



Labor and Globalization

Oksana Balashova, Ismail Doga Karatepe,
Aishah Namukasa (Eds.)

**Where have all the classes
gone?**
**A critical perspective on
struggles and collective action**



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Volume 8

Edited by Christoph Scherrer

Oksana Balashova,
Ismail Doga Karatepe,
Aishah Namukasa
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List of abbreviations

ACFTU	All-China Federation of Trade Unions
ACLI COLF	Associazioni Cristiane dei Lavoratori Italiani - Collaboratrici Familiari (Christian Associations of Italian Workers – Domestic Workers)
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
AMWU	African Mine Workers Union
AMCU	Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union
ANC	African National Congress
AP	Adalet Partisi (Justice Party)
BE	Bloco Esquerda (Left Bloc)
BWI	Building and Woodworkers International
CDS – PP	Centro Democrático e Social – Partido Popular (CDS – People’s Party)
CLB	China Labor Bulletin
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (Italian Confederation of Workers’ Trade Unions)
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (Italian General Confederation of Labor)
CGTP	Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses (General Trade Union Federation of Portuguese Workers)
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPE	Critical Political Economy
CTEP	Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular (Popular Economy Workers’ Confederation)
CUT	Central Única dos Trabalhadores (Unified Worker’s Central)
DWA	Domestic Workers’ Association
ECHR	European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
EU	European Union
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
GEFONT	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions
GR	Geração à Rasca (Desperate Generation)
HSMP	Highly Skilled Migrant Programme

ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IFB	Interest-free Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
LDMAL	Labor Disputes Mediation and Arbitration Law
MDW	Migrant Domestic Worker
MNCI	Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena (National Peasant and Indigenous Movement)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPL	Movimento Passe Livre (Free Fare Movement)
MSP	Millî Selâmet Partisi (National Salvation Party)
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Worker's Movement)
MTUC	Malaysian Trades Union Congress
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NHS	National Health Service
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONN	Overseas Nurses Network
PBS	Points-based (immigration) system
PCP	Partido Comunista Português (Portuguese Communist Party)
PDP	Popular-Democratic Program
PS	Partido Socialista Português (Portuguese Socialist Party)
PSD	Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party)
PEC I-IV	Programmes for Stability and Growth
PSI	Public Service International
PSOL	Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (Party of Socialism and Freedom)
PSTU	Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado (Unified Socialist Workers' Party)
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party)
QSLT	Que se lixe a Troika (To Hell with the Troika)

ROS	Register of Society
RTP	Rádio e Televisão de Portugal (Radio and Television of Portugal)
SACP	South African Communist Party
SETC	Sindicato dos Estivadores, Trabalhadores do Tráfego e Conferentes Marítimos do Centro e Sul de Portugal
SMU	Social Movement Unionism
TOBB	Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği (Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey)
TSU	Taxa Social Única (Single Social Tax)
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UDF	United Democratic Front
UGT	União Geral de Trabalhadores (General Union of Workers)
UID-DER	Uluslararası İşçi Dayanışması Derneği (Association of International Workers' Solidarity)
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro (Italian Labor Union)
UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration
UN	United Nations
UNAR	Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (Italian National Office against Racial Discrimination)
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNI-MLC	UNI-Malaysia Labor Center
UST	Union de Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra de Cuyo (Landless Rural Workers' Union of Cuyo)

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Acknowledgements

“Where have all the classes gone?” This was the question that we, PhD students at the International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD), raised at one of our regular meetings. Coming from different countries, academic backgrounds and theoretical perspectives, we all seemed to agree on one issue: that class was a key concept and a cross-cutting category in our research. However, we had observed that the concept of class became increasingly obsolete in the literature on social movements and uprisings, and were further interested in finding out whether it was still a valid category for understanding politics. Thus, an idea of a workshop on classes and social movements arose. It was conceived as the terrain for scholars and activists alike to discuss various topics, including social movements in rural and urban spaces, migration as a form of individual protest, and rural forms of protest and organizing beyond the working class.

The result of our deliberations was an international workshop. “Where have all the classes gone? Collective action and social struggles in a global context” took place in Kassel on December 3-4, 2015, with presenters and participants coming from across four continents. During the workshop, we sought to re-conceptualize both class and social movements, to critically probe the gendered aspects of social movements in both rural and urban settings, and understand workers’ mobilizations beyond trade unions. This book is the final collaborative product by not only scholars, but also activists.

This collection contains modified versions of research that was presented during the workshop. We hereby thank our key note speakers Emma Dowling and Cenk Saraçoğlu, and all the paper presenters including Ezgi Bağdadioğlu, Jairo Baquero, Mark Bergfeld, Crispin Chinguno, Edward Cottle, Gönül Düzer, Anne Engelhardt, Tathagato Ganguly, Axel Gehring, Felix Hauf, Gaochao He, Cheng Li, Tatenda Mukwede, Sumeet Mhaskar, Nandita Mondal, Samuel Morecroft, Patrica Ndhlovu, Vladimir Puzone, Sarbeswara Sahoo, Minal Sangole, Karin Astrid Siegmann, Victor Strazzeri, and Louis Thiemann.

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Oksana Balashova, Ismail Doga Karatepe and Aishah Namukasa

Kassel, January 18, 2017

Christoph Scherrer

Rising inequality is today generally acknowledged in politics and academia but seldom framed in terms of the social divide between those owning the means of production and those who have to sell their labor power. Inequality is mostly explained by differences in skills or citizen status. Likewise the social protest in our unequal societies is seldom interpreted in a framework of class. The much studied social movements in the developed capitalist societies of the 1960s and 1970s seem to have overcome the divide between the working class and the capitalist class. In comparison to the working-class movements that dominated the last half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, these movements were, therefore, considered to be new. A closer look, however, reveals that people denied of the means of production were the predominant carriers of these movements. The civil rights movement was a movement of former slaves who were denied equal citizen status and, thereby, access to ‘old’ means of production such as land and capital as well as ‘new’ means of production such as marketable highly specialized skills. The protagonists of the anti-Vietnam war movement were also not the owners of the means of production but young men threatened by the loss of their ability to sell their labor power and by those sympathizing with anti-capitalist insurgents. The feminists of the women’s movement frequently came from the more affluent strata of society, but though their life was materially more comfortable, they were still denied access to good jobs and property, which subordinated them to patriarchy. And finally, the environmental movement was also not spearheaded by capitalists. The environmental movement, however, was even more often at odds with segments of the working-class than the other ‘new’ movements because capitalists portrayed environmental measures as job killers.

The reluctance especially of white male workers to support equal citizen status for people with a different skin color, gender or birthplace calls into question the salience of a class framework. It seems that the concept of class is neither explaining behavior nor mobilizing people into action. If the concept fails on these two accounts, it is of no value from an analytical perspective as well as from the perspective of a social movement ‘entrepreneur’. The participants of the so-called new social movements are rarely acting on an appeal of shared class status. But does this fact really make the class frame obsolete? Even in the heydays of working-class movements, the working-class was split along religious, ethnic and ideological lines. The difference to today’s struggles especially in the advanced capitalist societies is that

the appeal to class is seldom heard or acted upon. While those who have to sell their labor power mostly neither share a class consciousness nor act in solidarity with their ‘brothers and sisters’, the owners of the means of production and their well-paid manager, however, share ostensibly a commitment to upholding and expanding private property rights (though they might differ on strategies and tactics). The capitalist class consciousness gives reason that it might be too early to abandon the concept of class for today’s social movements. If there is one class, there must be another class and, if this class is not conscious of itself, one must probe deeper to find out why.

The contributors to this volume have rightly not given up on the concept of class. For one, while the capitalist class is quite successful in preventing the working-class from developing a broad-based, antagonistic attitude against the private ownership of the means of production, the strategies of capitalists and the resultant dynamics of capital accumulation repeatedly encroach upon the respective interests of those who have to sell their labor power or struggle for their livelihood. The encroachment can take many forms, e.g. curtailing public services, stripping workers of contractual benefits, mass layoffs or expulsion from land. Not always, but quite frequently this worsening of working or livelihood conditions for workers or communities leads to resistance. And in the acts of resistance, as many of the contributors highlight, working-class consciousness develops; a consciousness about living under similar conditions and facing similar threats to status, well-being, and livelihood. This consciousness leads to acts of solidarity among the movement participants. While not making other perspectives redundant, a class perspective provides for a better understanding of the structural conditions fostering conflict and, at the same time, for the possibility (though not necessity) of an emerging class consciousness.

The International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD) happily supported the editors of this volume to explore the power of class as an explanatory variable for social movements. The ICDD is aware of the fact that one needs strong movements for achieving decent work, a term coined by the International Labor Organization that in its words “sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” Well-meaning United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights or glossy corporate social responsibility brochures will not bring about decent work. As decent work is a class issue, it can only be

achieved by workers conscious of their subordinated position and the need to act in solidarity. We as academics can develop better production methods, sound economic justifications for decent work and appropriate policies, but only social movements can force capitalists to improve working conditions.

Kassel, April 4, 2017

Introduction: Are the classes really gone?

Oksana Balashova, Ismail Doga Karatepe and Aishah Namukasa

Where have the classes gone? We, as young scholars, have observed how they have disappeared in recent literature focusing on social movements and other forms of collective action. While the movements that we have witnessed in recent years, including some of those that stand for minority rights (e.g., Black Lives Matter), have class-relevant aspects (Taylor 2016), the scholarship on social movements largely fails to grasp this. The recently published articles that do underline the relevancy of class in social movements are, however, limited in terms of scope considering the exponential growth of these movements and struggles (Clover 2016; Panitch and Albo 2014). This is partially because of the so-called new social movements (NSM), which have emerged in Western countries from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The apparent novelty of these social movements has been depicted as a rupture with class politics and the labor movement struggles that came before them. As a result, the vast majority of analyses and theoretical contributions have moved away from class struggle analysis, labor-capital antagonisms and social inequality (Tejerina et al. 2013, 381; Barker et al. 2013). In order to make sense of diverse and often novel forms of resistance, social movement theories focused on particular aspects, such as the institutionalization of political opportunities, the formation of identities or the ways of bringing protests into public debate (Walder 2009). Despite the strength of these approaches in understanding different elements of collective action, the question concerning the role of class and class politics in collective action still remains.

In order to overcome this shortcoming we aim to demonstrate with this book that the concept class should be reintegrated into the analysis. Such integration increases the explanatory power of the analytical tools and theoretical frameworks that are used to understand social movements, other forms of collective action and individual resistance. This argument should not be taken to imply that class analysis should be the entry point to each and every scientific inquiry concerning social movements. Instead, it implies that an analysis of class should be taken into *account* in order to give a fuller picture even if the argumentation is not class-centered. Let us use one of the editors' contributions as an example of an integration of the concept class into the overall analysis: Balashova's article analyzes the resistance practices of Ukrainian migrant domestic workers in Italy. In her contribution, she underlines the collective identities partially fashioned by socialization in the Soviet Union and contemporary

Ukraine and their effects on resistance dynamics. To give a complete account, however, the author incorporates the analysis of multiscalarity of classes – different class positions in Ukraine and Italy and the complex processes of class transformations in transnational spaces. This allows the author to explain the transitive class position, which leads Ukrainian women to treat the work in Italy as a temporary and a necessary sacrifice. On the one hand, they are employed in the domestic sector in Italy and work under very unfavorable conditions. But, on the other, they maintain a certain lifestyle for their families ‘back home’, in Ukraine. In some cases, they start businesses, purchase property, and employ labor tenants. The transitive class position of Ukrainian domestic workers allows the author to focus more on the lack of collective action and the private spaces of Italian households to which Ukrainian migrant domestic workers often shift their struggles.

What is class or class analysis? This book may disappoint those readers who expect a clear definition of class or a prescriptive recipe for class analysis. The authors in this book employ the concept of class in different ways having different theoretical inspirations. Some of them consider the class as social status, others examine it in the framework of mode of production. For instance, Bernáldez in his contribution in this book approaches rural workers from the perspective of “wage laborers deprived of the means of production and reproduction”. Meanwhile, Namukasa utilizes the term social class as one of the aspects that explain varying behavioral responses of African migrant workers to exploitation and racialization in the workplace. For this volume, different employment of the term leads us to conclude that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition of class: The concept itself is only meaningful insofar as it is useful to explain certain societal dynamics in the scientific inquiry. The class analysis can be concomitantly devised and employed in relation to the context or the case in question.

The related literature has largely moved away from employing a class analysis, rather arguing that class is not a plausible concept that allows us to explore social phenomena. The mismatch between class-in-itself and class-for-itself provides the basis for overlooking class relations (Barker et al. 2013; Della Porta 2015). Are people’s position vis-à-vis the means of production and class consciousness really as unrelated as it is claimed? For capital, at least, it is not the case. Business groups have overt class consciousness and they are relatively well organized in pursuit of their own interests in a given spatio-temporal horizon. What about the rest of us? Do the working classes, peasants, or the popular classes¹ in general pursue their interests in a way that corresponds to their objective class location? We reach different

¹ We are employing this concept in a broad sense to indicate different groups of people, including working class, who neither belong to the ruling classes nor hold important positions in the state apparatus.

conclusions. *First*, some contributions of this book show that class-in-itself (objective class location) may not manifest itself necessarily in consciousness in contrast to capital. However, we strive to show that it is still an important category insofar as social movements, other forms of collective action, and individual resistances have a class-relevant character, considering the fact that “mobilization in the name of non-class rather than class identities could well have greater relevance to” class politics (Sum and Jessop 2013, 190). Above all, the participants’ class positions may influence and fashion individual and collective protest actions. *Second*, other contributions in this book show that in some cases social movements, other forms of collective action, and individual resistances have an overt class consciousness.

However, it is not just the literature that has moved away from discourses on class interests, but also world politics more generally (Barker et al. 2013). It is arguably one of the offshoots of the recent developments in world politics, which has been swinging further to the right: Trump in the USA, Putin in Russia, Modi in India and Erdogan in Turkey are just a few examples of this rightwing lurch. The political parties, which ideologically rely on ethnic and racial majorities, seem to be the winners in current political contestation. As such, the right-wing offensive has been generally followed by a curtailment of democratic rights, the retrenchment of secularism and the suppression of both minorities and dissent of all sorts.

The advancement of the right has emerged within a neoliberal setting in which the popular classes have suffered more from impoverishment and pauperism. Such settings offer fruitful spaces for right-wing politics to make their ideas more popular. Right-wing politics tries to link the problems that stem from the inherent contradictions of neoliberalism – such as increasing inequality, deterioration of job security and welfare services – to claims of excessive democracy and multiculturalism. The promise of more authoritarianism appears to resonate among the popular classes. The business community also does not seem so disappointed with the status quo. Under the settings of different shades of the authoritarian state form (e.g., right-wing populism to Bonapartism), the politico-corporate ensemble has been redesigned, entrenching patronage relations between businessmen and the party in power, as can be observed in the case of Turkey and India. Such a design has brought about a lucrative environment for various bourgeois factions.

The arguments above can be taken to further argue that the success of right-wing politics consisted in engineering a cross-class alliance along ethnic, religious and racial lines. Ethnic, religious and racial symbolism in politics became the glue. Therefore, on the one hand, right-wing parties have secured their broad electorate base. On the other hand, most of these parties

have been supported by companies, small and large, which in return have profited from the success of the parties (e.g., through state contracts).

In this book, we approach the rise of the right-wing from a critical perspective. A critical perspective evaluates social events from a moral and political standpoint. This standpoint, above all, questions power relations and seeks to change them in order to create a more emancipatory life. In this volume, we do not only give space to the critique of power relations, but also explore the actors and acts of change. We study social movements, struggles and resistances, which, when taken together, partially (or hopefully) form the necessary conditions for change.

As this study has such a critical stance, we aim to demonstrate that neither the rise of right-wing politics nor neoliberal advancement has been uncontested. Social movements, strikes, uprisings and resistances, individual or collective, altogether have challenged the neoliberal order with its right-wing ethnic, religious and racial ideas (see Cox and Nilsen 2014). The movements that we have recently observed and largely reflected on in this book, for instance in Brazil or Turkey, have transcended ethnic, religious and racial lines creating different identities through the cause. These movements had strong class-relevant aspects and thus overcame differences stemming from right-wing identity politics as such. For instance, in the case of Turkey, one can recall the June Uprising of 2013, which contested the cultural, political and economic policies and positions of the conservative/islamist Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - Justice and Development Party's (hereafter by its Turkish initials, AKP) ten-year ruling term. The uprising began with a relatively small Occupy-style movement against the demolition of a relatively small park – Gezi Park – that still remains a green area near Taksim Square; the square considered by many as the heart of Istanbul. This occupation instantly morphed into an uprising, showing the discontent of the popular masses against the AKP's policies in general. The movement had a strong class aspect and thus partially brought different identities (Kurds, Alawites, secular Turks, etc.) under one umbrella. It had a class aspect not because the Gezi Uprising was predominantly composed of the working class, but because of the self-positioning of the movement: It was opposed to the privatization of the urban commons and a shopping mall construction (See also Saraçoğlu's contribution in this volume). It should be noted in this context that the construction industry in Turkey symbolizes for many the AKP's way of capital accumulation and overt exploitation of labor, nature and the commons.

All these arguments concerning the rise of right-wing politics and its cross-class engineering can be taken to imply that the concept of class, as a matter of political struggle, appears to disperse the political 'aura' fashioned by right-wing politics. Hence, advocating for

this concept *per se* is a way to contest the rise of right-wing politics. As editors of this book, bringing this concept to the fore is one of our political goals. However, the aim of the book and the scope of each contribution merit more nuanced discussion.

The aim of the book

The aim of the book and concomitantly its scope should be delineated considering the fact that collective and individual forms of resistance continue to be diverse and emerge from different contexts. Their demands can range from the right to affordable transportation to access to land. So what do all these struggles have in common? How do they fit into the global political economy? Can those that are apparently not connected to economic issues be understood through this lens? To what extent is class still a valid category for understanding resistance in different cases? And how is class manifested in these different contexts? Answering these questions requires an analysis that should be carried out in different sites and spaces and cover different levels of abstraction. This first leads us to confine our attention to different cases and scopes; from national uprisings, to relatively small strikes and individual coping mechanisms. Second, it directs us to focus on the question of how gender, ethnic and religious identities interact with each other and with the notion of class in different contexts.

Considering the discussions above, this book has the following objectives: i) It aims to offer critical approaches to the conventional theories of social movements and uprisings as the mainstream social movement theories have principally failed to capture these class-relevant aspects. ii) It aims to identify the main drivers of the struggles and recent uprisings that have impacted the political landscape. iii) It seeks to examine social movements, struggles, uprisings and moments of resistance in a comparative way through multiple and diverse case studies. In a similar vein, it aims to explore the counter-strategies striving to undermine them. iv) It aims to offer an analysis of more local struggles, such as strikes in workplaces. v) It endeavors to explore the dynamics of resistance and coping strategies of migrant workers. vi) It aims to deliberate on the role of labor in social struggles, by, on the one hand, discussing the relation between labor struggles and social movements through concrete cases, and on the other hand, outlining crucial concepts such as social movements, working class etc. vii) It aims to go beyond social struggles in urban spaces by exploring rural struggles and demonstrating their unique dynamics. viii) The book also sets out to discuss the role of gender in the preceding points, through highlighting gender aspects in strikes, migrant workers' coping strategies and rural struggles.

As a careful reader might have already recognized, the scope of the book is not limited to social movements in a conventional sense as it also covers strikes, uprisings and individual resistances. This may appear strange due to the overt and strong, albeit theoretically unsustainable, division of labor in contemporary academia. For example, strikes are generally studied by scholars associated with Labor Studies, whereas individual resistances are delegated to cultural studies having mostly Foucauldian inspirations. Social movements and uprisings are generally confined to the subfield of political sociology. Such allocation, as Barker et al. carefully discuss, ignores the relations between them: Above all, social movements and uprisings more generally are inspired by the everyday resistance and labor strikes, while individual resistances may be fashioned by labor strikes, uprisings and other forms of collective action. Uprisings may also draw on local cultures of resistance and labor strikes (Barker et al. 2013).

The organization of the book

To achieve these objectives, this book is designed in five distinct, albeit interrelated, parts containing 13 contributions. The first part focuses on the theoretical and conceptual discussions revolving around social movements, class and class struggle. In this part, the contributions endeavor to critically question the conventional understanding of social movements and the notion of class. They, above all, highlight the importance of the alternative frameworks and innovatively offer a set of concepts that deliver a more comprehensive understanding of class-relevant social struggles. In the second section, attention is confined to social movements and their impact on the political landscape. In this part, the contributions link social movements and labor struggles within contemporary developments. This part covers three case studies: Brazil, Turkey and Portugal. The third section focuses on labor struggles. The articles in this part unveil the contractionary character of labor movements within established institutions such as trade unions. The fourth section also focuses on labor struggles but limits its attention to migrant workers and their struggles, individual or collective, drawing on the findings derived from extensive fieldwork carried out by the authors. The fifth section of this book is designed to go beyond urban struggles. The contributions aim to explore peasant-agrarian struggles by studying different territories in Latin America.

The first part of the book starts with Cenk Saraçoğlu's article, which aims to pave the way for an alternative social movement theory, introducing two notions – totality and antagonism – to social movement analysis in order to overcome the perceived limitations of the mainstream theories. The author claims that these notions are crucial if we are to understand

both the historical/structural backdrop in which a social movement arises, and the opponent against whom this movement builds its political demands and objectives. With these notions, the author argues that an alternative framework emerges, which not only goes beyond social movement theories that only focus on the appearance (e.g., organizational features), but also offers more space for emancipatory political practices. The author underpins his arguments with the case of the June Uprising of 2013 in Turkey.

Jorge Enrique Forero's brief article, *'Us' and 'them': Theoretical insights about the class division in contemporary capitalism* sheds light on the lengthy discussions predicated on the question of what we actually mean by class. He starts his article by critically questioning perhaps one of the most controversial terms in social science – that of the elite. Relying on a Marxist approach to social classes, the author reminds us about the ownership of the means of the production whilst also problematizing this concept. The author develops his arguments by discussing the weaknesses of existing accounts drawing boundaries between the working class and sectors such as the so-called middle class and the precariat. The author offers the term “class fraction” as an alternative term to better grasp these divisions.

Part II begins with a discussion on Brazil, whose political landscape has changed drastically in recent years. Victor Strazzeri addresses the demonstration wave of June 2013, which was triggered by an increase in transportation costs in São Paulo. Theoretically in line with Cenk's suggestions, the author underlines the context in which the social movement arose, and brings the class-relevant aspect to the fore in order to examine the protests. He underlines that the rise in the public transport fare that triggered the demonstrations was not a mere catalyst, “it indicates a radical critique of the development model of the last decade of Workers' Party rule through a clear call for social rights in the context of cities marked by growing inequality and shaped by private interests”.

The second contribution in this section focuses on a case that also witnessed an uprising at the same time, albeit located geographically far away from Brazil. It focuses on Turkey, not on the June uprising, but on the movement that this uprising opposed – Turkey's Islamists. It critically questions the “common sense” argument that has positioned the Islamists as a social movement vis-à-vis the privileged establishment. The author of this contribution, Ismail Karatepe, claims that Islamist politics did not emerge from the popular classes against the establishment, as is often depicted. Drawing on a historical analysis, Karatepe demonstrates that Islamists have been rooted in the establishment over the last 15 years and have excluded all other social forces. He evaluates the recent political developments such as the coup d'état attempt in July 2016 from this perspective.

The last critical inquiry in this section steers our attention towards the so-called old and new social movements through a Poulantzian understanding of the state. Anne Engelhardt, in her contribution, underlines that social movements should be approached as a response to the upshot of, as well as being embedded in, the various forms of crystallized power relations, mostly in the form of the state. She discusses the relations between social movements and traditional labor organizations in Portugal between 2011 and 2015, by stressing the role of the state and interconnectedness of labor and social movements.

Gönül Düzer, in the third section of the book, studies women workers' engagement in labor resistances through the case study of Istanbul's garment industry. Drawing on socialist feminist approaches, she provides an analysis of the labor resistance sites from a gender-oriented perspective. The author claims that participation in acts of labor resistance can have the potential to develop awareness and resistance against patriarchal norms, paving the way for emancipatory practices of women as active political agents. She also argues that women's participation in negotiations against the system of patriarchal capitalism can result in consciousness-raising through awareness, leading to increased self-esteem and self-consciousness, as well as the translation of the resistance experiences and emancipation into other spheres of women's lives.

In his contribution, Cheng Li attracts our attention to the greatest 'labor supplier' on earth – China. The author evaluates the relationship between industrial unrest and the role of trade unions, and the impact this has had on the economic and political landscape. The author unpacks the wage relations in the context of class struggle, a context that was almost forgotten by political economists. Moreover, he underlines the absence of trade unions in the Chinese class struggle. Li concludes that in the case of China, the class struggle and industrial unrest "formed challenges and requirements to the current union structures from the bottom up; in contrast to the former directional way (top-down)".

The last contribution of this section focuses on the strikes in South Africa. *Long Waves of Strikes in South Africa: 1900-2015*, by Eddie Cottle, traces the offensive and defensive character of strikes, considering the business cycles and long waves of capitalist development. The author clearly demonstrates "the tendency for offensive and defensive strikes to align to cyclical fluctuations of the business cycle in both expansionary and depressive long waves". At the same time, Cottle cautiously discusses the autonomy of the politics of class struggle and the meaning of class conscience for the strikes.

The fourth section of the book, where attention is confined mainly to migrant workers, begins with a case study of Ukrainian domestic workers in Italy. The author, Oksana Balashova,

raises questions with regard to resistance practices of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) both within and outside the labor movement. What elements form the basis for organizing and resistance of these domestic workers? Drawing on extensive fieldwork, she shows that different dynamics of resistance practices of Ukrainian migrant domestic workers in Italy have been heavily influenced by the gender order – as an institutionalized societal gender relation – and women identities within the USSR and in contemporary Ukraine.

Verna Viajar, in her paper, *Dimensions of Precarity of Migrant Domestic Workers: Constraints and Spaces in Labor Organizing in Malaysia*, demonstrates the dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia. These dimensions consist of (a) job/work-based precarity (domestic work as non-work); (b) status-based precarity (temporary and precarious status of migrant workers); and (c) national-based precarity (specific political economic context of Malaysia). Departing from these three dimensions, the author examines the demands and issues of trade unions and NGOs seeking to represent, engage and empower MDWs in Malaysia.

Drawing on a socio-legal approach predicated on critical legal studies and political sociology, Aishah Namukasa examines the legal production of precarious migrant status in the UK. The author explores specific migrants' legal consciousness including their strategies of claiming rights under restrictive conditions, through self-organizing and collective or transnational engagement with civil society actors within migrant rights' movements. Using qualitative data derived from interviews with East African migrants in the UK and an extensive literature study, she examines the role of the intersecting categories of race, class, migration status, and gender in shaping migrants' experiences under various facets of the law.

Jairo Baquero-Melo in his contribution in the last section of this book confines our attention to communal territorial rights and the role of class, race, and ethnicity in recent agrarian struggles in Latin America. The author claims that the analysis of the relationship between territory, land distribution, social categories and land conflicts is “essential to understand the complex situations emerging from, and the effects produced by, conflicts linked to the expansion of territorial rights in the midst of violence and competing economic interests in the region”. Drawing on case studies and field work in Colombia, this chapter sheds light on the way contemporary social struggles develop in rural settings.

In the last chapter of this section, Joaquín M. Bernáldez explores social movements “in times of new extractivism” in the case of Argentina. The author examines the conditions and factors that enable peasant and indigenous actors to engage in local ecological and territorial struggles against privatization and the increasing exploitation of nature. He particularly focuses on factors that can help these local struggles to evolve into more comprehensive arrangements

for emancipatory social change. Hence, he “calls the attention to a set of interconnections between peasant-indigenous and urban working classes’ struggles that reveals a relevant attempt of subaltern classes to organize against capitalism”.

The last section of the book is reserved for the conclusion. In that section, we will underline the relevance of the concept of class for the analysis of social movements, and raise the question of where we (read scholars) stand.

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Part I: Theorizing social movements and uprisings

1. Building an alternative to mainstream social movement theories: Totality and antagonism

Cenk Saraçoğlu

Abstract

Mainstream sociological theories of social movements and uprisings such as collective behavior theories, rational choice oriented explanations and political opportunity approaches are all characterized by two essential drawbacks: a) that these theories remain content to merely describe the movements' organizational features, and mechanisms of finding and utilizing resources, failing to provide us with a robust analytical framework through which to apprehend the larger social and economic backdrop against which the movements erupt. In other words, these theories are ahistorical to the extent that they are typically unable to go beyond the outward appearance of these movements and to unravel the underlying/real social and political dynamics behind them. b) That these theories, as descriptive as they are, are also disconnected from political practice as they do not evaluate these movements in regards to their potential to create a progressive change in society. Based on these two points it can be argued that mainstream social theories are replete with a lack of realism and praxis, which are two essential elements of critical thinking about society. This paper will endeavor to answer the question "What is needed conceptually and epistemologically to develop an alternative perspective to the mainstream theories that could go beyond the superficial appearance of social movements (realism) and contribute to emancipatory political practice (praxis)?" It will be argued that in order to achieve such a goal, an alternative social movement theory should incorporate two notions into its analysis: a) totality (the idea that a social movement and an uprising should be situated within the totality of the social formation in which it occurs and evaluated within the context of the historical development of this social formation) b) antagonism (the idea that a social movement or an uprising should be evaluated in relation to the character of its opponent as well as the degree and nature of the defiance that it carries out against its opponent).

