

ENCUENTROS

“Geography is a holistic scientific discipline, in a world where specialization is everything”

Interview to David Harvey

Jerónimo Montero Bressán¹

Jerónimo Montero Bressán (JMB): So, first of all, thank you for agreeing to do the



interview, I have to say that you were happy from the very beginning to do an interview for Pleamar. So, thank you about that.

Dr. David Harvey and Dr. Jerónimo Montero Bressán during the interview at the City University of New York. November 15, 2022

I want to ask first...I'm trying to “reveal your formula”: How do you work? How do you get to write a book or article? What are your inspirations?

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David Harvey (DH): Well... I think of myself as a writer and a commentator, and therefore I'm involved in trying to explain what's happening in the world and why, and some ideas about what to do about it. So that's where I'm positioned. And so the writing is kind of incidental to that.

But on the other hand, it's also a mechanism and a means by which I try to change the world and understand it. And I'm perpetually looking for new ways to understand what's going on and to put it together in a conceptual form that other people might understand, and I think that over time I've tried more and more to be more comprehensible to as many people as possible. I don't know if I always succeed.

But I've also felt all along that you shouldn't patronize your audience. You should challenge them and I assume they are intelligent, smart people, and people can understand. If it's a difficult subject, you have to deal with difficult things, and we have to spent a lot of time figuring out what to do.

JMB: Who are your readers? I mean, when you're writing, who do you have in mind?

DH: Publishers often come to me and say things like: “Well, who is your audience?” And my answer is “Well, if I'm just gonna write for a fixed audience, and...what's the point? I'm interested in *making* an audience, *creating* an audience through my writings and my work. The answer to that question is that my audience is anybody who picks up my work and runs with it. Looking at things like citations and so on it's clear I have a very large audience, and I've made it, and I would like to make as much more as I possibly could. I think that any author worth their salt is trying to make an audience rather than simply satisfy an audience.

JMB: Kind of hard! I usually write with some colleague in mind. I guess some bits you write them like responding to someone or stuff like that, because you are involved in discussions about how the world works with other colleagues as well.

DH: I used to write often with the idea that I had somebody on who was checking me out, sitting on my back. And I remember saying this to somebody that it's very difficult for you riding away, and then you're thinking: “God, that's the person on my back thinking this and that” and then you kind of say at a certain point, you would even personalize it and say: “Well the person sitting on my back is, I don't know, Althusser, Poulantzas or

somebody like that you know. So, I said this to somebody else and he said “Yeah, you've been sitting on my back for a long time!”.

JMB: That's true.

DH: And at a certain point I said “to hell with youth on my back!”, just “get on and do what you wanna do”.

JMB: What is your difference with other colleagues in Geography? Because you've obviously made it to, say, the top ten thinkers about how the world works, and no other geographer is there. Probably Jamie Peck is being increasingly cited beyond Geography and beyond Academia. But how do you made it to...to be so...so well known outside of the Academia? What did you do differently to other geographers?

DH: I don't think I did anything differently. I think I've probably produced more of it, as a certain point where the mass of what you produce starts to have an impact. But it's interesting you say that geographers are not so cited. Just yesterday I'm watching the news and National Public Radio, which is the public radio station, and they have a news item and at the end of the news item had a little cultural thing. And one of my students was being interviewed on National Public Radio. He has a project about recovering the spirit of the new deal and he has in a sense an atlas of all of the New Deal projects during the New Deal. They built new highways and they built new gardens and parks and all kinds of things like that. It's a fantastic record. And so he's been leading a project to document this, and so that he's on NPR.

