegenfeuer. Wortmeldungen im Dienste des Widerstands gegen die neoliberale Invasion* (Konstanz: 1998).

criticisms turns into affirmation — as long as such criticisms merely perpetuate the old problematics....”³⁴

It is here that the limitations of Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life become apparent. To be sure, he was able to transcend certain dogmas of the marxist movement, but he remained locked into a theory of revolution that was grounded in a philosophy of history. Contrary to his belief that a trend towards radical-democratic self-management (or *autogestion*) was unavoidable, capitalism has become even stronger following the crisis of the Fordism: it has proven itself capable of absorbing its critics, taking up certain oppositional claims and instrumentalizing them for its own purposes.

The French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have indicated that capitalism has faced different forms of criticism during the course of its history.³⁵ They suggest that two basic strands of critique have emerged since the mid-20th century. Whereas the first is directed against exploitation and inequality (*critique sociale*), the second thematizes aspects of autonomy and self-realization (*critique artiste*). The system tries to take on both forms of critique and play them off against one another:

According to our hypothesis, no phase of capitalism is confronted with both claims of liberation simultaneously. Rather, capitalism tends to take back on one level what it offers on another level. However, since strong interdependencies obtain between both claims of emancipation, every concession and every retraction on one level generates consequences on the other level. This leads in turn to a new configuration of the two forms of alienation.³⁶

Thus, with the crisis of the Fordist developmental model, structural transformations began to unfold which appear to correspond above all to the demands of the “*critique artiste*” but conform to predominant developmental tendencies. By contrast, due to the process of capitalist restructuring, the previously dominant “*critique sociale*” has begun to

³⁴H. Kocyba, “Die falsche Aufhebung der Entfremdung. Über die normative Subjektivierung der Arbeit im Post-Fordismus,” in M. Hirsch, ed., *Psychoanalyse und Arbeit* (Göttingen: 2000), p. 24.

³⁵L. Boltanski and E. Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (Paris 1999); “Befreiung vom Kapitalismus? Befreiung durch Kapitalismus?” *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 4, 2000.

³⁶Boltanski and Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 484ff.

lose its overarching role as the “ideology of liberation.” Flexible capitalism has been able to confront the wishes and demands of the new social movements through its new supply of identities and consumer goods; meanwhile, the transgressive energies of the new social movements are being transformed into lifestyles. It is clear that the social position of subjects no longer hinges upon their position in the production and labor process, but increasingly upon symbolic forms of distinction which are in turn derived from aesthetic experiences and particular models of consumption. The culture industry attempts to provide the necessary symbols and signs for these patterns of identity formation by offering “experiences” or “lifestyles” as commodities and services. Whereas Fordist mass consumption contributed to an opening up of social space and the emancipation of subjectivity, consumption today accentuates the hierarchical character of class relations, be it through the medium of money, by means of distinctive lifestyles or through a restrictive regulation of space.³⁷ At the same time, the expansion of creativity and autonomy is secured only through social dumping, increasingly precarious employment relations and a growing exclusion of “unproductive” people. The system of power associated with neoliberalism operates not only through the demand for self-reliance and individual responsibility. The return of the “punitive state”³⁸ indicates that the classical model of “discipline and punish” has not disappeared.³⁹

For this reason, a subversive confrontation with post-Fordist everydayness must contain two main thrusts. On the one hand, a *critique sociale* must be formulated which can account for transformations in social and power structures. On the other hand, a *critique artiste* must be prevented from being mobilized for purposes of productivity and instrumentalized subjectivity without falling back onto Fordist standards.

According to Foucault’s thesis,⁴⁰ three types of social struggles have existed since the 20th century — those against domination, whether of a religious, ethnic or social character; those against

³⁷The conception of individual consumption practices as a form of empowerment or even of subversive action — which is frequently propagated in the field of Cultural Studies — must therefore be rejected.

³⁸Loic Wacquant, “Vom wohltätigen Staat zum strafenden Staat. Über den politischen Umgang mit dem Elend in Amerika,” *Leviathan*, 1, 1997.

³⁹Michel Foucault, *Überwachen und Strafen* (Frankfurt: 1976).

⁴⁰Foucault, “Das Subjekt und die Macht,” in H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault. Jenseits von Strukturalismus und Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt: 1987).

exploitation that separates individuals from their products; and those against everything that binds individuals to themselves and thus subordinates them to others. At least since the revolts of 1968, the struggle against “forms of subjectivity” has dominated. Of course, domination and exploitation did not disappear as motives for revolts, for modes of subjectification are always linked to conflicts in social arenas such as the economy or law. The dominance of battles against subjectification results from the subordination of all aspects of social life to the state. In this context, one must transcend the conception of the state as a static apparatus. It is, rather, a modern, “fluid” technology of power in which the socialization of individuals is accomplished precisely through their modes of subjectification. People participate in this process intentionally by paying tribute to the ethics of law and internalizing norms. Against such tendencies, new forms of subjectivity must be established which reject the century-old form of individuality that subjects people to a morality infused with logics of sacrifice or victimization. This poses the perennial problem of how minority groups can strengthen each other in their respective claims to freedom. But this is, ultimately, a question of political praxis.