Keywords: Social movements, methodology, social structure, totality, antagonism, class

Introduction

The cascades of revolts and popular movements in the last decade have instigated some critical discussions in different fields of the social sciences around the dynamics and possible outcomes of these movements. Such discussions have also opened new terrains of debate in social movement theories in so far as these movements have appeared in unexpected regions of the world such as Arab countries, appealed to new forms of protest, and utilized seemingly unprecedented methods of organization and mobilization. A quick glance at the methods used to investigate these movements in this still-growing and immense literature will show that the overwhelming majority of academic studies have remained within the analytical framework of the mainstream social movement theories and reflected the weaknesses and problems associated with them. Having stated this, these weaknesses provide an opportunity for critical scholars to unravel the predicaments of the epistemological premises of the mainstream approaches and build an alternative framework of analysis that could overcome these predicaments. In recent years we have come across a few important studies that attempted to build such a critical framework (for an invaluable example of this attempt see Barker et. al., 2013). This paper aims to contribute to such critical studies through developing some preliminary epistemological and methodological instruments to approach and evaluate social movements and uprisings. However, before starting to engage in such an endeavour, it is necessary to briefly explain the particular drawbacks of mainstream social movement theories that this critical social movement theory is responding to.

The premises and drawbacks of mainstream social movement theories

The emergence of social movements as a distinct research object for the social sciences and the formation of such a specialized field as "social movement theories" were intricately related to the rise of anti-systemic mass movements in the USA and Western Europe in the 1960s. Some of the leading protest movements in these years such as the anti-war movement that took place as a reaction to the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement and the entire 68' movements in France and across Europe exhibited different characteristics from the classical working class revolts or the party-led socialist revolutionary movements, in terms of the themes they upheld, the repertoire of contention and the profile of their participants. The early discussions in the field of social movements were mainly concerned with developing theoretical tools and conceptual schemes to understand the major dynamics and possible outcomes of these distinct movements. These discussions have left us three main streams of thought (three mainstream theories) that still continue to shape the research agenda of social movement scholars. The first

of this is what is referred to as "collective behaviour theories" which included such names as Herbert Blumer and Neil Smelser. The collective behaviour theories were, at a certain level of abstraction, an extension of the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons to the extent that its main arguments rest upon the presumption that society is an entity that could maintain its existence smoothly, orderly and continuously as a system in so far as its interconnected parts, i.e., institutions, structures and agents functioned properly. From this perspective, the proper functioning of a social system as a whole could be obstructed in certain periods – especially in the times of rapid social change – when there emerges a "dysfunctional" flaw in any "part" of the system that spills over to the other parts and consequently leads to a lack of cohesion and harmony (Smelser 1962). Against this background, collective behaviour theories conceive dissident collective actions, protests and revolts as a symptom of a defect in the system that needs to be addressed immediately in order to ensure the proper functioning of social order. This conception of society and of collective action leads the collective behaviour school to see the participants of a riot or a social movement as individuals *reacting* with a sense of deprivation or exclusion to a sporadic and temporary defect in the system. As such, they avoid evaluating social movements as representing a particular coherent political position in a divided society and disregard rational/strategic decisions taken by or within a social movement against a political rival. What was rather more important for them was to understand under which circumstances individuals are *incited* to engage in a collective anti-systematic action, which is assumed to be an irregular occurrence in a social system that is expected to function smoothly. Hence representatives of this theory concentrate neither on the structural and inherent contradictions of the system that generate a potential for dissidence nor on the nature and character of the power bloc that the dissidents oppose, but instead on the profiles, traits and grievances of the *individuals* that engage in collective action against the system. This is not to say that all representatives of collective behaviour theory envisage social movements and revolts as detrimental or pathological occurrences. To the contrary, departing from the above-explained presumptions, some scholars of this stream of thought tended to evaluate social movements as beneficial for the system insofar as they function as societal alarm bells that would exhibit otherwise undetected defects and disturbances, and thus induce the political authorities to take action to "repair" such disturbances. Furthermore, this process could then provide, especially in times of rapid social transformation, excluded and alienated individuals some common values/norms and new forms of solidarity through which they could stand against unfavorable conditions in the system, whilst still adhering to society (Rochon 1998).

Since the 1970s such assumptions of collective behaviour theories were largely criticized by another stream of thought influenced by the main tenets of rational choice theory that started to dominate American sociology. Underpinning this criticism was the idea that every individual has the intrinsic tendency to shape their actions in a conscious, rational and strategic manner so as to maximize their benefits with the least possible costs. As such, individuals' participation in a social movement or riot cannot be reduced to emotional and haphazard reactions to social strains as most of the collective behavior theorists would assume (Olson 1965). This criticism prompted these sociologists to focus on the interests that protestors pursue, what kind of tactics they employ to realize these interests and how they mobilize necessary resources to achieve their objectives (McCarthy ve Zald 1977). Such a research agenda was the reason why scholars employing this framework are grouped together under the rubric of "resource mobilization theories".

In the 1980s the research agenda of some "resource mobilization" scholars started to also include the political systems and power struggles of the countries where social movements effectively challenged the system. Underlying this theoretical maneuver was the contention that, even though individuals' strategic choices around the cost-benefit calculations is vital for understanding the mobilization of social movements, it is also necessary to take into account favorable political conditions, structures and processes in a country that allow and encourage individuals to form and take part in social movements (Eisinger 1973). This contention led these scholars to investigate legal and institutional structures in a comparative manner exploring different countries in order to understand under what circumstances a social movement or a revolt takes place or can be successful. Power struggles and frictions between different political actors and elites within the state was also an important component of analysis for these scholars, as it was argued that the fissures deepened by these intra-elite conflicts could bring about an advantageous political and social environment for the mobilization and eventual success of social movements and uprisings (Skocpol 1978; Tilly 1979). Given this research agenda and theoretical framework these approaches were addressed as "political opportunity theory" or "political process theory". "Political opportunity theory" was a significant intervention into earlier discussions on social movement theories in terms of expanding the domain of analysis from the internal composition of movements themselves and individual motivations of participants, to the longstanding political structures and rivalries. Nevertheless, despite its seemingly "structuralist" outlook it cannot be argued that political opportunity theory is exempt from the weaknesses of the other two mainstream approaches discussed previously. In the following section of the paper I will discuss two common drawbacks of these mainstream

theories and then elucidate why a critical approach that would go beyond these approaches is highly needed.

Two drawbacks of mainstream social movement theories

The first weakness of these theories is related to their putting the *description* of the "forms" in which social movements appear and organize themselves at the centre of analysis without a thorough investigation of the historical/structural backdrop that paves the way for these movements to take place in such a particular form (Goodwin and Sarper 2015, 11). In none of these approaches can one find a profound analysis of the connection between the internal contradictions of the social order in general, capitalism in particular, and the emergence of the movements and revolts (Crossley 2002, 11). Rather than being a gap that needs to be filled with more research, this weakness is an essential methodological flaw that puts the validity and pertinence of the findings – wrought by an analysis remaining within the boundaries of these frameworks – into question. This is because the ways in which the appearance and formation of the movements is *described* cannot be thought of in separation from the historical/structural contradictions of the specific social order. Each social movement and uprising exhibits countless distinctive features in their form; which of these distinctive features is worth taking as a meaningful component of their description, can be assessed only when this movement or uprising is contextualized within the contradictions of the social order. This is because social movements emanate from these contradictions, and their continuity and historical efficacy depends on the effects that it inflicts on the social order as a whole. As Manuel Castells puts it, "the only relevant question to assess the meaning of a social movement is the social and historical productivity of its practice, and the effect on its participants as persons and on the society it tried to transform" (2015, 314). With a focus on the internal composition and organizational mechanisms of the movements, mainstream social movement theories could not come up with a benchmark through which to surmise what needs to be, and is worth, analysing in a social movement.

Here, the crux of the problem is whether the characteristic features of a social movement could be brought into focus by merely exploring the profile, assumed interests and organizational practices of its individual participants or whether these features could be inferred by first assessing the place of this movement in the history of the social order from which it emanates and its potential effects on this social order (i.e., capitalism) as a whole. The mainstream theories incline to opt for the former. Therefore, the problem with them is a fundamental one, as it is concerned with the point of departure and direction of their analysis.

Collective behaviour theories, as the first mainstream theory discussed above, starts its investigation with the participants' own individual discontent and sense of deprivation and then proceeds through an analysis of either how the social system could be "fixed" so as to prevent or allay this discontent, or, of how the movement itself could help the social system to revise itself. As such they could not provide an analytical framework through which one can contextualize the emergence of the movement within the historical contradictions of the capitalist social order in a country. As a result, depending on the findings of research conducted along these lines, a social movement or uprising would be either described as a sporadic response to the defects of the system or as a healthy and functional reaction. Hence, to the extent that the system itself is taken for granted, its fundamental contradictions that lay the ground for a social movement or uprising would remain unproblematized.

Despite its pretention to deploy a fundamental critique of collective behaviour theories, the resource mobilization approach also shares the problem of remaining blind to the deeper social and historical contradictions that prepare the ground for the emergence of social movements. In so far as this theory tends to characterize a movement or uprising based only on the interests of participants or on the movements' methods to gather resources to reach certain objectives, it fails to go beyond the movement itself and see the larger and historical context in which it takes place (Crossley 2002, 10).

At first glance, political process theory might seem to have resolved the above-mentioned problem of resource mobilization theories through taking into account as a significant parameter the "political systems" and "inter(intra)-elite rivalries" in a country. Nevertheless, these structural political conditions become a part of the analysis in this theory in order not to situate the movement within the context of contradictions of the capitalist social order, but to find out the opportunities they open up or close down for a movement. Furthermore, since the political process theory confines the domain of "politics" to administrative and legal structures and the power struggles between ruling elites, it tends to exclude from its analysis the social relations of production and the manifestations of these relations in 'civil society' in the Gramscian sense. This is the reason why this approach does not attribute enough significance to the history of ideological struggles in society, struggles that are vital for explicating the formation and development of social movements.

The second weakness associated with mainstream social theories is related to their distance to *praxis*. That is, these theories do not provide any guidance as to what kind of a *political position* needs to be taken and what kind of a *political strategy* needs to be developed vis-à-vis an uprising or movement. Here, what I mean by 'political position' and 'political

strategy' is fundamentally different from devising and presenting certain *policy proposals* for state or ruling classes in regards to the methods of containing, appeasing or eradicating these movements or of "repairing" certain loopholes in the social system. This is indeed what mainstream theory, particularly collective behaviour approaches, is preoccupied with. Developing a 'political position' and 'political strategy' in this paper rather refers to evaluating a social movement on the basis of its potential to make a contribution to the emancipatory transformation of society and, based on this evaluation, considering the necessary and effective actions that would help the movements to realize that potential, if it exists. Mainstream social movement theories, as they stand, do not allow any room for political strategy as such. This problem stems mainly from the adherence of mainstream theories to the positivist tradition which isolates, under the rubric of 'objectivity', the endeavours of understanding the social world from the quest of changing it, and thereby presumes a precise distance or split between the research object (social movements) and researcher (Krinsky 2013, 108). Indeed, this second weakness is intricately related to the first one discussed above, since a theory that limits itself to the *description* of the forms in which social movements occur is not able to draw any political conclusions and strategic implications from them. Only a theory that allows for the contextualization of a movement within the nature of the social order and history of social struggles in a country could yield some political and strategic conclusions in the face of social movements and uprisings (Zemn et.al 2013, 889).

These two drawbacks of mainstream social theories manifested themselves in many articles and monographs written about the wave of revolts and movements we have experienced in the last decade. Even some seemingly alternative and innovative frameworks of analysis were not exempt from the influence of mainstream theories and their weaknesses. Maneuel Castells' well-known book *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2013), for example, offers a quite comprehensive examination of the social and political dynamics of the recent wave of protests and revolts across the world. Nevertheless, this book determines the most significant and distinctive features of these movements based not on the contradictions of the existing social order but on the novel *forms* of their organization and mobilization in the Internet age (Fuchs 2012). Some other "new" approaches that state the need to focus on the emotions inciting and revealed in social movements (Jasper 2007; Flam and King 2007) are also replete with the problem of not situating a social movement within the structure and history of a society (Çetinkaya 2008, 28-29).

This two-fold drawback of mainstream movement theories gives us some suggestions as to the basis on which an alternative theoretical model could be developed. Given the

discussion above, such a critical approach needs to fulfill two tasks: a) situating a social movement and uprising within the totality of the social formation in which it occurs and designating its quality based on this contextualization; b) answering the question “what is to be done”, i.e., informing political action or proposing a political/strategic perspective in regards to a social movement and uprising.

Marxism, class and social movements

This paper asserts that the Marxist conception of history and society, its class perspective, could provide us with the necessary analytical tools to fulfill these two tasks. A class perspective could help us to constitute an alternative framework of analysis through which to examine the contradictory nature of today’s social and political relations that prepare the ground for the emergence of social movements and revolts as well as develop some strategies for future political action. In fact, as the recent wave of revolts have coincided with one of the deepest economic crises of capitalism one can see a tendency among many scholars to bring class back into studies of these movements. Nevertheless, in many of these studies “class” is used rather as a variable that is used to empirically evaluate the social composition and the participant profile of the movements and uprisings (Della Porta and Diani 2009: 57-61) rather than as a *perspective* that would help us to situate a social movement within the structure of the social formation in a country. The clearest examples of this tendency can be seen in the discussions as to the nature and meaning of the 2013 Gezi Uprising in Turkey. In the aftermath of the uprising, while some researchers were inclined to designate the Gezi uprising as a “middle-class movement” (an example is Keyder 2013) based on the observation that the protestors exhibited the typical cultural traits and social aspirations of today’s middle class. Some others opposed this and asserted that the uprising was indeed a working class movement as the overwhelming majority of the Gezi protestors fell into the category of the working class defined along the lines of one’s position vis-à-vis relations of production (Boratav 2013). Although there is a fundamental divergence between these positions in terms of the way they conceptualize ‘class’, they share a common presumption and a common line of reasoning when determining the character of a social movement: Both positions assume that the nature and meaning of a social movement is determined mainly by the dominant class profile of its participants, and tend to derive the nature of the Gezi Uprising from some common “economic” or cultural traits of the protestors. Therefore, these perspectives could not build a robust alternative to the very fundamentals of mainstream social movement theory, which also infers the nature of a movement from the prevailing cognitive frameworks, social traits and individual

interests of the participants. Furthermore, those studies that operationalized class in this way could not go beyond the analytical framework and reasoning of those approaches which tended to categorize the recent wave of uprisings as the “youth revolt” or “internet age revolt” (Hussain 2013) based on the presumed common cultural traits and new methods of contention empirically observed among the protestors.

A class perspective on social movements that is not limited to the discussions revolving around the class composition of protesters could be built on the basis of two key notions of historical materialism: *Totality* and *antagonism*. This paper asserts that a class perspective informed by these two notions could provide us with an analytical framework that goes beyond mainstream theories and can supersede its weaknesses.

Totality and social movement

A social movement and uprising comes into being as a result of complex interrelated dynamics of an entire society, which cannot be reduced to the intentions, interests, cognitive patterns and organizational capacities of its participants (Krinsky 2013, 108). A social movement and the process of revolt bears the hallmarks of the existing contradictions of the social order as well as the history and memory of the social struggles in the country where it takes place (Fuchs 2012, 785). Accordingly, *totality* here refers to the contradictions and conflicts of the social order that manifest themselves in ideological, political and economic fields of a society on the one hand, and to the history of the social struggles in a country that occur as a response to these contradictions and culminate in the formation of a social movement and uprising on the other.

An analysis based upon such a formulation of totality assumes a critique of those approaches that reduce ‘class’ to the individuals’ economic position in the relations of production or of distribution, and that reduce ‘class relations and struggles’ to the economic conflicts between different social groups. The notion of totality generating a conception of a social formation as an interrelated unity of political, economic and ideological realms allows us to see that class contradictions and class struggles manifest themselves not only in the economic conflicts between capitalists and workers, mainly revolving around wage relations but also in some context/time-dependent political issues and ideological themes (Zemni, De Smet and Bogaert 2013). Social movements and uprisings throughout the history of modern capitalism have generally formed as a response to, and in relation with, the manifestations of class contradictions/struggles crystallized in economic, political or ideological domains of society. As such the nature and character of a social movement can only be thoroughly

understood when it is situated within the context of the totality of class struggles revealed in ideological, political and economic relations (Barker 2013b, 49).

Given that we live in a world dominated by the capitalist mode of production, a social analysis informed by the notion of totality would ask the following preliminary questions when investigating a social movement or uprising: How is the capitalist mode of production specifically organized at the ideological, political and economic levels in the country² where a social movement and uprising appears? (i.e., what are the significant features of *the capitalist social formation* in the country under investigation)³. What are the most important social contradictions and political/ideological contentions that were generated from this specific organization of capitalist social formation in that country? To what extent and how is the social movement and uprising under consideration related to these contradictions? Where does this social movement and uprising stand in the history of class struggles in that country? And finally, how does this social movement influence class struggles both in and beyond that country? Such questions are typically underemphasized or never asked in mainstream social movement theories that focus merely on the profile of the protestors, organizational structure of the movement and its modes of action. This is not to say that such features of the social movement that mainstream theories bring into focus are futile. An investigation into the composition of the participants, and their repertoire of action could, on the contrary, be quite meaningful. However, information in regards to these formal features of a movement could gain its true value and meaning when this information is gathered and organized in relation to the *totality*, that is, for the purpose of answering the questions sketched above⁴. Otherwise, an analysis that isolates this information from the totality could not go beyond taking a descriptive, partial and hence probably misleading picture of the movement or uprising (Barker 2013a, 7).

² For the importance of the specificities of the national setting in the recent uprisings and movements see Glasius and Pleyers (2013).

³ I use the concept of 'social formation' in this paper as the concrete form that a mode of production takes in a national setting. The capitalist mode of production is universally based on the production relations and the contradiction between labor and capital, but this contradiction could be built on different political and ideological structures depending on the historically specific conditions of each national setting. By 'capitalist social formation' I mean the totality of economic, political, and ideological structures that reproduce the capitalist mode of production in a particular national setting. For the distinction between 'mode of production' and 'social formation' see Poulantzas (1973, 13-16). For an analysis of the 2011 Arab uprisings along the lines of "different modalities of capitalist mode of production", which evokes the concept of social formation, see Achcar (2013).

⁴ For an excellent example of employing this kind of information in relation to the totality of social formation and historical struggles in Egypt see Hazem Kandil's comprehensive analysis of the Egyptian uprising (2012).

Antagonism and social movements

In order to discern the historical meaning of a social movement, it is also necessary to investigate the nature and strategies of the social forces that this movement clashes against. This is because the character of a social movement is shaped by the nature of the *antagonism* of which it is a part, as well as its place within the totality of the social formation and historical struggles in a country (Barker 2013b, 48-49). Therefore, a thorough comprehension of a social movement could be achieved only when the answers to the following questions are pursued: Against whom does this movement forge its political demands and aspirations? Which position does the opponent(s) of this social movement occupy in the relations of domination? And how can one designate the nature of the antagonism between the movement and its opponent (i.e., whether the movement aims to compromise with or subvert its opponent)? The character of the opponent of a social movement and the nature of antagonism between them could be adequately understood only in relation to the characteristics of the social formation in which they act. Thus, the analysis of antagonism and that of totality should go hand in hand with each other.

The notion of antagonism also provides us with some important hints in regards to the discussions of the class character of the social movements and uprisings that emerged in the last decade. In these discussions two positions typically collide with each other. The first position puts forward the idea that these uprisings are not working class movements per se but yet another manifestation of "new social movements" on the grounds that they possess a heterogeneous participant profile, that they were not spearheaded by the socialist parties and unions, that they employ unprecedented methods of protest and that they brought to the fore political and cultural demands as well as economic ones (see e.g., Ingman [2013]). The representatives of the other position follow the same analytical line of thinking but reach an opposite conclusion: They basically argue that these uprisings are class-based movements since they essentially mobilize the sections of the working class that were hit hard by neoliberal economic transformations (for an example of this position in the context of the Gezi uprising see, Yörük and Yüksel [2014]).

The common analytical reasoning embedded in these positions might lead a researcher to reach some politically misleading and methodologically erroneous conclusions: For if the class character of a movement is measured by the *quantitative* predominance of workers in its composition or by the degree of preponderance of immediate economic demands and complaints of workers in its agenda, then, an anti-systemic uprising with a heterogeneous profile of participants attracting people from all walks of life would not be considered to possess class character. The same logic could also conceive a movement as having a non-class character

when it agglomerates different sections of society around some common political or ideological themes that cannot be reduced to the immediate economic demands of workers, even though it has the capacity to threaten the very fundamentals of the political and ideological foundations of the capitalist social formation in a country. Viewed from the opposite position, the same reasoning would designate a protest or uprising as a working-class movement only because its supporters are overwhelmingly laborers and are motivated by everyday economic concerns, despite the fact that this movement develops a compromising and even close relation with the dominant social order and reactionary social/political forces.

If this line of reasoning is followed many of the uprising and revolutions in modern history that mark a historical turning point for class struggles would not be considered to possess a class character just because they mobilize different sections of society that were unified under some non-economic but political or ideological agenda. This reasoning would put even the class character of the Bolshevik revolution under question since this revolution organized and mobilized not only workers but also soldiers, peasants, intellectuals and petty-bourgeoisie all of which were attracted by the Bolshevik Party's promise of peace, that is, withdrawal from the war, as a common denominator, alongside "land" and "bread" (Laclau 2005, 97). The same logic could designate instead such an anti-migrant/ultra-nationalist movement as Pegida⁵ in Germany as a working-class movement to the extent that it attracts workers reacting to unemployment and possible deterioration of the economic conditions of 'native' German citizens (Thran and Boehnke 2015).

These kinds of misleading conclusions can be avoided only when the notion of antagonism is included into the analysis of a social movement and uprising. This notion would allow a researcher to take the nature of the antagonistic relation between a social movement and its opponent as a part of the character of the former and thereby prevent the researcher from evaluating a movement's class character based only on its internal class composition. If a 'class', (be it working class or bourgeoisie) in its Marxian sense, could be defined and addressed only in the context of its contradictory relations with other class(es), the class character of a social movement, that is whether it is indeed a working-class movement or not, can only be discerned on the basis of the nature of its relationship with its opponent (i.e., whether it stands against and has the potential to wreak havoc on the political, ideological or economic foundations of the dominant class order). The notion of antagonism is crucial for determining the character of a social movement since struggling against an opponent with an unequivocal

⁵ It stands for Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes).

class character would unite the participants of a movement from different walks of life against a common enemy, trivialize their differences politically and endow them with a common class character (Della Porta and Diani 2009, 23). This was the case, to a certain extent, in the Occupy Wall Street protests in the USA as well as the Indignados movement in Spain where protestors coming from different segments of society positioned themselves against the financial oligarchies and ruling strata and thereby appeared as a united social force albeit their heterogenous composition (Tejerina 2013, 7). This is indeed not something typical to the social movements of the last decade but holds true for almost all revolutionary processes in modern history. The most remarkable popular uprisings and fulfilled social revolutions in modern history did not come into being as a result of open confrontation between the members of the bourgeoisie and that of the working class but rather as an outcome of the struggle of a united bloc of discontent sections of society (people) including the working class against those political or social forces (for example the state, government or an emperor) that upheld the representation of the ruling class and the established class rule (Laclau 1977, 110).

As such, a social movement could be designated as a working class movement when it thickens frontiers between the discontented sections of society and the political and social forces representing dominant classes. The “thickening” of the demarcation line between the dominant class and the rest could be achieved to the extent that a social movement confronts the *totality* (ideological, political and economic underpinnings of the system) that the dominant class strives to reproduce. A social or political struggle that limits itself only to a single demand or agenda *isolated from the totality* (democratic demands in Laclau’s terms [2005, 74]) would not endow the subjects of this struggle with a class character even though this struggle is connected to immediate economic concerns of the working class. Having stated this, in certain contexts and under some special circumstances, a single political issue or an ideological theme could possess such a vital importance for the reproduction of *totality* that a confrontation/antagonism around it would be a fertile ground for the emergence of a social movement with a radical character. In this case, rather than the class composition of its participants, the working-class character of the social movement organized around this particular theme or issue would be predicated upon the capacity of this movement to mobilize different segments of society in such a way as to harden the lines between the dominant class and the rest, and to threaten the entire class order (*totality*).

This discussion does not yield the simple conclusion that the unequivocal class position of its opponent is a sufficient condition for a social movement to gain its class character. What is rather meant is that the class position of the opponent could be a convenient political and

ideological ground on which the class character of the movement could be politically constructed. For a social movement to gain a class character it is also necessary for this movement to act in accordance with the objective of subverting or weakening its political rival that represents the interests of the dominant class and hence the system of class rule. A movement that remains limited to seeking a compromise with, or 'requesting' a special privilege from, its 'opponent'⁶ could not be considered a class movement because such a movement could never have the chance to significantly change the course of class struggles at political, ideological and/or economic levels.

Whether a movement develops a subversive or compromising relationship with its opponent is largely determined by the ideas and social/political forces dominating and steering this movement. This means that the class character of a social movement is also contingent upon the course of political and ideological struggles within the movement itself (Barker 2013b, 48). Hence, the capacity of a social movement to influence the *totality* is intricately related to the capacity of the progressive/revolutionary social and political forces within this movement to gain the upper hand. This means that a critical social movement analysis needs to investigate also the course of political struggles *within* the movement itself in order to scrutinize the place of this movement vis-à-vis the *totality* and the nature of its relationship with its opponent. Accordingly, internal divisions, the social composition and demographic profile of the social movements could be a part of the analysis of a critical social movement theory in so far as the information about these parameters would help the researcher to shed light on the political/ideological struggles for leading the movement. Unlike mainstream social movement theories that use raw data collected about these parameters to define the nature and orientation of the movement, a critical theory would collect, select and utilize data about the internal composition of the movement when it is useful for examining its possible or actual political orientation, its capacity to transform the *totality* and to subvert its opponent.

Conclusion

The series of uprisings and social movements taking place in different parts of the world in the last decade have revealed the predicaments and weaknesses of mainstream social movement models and pointed to a need for a critical social movement theory inspired by the theoretical

⁶ This evokes Ernesto Laclau's distinction between "democratic demands" and "popular demands". In his *On Populist Reason*, Laclau makes this distinction as follows: "We will call a demand, which, satisfied or not, remains isolated a *democratic demand*. A plurality of demands which, through their equivalent articulation, constitute a broader social subjectivity we will call *popular demands* - they start, at a very incipient level, to constitute the 'people' as a potential historical actor" (2005, 74).

and methodological premises of historical materialism. The notions of totality and antagonism that are ingrained in a historical materialist conception of society are crucial for developing such a critical framework as they constitute the building blocks of an analytical framework through which one can go beyond descriptive and misleading evaluations of mainstream theory and thereby inform political action. While the notion of totality enables us to contextualize a movement or uprising within the trajectory of the development of the capitalist social formation in a country on the one hand and within its contemporary structural contradictions on the other, the notion of antagonism helps a researcher to infer the character of a movement from the class roots of its opponent as well as from the nature of the conflictual relationship between them. The analysis proposed in this paper along these notions should be seen as only an abstract preliminary framework that could guide a concrete investigation of any particular social movement or uprising.

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2. ‘Us’ and ‘them’: Theoretical insights about the class division in contemporary capitalism

Jorge Enrique Forero

“There’s a class warfare, all right. But it’s my class, the rich class that’s making war, and we’re winning” Warren Buffet, US multi-billionaire

Abstract

This article discusses the problem of class division in contemporary capitalism. Focusing on the recent work of Savage et al. (2013), it addresses two problems: First, it calls into question their concept of “the elite” and particularly their neglect of the role of the capitalist mode of production in the constitution of this group; second, it questions how these authors create class borders between the working class and social groups such as the middle class and the precariat. Regarding the treatment of “the elite”, we suggest it would be useful to bring back the question of the relationship between the capital accumulated by this group and the control/ownership over the means of production. Regarding the working class and the other aforementioned groups, we suggest to instead use the concept of class fractions. In order to develop these proposals, the article explores a way to integrate the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu – used by Savage et al. (2013) – and the Marxian approach to social classes. To this end, it follows a double path, first using Eric Olin Wright’s classification of social class approaches in order to highlight their limits and potential contributions, and, second, suggesting the use of some insights from Alain Badiou in order to build a common ontological framework.

Key words: Social classes, Marxism, working class, class divisions, class fractions

Introduction

In 2013, Mike Savage and a group of researchers from different universities published their analysis of the BBC’s Great Britain class survey of 2011, “the largest survey of social class ever conducted in the UK” (Savage et al. 2013). Their research aimed to grasp the class configuration within the country through measuring the differences in the distribution of three kinds of capital among the population: Economic capital, defined as “wealth and income”; social capital, which measures “contacts and connections which allow people to draw on their social networks” and cultural capital, understood as “the ability to appreciate and engage with

cultural goods, and credentials institutionalized through educational success” (Savage et al. 2013, 5). The operationalization approach developed in the study was based on the theoretical work of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

The scholars’ aim was not to develop “a deductive class schema” but instead to use what they defined as a “latent class analysis”, which was “based on the idea that some parameters of a statistical model differ across unobserved subgroups, which form the categories of a categorical latent variable” (Savage et al. 2013, 11). This method allowed them to identify seven well defined classes: elite, established middle-class, technical middle-class, new affluent workers, traditional working class, emerging service workers and the precariat (2013, 12). In general terms, the results indicated dynamics that moved toward a crescent-shaped “polarization and class fragmentation” (2013, 3).