And then this morning I wake up and there's a discussion on global population, and the main source of the discussion is Danny Dorling who's the professor of Geography at Oxford. So in one 24 hour period I'm listening to two geographers who are talking about what they're doing and... and I think, you know, Geography is of course a very diverse discipline and there's a lot of different things going on within it. I think the big problem for the discipline is that it doesn't have...it's rather a *holistic* discipline, and in an era where specialization is everything. Geography is infected by specialization and they tend to not do the sort of grand theory stuff, and I suppose you could say that one of the things that I do is place some attention to the grand theory. So I tried to integrate understandings about space, place and environment, integrated into a theory of the capitalist mode of production. And when you do that, you end up with a rather different understanding of the theory, and it works out rather...rather differently. So I think that that is one of the problems of Geography: it is holistic and that's his strength, but being holistic these days

is, you know... deans look at you and say: “What is this?” But it's terribly important, I mean, the difference between Medicine and holistic Medicine is very significant. I think the distinction between specialized Social Science and holistic forms, which Geography is essentially concerned with, is a big difference. I think we have something very, very big to offer, and I think it's a great mistake to push it to one side because it does not have the intensity of the specialized disciplines.

JMB: So it is hard for young geographers today to actually make it, because you can keep on with your holistic stuff because you're David Harvey...

DH: Yes, yes.

JMB: Today for a geographer doing something holistic, at least in Anglo-Saxon Geography is very difficult, right? Because they are pushed to concentrate on specific debates so that they will be cited by colleagues... Is it still possible?

DH: Yes. Oh, yeah, it is, I mean, but you have to have a strategy in doing it. I mean, for example, I did my doctoral work on cultivation of hops in this little area in Kent, in the 19th century. You can't get much more specialized than that! But, in the process I learned a fantastic amount which was of general significance. The Chair of my department at John Hopkins recounted a story to me about how to think about Geography. He said “You know, when you're doing dissertation, you have to dig a deep well into something very specific, and you learn how to deal with the intensity of what is going on at the bottom of the well”, he said, “but then there's an interesting question: Are you going to bring water up from the well and irrigate knowledge in general, or you're going to stay down the well for the rest of your life?” And a lot of geographers stay down the well for the rest of their life. I dug a well, and I've learned a fantastic amount doing that work on 19th century hop cultivation in Kent, and I learned a fantastic amount from it, which I still draw upon today! But I did it in a way that was about general things. For example, one of the things about hop cultivation is that you have to plant hops and you wait for seven years before you get them. So you need *finance*. Where did finance come from? What was the relationship between the Kentish hop growers and the city of London financial markets? So suddenly I realized that “this is related to this”. There was an interesting moment in which of the Kentish Agricultural folk were actually in cahoots (alliance) with the West Indian sugar plantation interests, they were just coming out of slavery! And you think “that's not a very Kentish thing to do, you know, to be involved with people from slavery”, but it turned

out that what they had in common was the question of the sugar duties, because sugar was terribly important in terms of the diet of working class people, and one of the ways they took in sugar was through having jam and the like, and jam is made with sugar, and the fruit was grown in Kent. So there I am and I'm dealing with something where it has ramifications with the West Indies, the Parliament, financial markets... So you can do a very, very narrow topic, but if you see, it has a kind of like a monad or kind of which internalizes all of these forces then...then you can actually see the generality and the specificity.

JMB: So, you can then look at the scale question, right? I mean the presence of the different scales...

DH: Well, but in this case the scale is what? I mean OK, I'm looking at different cultivation and fruit in Kent, but it relates to the West Indies and the sugar trade and the sugar interest, and it relates to English industrialism because all the workers going down over the mines are actually taking bread with a bit of sugar on it in the form of jam or anything. And this actually even got me around to looking at something like "English like to have bitter marmalade". You say: "Bitter marmalade, what happened? Why? Why did they, why? And I make marmalade, I make my own marmalade to this day and my family did that and..."

JMB: But not bitter, right? (laughs)

HARVEY: Yes bitter marmalade, yes, I make bitter marmalade, I love it! And then you ask "where did the taste come from?" Well, it came from the fact that the fruit industry had a source of fruit pulp for most of the year, but they didn't know what to do in January. Well in January, there are all these bitter oranges that nobody uses down in Spain. So you could take the bitter oranges and turn them into bitter marmalade and so suddenly this taste for marmalade arises because of the necessity of keeping your fixed capital fully employed over the year. Things like that, which came out of the research which I'm always interested in. So... I don't think it's impossible, I think that somebody *should* go down into the well, because when you go down then you know how to do it. I spent a lot of time in the archive and I know how to do archival research, and it's very difficult, and it is very significant, and I learned how to do that. And so you can learn to do many techniques and to understand what it takes to get the information down the bottom of the well. But unless you bring it all up and start to use it...