The study received much attention and a fair amount of criticism. Tai-lok Lui, for example, pointed to the lack of a theoretical framework capable of giving an account of the changes in the social structure that the research seemed to be describing (Tai-lok Lui 2015, 481). In the same way, Hugo Radice (2015) used the work of Savage et al. as a starting point for bringing back the Marxist discussion regarding social classes. He points out that studies like that of Savage and his colleagues may allow us to get a “snapshot” of the “classes-as-clusters”, but does not provide information regarding how they interact with each other, nor does it offer a way to understand the changes on class configuration (2015, 271). This is a limitation relative to broader theories of social classes, such as the Marxist one. Nevertheless, Radice suggests, “the integration of the two approaches to class into a single ontological and epistemological framework allows the weaknesses of each to be addressed” (2015, 286).

This article explores this possibility, suggesting some limitations of Savage et al.’s analysis, and indicating a potential convergence between Bourdieu’s and Marxian theories of social classes. The article is divided in three sections: In section one, we present Olin Wright’s (2009) proposal to create an “integrated analytical model” to the study of social classes. In the second section, we engage with Bourdieu’s theory, and suggest some ways to generate a convergence with Marxian theory, including some contributions from the ontological framework developed by the philosopher Alain Badiou (2003). Finally, we go back to Savage et al.’s findings, analyzing them from the framework suggested, focusing on the two tendencies identified by the authors, namely, polarization and differentiation.

Towards an “integrated analytical approach”

Radice’s suggestion to link empirical works like that of Savage et al. with an approach that has

more explanatory power seems to be a reasonable one. A step in this direction can be found in Olin Wright's (2009) outline of an "integral analytical approach", where he seeks to articulate what he identifies as the three main approaches to class analysis: The first which describes the interaction between relevant attributions of social agents and their conditions of life; the second, which highlights how the privileges and opportunities of some agents relate to the exclusion of others, and the third, which focuses on how social differences imply relations of exploitation and domination. Let us briefly describe these one by one.

Social stratification should always be the starting point for any analysis of class as it allows us to identify the differences between individuals regarding their different living conditions. At the most basic explanatory level this would imply that we must relate those with similar life conditions, based on some common attributions of the individuals gathered there, for example gender, age, social background, behavioral patterns or even religious inclinations (Wright 2009, 103). Many studies of this kind, for example, identify education as the attribution that most influences living conditions. From that point of view, class division is generated as follows: The social and personal background of certain individuals facilitate their acquisition of those socially relevant attributes, giving them access to the jobs and occupations that offer a better economic reward (Wright 2009, 104).

The second approach goes one step further addressing the idea of "opportunity hoarding". This concept sheds light on the way in which the ability of certain individuals or groups to access the attributions that may ensure better living conditions is related to the *exclusion* of other individuals. This approach also indicates the mechanisms used to ensure this dynamic of exclusion; academic credentials and professional certifications, for example, but also citizenship, unionizing, etc. (Wright 2009, 105). Different forms of social power allow some social agents to hoard certain kinds of opportunities, leading to differential locations within the so-called labor 'market' dynamics, impacting on the distribution of economic resources.

A Marxist approach, on the other hand, is characterized by the emphasis it places on one specific kind of opportunity hoarding: The private property and the ownership of the means of production, which is also identified as the main historical cause of class differentiation. The appropriation of the means of production implies the exclusion of certain social agents from these means, thus, forcing those excluded to alienate their physical and intellectual capabilities and exchange them for means of subsistence with the owners of the means of production. This constitutes relations of *domination* and *exploitation*. Domination understood as "[...] the ability to control the activities of others", and exploitation as "[...] the acquisition of economic benefits

from the labor of those who are dominated” (Wright 2009, 107).

From this classification, Wright suggests that there is the possibility for an integrated model, wherein each approach grasps a different mechanism of class configuration and that all of them interact in different ways depending on the social organization under analysis. The Marxist approach, he says, studies the major class division within contemporary societies – the one between workers and capitalists. The “opportunity hoarding” approach, on the other hand, points to the processes of differentiation that secure privileged positions for the middle class with respect to the working class. Finally, the “attributions and conditions” approach describes the way individuals are distributed into different positions within the class structure (2009, 109-110). In the next section, we will suggest that such an integration is possible, through a connection between Bourdieu’s and Marxian theories of social classes.

For a Marx-Bourdieu convergence

The work of Pierre Bourdieu constitutes one of the most important contributions to the analysis of social classes, not only because of his remarkable empirical research, but also because of his theoretical insights. He defined his approach as a “relational perspective”, where “one needs only to take up the relational or structural mode of thinking characteristic of modern mathematics and physics, which identifies the real not with substances but with relationships” (Bourdieu 1987, 3).

The social class configuration is for him a multidimensional space shaped by the “relative distance” created by the “unequal distribution of the sources of power”, which in contemporary societies can be measured by three main types of capital: Economic, social and cultural. Each social agent possesses a determinate *volume* of capital, *composed* by different proportions of each kind, which vary through time, creating the *trajectory* of each agent within the social space.

With the set of common principles which measure the relative distance between individuals, we acquire the means of regrouping individuals into classes in such a way that agents in the same class are as similar as possible in the greatest possible number of respects [...] and in such a way that the classes are as distinct as possible from one another- or, in other words, we secure the possibility of obtaining the largest possible separation between classes of the greatest possible homogeneity (1987, 5).

Bourdieu seeks to go beyond what he calls “the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism”: Between an objectivist approach that believes that social scientists can classify

social agents as objects in a process of knowledge that subverts the lay “common sense”, and a subjectivist approach, for which social agents construct social reality as an aggregation of those inter-subjective constructions (1987, 1-2). Instead, Bourdieu aims to explore how “agents are both classified and classifiers”, and that they “classify according to (or depending upon) their position within classifications” (1987, 2).

The distribution of the social agents along the social space also regulates the acquisition of certain “dispositions”, the sense of one’s own place, from which their daily strategies and behavior are shaped. Social differences are therefore “inscribed in the body” in the form of what Bourdieu calls “habitus”, defined as a “system of practical classification”, and “an embodied manifestation of the class condition, as well as of the conditionings that this condition imposes” over the social agents (Bourdieu 2003, 100):

This sense of one’s place is at the same time a sense of the place of others, and, together with the affinities of *habitus* experienced in the form of personal attraction or revulsion, is at the root of all processes of cooptation, friendship, love, association, etc., and thereby provides the principle of all durable alliances and connections [...] (Bourdieu 1987, 5).

One can find here a resemblance with the way E. P. Thompson understands class, not “[...] as a ‘structure’, nor even as a ‘category’, but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown it happened) in human relationships” (Thompson 1966, 9), and that shapes social relations between classes as well as within classes.

The theoretical construction of social classes is, from that perspective, one particular modality of those class relations, and the more accurately it grasps the social dynamic of classification and the principles behind it, the greater its risk of being confused with the actual social dynamic. Or, in Bourdieu’s words, a mistake “recurrent within the Marxist tradition”, is that of believing that “theoretical classes are real classes, real groups of individuals moved by the consciousness of the identity of their condition and interests, a consciousness which simultaneously unites them and opposes them to other classes” (1987, 7). In order to prevent such a mistake, he proposes that

[...] a theoretical class, or a "class on paper," might be considered as a probable real class, or as the probability of a real class, whose constituents are likely to be brought closer and mobilized (but are not actually mobilized) on the basis of their similarities

(of interest and dispositions) (1987, 7).

Finally, as stated before, through the description of the distribution of the three forms of capital (economic, social and cultural), it is possible to obtain a relative description of the agents' distribution into the social space. Nevertheless, for Bourdieu the *class division* is not self-evident in the distribution.

The boundaries between theoretical classes which scientific investigation allows us to construct on the basis of a plurality of criteria [can] be conceived of as lines or as imaginary planes, such that the density (of the trees or of the water vapor) is higher on the one side and lower on the other, or above a certain value on the one side and below it on the other. Objects in the social world always involve a degree of indeterminacy and fuzziness, and thus present a definite degree of semantic elasticity (1987, 13).

The drawing of class boundaries, and therefore the making of a social class is then, as the constitution of other social groups, a political and symbolic struggle where the resources – including the three types of capital – are unequally distributed. The more founded in reality those boundaries are, however, the more probabilities of success in the construction of the social group.

Now, as we said before, there is no doubt that a work like that of Savage et al., grounded on Bourdieu's approach, can constitute a good starting point for a class analysis. However, it cannot take us very far due to its explicit rejection of the idea that the privileges of certain actors can generate the depriving conditions of others. In their own words,

[...] it is the potential of some assets to augment, store, transmit, and convert advantages which is central to the operation of class. Those without such assets are thereby limited relative to those with them. This formulation hence avoids a zero-sum conception of class exploitation (where one class gains directly at the expense of another) whilst also endorsing a relational contest in which some groups have unusually marked opportunities to accumulate and hence gain increasing advantages over those who do not (Savage et al. 2014, 7).

We agree with Radice that combining Bourdieu's and the Marxist approaches into an integrated framework of class analysis will require a "single ontological and epistemological framework" (2015, 285). Nevertheless, such an enterprise, although possible, is beyond the scope of this paper. For now, let us only mention three points to be taken into consideration as we move in

that direction.

The first relates to the use of the concept of economic capital in Bourdieu and the possibility of integrating it with Marxist value theory. If one wishes to go beyond research on stratification, there needs to be a distinction between money used within the spheres of consumption and reproduction, and that which is invested to obtain any kind of surplus, which – from a Marxian point of view – can only result from direct or indirect forms of exploitation and expropriation.

The other two points are potential contributions from Bourdieu's theoretical work to the Marxian class analysis. One is his emphasis on the "practical character of social classes", which means the way in which they are shaped in daily social relations, inside and beyond the sphere of production, only becoming theoretical as a result of the analytical effort to identify and describe the patterns and the underlying mechanisms of their configuration.

Finally, there is Bourdieu's idea that to study class one should appropriate the way of thinking of "modern mathematics". We suggest that this can be done by using the developments of set theory, in the way suggested by the French philosopher Alain Badiou (2006). We will not develop the full implications of this ontological approach for class analysis here, but simply indicate some basic orientations.

First, social groups can be conceived of as sets, as the bounding of elements⁷ and subsets that share one or more properties. Sets and subsets have relations of union, intersection, belonging, inclusion, and so on (Alain Badiou 2006, 64-74). This bounding is the result of an operation: A "forming into one", the constitution of a new "unity" from an initial plurality, with implications that will vary depending of the rules behind the operation, but that never imply the overcoming of the condition of multiplicity, which it is what set theory is based upon (2006, 26-33).

In the constitution of social classes, we can find different dynamics of "forming into one". One of those configurations is that which results from the processes of classification operated in daily life by social agents, in the way suggested by Bourdieu (2003) and Thompson (1966). In contrast, during the process of social research there can be several "formings into one" depending of the operation's criteria: One configuration will result, for example, if the criteria is the relation of the social agents to the means of production, another one if the criteria is the accumulation of the three kinds of capital. It will be revealing if there is a relative overlapping of those different configurations, but slight differences between them do not

⁷To be more precise, the elements are also subsets, and to the extent that set theory as presented in Badiou's ontology allow just for the presentation of multiplicities (Badiou 2006, 26).

invalidate the knowledge procedures used in order to constitute them.

Now that the possible convergence between these different approaches has been explored, let us return to some of the findings of Savage et al. and look at a few problematic points as well as possible paths of exploration that can rise from an expanded approach.

Another glance at contemporary class dynamics

We cannot discuss here all the findings presented in Savage et al., and this is also not our aim. However, let us just briefly reflect on some of their main points, and especially on the way they address current dynamics of polarization and differentiation.

a. Polarization:

As we said before, a picture of the social division like that obtained with the methodology used by Savage et al. constitutes a good starting point for a class analysis. And, as they highlight, it allows us to identify what they call a process of polarization. In their own words

[...] one of our most striking findings is the delineation of an ‘elite’. [...] If one has to detect the most important cleavage in Britain today, it is not between ‘middle’ and ‘working’ class, but between a relatively small corporate (or ‘professional-executive’) elite and everybody else. [...] One struggles to read any sustained studies of the social composition of small elites within sociology even though it is clear that their relative income and wealth has increased dramatically (Savage et al. 2014).

Let us just mention that the lack of attention regarding those of the top seems to be not exclusively a failure within sociology. Jose Gabriel Palma, points to a similar omission in the fields of economics and development:

Perhaps the most striking stylized fact of traditional mainstream explanations of high inequality, [...] is that until very recently they have focused almost exclusively on the middle of the distribution. It is only very recently that they are starting to look at the bottom 40 percent — as if there was an absolute taboo against looking at the top (Palma 2014, 25).

However, now that this slippery social group has finally received some attention let’s take a brief look at their main characteristics before they once again fade into the shadows. Savage et al. describe them as “the most advantaged and privileged group [...] characterized by having the highest levels of every form of capital. [...] a relatively small, socially and spatially

exclusive group at the apex of British society, whose economic wealth sets them apart from the great majority of the population. [...]” (Savage et al. 2013).

The most basic question that these results should invite us to ponder on has to do with the concentration of economic capital. As quoted above, Savage et al. recognized “the potential of some assets to augment, store, transmit, and convert advantages” (Savage et al. 2014, 7). They also accept the possibility that “some groups have *unusually marked opportunities to accumulate and hence gain increasing advantages over those who do not*”⁸ (2014, 7). In other section, they declare:

[...] we also think that there are mechanisms of accumulation *other than those arising from the labour market alone*. Bourdieu’s concept of economic capital usefully broadens our understanding to incorporate other forms of wealth accumulation, for instance income from savings, investments, housing and the like. *In our view, it is quite conceivable that someone who has never been in paid employment, but who has the capacity to draw upon sources of capital such as these can be seen as highly privileged in class terms*⁹ (Savage et al. 2014)

There seems to be no better agenda for further research than to establish the extent to which those “other forms of income” can be a more determinant source of economic, as well as other forms of, power than “paid employment”. In this sense one can see the problematic use of the name of “elite”, referring to the top of the social structure, identified through their share in the distribution of social wealth. Focusing on the outcome of the process of distribution, this specific act of nomination, as Bourdieu would call it (1987, 17) ignores the underlying mechanisms. Their relationship with the means of production, meaning their condition of the *capitalist class*, as an origin of their capacity for capital accumulation certainly does not have to be assumed *a priori*, but it should be considered as a valid hypothesis.

One possible way to address the question is by studying the dynamics of economic differentiation at the top, for example one could compare the internal differences within the top decile. Given the extraordinary level of concentration of wealth, revealing patterns of differentiation can be found within a “big” and perhaps heterogeneous group such as the top 10%, especially at the national level. Recent analysis by Oxfam has shown that the 65 richest individuals in the world possess the same amount of wealth as the poorest 50% – more than 3.7

⁸ Our emphasis

⁹ Our emphasis

billion – and that the top 1% already hoards more wealth than the rest of the global population (Oxfam 2016, 11). At the national level for example, the total wealth owned by Carlos Slim in the Mexican stock market exceeds by 38% the wealth owned by the rest of the Mexican population (Caballero 2015). This figure leads us to suspect that there may be substantial differences between Slim and many of the other millions of Mexicans included within the ‘top decile’. In the case of the UK, the threshold for belonging to the richest 10% was a little more than £1 million in 2015 (Office for National Statistics 2015, 15), yet the threshold for belonging to the top thousand individuals was one hundred times this number, while the richest man in the country was worth more than £13 billion (Ward 2015).

Furthermore, the occupational characterization of “the elite”, used by Savage et al. may confuse, to the extent that its members continue to be described as “chief executive officers, IT directors, marketing and sales directors, financial managers and management consultants” (Savage et al., 2013, 16). The role that occupational income plays for some agents in the contemporary levels of inequality cannot be denied as there exists, “[...] a veritable separation of the top managers of large firms from the rest of the population” (Piketty 2014a, 24). But interesting as income variations between occupations may be, there are important differences between the inequality generated by labor income and that which results from capital ownership: They correspond to different social forces, and especially, as Piketty recognizes, *different hierarchies* (2014b, 743). There is no doubt that the extraordinary bonuses, commissions and other forms of payments for CEOs and managers are a source of the wealth for many of the “elite members”, but those should not be considered as wages: the extreme differences of “labor” income between workers and managers should be necessarily an indicator of a qualitative difference.

In 2009, the wealthiest bosses in the UK earned ninety-four times the average worker’s wage: The chief executive of Reckitt Benkiser, a big pharmaceutical and chemical company, for example, earned the equivalent income of 1,374 of their workers put together (Jones 2016, 163). This is not a British aberration: “[t]he average salary (plus bonuses) of a CEO at one of the top 350 US firms in 2014 was \$16.3m” (Oxfam 2016, 14).

Decades ago, when the discussion regarding the emergence of a “managerial class” was extensively addressed, many scholars showed that the members of this group were usually major stockholders, a position that explained their extraordinary wages (Ralph Miliband 1980, 35). Masking capital profits as labor income, has, indeed, been a frequent tax-avoidance strategy used by capital owners and stockholders (Jones 2016, 165).

Yet, even when accepting that managers and CEOs are not necessarily stockholders,

their relationship to the means of production is still an important explanation for their extraordinary share of the wealth produced. When defining the capitalist class, Wright uses Poulantzas' distinction between legal ownership and real control over the means of production (Wright 1979, 67-74) From his point of view, the power over the productive process and of the decision-making over the means of production, that CEO's and top managers possess, give them a stronger sense of fellowship with the capitalist class than that which a small amount of shares would give to a middle-income wage earner. Class experience plays here a major role, and for a long time research has shown that CEOs and managers of big companies share "values, goals and behavior" with the capitalist class (Meiksins 1986, 112).

As Radice points out, one of the main criticisms against Marxist theory of social classes is the false prediction of a simplification of the social structure through the polarization of society into two fundamental classes (Radice 2015, 273). The figures on inequality quoted above, seem to suggest that if we took Bourdieu's methodological suggestion of measuring economic – and probably other kinds of – capital, we would find such a distance between those in the top and *everybody else*, that the class boundary would be, opposed to Bourdieu's supposition, almost self-evident. The next intermediate task would be then, to establish the mechanisms behind this process of differentiation. And the Marxian approach has, as mentioned before, something to say about this.

b. Fragmentation

Savage et al.'s study also points to the crisis of the so-called "traditional working class", finding a substantial reduction of its proportion with respect to the total population, as well as a relative over-representation of aging people: "[...] we might see this class as a residue of earlier historical periods, [...] a 'throwback' to an earlier phase in Britain's social history, as part of an older generational formation" (Savage et al. 2013).

This phenomenon, they say, has evolved in tandem with the emergence of new occupational groups. An important example is the *precariat*, a category used by scholars like Standing to describe "[...] millions of people scattered around the world, living and working in insecure jobs and conditions of life" (Standing 2012, 589). Savage et al. describe the precariat as "[...] clearly the most deprived of the classes that we have identified, on all measures, yet they form a relatively large social class, [...] a significant group characterized by high amounts of insecurity on all of our measures of capital" (Savage et al. 2013, 25).

We mentioned above that authors such as Tai-lok Lui (2015) and Radice (2015) highlighted the lack of a historical dimension as one of the major problems in Savage et al.'s

study. Indeed, if we consider the working class as a historical entity, the changes in the conditions of exploitation, labeled here as precarization, should not be dealt with as the emergence of a new class. What should be recognized here is *the precarization of the labor conditions for increasing sectors of the working class*, probably as part of the broader question of the neoliberal accumulation regime and its implications for the relationship between capital and labor (David Harvey 1990). From that point of view, this can be seen as part of a *differentiation within the working class*, which has been present in many ways throughout its history.

A good way to exemplify this is through the relationship between two categories often used synonymously, the *proletariat* and the *working class*. It can be said that each of these refer to different properties, moments, or dimensions of the *same* social class. The first denotes the lack of a means of production; the second, the alienation of the labor force –waged labor – into which the proletarian is dragged as a result of the first dimension. If the second is the moment of *exploitation*, the first is the one of *exclusion*, and constitutes its historical premise.

The problem is that the two moments are not completely coincident. Subsequently, if we accept that proletarians and working class refer to two different – but related – dimensions or constituting moments of the same class, it can also be said that as social groups they have a relationship in which the second tends to be a ‘subset’ of the first. The priority that the signifier *working class* achieved in socialist discourse was the result of a decision, both political and theoretical. ‘Political’ because the working class seemed to be the most suited fraction for political action: Its members acquired discipline and organization as a result of the industrial regime, and they were the only actors capable of carrying out a strike, seen then as a major instrument of socialist struggle. ‘Theoretical’, because of the role of exploitation as an economic category within Marxist economic thought. Yet, this included a high level of abstraction: As E.P. Thompson has shown, the political ‘working class’ that emerged during the first half of the 19th Century in Europe was constituted by several actors besides wage earners (Thompson 1966). The effect was one of *synecdoche*: The part was taken as a representation of the whole. Curiously, in the theoretical discussion regarding the concept of working class, the procedure has been just the opposite¹⁰. After ‘wage earners’, the category started to be used to refer to manual/industrial-workers, then to productive-formal-workers, and even to productive-formal-unionized-workers, and so on. Certainly, there has been a historical “shrinking” of the working class, but clearly there has been also a theoretical “shrinking” of the

¹⁰ See, for example, the discussion of Olin Wright regarding the use of the category by Poulantzas (Olin Wright, 1979: 30-60)

concept.

The hiatus between the moment of exclusion and the one of exploitation represents a central theoretical – and political – problem in a social context where, as a result of the development of the productive forces, the quantity of labor required for the dynamic of capital accumulation, especially in the productive sector, has been globally reduced. Today, more than ever, it can be said that *being exploited is a privilege*. The gap between the proletariat and the working class has been increasing substantially, as well as the political action of those included within. In his article about the *Social classes in the 21st Century*, Therborn uses the category of *plebeians*, referring to the heterogeneous “workers and the popular classes in all their diversity” (2012, 15), thereby avoiding the use of *proletariat* because of its identification with the working class. Yet, whatever the theoretical strategy to grasp this group, it should be able to address both its historical character and the mechanisms behind its constitution as a social group.

In the same article Therborn mentions how contemporary research about the middle classes in developing countries uses income thresholds of between 2 USD and 13 USD per day. Also, looking at the social representations of that social class in thirteen developing countries, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo found that, “[t]he defining characteristic of its members is that they have a *steady, waged job*”¹¹ (2012, 16). This is not a third world phenomena: In his compelling book about the “demonization of the working class” in the UK, Owen Jones shows how the self-identification as ‘middle-class’ has begun to mean barely “non-poor” (2016, 142).

It is certainly not so easy to find a Marxist criterion to define a “middle class”. Nevertheless, Marxist theorists have sought to distinguish this relatively privileged layer of the population from the rest of the working class. For example, Poulantzas used the label “new petty bourgeoisie” for gathering the ‘mental’ workers, supervisors, workers of the service sector and many other groups that from his point of view cannot be labeled either as bourgeois or working class (Poulantzas 1975, 287-292).

Certainly, the concept of petty bourgeois can be appropriate for describing, for example, small employers and independent, well-established professionals who enjoy certain levels of independence and prestige. However, it is interesting to notice that the tendency for many of those actors to become simple wage earners as a result of the logics of capital accumulation was already pointed out by Marx and Engels in their Manifesto:

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked

¹¹ Our emphasis

up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborer's (Marx and Engels 1998, 34)

For Marx and Engels then, qualification was not a criterion for class differentiation, and professionals can definitely be part of the working class. However, this process may be indefinitely incomplete. And, even recognizing a process of "proletarianization" of those sectors of professionals, the labor market will maintain differences in terms of wage, prestige and labor conditions, such as those present between different levels of qualification.

Bourdieu's tools and concepts seem particularly useful for grasping those differences and the way they affect daily social interaction. From this perspective, qualification is a form of cultural capital, which ensures better access to both social and economic capital. Furthermore, it also implies non-economic rewards: Symbolic privileges and power that mask the way the qualified labor force is also subjected to domination and exploitation. In the struggle for improving their position within the [labor] market, those actors can seek to limit the access of others to cultural capital with strategies of "opportunity hoarding", in order to avoid the devaluation of this kind of capital, an "immediate" interest opposed to that of non-qualified workers.

However, the precarization of their labor conditions can give them a shared experience with respect to the other sectors of the working class, constituting a common ground for political articulation. The way medical doctors are subjected to a Taylorist discipline by big health care providers – let's recall the 2015 labor grievances of the young medical doctors in the National Health Service in the UK – is a good example not just of the accuracy of Marx and Engels insights, but also of the tendency toward a homogenization of the working class experience that capital tends to impose.

Furthermore, academics, professors and researchers have often enjoyed high levels of autonomy regarding their professional activities. But here also, the recent reforms in the system of scientific research and higher education all over the world, and the increase in the supply of highly qualified labor is changing the conditions for 'intellectual' workers, who are beginning to progressively share the fate of other wage earners in terms of competition and precarization.

That should invite us to think about the differences between qualified and not qualified labor more in terms of fractions, divisions within one single class, rather than in terms of boundaries between two different classes. Indeed, the concept of class fractions, used extensively for characterizing the internal division within the capitalist class, has not been yet equally applied to the working class. A curious fact considering the attention that "the boundary

question” occupied the theoretical discussions of the 1970s and 1980s (Meiksins 1986). With social differentiation being one of the major problems for the political organization of the working class, it is striking that none of the major scholars on the topic took a risk in that direction.

In the same way, if qualification is not a criterion for class differentiation, neither should income be, an important challenge to the approach used by Savage et al. The suggestion of Bourdieu has more power here: Any boundary will be a more or less capricious line within a continuous distribution of levels of income.

A good example of how neither income nor qualification are necessarily class boundaries, and how some of those considered as middle class can share with other sectors a working class experience, is the case of the tech workers that have massively supported Bernie Sanders’ 2016 campaign to the Democratic nomination and constituted, along with the workers of the education sector, his major donors. An article in The Guardian suggested a simple explanation:

[...] According to PayScale, the median salary for a software engineer in San Francisco is around \$100,000 – post-tax, this comes out to roughly \$70,000-. With median one-bedroom rents in San Francisco hovering around \$3,500, this means the average software engineer spends 60% of their take-home pay on housing. It would take our average software engineer 40 years of saving every penny of their post-rent income to pay cash for a house in San Francisco in today’s prices. (Tarnoff 2016).

Although highly qualified and considered as high-wage earners, their class experience nevertheless makes them conscious of where real class boundaries are located. It is worth noting that tech workers are also the main supporters of one of the most prominent socialist in the US, the Seattle city council woman Kshama Sawant, who has publicly suggested that Microsoft and Amazon should be worker-run and publicly owned companies (Tarnoff 2016).

Conclusions

Discussing the research of Savage et al. (2013) on the class structure in the United Kingdom, we suggested a way to integrate the theoretical framework they used with the class theory of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the Marxian approach to social classes. First, we used the contribution by Erik Olin Wright, in order to highlight the limits of their approach, as well as the way in which this can be mutually complemented and reinforced. Secondly, we suggested

the use of set theory – in the way indicated by Alain Badiou – as an ontological strategy to address the question of social classes, its internal differentiation and relations.

Using the framework described above, we problematized the findings of Savage et al., indicating alternative explanatory strategies to deal with their findings and suggesting a further research agenda. In particular, we addressed the dynamics of polarization and fragmentation, identified by those authors.

Regarding the polarization, and highlighting the 2016 report of Oxfam on social inequality, we suggested recovering the Marxian discussion of the control and ownership over the means of production as a major cause of class differentiation. Here, we suggested that internal differentiation within the so-called “elite” should be a matter of research, problematizing also the occupational characterization used by Savage et al.

Finally, regarding the issue of fragmentation, we discussed the problem of establishing class boundary lines separating the working class and sectors such as the proletariat, the ‘middle class’ and more broadly, the qualified labor force. We suggested here the use of the concept of class fraction as an alternative for dealing with those sectors, considering instead potential subsets of a single class.

From that point of view, it can be said that the dynamics of fragmentation do not necessarily exclude those of polarization. And as we can see from the evidence gathered by Savage et al., that means polarization between the elite and the rest of the population, and fragmentation within the later. In the way we deal with these dual phenomena will determine how we uphold the soundness of a Marxian theory of social class, as well as the possibility of revolutionary politics.

We consider that a framework like the one proposed can help us to better deal with the internal contradictions of that huge social group which stands in front of the capitalist class. It should be clear that neither the intellectual, nor the political project requires a rejection of the plurality that constitutes it. Indeed, what categories can compress the diversity of the life conditions and surviving strategies of the billions of people who are not part of the tiny “elite”?

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Part II: Political landscape and social struggles

3. The June 2013 demonstrations in Brazil: The eclipsing of class politics?

Victor Strazzeri

Abstract

The massive demonstrations that swept Brazil in June 2013 not only changed the political landscape for good in the country, but also raised a number of important questions regarding the place of class in the analysis of social conflict in the current Brazilian context. The demonstrations seemed to finally indicate the arrival of a new phase of political mobilization where recourse to class was at most of minor importance. Its main characteristics, i.e., a substantial presence of young people, its urban setting and supposed cacophony of conflicting demands had been present in the political scene of advanced industrialized countries at least since the events of 1968, which could signal that a corresponding transition of political culture had now taken place. Adopting a renewed analytical approach would thus seem to be in order, and some observers were indeed quick to conclude that June 2013 marked the eclipsing of class politics in Brazil by other, more diffuse demands, and plural actors. This paper will contest this narrative of the events of June 2013, arguing that the demonstrations cannot be understood without reference to economic and social factors, as well as to the class underpinnings of both demonstrators and key organizations present at the protests. The trigger of the demonstrations – the rise in the public transport fare – was thus not a mere catalyst; instead, it indicated a radical critique of the development model of the last decade of Workers' Party rule through the call for social rights in the context of cities marked by growing inequality and shaped by private interests.