So I think there's this wrong thing of saying “well, okay, there's specific stuff going on over here, and general stuff going here”. No, I think they are always enmeshed together. The particular and the universal are, if you like, locked in a metabolic relation.

JMB: Yes, I've been looking to papers of left-wing and heterodox economists, back in Argentina, to discuss with them now in December. And they kind of analyze the Argentinian situation, and they do mention the worldwide situation but as a context, just as a context in which Argentina... Like saying “what happens in Argentina is this, this and that”, and they don't look at what is going on beyond the country. You actually say something like that in one of your papers, you say that economist look at the world as a *patchwork* of different Nations”. So what we do as geographers is try to understand the broader thing.

DH: Right, right.

JMB: Your trajectory in the last years... In Latin America we are kind of still looking at your New Imperialism and Brief History of Neoliberalism. Some did read the Seventeen Contradictions [and the End of Capitalism], but people in general, I would say, they're not aware of your more abstract writings in the last ten years. What was your trajectory? How did you go from the New Imperialism to the Companion on the Grundrisse (which is coming out in January)?

DH: Well, there are two things. Reading Marx in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the collapse of communism, teaching it, hardly anybody wanted to read it... at a time when actually we looked at what was happening around the world in terms of the recreation of certain labor practices as, you know, textiles for example, that actually this is very much like what you read about in volume one of Capital, when you're looking at the Working Day. So I was getting frustrated with the fact that “here is a historical period when Marx is terribly relevant and there's a historical period when every must read it!”.

So I was taken with this sort of thing around: I should try to explain to people what they should read this stuff because it's terribly relevant to understanding... And the more I got into that, the more I got into the idea of “well...I should spend some time trying to explain to people what's going on in Marx's Capital, because I always used to teach that, so then, coming here to New York with some very media savvy students, one of the students in

particular said basically: “We're going to put this on the web. We're gonna turn it into a kind of educational thing”. And I didn't agree.

JMB: You didn't?! How Come?!

DH: No, I didn't, for about a year I didn't agree, no, I thought it was a silly idea!” (laughs), but he said: “No, no, it's fine, we will do it, we will do it”, and he did it. And I then thought “well this is a bit about trying to get people to read Marx”. In doing so, I wanted to publish some things that were drawing upon my understanding of Marx to understand the world and those are the books like *The New Imperialism* or *Brief History of Neoliberalism* that I wanted to do.

In retrospect, I see it as a kind of “Marx project” that I'm on it to get people to read Marx, and to do that was very important because there are a lot of commentaries, of course, on Marx, coming from philosophy or economics or so on, and the commentaries are usually much more difficult than Marx himself, so you kind of say: “Well, what's the point of that?” So I wanted to come up with a way of understanding Marx, which is, Einstein once put it as “it is simple, but no simpler”, by which I mean you can simplify something but then you can get simplistic. So there's a very narrow path you have to go and I sometimes fall off one side and I have times I pull off the other side. So I tried to do that with Marx's texts. I think it's been very encouraging, actually a lot of people have got to read Marx's text because of the Companion and because of the lectures. I get letters from people like, I had a wonderful letter one day from somebody who'd been in the union movement in California all (their) his life, and he is now 80 years old, and I get his letter from him kind of saying that all of his life he had wanted to read *Capital*. He never got it, and finally he got it, in his old age, and he was so delighted, and I thought “this is great!”.

The same thing is true of the *Grundrisse*, which is very difficult to write but I do it in two ways. I try to take out what I think are the more salient points - there's a lot of fluff and mess and mud around - I try to extract that, remaining fairly faithful, as much as I can, to the text, but at the same time I try to say that this is useful to look and think about, and to think about it because when you think about it through these terms, you see the world in a different kind of way. Out of that comes a rather a distinctive reading of Marx, which is not deeply philosophical or even rigorously economic. It's more...it's more like “what are the political applications of this? And where and what things do you discover when reading the *Grundrisse* that you wouldn't have thought about, and which are relevant to understanding the current situations. So that's the spirit in which I have been doing it. So,

oh... I'll get a lot of criticism and well, the Companions have received a lot of criticism from “expert technical Marxists”, you know, and a lot of people, you know... the *Marxists*, tend to be rather dogmatic and actually conservative, it's very interesting, they're very, very conservative. They are supposed to be revolutionaries, and I am...

JMB: In what terms? Would you give an example?

DH: Well, there are certain dogmas in Marx about... say, the falling rate of profit or, you know, the base and superstructure or something of that kind, and everybody's got banging their heads...

JMB: You've insisted recently on the fact that crises can arise at any moment of the circulation of capital...

DH: Yes, yes...

JMB: ... meaning that it's not just struggles at the point of production and that matter, but also struggles all around the different moments of circulation.

DH: Yes. Yes. No, I mean, Marx says these things and you pull them out of the Grundrisse, for example he says that the worker is involved of course in class relation with capital and class struggle with capital, but the worker also lives and has a life, and when they have money they go out and they spend it this way, that way, and they use it in certain ways, and they go into the market and they buy commodities with it and then Marx kind of he says “when they're doing that, they actually abandon their identity as worker. They're no longer worker. They're...they're buyer in the market” and therefore they're caught up in a different kind of struggle at the point of consumption than they are involved in the point of production. And what Marx kind of says is that both of those struggles are legitimate, legitimate features around which political struggle might help... I'm forward to something you're fighting against rising rents. You're right here [in New York City]! and that is as important as the kind of struggle you have to... you know. When I say that there's a conservatism about it... Marx built a basis for understanding, but the only point of acquiring an understanding of the basis is to use that basis to go on doing other things. So that's what I try to do with this, kinds of saying “What does this mean?” And we get into sort of looking at struggles in the city. I've always been about saying “well, you know, this distinction between struggles at the point of production and

urban social movements”... No! They are all part of the holistic structure, the totality of what a worker is facing and all of those moments are important in their lives!

JMB: Yes. We'll come back to that in the very end. I just wanted to ask you about something else. You are concentrated now on the power of abstractions, on how abstractions actually lead people like capitalists to do things which are against their own interest, but they just cannot stop it. What's the power of abstractions? Why these abstractions are important? And how do we actually kind of shift our mind to understanding the abstractions?

DH: Well, if you ask yourself, for instance, one of the abstractions and which is constantly in the press these days is inflation and the interest rate. And things are being done about... there's interventions going on about the interest rate, which have to do with inflation. These are abstractions. They're real. They're *concrete abstractions* in the sense that the Federal Reserve has data about inflation, wants to do something about it, and so intervenes with the interest rate. Now, the Federal Reserve does not create money, money is created all over the place by different people doing different things. So money creation is not something... but the Federal Reserve can actually, by setting a state interest rate or a fixed interest rate, it can actually regulate something, much of the activity. For example, if people who want to invest in fixed capital equipment, usually borrow, and you will find, if you raise the interest rate, people won't borrow much, and therefore fixed capital formation will go down. The same is true about housing prices, that when the interest rate goes up, you know, house prices come down, because people have to pay much more for, you know, to get into the house. So these are concretely what Marx would call concrete abstractions. And the capitalist has to respond. So how does the capitalist respond when faced with an increasingly interest rate? And at a certain point, particularly if they have borrowed and are indebted and have to pay back past debts, and then they suddenly find they need to borrow again and they can't borrow because the interest rate is so high, then they've got to go out of business. So, this is the power of concrete abstractions. It's interesting to watch these programs about the business sector, Bloomberg News we have here, which is all about what's going on. They're all kind of trying to read the tea leaves as what's going on in the market. The abstractions are going on and they're saying: “Oh my goodness. It's going that way, right? We thought it would go that way”, you know, I mean, so...so the abstractions are terribly important. So it's not me making the

abstractions: it's me reporting on the abstractions which are concretely constructed through these market practices.