Keywords: June 2013 protests, Workers' Party, urban segregation, new social movements, right to the city, youth protests

Introduction

It's been a short but eventful three years in Brazil since 6 June 2013. On that day, the first protests against a hike in the public transportation fare took place in São Paulo¹², sparking the

¹² This article is centered on the demonstrations in São Paulo, Brazil's largest metropolis. Events in São Paulo are particularly significant as the Free-fare Movement was especially active and the repression of the early demonstrations received the most national media attention. Nevertheless, various reports suggest the June protests were a country-wide phenomenon, not only because the question of high costs and low quality of public transportation is practically universal in Brazil, but also because industrial and overall economic activity has grown more strongly outside the state of São Paulo in the previous decades than within it. The state used to hold 80.7% of value-added industrial production in 1970, a figure that had dropped to 61.8% by 2005 (Maricato 2014, 14).

biggest demonstrations the country had witnessed in a generation. After the immediate objective of the protests was reached and the fare hike was called off on 19 June, the protests were replaced by demonstrations against the Confederate Cup, followed by a series of smaller protests throughout 2013 and early 2014 including the demonstrations against FIFA and the World Cup. In October 2014 national elections were held that saw Dilma Rousseff (Workers' Party) be reelected by a small margin along with a legislature that moved significantly to the right. This combination coupled with the ill-advised switch of the Workers' Party government to all-out austerity in 2015 proved fateful for the President and, it could be said, for the post-1988 democratic establishment as a whole. A new round of mass protests erupted in the first half of 2015, yet this time they were led by the right – and often far-right – with the overwhelming support of Brazilian media who had helped orchestrate them. The aim was to impeach the newly elected president and, supposedly, put an 'end to corruption'.¹³

This 'shift to the right' by both the government and the masses on the streets¹⁴ made June 2013 seem like a distant memory, even if those protests were never fully understood in the first place. This paper aims to challenge some of the conventional arguments that surround the 2013 protests and those social segments and organizations that took part in them, adding to the steady stream of scholarly contributions on the events that have started to emerge over the last year.¹⁵ It will achieve this by placing June 2013 in the wider context of the last three decades of struggle for democracy and social justice in the country, a period that roughly coincides with the years that the main bearer of the interests of the Brazilian subaltern classes was the Workers' Party or PT, which arose in 1979/80. I have chosen to examine this period focusing on how the 'urban question' has evolved during these decades and, more specifically, how the PT chose to face it in its three municipal administrations in the city of São Paulo over that time span.

This focus is part of my core claim that the trigger of the demonstrations, the rise in the public transport fare, should not be seen as a mere catalyst, but rather as a crucial element for

For accounts of the 2013 protests on the major urban centers of Porto Alegre, Goiânia, Vitória, and Curitiba, cf. respectively Cunha 2013; Tavares, Roriz, and Oliveira 2016; Losekann 2015 and Torinelli 2014. For yet more cities, cf. Moraes, Gutiérrez, Parra et al., eds. 2014.

¹³ For a consideration of the impeachment (or parliamentary overthrow) of Dilma Rousseff, see Strazzeri 2016.

¹⁴ For a first appraisal of the rise of the right in Brazil in 2014-15, see the essays in Codas, Kaysel, and Velasco e Cruz, eds. 2015.

¹⁵ As soon as they erupted on a massive scale, the June 2013 demonstrations sparked a series of 'instant books' and attempts at analysis (cf. most of the contributions in the references from 2013 and 2014). The first wave of scholarly contributions started to emerge in 2015 and early 2016 with a greater thematic focus, attempting to draw the wider significance of the demonstrations and their place in contemporary Brazilian history. This contribution shall attempt the balancing act between the more engaged pieces from the time of the events - the author was a participant in the protests from the very beginning in São Paulo - and the wider vantage point that has characterized more recent analyses.

the rekindling of social struggle in Brazil. Furthermore, I argue June 2013 pointed to a radical critique of the Workers' Party's 'development model' – as implemented in the decade that preceded the protests – with a clear call for an array of social rights in the context of cities marked by growing segregation and shaped by private interests.

The Workers' Party in the 1980s: From a cauldron of 'new social movements' to runner-up in the 1989 presidential elections

The Workers' Party was formed through a convergence of different actors who opposed the Brazilian civil and military dictatorship that had been in power since 1964 (Secco 2012, 74-75). Two of these actors or groups were identified in the scholarship from the 1980s as 'new social movements', i.e., the new union movement which sought to break with the conciliatory and bureaucratized practices of trade unions of past decades and the 'ecclesial base communities'; a grassroots initiative of left-wing Catholics that united worship with community organizing and educational activities. However, scholars did not attribute their character as 'new social movements' to 'post-materialist' claims, as very basic citizenship rights and material needs were at stake. Instead, the novelty was believed to stem from their bottom-up strategies, including a focus on democratic practices and challenges to traditional structures and organizations (Scherer-Warren 1987, 41-44; Calderon, Piscitelli, and Reyna 1992, 21-22).¹⁶ A third element that helped to form the party, i.e., the young activists who had chosen armed resistance against the dictatorship and who suffered terrible repression at the hands of the dictatorial state, had also broken with so-called traditional left-wing organizations, such as the Brazilian Communist Party (Secco 2012, 72-73 and *passim*). This background meant they would also contribute to the party's discourse of rupture with past organizational practices and calls for a radical change in Brazilian society.

In social terms, the party's members were split among the urban working class, left-wing intellectuals, but also leading segments of the union movement in the service sector as well as members of assorted rural social movements (Secco 2012, 62f.). As the party emerged in the 1980s in a time of economic crisis and political change, but also of strong mobilization, the party's diverse membership found a common goal not only in the struggle against the dictatorship, but also in the objective of overcoming a more deeply rooted 'populist' legacy. A legacy which, in their eyes, meant that workers had never had their own genuine political representation – a foundational myth of sorts which overlooked other working-class

¹⁶ For a recent consideration of how Brazilian 'new unionism' represented a break with past practices, but not to the extent their initiators claimed, cf. Antunes and Santana 2014.

organizations that had preceded it – and had been robbed of their agency by governments claiming to vie for their interests, but that were in fact preserving those of the oligarchy (Weffort 1978, 61). In both cases, in order to defeat the dictatorship and overcome ‘populism’, centrality was given to democracy and democratic practices on all levels. This was a key factor in uniting the diversified components of the party around a short-term platform and coherent political identity most of its members could accept.

In less than a decade, however, the party went from a grassroots organization to a key actor in the institutional arena. By the late-1980s it was already a key participant in the constituent assembly in charge of writing a new constitution (concluded in 1988), the party was also in a strong position to win major posts in the municipal and state executives and even had credible chances to win the presidency in the 1989 elections.

The promise of electoral success led to the first reorientation of the party, symbolized by the ‘Popular-Democratic Program’ (PDP) of 1987¹⁷, which argued that the moment was not ripe for structural change and emphasized the need for the party to present itself as a real alternative for the people (Partido dos Trabalhadores 1998, 308). The PDP’s program of reforms included the reestablishment of civil liberties, the nationalization of key economic sectors, a break with the IMF, agrarian reform and, most significantly for the purposes of this paper, ‘urban reform, that shall guarantee the right to housing for all, also through the expropriation of idle land’, ‘state ownership of public transportation systems’ and ‘the creation of instruments to democratize municipal power’ (Partido dos Trabalhadores 1998, 310). In a way, the program already signaled a retreat from the principles of radical democracy that the PT was founded on (Iasi 2006), but especially with regards to the ‘urban question’, it could be said it was still in line with its roots.

The issue of mobility and the Workers’ Party administrations in the city of São Paulo

The issue of mobility played a central role in the party’s first term in office in the municipal administration of the city of São Paulo (1989-1992). There were, for instance, concrete plans to introduce transportation without charge to users and financed through progressive taxation over real-estate property¹⁸. Indeed, some bus lines in the city’s periphery provided services free

¹⁷ It had followed a major internal reorganization whose main consequence was the strengthening of central structures of the party and the organization of its different wings into tendencies, with the expulsion of some of the more outspoken Trotskyist groups, which had been accused of being ‘parties within the party’, thus breaching the limits of internal pluralism. For a study of the development of the Workers’ Party’s internal structures and finances, cf. the excellent work of Pedro F. Ribeiro (2010 and 2014).

¹⁸ For a concise but well-rounded summary of the issue of transportation in the Erundina administration, cf. Espíndola Ribeiro 2015, 12-21; for general overviews of this key early experience for the Workers’ Party, cf. Sader

of charge for a period. Nevertheless, due to a myriad of reasons including the opposition suffered by mayor Luiza Erundina within her own party, a hostile municipal assembly largely representing the elites and bus companies, the catastrophic state of the city's finances along with strong opposition by conservative media and the upper classes, there was little chance of getting the project off the ground (cf. Singer and Kowarick 1993; Fix, Ribeiro, and Prado 2015). Indeed, though it faced various challenges and crises, the fate of the Erundina administration was in many ways tied to that of the transportation question (Singer and Kowarick 1993, 209); she had been elected on a platform of radical change to the system in place proposing to bring it under state control, faced some of her greatest challenges in trying to implement it and – despite considerable achievements in the sector, like a change in the way bus companies were remunerated (cf. Couto and Abrucio 1993, 74; Espíndola Ribeiro 2015, 19-20) – saw it become the source of the administration's greatest frustrations. There were broader lessons as well. The first administration of the Workers' Party in São Paulo demonstrated how crucial the question of public transportation – or mobility as a whole – was to Brazil's metropolises. It revealed multiple contradictions in the institutional arrangement laid down by the recently-approved 1988 constitution (e.g., the disproportional relationship between cities' many responsibilities and their limited fiscal capacity) and how the democratizing potential of the institutional order it erected could be negated by a concerted effort of big media, local oligarchies and municipal legislatures to discredit and/or torpedo any measures that challenged their interests.

It would take a decade for the party to return to the executive of Brazil's largest city with the election of Marta Suplicy (2001-2004), who in her only term in office acted in a markedly more pragmatic and centrist manner than the Erundina government had (Couto 2003, 85-87). This was the 'new' PT, more conciliatory and social-democratic, in a preview of the moderate profile the party would take on in its federal administrations starting in 2003. Yet, Marta Suplicy did count as one of her major accomplishments the integration of the city's transport fare through a system where the user was free to take multiple connections within two hours of tapping in, benefiting especially those that lived in impoverished suburbs far removed from the center. Nevertheless, during the disastrous terms of the former dictatorship crony Paulo Maluf and his former finance secretary (1993-2000) that occurred between the two PT administrations (Couto 2003, 82-85), the bus system had been partially privatized and was now run by a collection of highly inefficient companies and illegal cooperatives with ties to

1992; Couto and Abrucio 1993; Singer and Kowarick 1993 and Singer 1996. The best account in English is Macaulay 1996. For a candid interview by Lucio Gregori, Erundina's former secretary of transportation, who first proposed the 'free fare', cf. Fix, Ribeiro, and Prado 2015.

organized crime, providing low quality service (especially in the periphery) that nevertheless required a high amount of subsidy from the municipal government in order to remain affordable (Espíndola Ribeiro 2015, 22-30). Since the integration of the municipal transport fare enacted by the Suplicy administration did not mean a break with the privatized service providers, successive hikes of the fare were introduced to limit the amount of subsidies paid by the city. This meant that from around the year 2000 onwards the bus fare consistently increased above inflation in two to three year intervals without any significant improvement in the service since the introduction of the two-hour fare¹⁹.

After three administrations of conservative governments (2005-2012) and a significant worsening of the issue of mobility in São Paulo for reasons that will be discussed below, the 2012 campaign brought the Workers' Party back to power in the country's largest city for a third time. This success was largely due to campaign promises tied to transportation from then candidate Fernando Haddad, especially the proposed introduction of a monthly fare allowing an unlimited number of rides, thus significantly reducing costs for users.

Within two weeks in office, however, the first measure with regards to transportation by the new mayor in early 2013 was *the announcement of yet another hike to the bus fare* – even if a moderate one – justified by the state of the municipality's ever-fragile finances²⁰. This came in the absence of the improvements to transportation promised in the campaign, leading to more unrest. Another element that would inadvertently contribute to the strength of the protests was the fact that the pending fare rise was announced early in the year but was not put into effect until the beginning of June since the federal government feared it would impact the inflation rate, which was already on the rise.²¹ This gave social movements time to organize and generate broad awareness of the upcoming hike. The stage was set for the Haddad administration's first challenge as the fare went up on 2 June.

¹⁹ Data gathered from the São Paulo municipal authority for transport. Accessed 10 May 2016. http://www.sptrans.com.br/a_sptrans/tarifas.aspx.

²⁰ "SP terá aumento da tarifa de ônibus até o mês de junho, diz Haddad". Accessed 10 May 2016. <http://g1.globo.com/sao-paulo/noticia/2013/01/sp-tera-aumento-de-tarifa-de-onibus-ate-o-mes-de-junho-diz-haddad.html>.

²¹ For Brazil's inflation data in 2013, and how it was on pace to reach the annual 'ceiling' of 6.5% by May 2013, cf. <http://www.inflation.eu/inflation-rates/brazil/historic-inflation/cpi-inflation-brazil-2013.aspx> Accessed 10 May 2016. The federal government had requested local and state governments to refrain from raising fare prices in the beginning of the year lest inflation data be negatively affected in the first trimester. This inadvertently created the basis for a national movement as many hikes took place at once all-around the country in June. Considering Brazil's continental dimensions and considerable regional diversity, this is a relevant factor in the spread of the demonstrations, though even where the fare had been raised beforehand – such as Curitiba (Torinelli 2014) – or raised and brought back down again by protests earlier in the year, most notably in the case of Porto Alegre (cf. Cunha 2013, 20-21), movements and a mass of protestors still took to the streets. The dire situation of transportation in a country whose population was now 90% urban had given the issue nation-wide relevance.

How it unfolded

What follows is the briefest of accounts of how the June protests unfolded in São Paulo. My focus will be on elements that have been mostly neglected on the available scholarly analysis of the events. This account will also contribute to my discussion of the relevance of class to understanding the protests.

a. The social movements and organizations involved

The organization that spearheaded the protests, the Free Fare Movement (Movimento Passe Livre, MPL) which was founded in the World Social Forum of 2005, had already been involved in protests against fare raises in previous years, but – just as in those cases – did not take the streets alone. In previous struggles, a wide range of social movements and small leftist parties had joined and would do so again in 2013; the MPL would work closely with the Union of Subway workers and with youth organizations tied to the parties PSOL (Party of Socialism and Freedom) and PSTU (Unified Socialist Workers' Party), both stemming from organizations that had broken away from the PT as it moved to the center at different points in its trajectory. The fact that a 'new social movement' such as the MPL was side-by-side with more traditional organizations from the left such as trade unions and political parties has not been recognized in most of the scholarship so far, though a recent study has made a strong case for their presence (Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2014)²². Further evidence of the one-sidedness of prevailing narratives is given by the fact that the MPL was not present in all major cities where the protests took place, and that the peculiar mix of movements and organizations as well as their trajectory until that point in each location, played a key role in how the demonstrations progressed and in what they eventually achieved. In the absence of thorough comparative studies, however, no far-reaching statements regarding the organizational aspect of the protests can be made at this point. What the overall data does suggest is that, whether in a 'new social movement' or as part of the 'old left', it was the youth who consistently played a major role. Moreover, protestors shared a particular social make-up, i.e., the fact that "the vast majority of these students are also urban wage-labourers, part of the new service-sector proletariat, who study and work or work and study" (Antunes 2013, 41).

²² As soon as the protests could no longer be ignored and social support grew, the media narrative of the protests focused on the MPL as the nonpartisan 'good protestor' and on the Black Blocks as the nonpartisan 'bad' protestor. The other actors present were mostly ignored, which has reflected strongly on scholarly accounts of the protests. For an account of how a key media outlet's coverage of the demonstrations changed over the course of June from rejection and criminalization to support (in the hopes of gaining influence), to rejection once more, cf. Carlos 2015, 75-89.

b. Social-media or grassroots organizing?

In another over-emphasized aspect of the demonstrations, the fact that social media was used to spread word of the protests has overshadowed the key grassroots work the MPL had been doing for years in the case of São Paulo, especially within schools of the periphery. This guaranteed the awareness of the MPL's ties to the cause of free public transportation and the struggles over hikes in the fare. Though arguing for horizontal, decentralized structures, the MPL successfully asserted its influence over the initial phase of protests. What also helped was their knack for the 'performative' aspect of the demonstrations, such as unfurling huge banners over bridges carrying slogans ('if the fare doesn't drop, the city will stop'), staging the burning of toll barriers and skillfully avoiding any other banner from overtaking the issue of repealing the latest raise.

c. Dynamics of the first phase of protests (6 - 13 June)

Gathering from 5,000 to 20,000 protesters, the four different demonstrations that took place over this period had a clear tactic: they took place on weekdays, at rush hour, at an important traffic junction of the city. Only a small nucleus from the participating organizations knew the route of the protest beforehand, but other than the aforementioned performative moments, where and how the demonstration would end or whether smaller protests would erupt in other places was left purposely open. (Martins and Cordeiro 2014, 201-218). Especially in the first few nights of protest this led to some confusion on the part of police forces and meant the protest would rally for several hours before being definitively broken up. The appetite for protesting – especially on the part of the youngest demonstrators present (the vast majority of protestors were under 35)²³ – even when facing brutal tactics by riot police, was a surprise even to organizers. As the protests grew, and under calls from conservative media to put a stop to the chaos in the city, riot police brutally repressed a peaceful 13 June protest, and in the process injured a number of journalists covering the action.

d. Dynamics of the second phase: the eruption (17-20 June)

The media was forced to recognize that repression had gone too far and that the right to protest had to be assured (Scherer-Warren 2014, 420). Public opinion, which was already largely sympathetic to the protests, now swung to their defense and brought millions to the streets for

²³ I discuss the available data on participants below.

the 17 June demonstrations, which had now spread to hundreds of cities. On this protest and the following one on 18 June, new social groups no doubt joined the demonstrations, but the level of coherence in what the crowd was calling for was higher than has been reported: The fare rise and rejection of police violence were still the central issues, followed by demands for better public services and criticism of the World Cup. Nevertheless, the first signs of conflict between protesters had begun, especially over the carrying of flags and banners of parties by some, and of the Brazilian flag and colors by others. Meanwhile, fearing yet another escalation of the protests, São Paulo authorities called off the fare raise of 2 June in a press conference on 19 June. In response, the protest set for the next day was to be a celebration. On 20 June, with the immediate objective reached and the ‘controlled lack-of-control’ tactics having reached their limits, calls against parties from within the protest – which happened to be in one of São Paulo’s wealthiest neighborhoods – and the emergence of far-right activists led to the expulsion of all leftist organizations and movements from the protests. The latter had decided to form a block for reasons of self-protection, but ended up becoming a bigger target for right-wingers. What was striking was that the calls against political parties that had been heard before, now led to a rejection of *all organizations* present, whether parties, social movements or even the MPL. On account of this, the latter decided not to call for any further demonstrations and the biggest protests in a generation came to an ambiguous and abrupt end.²⁴

The urban question and the contradictions of the Workers’ Party’s rise to power in 2003

In order to understand how a protest over a matter of mobility was not a mere trigger, but a key reason for the nation-wide occurrence and massive proportions of the protests that took place one must look closer at the PT’s transformation in the two decades that had elapsed from when Luiza Erundina left office in 1992 and Fernando Haddad became mayor of São Paulo in 2013. The 1990s had solidified the notion that the party’s task was to represent working people’s interests within institutional politics and representative assemblies while, as part of the same effort, social movements would continue pressuring for change within civil society. This took place under extremely unfavorable circumstances as the country went through a relatively late – but no less damaging – arrival of neoliberal policies, mainly under the federal administrations of center-right president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-1998 and 1999-2002)²⁵. The main allies of the PT against these policies were the new union movement organized under the

²⁴ As mentioned before, the cities hosting the Confederate Cup games saw protests before and during every game until the end of the month.

²⁵ For a perceptive account of the Cardoso years, cf. Anderson 2016.

umbrella Central Única dos Trabalhadores_‘Unified Worker’s Central’ (CUT) and the Landless Worker’s Movement (MST) which had also arisen during the eighties. Land reform would remain a key element of the program of the PT until the late 1990s, not least because the three decades of conservative modernization of the country’s large landed estates meant the ‘agrarian question’ had become even graver in the turn of the century (Nakatani, Faleiros, and Vargas 2012). This phase of modernization also saw large landowners engaging in increasingly organized political activities and given ever-greater importance by the federal government due to the fact that exports of agrarian commodities had become a major source of foreign currency and thus a key factor in the country’s balance of payments in the crisis-ridden 1990s. The consequence was the failure of land reform, which, in turn, put enormous pressure on cities²⁶, which went almost three decades with little or no investment on public transportation before the late-2000s (Maricato 2014, 24-25), despite rising urban social movements and a large community of progressive urban planners fighting for urban reform since the end of the dictatorship (Maricato 2014, 16f.).

As a considerably more moderate PT came to power in 2003, it had abandoned plans for wide-scale agrarian reform together with all the remaining ‘structural reforms’ it once stood for. In fact, its first few years in power were marked by austerity measures²⁷ meant to assure markets of the party’s fiscal responsibility and commitment to political moderation (Coggiola 2004). Around 2005-6 a series of shifts within the party, spurred by the first large-scale corruption scandal to hit the PT federal administration²⁸, in addition to an improved external climate for commodity exporters, lead to a ‘neo-developmental’ turn in economic policy whose positive impacts in terms of income levels, reduction of poverty and employment have correctly been pointed out (Leubolt 2015), but whose adverse effects received much less attention by analysts. As an expert on the urban question in Brazil has pointed out, a look at the chaotic state of Brazil’s cities allows one to see through the ‘rosy picture’ of the PT’s most successful years in office (Arantes 2014). Some of the federal government’s central stimulus policies during that time, i.e., tax subventions and lax credit requirements for the purchase of

²⁶ In 1980 Brazil was 67,6% urban; the southeastern region, where its largest cities are located, was however 83% urban (Santos 2008, 64, fn. 1). The country as a whole would reach this degree of urbanization only in the 2000s. It’s worth noting that at around 90% urban by 2011, Brazil leaves developed countries such as Germany (73.9 %), the UK (79.6%) and the USA (82.4%) significantly behind, despite still being associated with its natural resources and primary exports (Source: UN World Urbanization prospects available at <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Country-Profiles/>).

²⁷ These were only partially offset by a limited number of social policy initiatives, but the goal of reaching a primary surplus *higher* than the IMF prescribed greatly limited the redistributive measures that could be put in place. For more details about the first years of Workers’ Party government, cf. Strazzeri 2016.

²⁸ For a fact-rich account of corruption scandals that have hit Brazil since the return to democracy in the late-1980s up to 2010, cf. Green 2012, 41-70, (esp. 54-58 for the first major scandal under the PT administration).

automobiles and motorcycles,²⁹ alongside a construction boom financed by public banks, but conducted entirely according to the interests of private real-estate developers, are prototypical of the mode of capital accumulation or ‘development model’ implemented by the Workers’ Party until 2014. It consisted in debt-driven consumption that generated jobs and improved access to consumer goods and housing, but did not include any significant offsetting measures of urban reform, social infrastructure or environmental policy (Maricato 2014). One analyst called the reshaping of Brazil’s cities during the Workers’ Party federal administrations a veritable urban ‘anti-reform’ (Arantes 2014), as private developers were given free rein in terms of regulation and received massive subsidies. In fact, despite the positive effects of the PT’s economic policy on income distribution in absolute and regional terms, the 2000s saw cities either maintain or accelerate processes of social segregation. The city of São Paulo, which was under a right-wing mayor with close ties to the real-estate sector (Gilberto Kassab, 2006-2012), was a particularly extreme case.

The combined impact of these policies and the lack of agrarian reform measures meant Brazilian cities epitomized the contradictions of the Workers’ Party ‘post-neoliberal’ administrations (Maricato 2011), especially after 2006. Higher wages, more jobs and greater access to higher education were as much part of this landscape as gentrification, privatized social services and the loss of public spaces.³⁰

The case of the Ministry for Urban Affairs was prototypical of the contradictory dynamics of democratic advances and concessions to vested interests (with a predominance of the latter) that have characterized the Workers’ Party federal administrations since Lula’s election in 2002. The Ministry was formed in 2003 to tackle urban reform through the coordination of the multiple governmental agencies at municipal, state and federal levels that somehow impact urban policies, and had a strong component of civil society participation. It was the first of its kind in Latin America and counted many progressive urban planners in its initial make-up (Maricato 2014, 22). But the step forward it represented was soon downgraded

²⁹ The number of automobiles on Brazil’s streets went from 24.5 million in 2001 to 50.2 million in 2012 - a growth of 104.5% - while the population grew a mere 11.8% between 2000 and 2010. The sales of 2012 alone - when the incentives for purchase were at their highest - were responsible for 14.6% of this growth. The number of motorcycles, in turn, more than quadrupled from 2001 to 2012 going from 4.5 million to 19.9 million (Observatório das Metrôpoles 2013, 4). As public transportation tends to be of an even lower quality in small and medium sized cities, this jump in the number of automobiles was also felt outside of metropolitan areas (Observatório das Metrôpoles 2013, 12ff.), bringing with them problems typical of the latter (traffic, air pollution, road-related fatalities).

³⁰ Not to mention the profoundly detrimental consequences of mega-events such as the World Cup in 2014 and Summer Olympics of 2016 in Rio, both were very contested and generated enormous expense without notable improvements to urban infrastructure. For a discussion of their impact in Brazil’s cities, cf. Jennings, Rolnik, Lassance et al. 2014.

as Olivio Dutra, a highly-respected member of the Workers' Party and the first to occupy the post of Minister for Urban Affairs, was replaced by successive representatives of a right-wing party with roots in the dictatorship, keen to gain access to the patronage possibilities the Ministry afforded (Tonella 2013). Until recently, it was headed by the former-mayor of São Paulo, Gilberto Kassab whose ruinous record on urban policy (Rolnik and Klintowitz 2011) was a key factor in fostering the chaotic urban conditions that the June protests radically challenged.

The dire situation of Brazilian cities was thus a result of consciously chosen policies on the part of the Workers' Party centered on individual transportation and private sector-led real estate development. As Luiza Erundina's former secretary of transportation, Lucio Gregori, recalled in a recent interview:

Even Lula, when asked about the free fare [*Tarifa Zero*], said something like: 'No, I don't think the worker needs free buses; the worker needs to earn enough to afford quality transportation'. [...] This statement sums it all up: they have to earn enough to afford an automobile. At bottom, that is what's behind it all: consumption. (Fix, Ribeiro, and Prado. 2015: 183)

Mobility: A central issue or just one item in an endless list of grievances?

The hike in the public transportation fare announced in 2013 provided a clear target for the expression of revolt over decades of urban mismanagement across the country. As Ermínia Maricato has pointed out, "no one who follows the realities of Brazilian cities was surprised with the demonstrations that rocked the country in mid-June 2013". Indeed, she believed "the major objective as well as subjective roots of the protests cannot be dissociated from the situation of the cities" (Maricato 2013, 25). Yet, many attempts at explaining the protests attributed only a secondary importance to the issue of the rise in the transport fare itself and the urban question more broadly. It was argued, for instance, that if these were central issues it was only during the first phase of the protests. According to this view, after demonstrations took on mass proportions the demand for free public transportation was overtaken by "a profusion of slogans and demands" (Singer 2014, 21). Furthermore, they did not seem to touch on truly fundamental issues as a prominent analyst has argued:

Class and property were not at the heart of the demonstrations, and the basic framework of the country's socio-economic order was not called into question. The political rules of the game, too, were only targeted in a diffuse way. (Singer 2014, 19 - my emphasis)

Here is where the previous considerations on the urban question and the Workers' Party policies in this area lead me to different conclusions. In order to effect changes to the issue of mobility in Brazil's metropolitan centers and mid-sized cities, one must indeed meddle with matters of a structural nature. The automotive industry plays a central role in the country's manufacturing basis and is almost entirely controlled by transnational companies; a drop in the sales of automotive vehicles as a consequence of better public transport and a shift away from transportation of goods by road would no doubt impact this sector with enormous economic and political consequences³¹. Regarding the issue of how public transportation is organized in the vast majority of Brazilian cities, i.e., through concessions to private providers that deliver low-quality and expensive services, a change would not only demand putting transportation under municipal control again – a challenge in itself considering the powerful groups that profit from the public-private model –, it would demand facing the insufficient tax revenues at the local level in Brazil and the regressive tax structure in general, not to mention the indebtedness of most cities to the federal government, a debt being serviced under very unfavorable and ultimately unsustainable terms.³²

These are some of the reasons that explain why the renegotiation of the contracts of transportation service providers in the city of São Paulo, pending since mid-2013, has yet to take place, despite the once-in-a-generation wave of support the protests brought for a fundamental change to the mobility model in the city.