You get this situation where, for example, capitalists in competition with each other are going to be in competition over the productivity of their labor. If I have a much more productive labor force than you do, I'll win, so I am gonna be obsessively concerned with making my technology as sophisticated as possible, but doing that means I'll reduce the amount of labor I employ, and if labor is the source of value, which Marx says it is, if my labor is a source of value to me, that means there's less value to go around, and therefore you do get a tendency towards a falling rate of profit, and you kind of say "individual capitalists acting in their own self-interest produce a result which is damaging to their class interest". And you find that going on again and again and again. For example: leveraging. Why are we so indebted? Why do capitalists always want to work on borrowed money? Because you can do something called leveraging. Leveraging is just very simple.

JMB: You...you mean that for example: General Motors wants to a new car and they never use their own money. They borrow money.

DH: Yes.

JMB: Even if they have the money, so why...why do they do it?

DH: Well, the broad answer is going to be leveraging in their versions of that including the General Motors kind of version. But I would rather think of a different example. Let's suppose I buy an apartment building for a hundred thousand dollars, and I think to myself: I'll get 6% rate of return by renting this out. So on a hundred thousand dollars I get six thousand dollars at the end of the year. Now, if I borrow 90,000 dollars at 5%, then I'll have to pay off at the end of the year 4,500 dollars, which means that I'd get personally 1,500 dollars. On the basis of the \$10,000 dollars that I invested, I get a 1.5%. So, people acting in housing market and things like this always borrow.

When Elon Musk said I'm going to pay 40 billion, now I pay 40 billion for Twitter... he borrowed it all! All of it. Okay? He didn't put up cash. He didn't use his cash. He didn't use his personal wealth, which is about 150 billion dollars. He didn't use his personal cash at all. He borrowed money. So... so the incentive is that you get a higher rate of return if you borrow and leverage, which means you use that difference between the 6% you get in aggregate and the 5% you pay by borrowing to enhance your own capital. So...so you

do that. So all capitalists are interested in leveraging. So then you kind of look at the volume of total indebtedness in the world, it's been going up since the 1970s, because everybody's leveraging like crazy. So we are now in debt to the tune, this is IMF figures, to the tune of 86,000 dollars or so per person on the planet Earth. What's the total amount of indebtedness right now And you can say: "This is insane, why did we do this?" Well, it's individual capitalists working in their own self-interest, leveraging and creating an aggregate effect, which is that the world is burgeoning with those 86,000 dollars per person.

Now, who holds the debt? And this is an interesting kind of question. But the point there is that this is another example like the falling rate of profit, where individual capitalists operating in their own self-interests engage in a practice which is inimical and damaging to their class position.

JMB: Yeah, well, because there's a danger of huge devaluation in there, of their own money.

DH: Yeah. No, no, and if they go bankrupt and then...then the problem is the people who lent them the money out.

JMB: OK, let's move to a more practical theme. What changed in 2008?

DH: Well, first of, I think the consent that had allowed the neoliberal project to go forward from the 1980s onwards ran into real difficulties at the end of the 1990s. The bankruptcy of Enron, long-term Capital Management, the Southeast Asian crisis, the crisis in Argentina... There was a very rough period there, where it was clear neoliberalism was not working. At that time neoliberalism realized, they realized that they needed support. So they went into an alliance with neo conservatism or kind of the right-wing, authoritarianism if you like. So you start to see this kind of process of convergence. But there was still the sense that, somehow, if you faced the difficulty of what was called "moral hazard", that is, banks could invest in anything and if they went wrong the state would bail them out, and so, you would have to expect a crisis and they got out of the crisis of 2001 by releasing liquidity, reducing the interest rate, and everything started to flow into the property market, and that exploded in 2007/2008.

So it was kind of almost, in a sense, an endgame for the neoliberal "project" as far as its legitimacy, and it's coherence and all the rest. It was well understood that this was a project which was crisis prone and was going to produce deeper and deeper crises, and

some of the difficulties have been how to get out of it, and getting out of that crisis relied almost entirely upon this huge investment project in China, which absorbed a lot of the surpluses, and actually kept global capitalism from falling into a major recession. China is not in a position like that right now to do it again. The issue is right now whether there is something like the Great Depression lurking over the horizon. And if so, can it be can it be staved off? And I think that there are serious people within the economics establishment who are beginning to think in those terms. Not that they are really going to be able to understand why and how it all but I think that there are, there are I'm sure some thoughtful people who are going to try and talk about stabilization and things.