³¹ According to data from the Ministry for Development, the automotive industry represents around 23% of the industrial GDP and 5% of the overall GDP in Brazil. Its impact in employment (direct and indirect) is in the order of 1,5 million people (source: www.desenvolvimento.gov.br). The recent worsening of the economic crisis in Brazil offers an example of how lower sales in the automotive industry have a significant impact in employment; in 2015, production in the sector fell by 22.8% leading the number of those directly employed in the industry to go from 144,508 in December 2014 to 129,776 just one year later (source: Fenabrave - www.fenabrave.org.br/ - and Anfavea - www.anfavea.com.br).

³² According to Maria Lucia Fattorelli, “in 2000 the city of São Paulo refinanced an R\$11 billion debt. In 2013, this debt reached R\$58 billion, despite the city having paid R\$28 billion to the central government in the period” (<http://www.auditoriacidada.org.br/o-impasse-da-divida-de-estados-e-municipios/>. Accessed 10 May 2016). Indeed, Fernando Haddad had promised he would renegotiate the unsustainable terms of the city debt with the federal government - profiting from the fact both were PT administrations – during the campaign only to see those intentions be denied by the federal government in early 2013. Only in mid-2015 did Haddad manage to renegotiate the debt with the federal government as cities and states debt servicing terms with the federal government were made slightly less onerous. This has meant that while debt payments are still in the billions yearly, impairing major investments for the foreseeable future, the debt appears to no longer be on an explosive trajectory. (source: transparency portal of the city of São Paulo: <http://transparencia.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/contas/Paginas/DividaPublica.aspx>. Accessed 10 May 2016).

Quality public transportation, free of charge, was the central goal of the protests of June 2013. If other demands arose eventually, they were mostly connected to demands for social and citizenship rights. Bringing them to reality would demand a fundamental change to local political structures and to the country's 'development model'. This speaks to the wide horizon of protestors' demands and points to a long period of struggle. An examination of the class aspects of the protests and their organizations can perhaps further illuminate the potential of the rebellious June 2013 for bearing any fruit in terms of social and political advances in the future.

Class and urban segregation: Overlapping mediations of a rebellious June

The first decade of Workers' Party rule in Brazil has brought important redistributive measures, a reduction of inequality and greater access to higher education (Singer 2012; Leubolt 2015)³³. Nevertheless, June 2013 becomes very hard to explain if only these aspects of the Workers' Party period in power are highlighted. The protests did, after all, take place *before* the economic slowdown had turned to a full-on crisis; moreover, demonstrators had a set of demands that pointed much further to the left than the party had dared to go since 2003.

Who were these demonstrators and what do they tell us about future perspectives for progressive politics in Brazil? I will conclude this paper with a set of still tentative hypotheses regarding the class character of the protests and how they overlap with the urban question discussed above with the aim of furthering debate. The first key element the data reveals is that the June 2013 comprised

a movement based predominantly on young people, complemented by a significant number of young adults—roughly, those aged between 26 and 39—and a smaller number of middle-aged and older adults. Taken together, the two main age groups [i.e., 12-25 and 26-35 years of age - V.S.] comprised approximately 80 per cent of those on the streets (Singer 2014, 26).

The first phase of the protests united broad swaths of São Paulo's youth, with two key class profiles: high-school and university students of a working-class background, likely working in

³³ The ongoing economic downturn casts a shadow over further improvement in these respects and suggests a reversal is not unlikely. One important indicator, the number of domestic workers – Brazil has the highest number in the world -, which had been in steady decline from around 2008 to 2013, began to rise again in 2015 as no other options of employment were available for working-class women. The degree of formalization of domestic work has also followed this pattern, improving until 2014 only for informal work to also see an uptick in 2015. (Source: IBGE Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego - Feb. 2016)

low-paying jobs in the service sector (call-centers, sales, outsourcing [cf. Antunes and Braga, eds. 2009]) and middle-class students and/or young professionals engaged also in the service sector, but on higher-earning jobs (teachers, journalists, clerks etc.). Subway workers were an additional sector that was present and, as public servants, were the least precarious of those involved. The available data on a protest in Rio seems to echo these assumptions³⁴.

It seems the core of the protests was thus formed by a downwardly-mobile or stagnant middle-class under growing threat of proletarianization – as the aforementioned professions no longer guaranteed the same level of status and income as before – and of a large contingent of working youth that has no doubt exceeded the level of education and perhaps of income if compared to their parents, but who nevertheless have little access to public space and quality public service provision, and whose ascent seems to fairly quickly hit a ceiling rooted in Brazil's still immense inequalities in terms of wealth, land ownership and income³⁵.

The stagnant middle-class was no doubt in the minority, and many of those faced with downward mobility or loss of prestige have taken a turn to the right. However, this is not always the case, as evident from the fact that this social segment was represented in the MPL and political parties who played a key role in the June 2013 events, though membership was far from strictly middle-class.

The truly key element is what I call *the vanguard of the periphery*: the young students and service sector workers that took part in the protests and became politicized through culture and/or activism in social movements, and whose rebelliousness and appetite for political protest signaled that waiting a whole generation for Brazil's levels of inequality to improve enough to reach the stage of pre-crisis Spain – the benchmark used by Singer (2015, 7) - will not do, even if that were possible.

What we now know is that 2013 would also be a record year in terms of strikes, which not only points to the beginning of the economic slowdown, but to the growing rebelliousness

³⁴ According to one survey made in Rio regarding the demonstration of 20 June, 'the majority of protestors was employed (70.4%), and had an income of up to one minimum wage (34.3%). If we add those who earned two to three minimum wages (30.3%) we can conclude that more than 64% of the million people that took to the streets in Rio were part of the precarious urban proletariat. If at first the student youth was predominant, it had since become mixed with the middle-strata of urban wage-laborers and had reached deep into the peripheries, in protests and demands that directly affect the working classes'. (Antunes and Braga 2014, 44)

³⁵ There have been many attempts recently to characterize those sectors of Brazil's lower social strata that have risen from poverty since 2004 and that together with the lower strata of the middle class now make up the majority of the Brazilian population. They have been called a 'new middle class' (Pochmann 2012, 11 - who is critical of the notion and shows its ideological basis), the 'subproletariat' (Singer 2012), the precariat (Braga 2012 - though the author points to its specific traits in the Global South, where he places it as a segment of the working class) or finally the working class in a broader sense, as a result of changes to the organization of capitalist production conforming 'labour's new morphology' (Antunes 2014)

of workers, including in sectors with a traditionally lower strike-rate, such as the private service sector (DIEESE 2015). This wave of strikes took place in parallel to the eruption on the streets and though there is still not much overlap, the potential is there for the convergence of social movements and the ‘traditional’ left (cf. Braga and Santana 2015) as the working youth of the cities is the main social bearer of struggles in both instances.

Indeed, at the center of the class experiences mentioned in this section is the conflicting social fabric of the city. Its segregated nature is responsible both for the socializing of privileged youth brought up in gated communities and whose conservatism appeared in the violence towards movements and organizations in the last days of the protest, and for the rejection of this way of life by a small but significant segment within these middle and upper-strata, especially their younger representatives. On the other hand, the everyday reaffirmation of class roles embodied in contrasts in the access to mobility, leisure and public spaces as well as quality social services, means gradual improvements in income and consumption – should they return – will very likely not be enough to satisfy the youth of the periphery that took to the streets in June 2013.

As late as 2012, the new Brazilian working-class was thought to be ‘apolitical and individualist’ (Pochmann 2012, 10). While that premise was utterly dismantled by June 2013, some analysts believed the protests jumped straight to ‘post-materialist’ demands and were therefore in line with what is expected of social movements in countries with a higher level of development (Singer 2014, 34-35). I have tried to argue that the main political and social demands of a large segment of those that took to the streets in 2013, despite their young age, is of an older vintage: social rights, direct democracy and the right to the city. As R. Braga and M.A. Santana have remarked in a recent essay: “In truth, one of the main lessons of the protests of June 2013 is that self-mobilization in the name of citizenship rights continues to define the horizon of political intervention of the country’s precarious working youth” (Braga and Santana 2015, 537).

I would like to conclude with a question: Can one speak of a delayed transition to ‘post-materialist’ politics or is the rebellious Brazilian youth not actually well-positioned for a post-2008 world that has ‘brought class back’ to Western developed countries, but just reaffirmed its continued relevance in contexts where it never ceased to be central?

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4. Reading contemporary developments in Turkey from the class-relevant aspects of Islamists: A concise commentary on the coup d'état attempt

Ismail Doga Karatepe

Abstract

This paper explores the class aspects of Islamist politics in Turkey in a historical context and evaluates recent developments, such as the coup d'état attempt in July 2016. It claims that Islamist politics, National Order and its offshoots, as well as the Gülen movement have never been part of a struggle against the established order. If the vogueish term *establishment* pertains to the influential and powerful actors in the political and economic realm, I argue that the Islamists always belonged to the Turkish establishment. They have always aimed to confine politics to a small circuit by excluding the popular classes. This, most probably, brings about the political moments of coups and counter coups.

Keywords: Islamist, cultural political economy of Turkey, establishment

Introduction or tanks reloaded

When the tanks were rolling down the streets of Ankara and Istanbul in July 2016, those who had dreamt that the era of coup d'état was over may have felt somewhat poignant. Yet, the coup attempt failed; Turkey's government under President Erdogan reasserted control rather rapidly, leaving 265 dead. The coup should be seen as a part of the struggle between two fractions of Islamists, who, over the years, have together dislodged the secular forces and thus almost fully controlled the state apparatus. These two Islamist fractions are the Erdogan-led Justice and Development Party (hereafter by its Turkish initials, AKP), which has gained and maintained popular support, and the Gülen community (*cemaat*, Sufi order or its branch) which has deep roots in the judiciary, military and police forces. The Gülen and Erdogan alliance ended long ago, and this split became visible with the corruption probe into Erdogan's close circle led by – the Gülen movement backed – police and judiciary forces. The corruption investigation became public on the 17th of December 2013, with a wave of incarcerations, and targeted largely bureaucrats and businessmen close to the AKP.

The latest Gülen movement-led military coup reveals the evident failure of the theoretical accounts based on the myth of the strong state tradition in Turkey, which became almost common sense in the academic as well as public discourse, and has been utilized by the

Islamist politics thus far. These accounts treated Islamists, especially the Gülen movement as a safety belt against the military. Theoretically, these accounts have a strong emphasis on what is absent in Turkey by utilizing a set of western perspectives in order to stress why Turkey did not develop in the same way that Europe did (Dinler 2003). The strong state is ascribed with Kemalist values and the power of the secular civil and military bureaucracy, which has allegedly kept civil society and the market under its tutelage. The military takeovers (e.g., in 1960 and 1980) are, likewise, associated with the power of the secular civil and military bureaucracy.

These accounts adopted a narrative which underlines that the Kemalist-led state has hitherto kept the bourgeoisie under tutelage and consequently Turkey has not caught up with the developed states. Thus, to further development, the market should be left alone and, equally importantly, the political parties should have more room vis-à-vis the secular establishment. This narrative became more pronounced and prevalent in the post-1980 neoliberal reconstruction. Indeed, this argument, which introduced the market as an institution kept under the tutelage of the state, has been one of the claims of the politics of state restructuring according to neoliberal principles.

The Islamists – both the Gülen movement and the succeeding Islamist parties³⁶ – have depicted themselves as political actors fighting against the secular state tutelage but holding on to liberal values in the post-1980 period. Such a depiction seamlessly fitted the dominant narrative and led them to build up broad alliances. Moreover, they have portrayed themselves as the voice of the majority against the tutelage of the secular civil and military bureaucracy. As such, the power of the Islamists should, following this argument, represent the normalization of democracy (İnsel 2003).

The AKP came to power in the November 2002 elections and has remained in power since then. In 2015, the party also won the June 7 and November 1 parliamentary elections, sweeping victory with 40.8 and 49.5 percent of the total votes, respectively. Many argue that the more than 14 years of AKP government rule, backed by the Gülen movement, has led to the retreat of the Kemalist Turkish military from politics. Hence, the coup of 15 July 2016, led by the Gülen movement was somewhat ironic for those who have upheld and reproduced the idea

³⁶ The history of the Islamists can be traced back to the late Ottoman time. However, as a political party, it first emerged in the early 1970s. Respectively, the National Order Party (MNP) and the National Salvation Party (MSP) in the 1970s, the Welfare Party (RP) in the 1980s and 1990s, and the AKP in the 2000s were the most influential Islamist parties.

that the Islamists would bring about democratization and put an end to secular tutelage and, concomitantly, the era of military interventions.

The illusion of categorizing the Islamists as a democratic force, partially arises from the assumption that the Islamists are a social movement that emerged against the establishment. Yet, if the term establishment pertains to the influential and powerful actors in the political and economic realm, I argue, that the Islamists have always belonged to Turkey's establishment. Islamist politics did not emerge from the popular classes³⁷ against the establishment as it was once (and even is still somehow being) portrayed. Such an argument requires a historical analysis. To this end, this concise paper aims to trace the development of Islamist politics by considering its class-relevant aspects. But before commencing with a historical analysis, a brief definition of what the term Islamist actually means is necessary. In order not to ignore the party's large electoral base, I also briefly discuss what binds the party with the popular classes.

Islamists: What is in this concept?

I do not use the term Islamist (or interchangeably Islamic) in an essentialist way, as this approach tends to reduce it to a set of cultural, political, and economic codes that are not prone to change. The essentialist view treats Islam as a static doctrine, rested upon the sacred texts (Quran and Hadith), which oversees and governs the private and public domains of life. Thus, Islam is regarded as antagonistic with western values such as democracy or human rights (Bayat 2007a). One can identify the two most important, yet at first glance incompatible, sources of such an essentialist understanding. First, it is actually how the *West* envisages the Islamists. This imaginary is largely molded by Orientalism, which is a “system of representation”, according to Edward Said, “dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient” (Said 2003, 202–3). Second, it is, ironically, the Islamic movements that try to universalize their particular interpretations of the sacred texts. These movements – varying from the western friendly ones to the self-proclaimed Islamic States – all make a claim to the one true Islam for their political ends. However, true Islam, as Asef Bayat persuasively discusses, is “matters of struggle” and of “competing” construals (Bayat 2007a, 8). This argument obviously suggests that Islamist as an adjective should not be translated as over-religious or fundamental. Nor can all Islamist movements be associated with radical groups such as Al-Qaeda. Notwithstanding this diversity, Islamist movements, however, pursue

³⁷ I am employing this concept in a broad sense as, arguably, done by state theorist Nicos Poulantzas. This concept is used here to indicate different groups of people who neither belong to the ruling classes nor hold important positions in the state apparatus (Poulantzas and Martin 2008, 193).

strategies and tactics in order to establish certain cultural codes according to how they construe the religion.

Hence, I employ the concept Islamist (or Islamic) to designate those political figures, political and economic groups, parties, their supporters and other types of organizations, who articulate, construe, as well as re-construct religious values within Islam and its vocabulary as a means of politics in order to establish a more religious society and state (Bayat 2007b, 581; Adaş 2003, 25). It does not refer to a homogenous group, party etc., but by all means pertains to a cultural political economic claim rested on ‘true Islam’. In the case of Turkey, until the AKP came to the power there had been several claims to Islamic ‘truth’. Most of these movements have been, however, over time articulated to the AKP’s political line and its claim to Islam (Tuğal 2009). Several conservative/Islamist figures, movements, and parties joined the ranks of the AKP. Nonetheless, competing alternative Islamic construals (e.g., Islamic socialism) still exist.

Some observers label the AKP as a post-Islamist party as they believe that the party, because of global and domestic dynamics, has been compelled to transform itself to be more moderate (cf. Dağı 2013). Therefore, the Islamist AKP is no longer as radical as it once was in the 1990s (Bayat 2013). However, such a transformation in the political course appeared to stem from rather a strategy premeditatedly pursued by the leading section of Islamists in order to dislodge the secular establishment and to foster the islamization of the society. The most recent visible authoritarian developments, especially since the June uprising of 2013, and the AKP’s persistent enforcement of Islamic moral codes with the help of state power, by no means signifies a drastic departure from, and radical critique of, Islamism or a shift to post-Islamism.

The development of Islamist politics within the establishment in Turkey

Perhaps Necmettin Erbakan (1926-2011) was the most influential actor until the dawn of a new millennium. For the Islamists, he still symbolizes a respected figure – Erdogan himself named his third son Necmettin, allegedly, after him – even though Erdogan and his team successfully rebelled against his leadership. Necmettin Erbakan rapidly ascended the political ladder in the 1960s – but not as a subaltern. In 1967 he was appointed the general secretary of The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB)³⁸. Two years later, he defeated the

³⁸ The TOBB is an umbrella organization of different sections of the bourgeoisie, consisting of local chambers of commerce, industry and commodity exchanges. It was founded in the year 1950 and is the largest organization in terms of the number of firms represented. It has a semi-legal status in a way that the organization has a chair in several official bodies.

candidate who had been heavily supported by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel in the presidential elections of the TOBB, with the help of votes cast by the delegates from Anatolia. This event “constituted an important deviation from traditional patterns in which the government’s candidate would invariably be the winner” (Buğra and Savaşkan 2014, 44). This deviation also represented the divorce of Islamist cadres from the conservative right-wing Adalet Partisi (Justice Party) (AP) who were in power at the time. Necmettin Erbakan became an independent MP for the Konya province, an area that has historically been (and indeed still is) regarded as the stronghold of the Islamists.

Under the leadership of Erbakan, the first Islamist party, the National Order Party was officially founded in January 1970. This party was banned following the military coup of 1971; the coup was an outcome of the political and economic crisis of the 1970s. Borrowing the Gramscian term, the armor of coercion of the 1970s, on the one hand, targeted the leftist opposition, who had been heavily inspired by the Latin American guerrilla movement. On the other, the hegemonic project of the 1970s also attempted to restore the planned development model. However, the damage was not so severe for the Islamist parties: The National Salvation Party (MSP) once again under the leadership of Erbakan surfaced as an heir of the National Order Party in 1972. These parties adopted the *National Outlook* as its party programme – a manifesto penned and published by Erbakan himself. The party organized itself rapidly as a representative of tradesmen, contractors and small producers. The significant religious communities in Turkey such as the *Nakşibendis* played an important organizing role, “through throwing their organizational weight behind” the new party (Sakallıoğlu 1996, 241). Consequently, the MSP grew rapidly and was granted 48 seats in the national assembly in the 1973 election by gaining more than 11% of the total votes. Despite its slightly decreased votes in the subsequent election of 1977, the party took part in different coalition governments as a minor partner throughout the 1970s.

The MSP discourse of accusing the other political parties of not supporting the alleged ‘domestic entrepreneurs’ (referring to the firms across Anatolia) and of being friendly to the ‘western world’ perfectly matched to the Islamic rhetoric in the 1970s (cf. Ahmad 1993, 143). Economic policies that favored the Istanbul bourgeoisie or had an explicit pro-western orientation were perceived as the vestiges of a Kemalist project, which had intended to constitute a secular culture as an alternative to an Islamist one. These arguments, however, should not be taken as a claim that the Islamists offered an alternative model. Neither Erbakan nor successive parties following the National Outlook agenda were ever against any sort of capitalist domination, i.e., unequal class relations (Savran 2013, 131). The Islamist parties were

never a challenge to the existing accumulation regime, as they were never against the idea of developmentalism, which was the dominant paradigm particularly in the post-war period; nor were their constituencies (Gülalp 1999, 27).

It was the neoliberal economic reconstruction during the post-1980 period that paved the way for the entrenchment of the Islamist establishment. A large number of businessmen, closely linked to Islamist politics, found a fertile ground for rapid capital accumulation in the post-1980 period. Above all, it was related to the conjuncture that favored the internationalization of capital and subcontracting activities. Furthermore, a labor-capital accord has been seamlessly established, especially in those firms linked to Islamic circles. The Islamist discourse played an important role in reconciling the interests of the working class and conservative businessmen. The entrance of Islamic communities (or sects) into business activities assisted this reconciliation process. This period was also marked by an extremely liberal economic environment most notably in the financial sphere. The last two points require further elaboration as they shed light on the class-relevant aspect of Islamist politics.

Concerning the liberal economic environment in the financial sphere, it should be noted that Islamic banks have played an important role in the capital accumulation of the Islamic firms in question (Hoşgör 2011, 345). The so-called interest-free banks (IFBs) emerged in Turkey's financial system in the post-1980 period. The IFBs have claimed to operate in accordance with the principles of Islamic law (Shari'ah). The interest-based return was believed as a form of usury in the Islamist cliques; therefore, conventional banking was declared incompatible with Islamic law. IFBs have presented themselves as participation banks and allegedly offered religiously sensitive financial products such as participation accounts or current accounts. These banks started to operate in Turkey after a series of legal arrangements were worked out between the years 1983 and 1986. The aim behind the establishment of IFBs was to attract Arab petrodollars, most notably Saudi capital and those pious domestic savers who had not joined in the conventional banking operations because of their religious sensibilities. Influential figures from Islamist politics played a crucial role in the establishment of these banks³⁹. The IFBs attracted

³⁹ Arguably, four important actors are practically and theoretically behind this establishment. The first political figure is Kenan Evren, the putschist 7th president of Turkey, who also served as the term president of the Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation, a body of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (in those days it was called Organisation of the Islamic Conference). The others are, one could call the Özal Brothers, namely Turgut Özal and his brothers Korkut Özal and Bozkurt Özal. The latter worked as an executive director for the Islamic Development Bank, who has led to foster the interest free banks across the Muslim world. He subsequently was elected as a MP from the Motherland Party (hereafter by its Turkish initials, ANAP) in 1987. Korkut Özal put a lot of effort towards channeling Saudi capital to Turkey, after his brilliant political career in the MSP ended with the military coup of 1980. With the help of the Topbas family, Korkut Özal launched the Al-Baraka Turk, which was founded in the year 1985 as one of the first interest free banks in Turkey along with Faisal Finance. Albaraka Turk as well as Faisal Finance were formed by Saudi nationals, respectively by Sheikh Saleh Kamel and Prince

money, which had not been directed to the financial system, i.e., the small savings of those who avoided throwing their money into the financial system not only because it is forbidden by Shari'ah, but also because the conventional banking structure did not seem safe due to a series of crashes and scandals in the beginning of the 1980s. As one observer put it, in “1985, Al Baraka attracted over 3000 accounts, while the Faisal institution had over 5000 clients after nine months of operation” (Wilson 1994, 143).

Concerning the fourth point, *cemaats* and other similar religious networks have played an important role in establishing and enhancing the mutual trust relation (Adaş 2009, 630; Demir, Acar, and Toprak 2004, 169; Hoşgör 2011, 344). These networks have been throwing their weight behind, especially, the initial establishment of firms. In the cases of the two most cited Islamic holdings, Kombassan and Yimpas, for instance, the necessary capital for the initial investment was gathered from geographically dispersed small investors through utilizing kinship and friendship networks provided by the sects (Adaş 2009, 629). It should be noted that Islamic communities had initially started collecting money in order to build mosques, Quran courses, schools etc. (Demir, Acar, and Toprak 2004, 170). However, such money collected from the pious followers of the sects was thrown into circulation to beget more money, and thus became capital.

All these arguments can be taken to imply that the Islamist business elites, to put it in a fashionable term, emerged from the networks of Islamist linkages. These linkages served as a sort of a business network that has been conducive to enhancing the lucrative businesses for these elites in question (Dönmez 2015, 88). What lay behind the strength of the linkages has been the mutual trust backed by religious values, codes and the political companionships. Those linkages were present in the pre-1980 period as well. However, the religious-based mutual trust became more salient in the environment where the formal codes and controls swiftly eroded in the post-1980 neoliberal period.

Concerning these linkages, it should be also stressed that these Islamic business elites were, and remain, heavily involved in patronage relations. The patronage relations became more vivid in the course of the 1990s and 2000s when Islamist actors started to capture important institutional positions. It is noteworthy that patronage relations are not unique to the

Mohammad Al-Faisal. Eymen Topbas and Korkut Özal were among the domestic shareholders of Al- Baraka Turks. Ahmet Tefvik Aksu and Salih Ozcan, two ex-parliamentarians from the right wing conservative parties (AP and the MSP), were the Turkish shareholders of the Faisal Finance along with Cemal Kulahli who was also an MP from AP, and would be an MP again, however, this time for the RP in the 1990s (Başkan 2004, 224). Others followed these two interest free banks, e.g., Kuveyt Turk was established in 1989.

Islamist bourgeoisie in question or Islamist politics in general. However, the involvement of the Islamist bourgeoisie in patronage relations went further than a “take there, give here” principle – a principle, which delivers mutual benefits for the participants of actions. Because, in this case, the religious and political objectives e.g., expanding the influence of Islamist politics, played an important role in binding political and economic relations. Moreover, the fuzzy borders between the business and political realm within the Islamist groups have been conducive to enhancing patronage relations. The businessmen within the circuit of the Islamist movement have engaged heavily in politics and conversely, the well-known Islamist political actors have had strong economic links (Gürakar 2016). Erol Yarar, Ali Bayramoglu, Nimet Cubukcu etc. can be listed as examples among others.

The popular classes and Islamists

In terms of increasing their popular support, the turning-point for Islamist politics was the coup d'état on the 12th September of 1980. The military opened a window of opportunity for the Islamists. The most oppressive and brutal military coup in Turkish history sought to root out the leftist organizations from the popular classes. As one observer plainly discussed it, “[t]he key element in the strategy of the military was to weaken the political power of the left, which they regarded as the major source of potential conflict and disorder in the post-1980 context” (Öniş 1997, 750). The tanks rolled through creating a political void especially in the squatter settlements, which was later filled by Islamist politics. The Islamist establishment thus finally found their submissive supporters within the urban poor: A group that has always been treated as potential Islamist voters due to their religious/conservative identity. Indeed, religious symbolism enabled the Islamists to build a cross-class coalition. However, the coalition was sealed through patronage relations: Clients in the patronage relations have sought out certain gifts and, in exchange, have been loyal to the party, mustering political support within the popular classes. In the recent period, the polls and surveys have clearly shown that as household income decreases, the AKP voting rate has increased (see: Konda Research and Consultancy 2015 for an analysis on the June 2015 election). However, some ethnographic studies demonstrated that the governors of the local branches of the ruling AKP in these urban areas can be labelled as business elites of Islamist politics (see: Doğan 2016).

The Islamist-run parties have always engaged in charity activities and social assistance. Yet, the victory of Erdogan and the RP in the 1994 metropolitan municipal elections marked a new sort of charity and patronage relation. The RP-run municipalities, most notably, the ones in Ankara and Istanbul, began to organize in-kind assistance such as coal, for the calefaction of

the dwellings in poor neighborhoods, giant food tents for fast-breaking during the month of Ramadan and award scholarships to university students and so on (Tuğal 2013, 125). These expenditures were funded off-budget as “only a small fraction of the funding for social assistance comes from the municipal budget” (Buğra and Keyder 2006, 224). These services and assistances provided were largely financed by individual donors, especially by the Islamist business elite, whose existence is also highly dependent upon the success of political Islam.

This has been considered a successful strategy by the influential cadres of the Islamists and has continued until today, drawing on the now well-established patronage networks, which has in return secured election victories (Özdemir 2015). It is indeed killing two birds with one stone: On the one hand, the election victories of the Islamists have provided a more lucrative environment for the Islamist business elites that augments, in return, financial sources for the Islamist party in power (Demir, Acar, and Toprak 2004). On the other, it creates an electorate base, whose source of revenue relies on the continuity of this assistance.

Conclusion

As it is discussed in the introductory part of this book, there has been a right-wing swing in world politics. Seen in the context of this rise, the political success or victory of different strands of Islamists in the Middle East since the turn of the millennium cannot be underrated. First in Turkey, the AKP, which portrayed itself as being moderate Islamist has controlled the reins of power since 2002. Following the Arab Spring that began in 2010, several Islamist movements – including the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia – rose to power for, however, a short period of time. The Arab Spring has been bitterly experienced in Syria as the upshot of this unrest was the outbreak of civil war. Since then, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) has controlled vast territories within the boundaries of Iraq and Syria and has increased its own capabilities to organize coordinated attacks outside its own territory, for instance, in Paris.

These developments have triggered a heated global and public debate about Islamist movements. Concurrently, the scholarly works on Islamist movements have started to attract more and more attention. The strategies of the Islamists, their organizational structures, their ways of organizing etc. have been largely discussed within this literature. Yet, what has been overlooked, putting Cihan Tuğal’s influential works aside for a moment, is, as far as I am aware, the hegemonic aspect of Islamist movements, i.e., how did the Islamist movement gain the hearts and minds of the masses?

The hegemonic aspect is overlooked in the related literature, partially because it is commonly assumed that the Islamist movements emerged from the popular classes. Accordingly, the Islamist militancy has been ascribed as subaltern and they are depicted as uneducated and reactionary. Similarly, the peripheral areas of the cities have been seen as their recruitment centers. However, as Bayat has discussed in the case of Iran and Egypt, and as I have demonstrated for Turkey, in relation to militant Islamism this is not even partially true (Bayat 2007b). In the case of Turkey, Islamists, let alone being subaltern, have actually occupied state bureaucracy. Moreover, the Islamist cadres have been largely composed of different strands of the bourgeoisie.

Islamists have always been a part of the establishment. Yet in the AKP period, the Islamists have drastically entrenched their position in the establishment by excluding other forces from it. Turkey's democracy has never been robust. However, the increasing power of the Islamists has brought about the eradication of the usual ways of doing politics, through political parties, trade unions and/or other political forms. This in part confines politics to the elites. Collective action of any sort has been suppressed or marginalized insofar as it threatened their rule.

All these arguments led us to the point where we started. Why did the coup d'état of July 15 fail? The answer lies in the fact that the coup plotters did not receive as much support from the elites as they expected (most likely were promised) to have. They presumably (and mistakenly) calculated that different fractions of the military, business organizations etc. would buttress their attempt. However, above all, the significant numbers of senior officers, including top commanders did not join the coup and some even ordered troops back to the barracks. This encouraged other influential political figures such as media moguls to support Erdogan in this tumultuous political situation. Indeed, Erdogan moved rapidly and started a counter-coup, detaining and purging all his political opponents, above all, those within the establishment. However, it seems to be that the political struggle within the elites will continue to intensify. Insofar as politics, most notably, executive processes are restricted to the elites by excluding the popular classes from this space, as such the moments of coups and counter coups may never end.

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5. What belongs together will grow together? The anti-austerity movements in Portugal

Anne Engelhardt

Abstract

For the past decade, Portugal has been a country where different forms of open class struggles could and can be observed. Five general strikes, several mass demonstrations bringing over one million people into the streets, flash mobs and cross-sector labor struggles have been the visible expressions of anti-austerity protests in the country. This paper aims to employ current attempts to categorize today's social movements in Portugal and combine them with a Poulantzasian theory of the capitalist state as a battlefield as a form of channeling these movements. Along this line, the debate over 'Old' and 'New' social movements will be framed in a new light, and the role of the state and how it deepens this division will be elaborated. These observations will be used to understand the divisions and convergences of the anti-austerity movement in Portugal between 2010 and 2015.

Keywords: Social movements, Portugal, austerity, authoritarian statism, Poulantzas, social movement unionism

Introduction

During the last decade Portugal can be classified as one of those countries where different forms of open class struggle could be observed. Since 2003 the attacks on the social welfare state, public ownership, labor and union rights have intensified. The tremendous achievements, especially for the working classes, of the 500 days of the Portuguese Revolution of 1974/1975 were challenged and continually undermined (Raposo 2015, 6). Privatizations, wage cuts, de-industrialization and other forms of neoliberal 'reforms' underlined the attempt of different capitalist fractions to regain the control that they had partially lost in the 1970s during Portugal's revolutionary period (Sperling 2014). However, in recent years, the working classes, the poor and the youth did not silently stand by and watch the dismantling of the achievements that they and their parents had fought for (Stoleroff 2015a, 1). Instead, they resisted through bitter strikes, mass demonstrations, and creative flash mobs against attacks on their wages, their living standards and their future.

In contrast to Spain, Ireland and Greece, countries that today are also known for strong anti-austerity protests, Portugal has not seen a period of economic upswing for decades (Stoleroff 2013, 311). While wages and living standards remained relatively low in comparison to other European countries, the Partido Socialismo (PS) implemented a range of austerity measures when they held the parliamentary majority from 2005 to 2011. These measures were inspired by the so-called 'New Public Management' program, hence the belief that the state apparatuses and services should be rebuilt and work according to the example of private enterprises (ibid.).

The dismantling process of the Portuguese welfare state can be divided into three different stages. The first one began in 2002 and continued until 2010, and it saw the implementation of New Public Management policies (Stoleroff 2013, 311). This process aimed to pave the way for a change from collective bargaining negotiations to the individual negotiation of working conditions and salaries (Martins 2014, 2). Increasing restrictions on employment and the "closure of a large number of entities" (Stoleroff 2013, 311) were the consequence of these measures.

The 'Programmes for Stability and Growth', or PEC I-IV characterized the second period from March 2010 to March 2011. This was, the name of the four budget plans the PS government planned to install in that year long time period. The second phase overlapped with the impact of the world economic crisis in Portugal. While the Spanish and Irish economies saw the burst of an "intense housing bubble fueled by credit" (Rodrigues and Reis 2012, 193), the Greek economy experienced a tremendous crisis caused by structural fiscal problems (ibid.). Portugal, in contrast, was affected by "endured stagnation since the institution of the Euro and thus persistent budget deficits" (ibid.). In March 2010, the government tested four different versions of the PEC attempting to ease the growing indebtedness and escape the escalation between low economic growth and independence from other weakening economies such as Spain (Stoleroff 2013, 313). Parts of the first, second and third PEC included increasing the VAT from 19 to 23 percent, a pay freeze in the public sector, freezing recruitment, subsidies and overtime pay cut by up to 50 percent, payments for a guaranteed minimum income were reduced by 20 percent, and promotions were stopped (ibid.). In this period, a new policy was brought in: Every new labor contract in the public service would only occur "upon authorization from the Ministry of Finances" (ibid., 312). Thus, every state institution had not only to hand in their annual budget plans, but every single labor agreement they were about to conclude. This increased the power of financial state institutions in comparison to other apparatuses, such as labor, social security, and education. As the Portuguese economy was caught in the

whirlwind of international economic activity, Portugal's government bonds lost their AAA ratings and their international credibility on the financial markets. In March 2011, the government of José Socrates proposed a fourth PEC, which included an increase in public transport and hospital fees (ibid.). On March 12, the mass demonstrations of Geração à Rasca brought the anger of thousands of people about precarious jobs and austerity measures to the street. A few days later, the PEC-IV was defeated in the parliament and on March 23, the Prime Minister José Socrates had to resign (Freire, 2014).

The third phase of 'external intervention' began in May 2011: As the next general elections were called for June 5, the PS established a caretaker government between April to June. On May 17, the PS (Martins 2014, 3) signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the EU, obtaining 78 billion Euros of financial assistance for the country (Stoleroff 2013, 313–314). The three PEC packages were not replaced, but instead supported and widened by the pressure of the Troika from outside. The succeeding conservative-right wing government of PSD and CSD/PP proceeded – and now supported by the European financial apparatuses, the Troika and the MoU – to implement further austerity measures, mainly targeting the labor apparatuses (Stoleroff 2014, 8). Labor was a key target as trade unionists and their lawyers heavily contested these measures, and were sometimes even successfully overruled, as such “Labour Law emerged as an obstacle to competitiveness and its review as a crucial economic policy instrument” (Martins 2014, 4).

Along this line, anti-austerity protests had already developed before “the sovereign debt crisis exploded” (Stoleroff 2013, 311). In the aftermath of the introduction of the New Public Management policies, employees of the education and health sectors fought fiercely against the measures that had worsened their working conditions. In 2008, teachers in particular mobilized strong strikes and protests, while in 2010 nurses and doctors were often seen in the streets.

A general strike was called on November 24, 2010. It was one of the bigger actions of the Portuguese labor movement as both main trade union federations – the Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses (General Trade Union Federation of Portuguese Workers, CGTP) and the União Geral de Trabalhadores (General Union of Workers, UGT) – mobilized their affiliated structures in support of the strike, a collaboration that had not occurred since 1988 (Pinto and Accornero 2013, 26).

In March 2011, two events triggered the development of huge anti-austerity protests in Portugal. Firstly, the mass movements in Tunisia and Egypt impressed and encouraged especially young people to start their own protests. Secondly, the famous Portuguese band Deolinda published its new song ‘Parva que sou’ (How stupid I am) which expressed the

frustrations that the Portuguese youth were feeling about their precarious living conditions. This song and the events in North Africa paved the way to open up the debate about the ever-increasing precarization of working and living conditions (Gil 2015). As the main trade union federations do not organize precarious and unemployed workers, the mass protests around casualization developed independently from traditional labor organizations (Stoleroff 2015a).

In 2011, a parallelization of anti-austerity protests occurred, with traditional labor organizations on the one side, and small but effective social movement networks on the other. Despite the independently organized mass demonstrations of March and October 2011 and September 2012 (Duarte and Baumgarten 2015), the leadership of nearly all the trade unions did not support the protest of the independent anti-austerity/anti-precarity networks, the Lisbon dockworkers union SETC, the staff council of the Portuguese Radio- and TV station, and the VW enterprise 'Autoeuropa' were the few exceptions (Camargo 2013). Instead, distinct from these mobilizations, the trade union leaderships of the CGTP organized general strikes, and, between 2010-2013 frequently cross-sector and public workers' walkouts. Furthermore, they mobilized for their own demonstrations separately from the new groups of social movement activists. In 2013 trade unions and 'independent' social movement networks began to organize several protests together, finally.

Observing the developments of these anti-austerity movements in Portugal, the following questions occur: Why and how did labor and 'independent' movements act in a parallel process? Why did they finally start to work together? How are these movements entangled with the state and its development under the influence of austerity and Troika policies? And, what was the impact of these movements?

In order to answer these questions, this paper will firstly examine the term 'social movements'. Furthermore, the debate on 'Old' and 'New' movements will be critically reviewed. Thirdly, the relation between collective action and the state will be explored. Finally, the interconnectedness of labor and social movements in Portugal between 2011 and 2015 will be sketched out, and an attempt to answer the questions raised above will be conducted in the conclusion of this paper.

Concerning the methodology, this paper derives from a broader study that I wrote for my MA thesis. It follows the thesis of Uwe Flick (2012, 251) according to whom theorization and cognition develop during field research and the reflection process whilst writing about those experiences. This approach could thus be classified as somewhat retroductive. In the data collection phase, I firstly decided to read current articles of social scientists who are either from or focus on Portugal, and that are dealing with the country in the period of the recent economic

crisis. However, through this literature review it became clear that the conflicts and tensions among the social and labor movements have not been analyzed in a way that would help to trace the crucial developments and dynamics.

Hence, my analysis of the anti-austerity movement is primarily based on nine semi-structured interviews with ten experts who occupied, or still occupy, different positions and/or represent different organizations in the anti-austerity movement. Moreover, a range of newspaper articles were evaluated to correlate with the interviews especially in regards to statements on dates and numbers; as the interviewees took part in many different protests over that period and sometimes mixed dates and events. According to the dates I was able to develop a timeline, which mapped the political, institutional and economic changes on the one hand and strike waves, demonstrations and occupations in Portugal on the other. As the interviewed persons also refer to different international events I also mapped a few of them to trace potential parallels.

The ‘New’ and the ‘Old’: reflection on labor and social movements

Social movements are a sociological phenomenon, thus their inner structures and societal influence (Giugni 1998, 377), as well as cultural aspects and the way they form their identities are a matter of interest (Diani and Bison 2004, 282). Yet, social movements are also a political phenomenon (Burawoy 2014, 17); their structures are distinct from parties, trade unions and churches, but they still seek political influence and challenge power holders (Rucht 2002, 2). Contemporary social science has highlighted important characteristics of social movements: 1. The way they are organized and how they differ from other political and societal actors in civil society. 2. How they mobilize and organize their resources to push for their cause. 3. How movements are interlinked with the polity and their political outcomes and impacts. 4. Cultural aspects and questions of identity have also been raised in the framing approach as well as in New Social Movement studies (Diani 2008). 5. And finally, the social roots of collective action are analyzed, for instance, in Mario Diani’s observations on social networks and the role these networks play by starting protests and framing causes (Diani and Bison 2004). All of these paradigms contain precious ideas on how to understand and observe social movements. However, something is missing. It is the statement that Paul Mason is using as a title for his very rich and valuable book: “Why it’s *still* kicking off everywhere” (Mason, 2013). The ‘reason for revolt’ or the ‘opponent’ is yet not clarified. Movements always go ‘against’ someone or something and interact with an opponent or antagonist. However, in many

paradigms the antagonist is understood as an already given fact or only seen as a yardstick from which to measure outcomes.

Concerning the anti-austerity movement in Portugal, scholars like Stoleroff (2013-2015) and Costa (2014) mainly concentrate their studies on the labor movement, looking at how the changes in the labor law and the dismantling of the welfare state affected the working class and how the trade unions reacted to it. Baumgarten (2013), Duarte (2014), and Estanque (2014) examine the structures, dynamics and (cultural) identities of the rather partially independent social networks and platforms, their programs and activities. Both sides of scholars give very valid insights into these two wings of the anti-austerity movement in Portugal. However, both views lack a clear thesis on the main cause and target of these movements: the state and the different state apparatuses. This paper argues that the capitalist state today, firstly, delivers the 'reason to revolt', as it is both affected by austerity and performing austerity measures at the same time. Secondly, the state apparatuses shape and influence in various ways the frame in which social movement actors behave. Thirdly, as demands are accepted and implemented, or rejected, the activities of social movements are reflected by the state apparatuses in different forms.

The way in which Baumgarten, Stoleroff et al. observe the Portuguese social movements mirror an important distinction concerning social movements that has permeated the political debate inside and outside of the academic world for decades: The segregation of social movements into the 'Old' and the 'New'. This paper argues that certain political events, as well as the role of the capitalist state and its apparatuses in shaping, separating and integrating social movements play a crucial role in this division. The term 'New Social Movements' (NSMs) was developed to capture the several international events that occurred around 1968, including the big social and labor unrest in Western Germany, the USA, in France, and Czechoslovakia (Calhoun 1993, 385). They brought new forms of activism and actors to the fore, and topics like freedom of speech, identity issues, women's and LGBTQI-rights, migration, anti-racism, and the environment gained visibility in separated movements. These issues had been increasingly pushed out of the labor movements. In his article "'New Social Movements' of the Early Nineteenth Century", Calhoun (1993) portrays how subjects of the NSMs are actually far from new. In contrast, at the end of the 18th century ecological issues brought people to the street, as capitalist accumulation and industrialization rapidly changed the (political) landscape. This also determined gender and cultural relations (Rowbotham 1998) as hunger within the labor force brought different groups from villages, cities and the countryside together (Marx (1867) 1957, 279). Flipping the argument, Calhoun asserts that it was instead the organized

labor struggles that belonged to the newer forms of social movements. They came to light, not in order to dominate the others, but as a complementary way of struggle (Calhoun 1993, 390–391).

At the same time the impacts of social movements on state apparatuses are often not adequately examined. As impacts are mainly understood as the implementation or rejection of a law or project, other categories of ‘impact’ are eclipsed. Huke, Clua-Losada and Bailey (2015) argue that although, for example, scholars of Critical Political Economy (CPE) concentrate on emancipation and the role of the state, their focus is frequently one-sided, as they deal with concepts of hegemony, hegemonic practices and their (re-)production and/or what kind of outcome they create, but the forms of eruption and challenges to hegemony are neglected (*ibid.*, 726). This points to the question of how political scholars examine movements in “search for means of emancipation” (*ibid.*) without neglecting the influence, limits and obstacles set by movements, but also not the structures and opponents they are acting upon. And this must also be valid in the reverse: While analyzing structures and actions of domination, ‘the other side’ – the dominated – should not be forgotten.

Combining a Poulantzian state theory with social movement research

Following Poulantzas, the state is a crystallization of the power relations of classes (Poulantzas and Martin 2008, 308; Wöhl and Wissel 2008, 9–10). The state is a ‘capitalist’ state, because at its ‘core’ lies the separation between private property and a socialized form of production (Stützle 2004, 9). Thus, it is only relatively autonomous from the economic sphere and from class struggle, unless the ‘core’ is contested. As the contradiction between the capitalist forms of production and private ownership is persistent, classes and fractions of classes are always in struggle. In this struggle the state serves not as an instrument for one class, but is a materialized frame, which is easing, organizing, and therefore channeling class struggles (Demirović 2007, 101). These channels or ‘canals’ (i.e. laws, institutions, public places etc.) are always contested, and due to this are in constant flux. The capitalist state structures are formed by economic, social and political struggles. At the same time, the state is not a monolithic bloc. Due to this constant struggle it is a heterogeneous ensemble of apparatuses (Wöhl and Wissel 2008, 9–10) that have either institutionalized the interests of the hegemonic or the subaltern classes. Civil society is also materialized inside different apparatuses (Stützle 2004, 7). There are differences, for instance, between the state apparatus of a trade union and a state apparatus of the police in terms of how class interests have been inscribed within them. There are also struggles between apparatuses that reflect in a distorted way the different interests of the fractions within the

capitalist classes, but also the interests of the working classes inscribed in the state structures (Poulantzas 1975, 26).

This paper argues that social movements appear as a response to the effect from various forms of crystallized power relations, mostly in the form of the state, social and economic institutions in the form of laws, repression, discourse, and normative assumptions. Groups in society on whom power relations are exerted express resistance through collective action. The aim of movements is to contest the effects of asymmetric power relations over a constant period of time. Social movements are thus turning into class struggles when aiming to reverse and challenge the asymmetry of these relations, i.e. the capitalist system as a whole.

Without this asymmetry, which, according to Poulantzas class conflict is always at the core, power would not be observable. Thus, ‘power’ structures society through capitalist, patriarchal and racist relations, and is produced, reproduced and interwoven through and with human action (Kannankulam and Georgi 2012, 4). Thus, the field of power is “strictly relational” (Poulantzas 1978a, 135). All kinds of struggles – and not only class struggles (ibid., 131) – appear inside fields or apparatuses which exist through, and reproduce the effect of, power relations. The asymmetries of power relations are diverse and so are the activists who claim to ease their effects, reverse, or destroy them. Movements, therefore, occur as networks of strategies, actors and organizations, and are themselves a foundation or source for new social movements and dynamics. This paper argues that social movements in the current capitalist forms of the state can have impacts on different state apparatuses, which can be understood as an outcome of their activities. Furthermore, from a different vantage point, the state apparatuses react to social movements by implementing some demands, and leaving out others. Hence, this strategic selectivity can play a role in separating social movements, such as the ‘Old’ and so-called ‘New’.

Portugal delivers interesting examples for this divergence. Due to its history, the country had a late and therefore short Fordist period. The dynamics of the revolution in 1974 paved the way for social and labor movements to inscribe parts of their interests into the state apparatuses. The Constitutional Court emerged with a relatively progressive constitution. Constitutional law provides a “social state, equality, labor and social security” (Esposito 2014, 17). In the aftermath of the revolution several companies and banks were nationalized. The constitutional law determined that these nationalizations “shall be irreversible conquests by the working classes’, a principle which apparently finds no corresponding provision in other countries, at least in the western world” (Fonseca and Domingos 1998, 129). Furthermore, bargaining contracts, holidays, and higher health standards were achieved. The women’s movement received the right

to vote, which until 1974 Portuguese women had been deprived of. Unfortunately, at the same time, the role of the family – and women as unpaid care workers as its core – has persisted. This remains a large problem, despite the installation of certain welfare services. Labor demands also had a higher profile in the political and economic struggles in the 1970s and 1980s, but this changed dramatically in recent years. For instance, the law concerning the ban on privatization was, from 1982 onwards, slowly wound back (Fonseca and Domingos 1998, 131) in order to support the attempts of the Portuguese ruling classes to enter the European Community and attract foreign investors. Due to the current economic and political crises, austerity measures went hand in hand with the flexibilization of the labor market. Actors behind these neoliberal programs, such as the social democratic parties, excluded progressive labor policies from their agenda. At the same time, women and LGBTQI rights activists were able to inscribe their interests to a certain extent in the neoliberal state apparatuses. This could be observed in 2011, when the PS was in power and implemented harsh austerity measures, but improved abortion rights for women. Recently, when the PS held the parliamentary majority in the Portuguese parliament together with the Left Bloc, the Portuguese Communist Party and the Greens, they legalized same sex adoption rights (lgbtqnation.com, 2015). At the same time, popular proposals, such as an increase the minimum wage, were blurred.

Despite the problems that exist inside and between movements, it is also the state and its apparatuses that add their part to the division by corresponding to the different movements in different ways.

The shift of the Portuguese state towards authoritarian statism

Through class struggles the capitalist state is in a constant state of flux. To analyze and support social movements and struggles, we must examine the “metamorphoses” or “transformations” of the state (Poulantzas 1978b, 114 own translation). Due to economic and political crises the leeway for compromises and concessions that keep conflicts and struggles concealed, are narrowing (ibid.). Moreover, the crisis triggers different emergency policies of the state apparatuses that are declared as ‘exceptions’ for the period of the crisis (Poulantzas 1976, 92). These emergency policies, however, lead to a transformation of the state towards more authoritarian policies, as the ‘state of emergency’ becomes the ‘new normal’ (ibid.). Following Poulantzas, this does not just happen because the interests of the hegemonic class fractions are concentrated in particular apparatuses, but also because they are able to fulfill the political and ideological role of the state (or alliance of states) against the interests of the dominated classes (Poulantzas 1978b, 132). A new hierarchy of state apparatuses emerges, enforcing some

interests, while impairing others. Of course, the transformation of the state due to crisis does not occur in the same way, rather it contains "a series of particular modifications" (Poulantzas 1976, 92). In comparison to the 1970s, the elements of authoritarian statism thus differ from the ones Poulantzas observed when he was writing (Kannankulam 2008, 160).

Kannankulam (2008), Buckel, (2011) and Oberndorfer (2013), for instance, maintain that developments towards a bureaucratization and a growing domination of certain apparatuses can be examined in relation to the apparatuses of the European Union and the different state apparatuses of its affiliated states. Some of these observed elements form part of the neoliberal reconstruction of European society (Oberndorfer 2013, 78). The apparatuses that most clearly represent the interests of finance and export capitalism have managed to articulate their interests openly on a national and European level (ibid.). Thus, these apparatuses have marginalized the interests of other classes and, subsequently, apparatuses such as the ministries for labor and social affairs or trade unions, in which the interests of the subalterns were more strongly inscribed, have increasingly lost their influence on the political agenda of the state and/or the EU.

Great example of this is the European wide introduction of the so-called 'six-pack' subsequent to the new program of 'economic governance' (Schulten and Müller 2013, 293). This system is an attempt to recognize the warning signs for a new economic state crisis within the EU affiliated states. The permanent monitoring of state budgets according to certain macro-economic guidelines is a key part of the 'six-pack' (ibid.). Where a state budget does not match these guidelines, automatic sanctions can be imposed on the state in question (ibid., 294). One important aspect of these guidelines was to introduce more flexibility on the labor market (ibid.). Thus these guidelines can directly affect workers, as the enforced 'labor flexibility' encompasses limited working contracts, low wages and false self-employment arrangements that can lead to stress and low living standards (Nowak and Gallas 2014, 132). This also has a direct impact on the quality of work in public services such as hospitals, schools, transport services, etc. The measures of the six-pack form part of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' that countries such as Portugal, Spain and Greece had to sign to receive conditioned aid. Yet, in 2012 the Competitiveness Pact was introduced, widening the six-pack guidelines for all states in the Eurozone (Schulten and Müller 2013, 295). Along this line, Oberndorfer (2012, 11) speaks of "Austerity Forever", to describe the massive impact of the new law and the shift in power relations between different state apparatuses on a national and European wide level.

In Portugal several examples of state transformation towards authoritarian statism could be observed. In order to underline the role of the state as both a field and organizer of the anti-austerity struggle, these will be briefly outlined below.

The MoU and the financial assistance of 78 billion Euro were demanded in a period when Portugal had a caretaker government with limited permission to govern. During this period the government was not actually allowed to take far-reaching decisions (Reuters, July 6, 2011), except in cases of emergency (Spiegel Online, April 6, 2011). However, in connection to the Memorandum “a series of structural reforms and the consolidation of the financial sector” (Fasone 2014, 6) were enforced and the new government was pushed “to also cut wages and pensions, particularly in the public sector” (ibid.). This far-reaching decision by the PS majority was not declared as unconstitutional, but rather understood as an act to rescue Portugal from a looming crisis (Spiegel Online, April 6, 2011). However, after five years it must be questioned whether the caretaker government really acted for the benefit of the country e.g. to ‘rescue’ it from a state of emergency, or if the conditioned ‘aid’ of the Troika actually worsened the situation. The decision of the caretaker government and the implementation of the subsequently enforced constraints were increasingly challenged by the Portuguese Constitutional Court. From 2012 onwards the court began to declare many of the new restructuring measures and further cuts in the public sector as unconstitutional (ibid.).

Another evidence for authoritarian statism in Portugal was the increasing fragility of the Portuguese political system. The percentage of abstention between the General Elections of 2011 and 2015, and the election of the President in 2016 increased by over 50 percent. Since the implementation of the MoU, the parliament was limited in its decision making capacity, as nearly all political decisions were connected to budgetary issues which depended on the consent of the Troika. Today, the Portuguese state budget still depends on the European Commission, due to the European Competitiveness Pact. Hence, in February 2016 the newly formed Socialist Party minority government had to defend its budget against several objections from the European Commission. Even though Portugal was able to satisfy the Troika and complete the MoU, the European Commission is still able to veto the Portuguese budget (The Financial Times, February 13, 2016). Since the economic crisis hit the Eurozone, it is clear that democracy has been muted by national and European economic apparatuses for the sake of financial interests. This however, did not occur on all levels of the state or in a vacuum but rather it faced resistance from the working classes, the youth, and the poor.

Actors of the anti-austerity movements in Portugal between 2010 and 2015

There are not only cleavages between the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ movements, but, especially in Portugal, the main separation in the current anti-austerity movement lies somewhere else. It was not only since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2007 that there has been obvious divergences inside the labor movement *itself*. Esser (1982) had already observed this issue at the beginning of the 1980s: While most of the trade unions supported regional bargaining sectors and highly organized labor areas, the number of unionists fighting against precarious contracts in the widening low wage sector was small (Gerlach et al. 2011, 38). We can see current examples of this development in Portugal: Precarious contracts that mainly affected young people were hardly contested by the big trade union federations (Stoleroff 2014). Thus, it was no surprise that the mass demonstrations of *Geração à Rasca* and *Que se lixe a Troika* were organized by young students and precarious workers instead of the Portuguese trade unions (ibid.). And it is no surprise that the ‘Precarious’ developed their own networks and structures outside the traditional Portuguese labor movement.

In the following part some of the interactions between the new and the old labor movements of Portugal, their attempts to overcome their separation, and their reaction towards the Portuguese state apparatuses will be outlined. Concerning the resistance of the working classes, three different actors can be singled out to be analyzed as relevant parts of the anti-austerity struggle: The traditional trade unions especially the CGTP, the social movement networks, and the social movement unionists. Subsequently, these actors and their interrelations will be specified.

In 2010, about 490 trade unions existed in Portugal, most of them were affiliated to the two big trade union umbrellas, although there exists seven Portuguese union federations altogether. Portugal has no clear figures regarding union density, although it was estimated to be between 11 (Addison, Portugal and Vilares 2015, 4–5) and 20.5 percent in 2012 (Stoleroff 2015b, 13). The trade union federation where the PCP (*Partido Comunista Português*–Portuguese Communist Party) has the strongest representation, the CGTP, was founded in 1976. Today it covers about 500,000 workers in 141 trade unions, and 88 of them are affiliated to the CGTP, the others cooperate with the federation on a regular basis (Worker-participation.eu 2014). The CGTP stands “ideologically and politically outside of the ‘governing block’” (Stoleroff 2014, 1), as its strategy is a combination of radical demands, strike actions and demonstrations. In 1978, the UGT was founded as a second trade union federation, to undermine the political control of the PCP on the trade union landscape (Sänger 1994, 95). At the beginning this had some progressive aspects as the PCP had partially tried to control any

kind of labor unrest and the trade unions more broadly (Stoleroff 2015b, 21; Sanger 1994, 95–96; 459). Today the UGT represents about 200,000 workers (Worker-participation.eu 2014) and stands politically close to the PS as well as the PSD (*Partido Social Democrata* – Social Democratic Party – center-right, liberal party), although the PS has the largest influence. As the trade union federation is ideologically linked with the “hegemonic governing bloc” (Stoleroff 2014, 1), it is rather acting in the “interest of competitiveness of national economy” (ibid.), thus, the UGT is much more willing to negotiate and cooperate with company management and the governing parties. Although the political and strategic divisions between the two main federations have been persistent during the anti-austerity struggle, they “maneuvered between divergence and convergence in action” (ibid.). The political division and tensions between the two main trade union federations, the UGT and CGTP, declined in 2013 as both of them organized a comparably strong general strike. During that period the UGT temporarily ceased to accept negotiations with the right-wing government.

The social movement networks appeared for the first time in 2011 and played a crucial role in mobilizing huge social groups in Portugal that had either never taken part in protests or hadn’t for a long period of time. The social movement networks encompassed relatively small groups of people who were at the same time organized in many different organizations. They were somehow politically divided over strategy and the program to overcome austerity. Nevertheless, they were able to join in these platforms. The social movements developed in combination to the economic crisis and the political crisis that occurred in the aftermath of it. It saw four peaks, one in March 2011 with *Geraao  Rasca* (GR) (200,000 to 300,000 participants), the second smaller peak in October with the platform O15 (100,000 in Lisbon; 80,000 in Porto). The third demonstration on September 15, 2012, and the fourth on March 2, 2013, brought each time more than one million people to the streets in over 20 cities of Portugal (Duarte and Baumgarten 2015). There was a clear relation between the protests and the state apparatuses: Labor rights were cut, and especially young workers were affected by precarious jobs and false or forced self-employment. This led to a wide casualization of the youth who also came from groups of society such as middle-class families of doctors, teachers and professors (Estanque 2014).