JMB: Would you talk about “deglobalization” or “postglobalization” after 2008? Do you think changes were as important as to say “globalization has been deeply challenged”, or its foundations...

DH: Well, it was already being challenged at the end of the 1990s. I mean, at the end of the 1990s, you had the World Social Forum coming into being, which was which was very hostile towards globalization. You have a whole theory of decoupling by people like Walden Bello and so on, and saying that's the answer. You get a lot of work coming out, like Escobar talking about the different development model, which is kind of isolated entirely from all of these things, and he would use something like Ecuador, or what happened to Ecuador as a good example... So you already had a lot of that sort of thing, and...and the Zapatistas movement in the 90s, and so in the 90s there was a lot of serious questioning about globalization going on. And...

JMB: You mean the Golden Era of globalization actually lasted very few years.

DH: Yes. I don't think it ever had a Golden Era! I think that it had an era of “consensual hegemony”, which is the 1980s with Thatcher and Reagan. And to some degree that was made even more emphatic by Clinton and Blair. And...but everybody kind of at that point was, I think, recognizing there was something wrong with all of this, and they were hanging on by then, and then the crises of 1997-98, 2000, round the world, was a sure signal, what Giovanni Arrighi would call “signal crisis” that things are headed in the bad way, and it was kind of held in place in essence by the Federal Reserve, but only for seven or eight years. And then the big crash came with 2008 and after that... Of course, the decision was made to bail out the banking system and not the people, and the people have been suffering ever since in terms of declining living standards, declining levels of social

provision. And that is producing a great deal of discontent pretty much everywhere. And so you're finding all of these movements.

Unfortunately, it comes to the time where the socialist alternative is kind of... weak... and the collapse of communism and so on, and such that the only alternative right now is the right wing authoritarian alternative, which begins to be seen actually in 2000 and 2001, you see elements of it back then, so it's not as if this whole thing is totally new, and the discontent starts to be in this country with the Gingrich attack upon Clinton towards the end of the 1990s and the Republicans attacking Clinton.

JMB: A lot of what you do helps trying to understand what is going to happen, which is one of the strengths of what you write, I believe. You talk about a certain labor shortage in *today's* world, actually, as a problem for capitalism today. There's a labor shortage in China and there isn't actually such a large pool of workers as there was in the 1980s or the 1990s when China opened up and Communism fell... There is not anymore that kind of big pull of cheap workers, cheap and unorganized workers, which capitalism can go and employ it and recover its profit rate by paying lower salaries. So, capitalism is facing real problems in that area, and it probably needs to create new inequalities, right? That's something that Neil [Smith] would say. Do you see war as playing a role in there? Do you think we're coming to a moment in which war is going to be a permanent thing, or...?

DH: Well, this idea that we have been at peace over the last 30 years or 40 years is crazy. We have been fighting wars almost all over the place. And it's just that this one is a big one and opposition behind it is two nuclear powers, which we haven't had that sort of thing. The closest has been, of course, when Pakistan and India were facing off, and that's always a danger point as well. So war is, as... was it Clausewitz who said it's "diplomacy by other means"? Which means you can always go back to diplomacy if the war becomes too burdensome and I suspect that the war is becoming so burdensome in Ukraine that at some point or other people would say "we just got to stop this!"

JMB: And going back to the labor shortage, how would you say capitalism will deal with it?

DH: Yeah, well today is the day when, according to the news this morning, the 8th billion person was born on planet Earth. So we are now a population of eight billion.

JMB: That's quite an exact calculation! (laughs)

DH: Well, yes, there's this group that has this crazy thing like “we have to find the eight billionth child in order to celebrate!” and it's somebody in Croatia, you know (laughs)... Anyway, so my point here is that capital, and Marx is very clear about this, he says that the expansion of capital is always parallel to the expansion of the global population. And historically the two exponentials parallel each other, you know... But now about 50% of the world is on zero or even minus population growth and we are left with these two big pools of population growth, one is Africa. By the end of this century, they're projecting that Nigeria will have a population bigger than the United States. And how on Earth they are going to be fed and all the rest of it in the meantime is another question. So, there is a big pool there. Then, of course, places like Pakistan and some Middle Eastern countries. The rest of the world is pretty much self-reproducing and minor increases here. So I think that we're gonna find two things: one is the question of what's going to happen to population growth in Africa in particular. Is it going to continue on its path or something's going to intervene? Which is going to, sort of, tamp it down. The big thing that intervenes, by the way, is education of women. It's probably the most important thing: the more educated women get, the lower the population growth.

So that could be one of the questions. And I guess the second question would be to what degree will that population then become a centerpiece of capitalism and capital accumulation? Will capital accumulation move the population, or will that population actually provide the migrant labor force for the northern countries? And we are seeing, at the moment, tending to be the latter. So, what happens in the African case is going to be a big question mark. But if the world moves to a situation of zero population growth, and that would break the relation between capital accumulation and labor supply which is historically been vital for this, and how Capital will deal with that...

JMB: We don't know.

DH: Who knows?!

JMB: One last question. If you think about your readers outside of Academia, like social movements and unions, what would be your message to them? You've recently challenged everyone by saying how hard it is to think of revolution as “only” taking the means of production, and that we have to go for the whole thing, for the whole system to actually turn it around and be able to plan production according to our

interests and our needs, so what should we do about it? I mean, it's hard to think of what will the future look like...

DH: Well, I've a very simple view and it may be simplistic, sorry. Marx says this kind of commentary in volume two of Capital, where he says "the realm of freedom begins when the realm of necessity is left behind", and that if you can satisfy all basic human needs, then you're free to do what you want. So why don't we make it in this world, and he makes that point, and it's a kind of fantastic imaginary. But right at the end, he says that the first step in that is the reduction in the length of working day, which is very reformist! It's not revolutionary! So...what I would do is to say "well, okay, there are some things to be done immediately", and if I had a choice between right-wing authoritarianism and the restoration of some level of social democracy, I would go for some level of social democracy as a transitional thing, and when I say things like that people say: "Ah, you lost your...blah, blah, blah..." And I kind of go "no! I am interested in the tactical question". But at the same time one thing I liked about the Grundrisse was that Marx introduces this idea of hanging keys of analysis, kind of ask the question: "What would an emancipated labor think of this?" So I think about the emancipation of the worker. And I think of that emancipation occurring at all those different levels, by asking questions about what are the qualities of life in the social reproduction, in the neighborhood, in the home, in the household, the holistic, what are the qualities of life there? What would you like to see, improve about those qualities of life and...and therefore there's a political project?

The worker also experiences things in the labor market. How can we reform the labor market? So, it's much more egalitarian and less humiliating than that it currently is. They also have experiences improving production process, and that's very well documented. Just what might come out of that? Then there is the monetary moment when the worker has money. That part is also actually when a lot of predatory activities are taking place. There are credit cards, inducing workers to gamble and get money out of their pockets and all those kinds of things, and then so, what can be improved about monetary management? Early unions, for example, always used to have a kind of a social fund, a mutual assistance fund and everybody could pay, and, I don't know, a few pence per week. And if I had a real problem and I got injured or something like that, then there was community help for it in some way. So...so it's been a whole long history of mutual aid going on at that level, and how they are ways in which we could set up stuff like that.

And then there's the kind of the question of price is gouging in commodity markets and rents and blah, blah, blah. So, you would ask the worker and the working person “think about all of those elements of your life, and ask where and when are their improvements to be constructed? Where and when would you like to see State involvement in regulatory activities? Sometimes that regulating rents, or prices, or something like that?” So are, out of that will come a political project, which will look social democratic, initially. But this is like Marx, going to say, you know “We got to take care of the basics” before the realm of freedom can begin. Can we take care of all of those things in such a way that you have as much freedom as possible and as free time as possible?

JMB: I think this is a good end for the interview. Thank you very much!

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