The social movements in Portugal differed in many ways from the protests in Spain or Greece that occurred at the same time. They can be characterized through three different attributes. First, the movements are not continuous in their protest against austerity measures (Romeiro 2015). They organize punctual events, but do not maintain their pressure through occupations, rallies or other forms of activism over a longer period. As the co-organizer of Que

se lixe a Troika (QSLT) stated, the social movement networks organized protests, but did not organize people (Camargo 2015). Secondly, the organizers of the protests met in very small activist platforms (Stoleroff 2015a). Activists of these social networks were often rank and file, sometimes leading members of the Left Bloc, the Communist Party, trade unions, political left groups as well as independent groups of friends and student collectives (Gil 2015; Romeiro 2015; Camargo 2015; Stoleroff 2015a). These activists organized and mobilized massive events and thus this small number of activists were frequently worn out (Mariano and Sousa 2015). Thirdly, although not many activists were involved in these platforms, the range of organizations involved was huge. Thus, tensions and divergences often developed. At the same time, these platforms were not able to develop a clear program with clear demands (Camargo 2015).

The activists of the platforms *Geração à Rasca* (GR) and QSLT were not only mobilizing for big demonstrations, but also supported strikes on different levels and hence were able to bring the social movements and the labor movement together. The first wave of social movements started with GR, in February 2011, and came as a reaction to the precarization of working conditions and the absence of trade unions that consequently challenged the issue (Gil 2015). While the CGTP leadership appeared to be much more militant than the UGT, it kept a hostile position towards other forms of political activity, thus at the beginning the organization refused to cooperate with the new platform (Stoleroff 2015a).

Nevertheless, there were impressive examples of trade union structures that decided to approach social movement activists and that have supported them and thus practiced Social Movement Unionism (SMU). They developed links to social activists that still remain and can be valuable for further protest movements in Portugal. The concept of SMU encompasses trade unions or labor organizations that orientate their structures and members on “building networks with different active groups and educate their rank and file members to prepare for and intervene in social movements” (Turner and Hurd 2001, 12). The practice includes trade union activism beyond the politics of an enterprise or sector, while at the same time helping to build broader structures of resistance for common aims (Engeman 2015, 2). This paper assumes that this form of activism is one of the main factors that brought trade unions and social movements together during the process of the Portuguese anti-austerity struggle.

One of these SMU groups were the dockworkers from Lisbon. They were involved in four years of conflict about working standards and collective bargaining agreements with the government as well as against the privatization of the port management. In that period the trade union SETC (*Sindicato dos Estivadores, Trabalhadores do Tráfego e Conferentes Marítimos do*

Centro e Sul de Portugal) was able to not just mobilize its affiliated members for strike actions but also for demonstrations against austerity in support of the social movement activists and recently in support of housing protests. On September 15, 2012, the dockworkers started to present themselves as a bloc on the Que se lixe a Troika demonstration. From that day on, the SETC was active almost every week in nearly all demonstrations that took place until November 14, where they also had a strong bloc in the demonstration of the general strike. Furthermore, the dockworkers started to support protests for social housing and recently organized a countrywide demonstration against precarious working conditions in Portugal.

Another SMU actor was the staff council of the enterprise ‘Rádio e Televisão Portugal’ (RTP), the main state owned television and radio company in Portugal. Similar to the BBC in Britain and the ARD/ZDF in Germany, the RTP broadcasts the daily news, and political and cultural talk shows with a small amount of time for advertisements. In August 2012, the government planned to lend the RTP to a private company for 20 years (Louça 2015). The staff council tried to receive support from the trade union federation the CGTP to stop this project. However, the union leadership saw the staff council as “undependable” and “ultra left” (ibid. - own translation) and denied their assistance. Without any trade union support, the council called for a general staff assembly. Hundreds of RTP employees attended the assembly, which in consequence had to be held outside of the building (ibid.). The staff council gave information about the plans of the government to privatize the company and decided to mobilize the RTP employees to the demonstration on September 15, which was organized by social movement activists of the new platform ‘Que se lixe a Troika’ (QSLT) who, like themselves, did not get any support from the CGTP.

Growing together

The social movement networks and the trade unions started to merge their activities at the end of 2012. This happened due to the frequent approaches of social movement activists and the role of the social movement unionists like the RTP staff council and the Dockers’ union SETC. Another factor in bringing together the traditional and the new precarious labor movement was the new legislations on labor rights adopted by the state apparatuses that dramatically diminished the leeway for negotiations and bargaining agreements with the trade unions. Squeezed between a right-wing government and new groups of activists whose ability to target labor issues improved with every new activity, the CGTP leadership had to change their strategy. The social movement networks, especially from 15O and Que se lixe a Troika, attempted to approach the trade union leaderships for a united plan of action against austerity and

casualization (Camargo 2015). During the five general strikes, social movement activists spent the night in front of the bus company Carris or the postal service CTT to support the picket lines against attempts by the riot police to clear them (Gil 2015). They also supported the strike of the dockworkers and of the call center saúde 24 (Camargo 2015). Before the general strike in November 2011, the networks approached the trade unions to organize a united demonstration. Until that time, the trade unions had refused to organize demonstrations during general strikes and picket lines were rarely seen. Due to several strike breaking actions and the pressure of the social movement networks that were able to bring thousands of people to the streets, the trade unions started to call for a demonstration (Raposo 2015).

In September 2012, the social movement platform, *Que se lixe a Troika*, was founded by activists from the precarious movement in Lisbon, in order to organize a protest around the time that the new national budget plans were to be announced. The new budget included a significant change in the Taxa Social Única (TSÚ) - social security contributions. The government planned to reduce the social tax for employers to the amount of six percent and increase it in the same amount for employees. Facing this new measure, on September 15, over one million people (ten percent of the population) protested in over 20 cities against the new legislation (Valela 2015). The trade union leadership did not mobilize for the protest and was surprised by the huge response (Stoleroff 2015a). Although labor questions are the central subject of the traditional labor movement, the issue was now challenged in a much more militant way by new social movement actors. The leadership of the CGTP was forced to call the staff council members of RTP, to meet them in the demonstration and take press photos to give their rank and file members the impression that they had actually supported this mass demonstration (Louça 2015). In this event the RTP council played an important role in pushing the main trade union federation to engage with the social movements, which they eventually did from then on until the end of 2013. Because of the huge protests the government was forced to abolish the change in the TSÚ (Camargo 2015).

In the aftermath of this success, the traditional labor movement and the new social movement of the precarious jointly organized demonstrations during the general strikes in November 2012 and June 2013, and the mobilization for a national protest in March 2013 (ibid.). In this period, the protests contained several dynamics. Firstly, on an institutional level, by influencing political changes within, and the asymmetries between, the state apparatuses: The majority of the Portuguese Constitutional Court overruled legislation, which had aimed to cut the pensions of public servants. Several other plans by the government to minimize the public sector and further cuts in wages and substitutions were declared unconstitutional (Valela 2015).

By June 2013, the government was on the brink of a political crisis (Stoleroff 2015a). The restrictions set by the MoU and the Troika for conditional aid could not be achieved, as the juridical apparatus of the Constitutional Court had rejected several measures. After the general strike in June 27, two members of the government, including the minister of finance, declared that they would resign. Obviously, the massive support for the anti-austerity movement had had a positive impact on the Constitutional Court, and also led to growing pressure on the legislative apparatuses. The government coalition was on the verge of collapse. This impact is not a measurable outcome, but can be traced back to the ongoing political activities of trade unions connected to social movement activists and social movement unionists. Unfortunately, the trade union federation of the CGTP did not use this period to organize further strikes and protests to bring the center-right government down and stop further austerity measures. The social movement networks and the SMU groups continued to organize several protests on their own which, however, did not garner the same turnout (Gil 2015).

Secondly, the protests of the anti-austerity movements had an electoral impact, which influenced and shaped the state apparatuses in other ways: In October 2015, the center-left governmental coalition lost its majority. Huge abstention and a broader support of anti-austerity programs eventually led to the installation of a minority government of the PS, tolerated and politically influenced by the BE (Left Bloc) and PCP.

The anti-austerity movements were able to re-shape the Portuguese state apparatuses that were shifting towards a broader authoritarian character. Through struggle this process could not be stopped, but the influence on legislation and the electoral outcome led to a change in the political system of Portugal. The speed of the process was reduced since the center-left government was elected in 2015, but could not be stopped entirely. As the new government re-opened a space for negotiations with the CGTP, the trade union federation leadership did not move back to an alliance with the social movement platforms and has, since 2013, not seen the need to call for another general strike.

Today, Portugal has a center-left government which attempts at least in some parts to stop further austerity measures and has even abolished some austerity measures (Kleine Zeitung, November 25, 2015). The four holidays that were dismissed have been re-installed, and the 35-hour workweek in the public sector that had been replaced by a 40-hour workweek is stated to be re-introduced on June 1, 2016, at least for several public sectors. Even here, the ambition of the state apparatuses to shape the movement becomes visible, as not all public-sector workers are guaranteed to regain their former working conditions. At the beginning of 2016, to reclaim their former rights the nurses and other sectors went on strike. Furthermore, the issue of

casualization is still prevalent. However, the trade union leadership got back to a strategy of orientating their policies on those highly organized labor areas especially in the public sector, while the dockworkers in Lisbon are filling the gap and had lead successful struggles against casualization in the ports, as well as supporting similar struggles for other areas.

Due to the economic and political crises of the Portuguese state from 2010 onwards, the state apparatuses and their relations towards each other have changed. This had an influence on both the social and labor movements and the way they work with or against each other in the recent period. The social movements were able to influence the Constitutional Court and the traditional trade unions to some extent to force them to support anti-austerity policies.

The impact of these protests on the movements themselves were severe. New social networks of precarious workers developed to resist austerity politics, rising prices, and unemployment. ‘New’ social movement actors started to support general strikes, called by the big two trade union federations CGTP and UGT. While there were few picket lines and no mass demonstrations at the first general strike in November 2010, this form of action developed during the following general strikes. Picket lines of the postal service and public transport were also increasingly supported by students, unemployed, pensioners, and activists of the social movement networks. The trade union of the Portuguese dockers in Lisbon, the SETC, began, as an organized block, to attend any demonstration that took place between 2012 and 2015. They supported strikes of other workers, as well as the demonstrations of the precarious activists. The dockers achieved new and better bargaining contracts and the re-employment of 47 dismissed colleagues (Mariano and Sousa 2015). Also the staff council from the public TV and radio station RTP supported several mass demonstrations called by social networks. At the same time they were able to stop the RTP privatization plans of the government and stop further dismissals (Louça 2015). Between 2010 and 2013 the inter-linkage especially between the SMUs and social activists increased. The protests could not reverse all austerity measures and could not stop the increasing casualization, however they influenced the political consciousness, which eventually led to the election of the current center-left minority government.

Conclusion

This paper examined how the anti-austerity movements that were witnessed since 2010/2011 opened up old and new debates about social movements, their divisions, and their likely or unlikely socio-political and economic impact. I outlined one main debate: The distinction between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ social movements. I singled out that this debate eclipses several other aspects of social movements and is lacking a social theory and a concept of state and class.

Thus, the definition of social movements has been developed and embedded in a Poulantzian understanding of the state. As the state is understood as an institutionalized relation in a constant state of flux, shaped by antagonist class interests, social movements are understood as struggles from subaltern classes. While social movements are inscribing themselves in the state apparatuses, parts of their demands such as the 35-hour workweek and the re-establishment of the four abolished holidays were included, while others like the termination of false self-employment and casualization were excluded from the political arena. This led to divergences between movements. The relations among social movements were influenced by the way the economic and political crisis acted upon the classes and the way they shaped the state apparatuses. Thus, the relation and hierarchy between the apparatuses is shifting, which has an impact on the relations between social movements. I gave the example of how this had a somehow positive impact towards the anti-austerity movements in Portugal so far, as social movement networks and labor movements were at some point working close together and shaped the political consciousness in the country. Nevertheless, in the 1970s and 1980s the economic and political crises in Portugal rather led to a division of these social forces.

The recent movement against the austerity measures and the capitalist system implementing them has split, as the aims of one part were achieved and inscribed in the state apparatuses, while others were neglected. It also depends on the solidarity of the forces, the relational strengths that these movements can develop if they keep on supporting each other. Furthermore, as described by Panitch and other activists and critical scholars: Economic and reformist politics remain only temporarily successful – not because they do not directly pave the way towards socialism – but because they can be taken back, as long as capitalism remains (Panitch 1998, 32).

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Part III: Labor and social struggles

6. Women workers' engagement in labor resistances: A case study of Istanbul's garment industry

Gönül Düzer

Abstract

This study explores the gender dynamics of mixed-sex labor resistances. Theoretically, this research draws on the socialist feminist tradition. The data is constructed through participant observation and in-depth and semi-structured interviews with women garment workers from different mixed-sex labor resistance sites. Specifically, I explore the idea that capitalism and patriarchy – as oppressive structures – are not only intertwined with the employment and working conditions of women workers, but also with the gender dynamics of the researched resistance sites. Drawing on interviews with women workers I seek to understand: (1) How does gender as an inequality regime (re)construct the mixed-sex labor resistances and how does this influence the women workers' engagement therein? (2) How do the labor resistance experiences impact the different spheres of women workers' lives? The latter tries to reflect on the emancipatory experiences of women workers gained from participating in a space, namely, labor resistance, with which they have little experience. This is done by focusing on the translation of those experiences into other spheres of their lives. Using the concept of capitalist patriarchy, the findings of my research shed light on the blurring borders of urban women workers' lives by pointing out the oppression (re)constructed through the relationship between capitalist mode of production and patriarchal social relations.

Key words: Turkey, garment industry, mixed-sex labor resistances, capitalist patriarchy, women's empowerment

Introduction

This study explores the gender dynamics of mixed-sex labor resistances drawing on the data I collected through participant observation in a resistance site along with in-depth and semi-structured interviews with women garment workers from different mixed-sex labor resistance sites in Istanbul's⁴⁰ garment industry. By mixed-sex labor resistance I mean the labor resistances in which women and men workers resist in the same site. The gender relations in

⁴⁰ Throughout the text, I do not use specific letters in the Turkish alphabet (e.g. ç, ş, ı, ğ). For instance, Dedeoğlu, Özdemir and İstanbul are the Turkish names for Dedeoglu, Ozdemir, and Istanbul, respectively.

spaces are the conducts of the genders forming these spaces. I specifically point out this phenomenon because the oppression based on patriarchal social relations impacts differently in women-only or mixed-sex spaces. The experiences of women vary based on who they experience the resistance with, and what kind of gender hierarchies exist among the resistant workers.

With the creation and large growth in urban female labor through neoliberal restructuring, especially in the garment sector, women workers have been (re)constructing their resistance practices. In this study, drawing on reflections of women workers engaged during the research, I raise two questions: 1) How does gender as an inequality regime (re)construct mixed-sex labor resistances, and how does this influence the women workers' engagement therein? 2) How do the labor resistance experiences impact the different spheres of women workers' lives? In the second question, I reflect on the emancipatory experiences that the women workers gained from participating in a space; namely, labor resistance, with which they have little experience. This is done by focusing on the translation of those experiences into other spheres of their lives.

Theoretically, this research relies on socialist feminist approaches, which stress the contradictory and complementary relationships between the capitalist mode of production and patriarchal social structures and their impact on women's lives. I specifically address the issue that these systems of oppressions are not only intertwined with the employment and working conditions of women workers, but also with the gender dynamics of the researched resistance sites.

Understanding the gender relations in mixed-sex labor resistances in Istanbul's garment industry necessitates an intersectional analysis to comprehend the patriarchal structures experienced within social relations. This is needed in order to explore how they are reconstructed and challenged, in addition to how this experience affects the lives of women workers in a broader sense. The tendency to neglect the importance of gender in paid labor practices and resistances has been challenged by feminist approaches through works that analyze the position of women workers as active subjects in those sites, rather than as subjects who are often reduced to mere bearers of their structure. This allows an analysis of the labor resistance sites from a gender-oriented perspective rather than holding a gender-blind position as in the concept of class⁴¹.

The findings of my research shed light on the blurring borders of resistant urban women

⁴¹ For relevant studies see Rosa 1991; Dannecker 1999; Harrington 2000; Mills 2005, and Pangsapa 2007.

workers' lives by pointing out how oppression is (re)constructed through the contradictory and supplementary relationship between the capitalist mode of production and patriarchal social relations. Studying how capitalist patriarchy affects their resistance practices as a whole and how those practices are translated to other spaces of their lives provides a more holistic analysis. Gender hierarchies are obstacles for women workers' engagement in labor resistances. However, women workers as active agents of this process construct tools to overcome the gender-based oppression experienced during resistance. As a result, they approach the labor resistance experience as emancipatory and are able to translate those gains to the other spheres of their lives.

Theoretical considerations, literature review, and methodology

The literature has shown that there has been an increase in female employment, especially in export oriented and labor intensive sectors within economically developing countries (see Marchand and Runyan 2000; Beneria 2003; Dedeoglu 2010). Yet the influx of female employment because of global restructuring means more than just the numeric facts of women workers in the formal labor force (Marchand and Runyan 2000, 16). Women workers' massive and fast inclusion in paid employment is constructed through distinctive employment practices, including the flexibilization and casualization of their labor. As Marchand and Runyan (2000, 16) claim, women workers are preferred in certain kinds of jobs because women are associated with labor which is seen as "physically better suited to perform tedious repetitive tasks as well as more docile and, therefore, less likely to organize than men". The increasing labor need in industrial production, which is based on adopting flexible employment regimes resulted in growing female employment in factories, small ateliers, home-base working⁴², and in informal production. According to the employers' rationale, workers who can work in severe conditions but have limited options – making them unlikely to resist unfavorable conditions – are preferable (Pyle and Ward 2003).

This brief overview acknowledges that not only class, but also gender reconstructs women workers' experiences in the labor market. This results in a better understanding of the intertwined relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. Socialist feminism is inspired by the ideas of the second-wave feminist movements in the late 60s and 70s, and socialist perspectives on the emancipation of women, and forms its own theoretical framework by integrating the two (Feng 2013, 276). Acknowledging gender instead of sex as the base of

⁴² For relevant studies from Turkey see Balaban and Sarioglu 2007.

patriarchal social relations refutes the naturalness of male dominance. To unlearn gender, second-wave feminists created the consciousness raising style of organizing (Gordon 2013, 4). The very fact that women changed their consciousness paved the way to change their relationships with the people around them, resulting in a challenge to existing social relations. This brought about the notion of the ‘personal is political’ and an eradication of the public-private dichotomy (Gordon 2013, 5). Breaking the public-private dichotomy raises the question of social reproduction. Women are the subjects of not only paid employment but also unpaid social reproduction. The labor of women in social reproduction, which includes the reproduction of the labor necessary for the reproduction of society, is concealed through the use of “labor” and “wage labor” as synonyms (Feng 2013, 299). This creates the double burden that working-women face: Paid labor - the only labor acknowledged under capitalism; and unpaid domestic labor - inherited as the responsibility of women by patriarchal gender roles. The studies on the undervaluation of women’s labor and double-burden in socialist countries critically reflects the existence of these phenomena in non-capitalist economies.⁴³

Hartmann (1979, 14) defines patriarchy as “a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependency or solidarity among men that enable to dominate women.” Her critique of Marxism focuses on its gender-blindness. She links Marxism’s class-centered analysis of exploitation to the radical feminist discussions on patriarchy (Hartmann, 1979). This dual-system theory discusses capitalism and patriarchy as sources of oppression over women. However, it also claims that they play their roles parallelly in different spaces - in and outside of the family (Feng 2013, 300). In contrast, the unified-system theory suggests that capitalism and patriarchy form a unified oppression system. This approach abandons the assumption of gender-blind capitalism (Young 1981, 58). Young (1981, 50) goes further describing it as, “an analytical framework which regards the material social relations of a particular historical social formation as one system in which gender differentiation is a core attribute”. Following this understanding, Eisenstein (1999) argues that neither capitalism nor patriarchy alone is conceptually sufficient to theorize the specificities of subordination and oppression of women in the current era of the capitalist mode of production and the reproduction of patriarchal social relations. On the contrary, the capitalist patriarchy framework highlights “the mutual dependence of the capitalist class structure and male supremacy” (Eisenstein 1999, 196). The structure of oppression of women is not an independent result of either women’s gender or their economic class. Rather,

⁴³ For relevant studies see Corrin 1992; Fidelis 2010; Havelkova 2014.

it has been reinforced and reproduced with a dialectical relationship between both. This dialectical relationship, i.e more than solely adding them together, evolves to the synthesis of socialist feminism, building on the thesis of Marxist class analysis and antithesis as radical feminist patriarchal analysis (Eisenstein 1999, 197). This means that capitalism and patriarchy are not autonomous oppression systems. On the contrary, their mutual dependence reproduces each other for their mutual benefit, which reinforces and reproduces the oppression of women, specifically working class women (Eisenstein 1999, 202). Hence, I suggest that it is also possible to analyze the mixed-sex labor resistances from this holistic perspective, which only then enables us to grasp the complex interplay of multiple forces in women workers' employment and resistance practices.

Gender relations in labor resistances and their influence on women workers' lives in a broader sense remain an underexplored area of study. The inclusion of multiple forms of resistance, from the daily to collective, is critical to develop a framework to analyze resistance as a whole. This study seeks to contribute to this literature gap by analyzing women workers' experiences of gender relations in resistance sites and the ways that women workers translate these experiences into other spheres of their lives. Thus, based on the above stated theoretical reflections, neither class-based nor gender-based explanations alone can provide a holistic understanding. I will briefly mention the literature on the women workers' resistance experiences from different semi-industrialized countries, which reveal the dialectical relationship between capitalism and patriarchy.

Negotiating gender norms

Analyzing women workers' labor activism necessitates grasping the complex interplay of subjective and structural forces. These forces dialectically reproduce each other. Oppression systems like class, gender, race, ethnicity, and immigration regimes hinder the effort of women workers' emancipatory practices. In other words, in order to claim their voices women workers need to challenge multiple authorities surrounding their lives in different but interrelated spaces. In her study on women in labor activism in globalized Thailand, Mary Beth Mills (2005) reveals how labor activist women are often reluctant to share their involvement and activities with their parents and other family members. For married Thai women workers, the negotiations are even harder. Gendered cultural norms challenge their involvement in labor struggles. Taking care of the children and household duties are time consuming, and are assumed to be female tasks. "Men are afraid their friends will talk if they are left at home to take care of things while their wife goes out to do union work" stated one unmarried activist (Mills 2005, 134). Likewise,

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women workers often find themselves in the position of having to prove their leadership ability while a man's capability was never questioned. Similarly, Ustubici's (2009, 25) study on the Antalya Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in Turkey points out that women workers negotiated against the oppressive gender norms in multiple spaces in order to take part and remain as active agents in labor resistance. Women workers needed to get the consent of the men around them in order to take part in the union because labor militancy was not accepted as appropriate behavior for women (2009, 25). During the time and energy-intensive resistance actions, the gendered division of labor within the households remained the same, meaning the reproductive burden was shouldered by the resistant women as a "second shift" during the strike" (2009, 26).

Related literature demonstrates that these repressive practices are not place-based exceptions. Pia Pangsapa in a study on the emergence of resistance among garment workers in Thailand (2007, 181) boils down the degree of repression in gendered structures to "the levels of control and coercion, social relations and other relationships". According to Petra Dannecker (1992), the experiences of women workers in Bangladesh consist of gender hierarchies at work and embedded gender roles, which restrict women's activities outside of the home in both the workplace and male-interest dominated labor unions. Lastly, Christy Harrington (2000) claimed that there were many elements that repressed women workers' activism: firstly this was embedded in gender ideologies on what is an appropriate female identity, this was exacerbated by the possibility of male violence if their identities conflicted with the dominant concepts of gender, of if they had time consuming caregiving responsibilities, the male-centered ideology of labor unions, a lack of experience in industrial work, and poverty which increases vulnerability vis-a-vis job loss.

Women workers as active agents

Subjective and structural forces repress women workers' involvement in labor struggles. However, this does not completely eliminate their agency by which I refer to as their ability to cope with, or overcome, these forces. On the contrary, women workers tend to produce and spread their skills of self-expression and tools to overcome those forces. Although these are often overlooked as strategies of resistance, Dannecker (1992, 20) underlines that women workers try to overcome different forms of constraints "as active agents whose modes of resistance are embedded in their specific rationalities of action." Specifically, the networks that women workers are establishing inside and outside of the factories are prominent examples of solidarity-based and organized forms of resistance practices.

Related to the oppression of married women workers' activism and organizing, Mills

(2005, 133) points out that most of the women labor activists that she studied “had chosen to remain single”. Similarly, the women workers in Sri Lankan FTZs developed strategies to build solidarity actions and spontaneous forms of resistance practices such as eye contact, small group initiatives, using local language, organizing through newspapers, and organizing campaigns against sexual harassment to and from the factory (Rosa 1991, 30).

Translation of the gained experiences

In the mentioned literature most women workers state that their experience of resistance was that it was an unfamiliar space for them. As the oppressive systems mutually benefit each other, the active agents – women workers – claimed that they have been able to translate these experiences to their broader lives. Labor resistance is often perceived as a consciousness raising practice. The knowledge and experience gained in these spaces was directly and indirectly translated to their lives outside of the work-spaces.

Women workers develop strategies to overcome the oppressive and exploitative structures at work and in their communities (Rosa 1991, 30). Rosa claims that these are highly interrelated domains (1991, 30); thus consciousness-raising in work-related spaces can be extended beyond the space in which it starts. Correspondingly, one informant in Dannecker’s (1999, 7-8) study reflected on her experience by saying that the gains of unity and collective action in the factory “did not evaporate as she left the factory gates” (78), but rather resulted in negotiating and developing a new gender order in addition to disproving the claims about women workers being passive and docile.⁴⁴

Methodologically, this study is based on a feminist, qualitative, and interpretative research design. Qualitative research provides studying “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 2). There are criticisms of this type of research on the methodological grounds that interpreting experience for knowledge production is problematic, yet, I agree with the position of Ramazanoglu and Holland that “there is a strong case for taking people’s accounts of their experiences as a necessary element of knowledge of gendered lives and actual power relations” (2002, 127). Ramazanoglu succinctly warns researchers about claims of value-free positions of neutrality, “it is more logical to accept our subjectivity, our emotions and our socially grounded positions than to assume some of us can rise above them” (1992, 211). Besides the informed consent of the research subjects, practical considerations

⁴⁴ Dannecker specifically underlines that this new gender order does not necessarily replace the old one, but adds new gender identities “which often led to ambivalence and contradictions” (1999, 6).

during the research process, including possible harm to the research subjects, were decided upon sensitively based on the feminist stance of ethics and accountability (1992, 157). Lastly, flexibility as one of the significant advantages of qualitative research enabled me during the research process to move back and forth in a cyclical way to prompt adjustments in the research design (Gerson and Horowitz 2002, 200).

I took different aspects into account when choosing the methods for data construction and conducted semi-structured and in-depth expert interviews as well as performed participant observation. As a form of power, gender is exercised in hidden ways through patriarchal gender roles in daily practice (Ackerly and True 2013, 1445). Thus, comprehending and analyzing gender relations embedded in mixed-sex labor resistances made it necessary to carry out participant observation which led to the joint utilization of both methods in this research. Lastly, I applied Meuser and Nagel's approach of coding (Saldana 2013) to analyze and interpret the produced data.

Background to case study

The garment industry is one of the industries of Turkey that the state particularly encouraged in order to bolster the export-oriented industrialization, which began in the 1970s. Being the second largest industry of Turkey, the industry holds a large proportion of the country's total exports (Fair Wear Foundation 2015, 2). With an estimation of 60% of unregistered employment⁴⁵, the industry largely consists of small and medium-sized factories, a wide web of subcontractor ateliers (Fair Wear Foundation 2015, 2), and home-based work.

As in many semi industrialized countries, neoliberal restructuring has affected women's participation in paid employment (other than agriculture) in Turkey. Including the gender inequality embedded in the social practices, government policies and discourses in the last decades, alongside economic restructuring, enables us to understand the capitalist patriarchal system in which women workers live. Women workers have gained certain economic and social independence through outside paid work. Nevertheless, the work environment is embedded with specific gender roles, which are "maintained through the exercise of traditional control over women's work and their work related conduct" (Dedeoglu 2012, 34). As a result, "employment will be practiced as an extension of domestic roles and as a temporary state, rather than as a radical departure from the confines of the patriarchal system" (2012, 35). To conclude, Kabeer (2000 as quoted in Dedeoglu 2012, 179) persuasively describes women workers in the

⁴⁵ The fact that there is no clear data on unregistered employment and the large refugee flow from Syria makes the estimation harder on unregistered employment in the garment sector (Fair Wear Foundation 2015, 11).

industrial production as “weak winners, powerful losers”. This clearly expresses “the paradox of negative objective conditions and positive subjective evaluations” (2012, 179) that women workers actually experience in the Turkish garment industry.

I conducted my research in Istanbul, the leading city in Turkish garment production. I stayed three and a half months, the summer of 2013, in the field and conducted seven semi-structured in-depth expert interviews with women workers who took part in mixed-sex labor resistances in the garment industry (five textile factories and one leather factory⁴⁶) during the last five years. All of them primarily produce for export and for well-known brands like Hugo Boss, Armani, Calvin Klein, Ermenegildo Zegna, Gucci, Jack & Jones and Mango. Three of the resistances emerged because of the employer’s anti-union efforts. The unions were active agents in these resistance sites. The other three resistances occurred because the factories were closed without prior notice given to the employees and their employment benefits were withheld. Apart from occasional union support, there was no direct union presence in these sites. However, some civil society organizations and political parties like the Progressive Workers Movement (Devrimci Isci Hareketi), Progressive Lawyers Association (Cagdas Hukukcular Dernegi), and the Labor Party (Emek Partisi) were active actors in these sites. Additionally, I conducted participant observation in the resistance site of the Kazova Knitwear Factory. The workers’ 4-month salary, compensation, and seniority payments were not paid, and the employers could not be contacted. In March 2013, right after the factory shut down, the workers started the resistance. Critical to the resistance sites were resistance tents, the main spaces where the workers and their supporters came together and shared information. As the tent was the main space where the strategies were discussed in an informal way and the networks were constructed, the gender relations there were crucial in comprehending the gender dynamics of the resistant sites. Five of the resistance sites I examined had resistance tents. However, if not specified otherwise, what I will refer to as “tent” in the present article means the Kazova resistance tent as it is the only tent space where I conducted participant observation.

Findings and discussion

The division of labor at home

The concept of the double burden for women doing paid work is very crucial to understanding gender inequality in a broader sense. When social reproduction is the responsibility of women, it is not hard to understand why women workers can find less time and energy for organizing.

⁴⁶ Kazova Knitwear, Hey Textile, Rosa Textile, Rimax Textile and Ermenegildo Zegna are textile factories and Kampana Leather is a leather factory.

In the situation of labor resistances, the data reflects very similar characteristics.

The married informants and informants who had children mentioned their responsibilities at home and child care as the main problem for their and their women coworkers' engagement in resistance activities. Some informants also needed to do paid work while joining the resistance because of economic problems. All the informants, while either talking about their experiences or their women coworkers' experiences, mentioned the double (resistance and household) work or the triple (resistance, household and paid) work that women workers had to do compared to the male resistant workers. Thus, it is possible to state that the double burden is even tripled for resistant women workers.

“It was not possible to manage everything together. I was never doing housework during the resistance. Resistance, child, housework and job were not going all together. So I had to make a choice, either work or resistance.” (Nazli)⁴⁷.

“When you think from the women's side, resistance is harder. Because when a woman goes to home, she has to take care of the children, cook, clean, and spend time to with her husband. But for a man, it is not like that (...) Even when my husband was staying at home, I was not able to go [to the resistance activities]. My children were staying hungry at home. When I was going, it was taking almost 1 am to come back. Then my husband was asking me where I was (...), [and] why I was not taking care of children” (Esra).

They underlined that it was not only physically but also emotionally hard for them to be and/or to feel responsible for both the resistance practices, which required regular involvement, and household tasks and child care. This resulted in some workers deciding to either quit their new jobs or decrease their involvement in the resistance. Some others used different tools to overcome this problem, like sending their children to their grandparents or bringing them to the resistance tent. Moreover, the married ones whose husbands were helping them with the household tasks and childcare, specifically mentioned that they were 'lucky'. Nevertheless, they all, whether content with their husbands' involvement in household tasks and child care or not, used the word 'helping' while mentioning this issue which underlines the ongoing gendered division of tasks in the home.

⁴⁷ The names of the informants are all pseudonyms.

“My husband was supporting me a lot. He was always helping me with the dishes and so on when I was coming home [from the resistance]. We were also doing the cleaning together, so I was lucky. My husband was retired when I was in the resistance” (Merve)

The conflicting gender roles of the resistant women

Despite the fact that the personal situations of each informant were different, there were conspicuous commonalities among their statements about the influences of social pressures on them and the other women workers based on gender norms. Mutually interactive reactions of their families and the environments that they live in, constructed further burdens for them, which required effort to be overcome. Although all informants personally decided to work without opposition from their husbands or families, their resistance experiences pointed out the necessity of obtaining the consent of their families for finding different strategies to overcome the interferences. Furthermore, the resistance breaking actions of employers also reflected the usage of patriarchal gender norms against the resistant women.

Merve mentioned that she personally did not feel any discouraging responses related to participating in the resistance from her family or the people around her. Although almost half of the workers in the factory were women, among the 35 resisting workers just 12 of them were women. She stated that women workers generally were reluctant to resist. She related the low participation rate or lack of attendance of women workers directly to the attitudes of their families.

“The inhabitants of the district where our factory is located are generally from Easterners [eastern part of Turkey]. There is not social democratic freedom for these women (...) Because of this I went to the TV channels 3 times. We were 3-4 women [active participants], but only I was talking with journalists. They were reluctant even talking about the things that they experience. There was always the anxiety that their relatives will be angry if they will be in the newspaper.” (Merve)

During the interviews the informants often discussed the significance of emotional support from people around them starting from their families. Nevertheless, they were put in a position where they not only did not receive support but also had to convince their families to join the resistance. For instance, when Esra, together with other resistant workers, chained herself to the door of The Union of Chamber and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) as her employer was the chairwoman of the Women Entrepreneurs Council, her father saw her picture

in a newspaper and did not talk to her for four months. Her male co-resistants did not experience similar issues after their action.

The fear from the responses of the people in their surroundings affects and hinders women workers' will to participate in resistance and demand their legal rights. Some women workers strategically overcame this situation by lying to their families and neighbors.

“The husbands are effective (...). They can be accused of what is the work of woman [the wife] on the streets by the people around (...). The place of woman is definite for them. There is no such trouble for men. Man can cavalierly say that he is going to resistance. I have a female friend who has been in the resistance since the beginning [for two years]. I am the eyewitness. Her neighbor asked where she was going and she said she was going to work.” (Esra)

“There were lots of women who were coming to the resistance having lied [to family and neighbors]” (Nazli)

This shows a certain compromise between the patriarchal gender norms and the neoliberal restructuring in Turkey, which has established a space for women to be workers and perform the necessities of work, such as long overtime. The informants did not mention the patriarchal gender-based problems related with coming back home late because of overtime. Nevertheless, resisting to gain the rights of their labor was not perceived as an appropriate action for women workers which points very clearly to how the capitalist patriarchy reconstructs the oppression over women workers not only in paid employment practices but also in labor resistance practices.

As the social networks were highly influential for the lifestyles of individuals in the resistance, most of the informants refer not directly to their husbands' ideas but to the possible reactions from their families, relatives and neighbors.

“Their husbands were prohibiting them [women workers] to join. You will stay at home, you cannot bring disgrace on my family. What will the people around me say? What will I say to people when they tell me that your wife is fighting for her rights on the street?” (Nazli)

“I see my brother once a month and do not talk about this [resistance] issues. I try not to be in the same environment with him (...) As he will influence my husband and after a point he will also say enough.” (Sevim)

The resistance sites that involved tents also revealed patriarchal gender norms that hinder women workers from staying overnight in the tent, which is actually a crucial practice in the resistance. During my participant observation, the only woman worker who stayed overnight in the tent was Sevim. Both Duygu and the other women workers that I could conduct informal interviews with stated that they could not stay overnight in the tent as their husbands did not allow them to or it was not appropriate. It was not perceived as proper or appropriate behavior for women, as these were mixed-sex resistances, and they would have had to stay together with male co-workers and the supporters. This was even more problematic for their situation and constructing an understanding that the resistance had broader implications beyond the men workers' claims that women workers should spend more time in the resistance.

In the Kampana resistance, the subcontracting firm tried to benefit from the patriarchal gender norms in order to break up the participation of married women workers. The women workers were harassed via phone calls at night. One woman worker who was the initiator of the resistance – together with Sena – was laid off through a call to her husband. The management not only failed to treat her as the person responsible for her own work, but also tried to suppress the woman through manipulating her husband. Later, he was approached in the tea-house⁴⁸ and humiliated in public in order to make his wife give up her fight. This process ended with her decision to divorce. Another woman from the same resistance site was threatened by her husband with a knife to her throat in order to persuade her to quit the resistance, even though he himself was a unionized worker and the woman worker's resistance was for unionization.

Winning the recognition of male co-resistants

Historically in Turkey worker resistances are attributed to men workers working in specific sectors, such as mining, and in large factories. Women's engagement in paid work, except in the agricultural sector, together with the flexible types of employment regimes have paved the way for the construction of unfamiliar resistance practices. Comprehending the gender relations between the subjects participating in the resistance was not easy to obtain solely from the interviewees with whom I generally did not have previous interaction. Nevertheless, the data collected during the participant observation together with the interview of Sena enabled me to suggest that women workers were put in a position to prove their capabilities and devotion to the male co-resistants. This did not mean that there was an explicit request from the men

⁴⁸ Tea-house culture in Turkey is very widespread and exclusively for men. It is one of the main spaces that men socialize.

workers. Nevertheless, it existed as a phenomenon experienced by women workers in two resistance sites.

The division of labor in the tent was, for the most part, implemented with solidarity. The male co-resistants were usually attentive to responsibilities such as pouring the tea for the guests, cooking, preparing the table and cleaning the site. During special gatherings, such as solidarity events, men workers were more actively engaged with community supporters. Although there was no clear separation, the workers generally interacted with workers of the same gender.

Because Sevim was one of the workers who was taking part in the resistance the most, her behavior during the participant observation and statements from her interview enabled me identify implicit gender relations in the resistance. As mentioned above, staying overnight in the resistance site signified that those who took part were leaders and most committed to the struggle. However, no other woman worker spent a night in the tent. This resulted in the construction of a space dominated by male workers. Thus, Sevim's interaction with the men workers was different than the other women workers'. For example, she was proud of being accepted by her male co-resistants based on her courageous actions during the resistance that the other women workers were not doing. Several times, she was referred to as *erkek gibi* (like a man) by the men workers.

“Despite [the fact that] we are women, they [men resistant workers] even say that they started to accept us like themselves. It means you are from us. They do not consider us as women. Especially me. Because I can sign under everything that they do. I also put my courage in the middle like them. I am staying overnight, not scared of anything, including the police.” (Sevim).

Furthermore, Sena, as a young woman worker, clearly pointed out that she needed to especially gain the trust of men workers. When she was referring to this situation about the women workers, she underlined the economic and gender based problems that she needed to overcome together with them to enable their inclusion in the resistance. Nonetheless, for the men workers, the inclusion of them also necessitated her to ‘prove’ her capacity and dedication.

“I was a pioneer worker. At the beginning men [workers] were not reconciling this with their concept of pride. They are older than me. I looked like a child. My [body] type is also dainty. So, there were friends who did not stand for. But after that, the urgency

came to a point that they said whatever is necessary should be done.” (Sena).

Empowerment through resistance

The last section of this paper is dedicated to the explanation of the concept of empowerment through resistance. This concept is critical because of the significance that the informants placed on the gains they achieved through the resistance as something that they experienced for the first time in their lives. Except for the usual spaces where gender relations and roles are internalized and embedded, such as in the family and at work, women workers, as active agents in the environments they live in, tried to construct a space where the gender relations among the actors and the gender roles could be reconstructed. As will be explained, the gains and the experiences of the women workers during the resistance can be seen as reconstructing the gender dynamics in the wider society. The literature on labor resistance and gender studies do not contain sufficient analysis on these discussions, which is one of the contributions of this study to that body of literature.

What is meant by empowerment through resistance is the influence of mixed-sex labor resistance experiences on the lives of women, in a broader sense than solely their work lives. Despite the obstacles explained before, such as economic problems, police violence, and the patriarchal social relations that they struggled against during the resistance, all the informants mentioned the resistances as one of the most influential and valuable experiences of their lives. Experiencing the solidarity-based and organized resistance strategies paved the way for informants to comprehend the necessity of action and protest in the spaces where they feel suppression over their identities not only as workers but also as women.

“They [women] should not be afraid of any more. When people are afraid of something, they are further suppressed. Why are they silent? Who are the women are afraid of? Their husbands. Why they are afraid of their husbands? They already have been working. They already have their economic independency. I am not dependent to my husband. He should be dependent on me. If your husband is crossing you out, you should also be able to cross him out when it is necessary” (Sevim)

Nazli also considered the resistance to be a life changing experience because she started to believe that through organizing and solidarity not only workers, but also women could achieve their emancipation. She stated that since the Roza Textile Resistance she has been trying to attend and support the resistance activities of workers. During an informal interview, she

explained that she had started attending 8th of March, International Women's Day demonstrations, after her labor resistance experience.

“Before I found the resisting people on the streets to be strange. I was saying that there is law and legal order in our country. Why are they on the streets? (...) But when it happened to me, I then understood that people are not going to street unnecessarily (...) Before, there was a different, more bourgeois Nazli (...)” (Nazli)

Similarly, although Sena referred to her point of view being class based and stated that she is not a feminist; she nevertheless explicitly underlined that Turkish society needs a gender-based approach for the improvement of women's conditions including work and resistance.

“Of course I describe myself as woman worker (...) For instance, we, as the association [Association of International Workers' Solidarity, UID-DER], are collecting signatures here for a petition about the work accidents. When I have chats with workers, I underline the fact that I am woman worker. The men friends staying here with me have to notice the women workers that they are working together and the fact that they can also struggle. When I, as a woman worker, pioneered the resistance, my male friends [there] did not take offense at this. Because they got to know me.” (Sena)

For Turkish society, the construction of spaces where the distribution of duties are more gender equal, can prompt the reconstruction of the so-called private space, where these gender roles and responsibilities are more embedded. During the participant observation and informal interviews that I conducted with the Kazova workers, the share of the tasks needed to be completed in the tent and during the special events, such as cleaning the toilets, pouring tea to the supporters, cleaning the site, was one of the crucial points. Besides some efforts of men workers towards equally sharing the tasks, there were cases in which women workers specifically stated that men should complete tasks with a concept of gender equality⁴⁹ in mind. They talked in a much more determined manner about the importance of gender equality in the resistance site compared to conventional spaces (mainly referring to the family and neighborhood).

⁴⁹ Most of them referred this as the equality among women and men.

“We do not have the thing like, ‘You are men and we are women.’ This is resistance, everyone is equal. If someone wipes the floor, the other one will also do it. If someone cleans the bathroom, the other one will also do it. This work [resistance] does not have the differentiation of men and women” (Sevim)

Furthermore, the strategies that they used in public spaces, from talking with the supporters to making protests, were referred to as influential elements in their lives in a broader sense. The experiences that they gained improved their self-esteem to overcome the problems that they faced. As mentioned before, paid work was described generally as a necessity based on economic problems. The informants could not construct a space for socialization mainly because of the excessive working hours, as well as childcare and household responsibilities. Thus, when the embedded patriarchal structures in Turkish society and the socialization problem that has been mentioned both in the literature and the data collected from the interviews, are taken into account, the strengthening power of experiencing active resistance practices can be conceived as a profound one.

“I had a friend in the resistance with whom we were working together in quality control [in Kazova]. She was never going outside or talking (...) But she came to the protests and her tent assignment ⁵⁰(...) She has a 2-year-old baby. She was never saying anything else than hello. You could never make her sit in front of the [factory] door. But she is joining now. She is pouring tea to the guests, chatting with them. This is something really beautiful. People realize that they are not only workers but also humans. You are not a machine. Sleep, wake up, come to work in the morning (...) We socialize with men workers (*abi*) that we did not know before.” (Duygu)

To sum up, regardless of the success of the resistances in the narrow sense of having demands met, the experience itself was recognized as a positive one. The women workers mentioned that they gained information about labor law and strategies to overcome injustice and oppression. They also stated that they had internalized these gains and could translate them into the other spaces in which they had previously felt less secure and less self-confident. Especially regarding the intimidation that women face in both the private and public spaces, the improvement of their self-esteem and belief in organized activities could lead to further developments for their

⁵⁰ Tent assignment does not include overnight staying.

struggle for gender equality. This is why I conclude this part with the words of informants, resistant women workers.

“We resisted for 58 days. But the resistance process was a very precious process for me like marrying, being a mother, buying a house. It was a pleasure. Fighting for your right and gaining it is a great feeling. Already having it is different, but struggling for it and achieving it is very special” (Merve)

“Organized solidarity has a significant place. You share your bread, the information from the book that you read with your friends. The guests are coming and you are telling your story to them. You become a completely different person (...) You become a representative with your rebellious soul (...) I wanted to show what a woman can achieve when she wants to through my experiences. The confidence of a woman is a real revolution.” (Leyla)

“Before when I saw a police officer, I was going away. I was not joining any protests as something bad can happen, they [the police] can take my testimony (...) I was getting very excited before. I had lower self-confidence. There was an intimidation. Today I am able to read public releases, shout slogans, go to the squares and streets (...) I am telling everyone that this [resistance] was a school for me. I learned about workers’ rights. I learned what the worker do when there is an injustice, against the suppression inside [workplace], exploitation, forced worked, arbitrary layoffs (...) Now I can organize my coworkers anywhere that I am working against these kind of things (...) We should not say destiny to forceful marriages, oppressions, rapes and should not remain silent. I believe that if we organize, shout, and resist together women can get their rights. But if they remain silent and stay at home, they will be suppressed further. Resisting and demanding justice are my suggestion to all women and especially women workers.” (Esra)

Conclusion

It is the women workers who have to face the brunt of the contradictory and complementary relations between the capitalist mode of production and patriarchal social structures. These nested structures were intertwined not only in the employment and working conditions of the women workers, but also in the gender dynamics of the explored labor resistances. The

embedded patriarchal structures were challenged through the labor resistances and the implications of this were decidedly and openly expressed by the women workers.

Interestingly, while their families or neighbors did not refer to paid work as a problematic issue, participating in a mixed-sex labor resistance was treated as a troublesome issue by many. Some women workers had to get the consent of the mainly male family members before participating. Correspondingly, some women workers were pushed to lie to their family members and neighbors who were against their commitment to the resistance practices. In the social and psychological context of labor resistance, the support from their family and environment was vital to the resistant workers to give them strength for further struggle. Moreover, the double burden of women workers, i.e. both participating in the resistance practices and being “responsible” of childcare, among other household duties, was frequently emphasized and for the cases of resistant women workers who are financially forced to start to a new job before the end of the resistance, there is even a triple burden. Last but not least, labor resistance has been both historically and traditionally attributed to the men workers’ space. When we include the so-called appropriate gender roles to this picture, it is really challenging to see the resistant women workers’ fight to be recognized by their male co-resistants.

My findings are similar to the literature on the patriarchal gender norms’ compromise with the neoliberal restructuring in Turkey, which established a space for women to be workers and perform the necessities of work, such as long overtime. Nevertheless, what is critical in this research is that resistance to gain the rights of their labor was not perceived as appropriate actions for women workers, which points out clearly how the capitalist patriarchy reconstructs the oppression over women workers not only in paid employment practices, but also in labor resistance practices.

According to all the informants, the experience of resistance changed their life drastically. I explain this phenomenon with the concept of empowerment through resistance. I believe that Dedeoglu’s statement about the employment situation of women workers in Istanbul’s garment industry, “the paradox of negative objective conditions and positive subjective evaluations” (2012:179) fits quite well to their labor resistance experiences. Although women workers are forced to negotiate against the capitalist patriarchal system in various spaces in order to demand their labor rights, these negotiations result in raising consciousness through awareness and a belief in solidarity. It is not only about the increased self-esteem and consciousness, but also the translation of the resistance experiences and emancipation into other spheres of their lives. Thus, the resistance as a woman worker might have also led to the resistance within conventional spaces, where patriarchal gender norms

venerate docile and silent women.

This study demonstrates that thanks to blurred borders of the different spheres of women workers' lives, a labor resistance can have the potential to develop awareness and resistance against patriarchal norms, paving the way for emancipatory practices of women as active agents. This was not lost on the women workers who served as the protagonists of this research. As Esra said: "Resisting and demanding justice are my suggestions to all women and especially women workers."

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7. Industrial unrest and role of trade unions in China

Cheng Li

Abstract

From a labor migration boom to a labor shortage, an upswing in labor dispute has witnessed a growing unrest within the industrial relations of China. Along with this process, the wages of migrant workers rapidly increased, however, a growth of real wages was only found at the beginning of the 2000s, which within academia triggered a heated debate over causation and whether it should be attributed to the simultaneous labor shortage, or other factors in the wage determinants. In practice, the way that massive strikes and collective actions occurred demonstrated the bottom up approach of workers. Each gory labor dispute also exposed a serious labor/capital relation to the public, and evidence of an increasing class consciousness among workers. In the meantime, the increasing struggles of migrant workers, through informal or even illegal approaches exposed the serious absence of trade unions in this space. Therefore, this paper will also touch upon what was the main reasoning for the lack of trade unions in migrant worker's struggles and emphasize the role of Chinese trade unions, the power relations with the ruling party and the legal framework of the disputes resolution mechanism, which involves issues such as the right to strike, labor disputes and class struggles in China.

Keywords: Collective dispute, labor unrest, collective bargaining, strike, trade union, industrial relations

Introduction

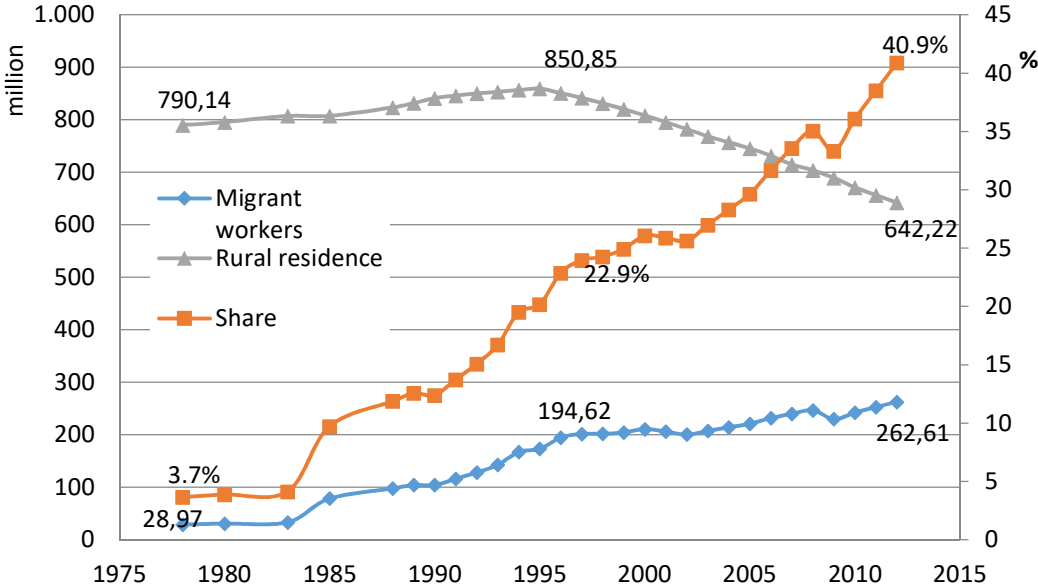
Labor shortage or migration boom

Over the past three decades, there have been three striking phenomena that have dominated most of the public's attention in the area of industrial relations in China. These include the labor migration boom, labor migration shortage and labor unrest. This attention has been centered on the shift from the strict control of labor mobility to a gradual loosening, along with the rapid advancement of industrialization and urbanization, demonstrated by an unprecedented mass transfer in terms of time, space, occupation, and industry.

Ever since the abolishment of institutional barriers on labor mobility in the late 1970s, internal labor migration has been taking place at an unprecedented scale in China (see Figure 1). According to the recent data from the *2015 National Monitoring Survey Report of Migrant*

Workers (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS]), there were 277.47 million migrant workers by the end of 2015, roughly equivalent to 1/5 of the national population; 1/4 of the national working-age population; and 1/3 of total employment. Furthermore, the 2013 UNDP Report on the China National Human Development also estimates that within the next two decades, nearly 310 million people are expected to migrate from rural to urban China (UNDP 2013).

Figure 1: Migrant Workers in China 1978-2012

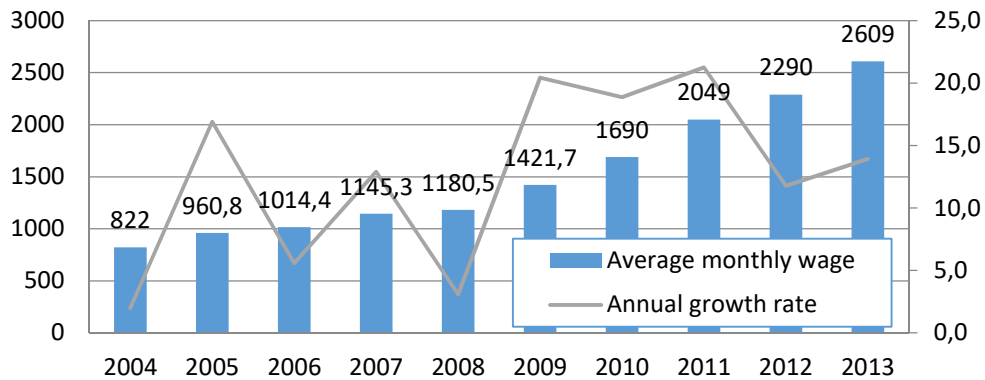


Note: 1. The data was collected from incomplete statistics, due to the limits of statistical discontinuities and methodological inconsistencies; 2. The absolute changes in both the decrease in rural residences and increase in migrant workers do not necessarily need to be equal, given the consideration of statistical methodology towards students, military personnel, as well as the refluxed migrant workers.

Source: Various years from the China Statistical Yearbook, China Population Statistics Yearbook, China Population Census, National Monitoring Survey Report of Migrant Workers, statistical data released by the national relevant authorities, and the existing researches and studies, calculated by Yang, C.M and Yang, L.Y (2009) in their studies on migrant workers.

Along with this process, the wages of migrant workers have also seen, on average, double-digit growth over the past decade, especially between 2009 and 2013, when the wages of migrant workers increased by 20.4 percent, 18.9 percent, 21.2 percent, 11.8 percent and 13.9 percent respectively (see Figure 2).

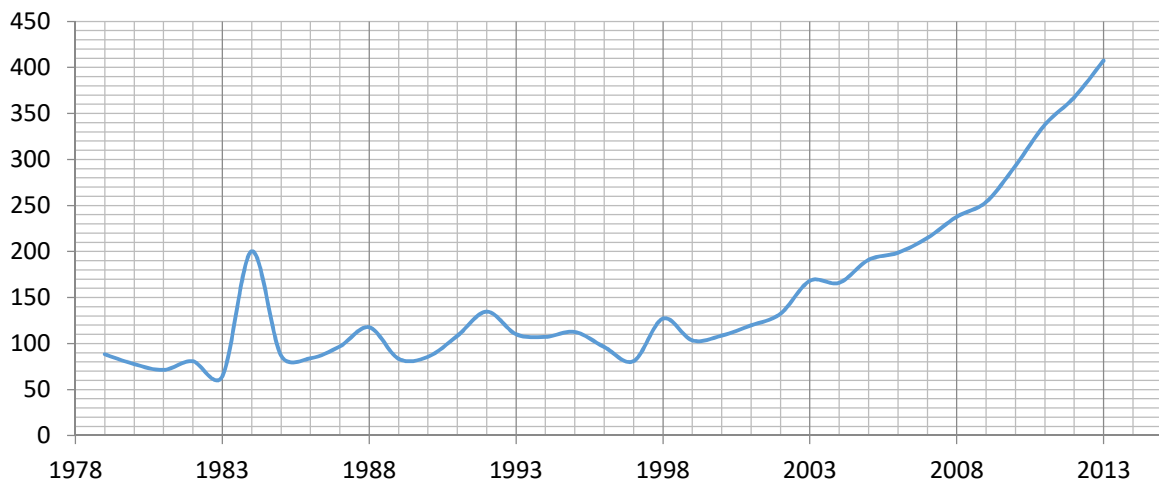
Figure 2: Average Monthly Wages (RMB) of Migrant Workers and its Growth Rate (%), 2009-2013



Note: Data of 2004 to 2009 is from the study conducted by Lu (2012), combined with four methodologies, and data of 2010 to 2013 is from the National Bureau of Statistics.

However, when it comes to the real wage increase, it turned out that it only started to increase at the beginning of the 2000s (see Figure 3), where, by coincidence, there was a simultaneous labor shortage in China. Therefore, it has been argued that the real wage increase of migrant workers was caused by the labor shortage.

Figure 3: Monthly Real Wages (RMB) of Migrant Workers, 1978-2013



Note: All the relevant data was calculated by the author;
 Source: National Bureau of Statistics, China Labour Statistical Yearbook, Population Census, and Economic Census.

In contrast to the labor migration boom, the labor shortage started to attract public attention. Factories in various industries all over China had been reporting annually that they were facing difficulties in securing a sufficient number of workers (MLSS 2004; BSR 2010). As such, 128

companies set up offices at railway stations, bus stations, on the street and even went to villages to try to convince people to work for them. They adopted new forms of employment contracts, provided accommodation, offered bonuses and other tactics. Yet, still, most industrial undertakings failed to maintain and employ sufficient workers (Wharton 2006). The shortage began in 2002, it worsened in 2004, and deepened after the financial crisis in 2008, under a broader context of the exhaustion of the demographic dividend and the exacerbation of an aging population, the labor shortage however, never made the news either inside nor outside China (Business Week, March 27, 2006; New York Times, April 3, 2006; ProQuest, January 3, 2008; Hindustan Times, May 12, 2007; Forbes, December 20, 2011). In brief, it was a shortage, growing year by year, and spreading from the industrial region to the agricultural sectors, from the skilled laborer to the unskilled one, coupled with various other industries (Xinhua News, February 13, 2011; Times of Oman, January 7, 2013; Xinhua News, February 28, 2013).

These scattered observations may not be consistent, but the fact is clear that many industries experienced a hard time recruiting enough workers. The wage increases therefore, could logically be attributed to the labor shortage. Also, there are many theories and models that attempt to analyse possible reasons behind this wage increase. For example, in most of the mainstream literature in the the field of development economics, it has been widely accepted that the increase of the wages of migrant workers can be mainly attributed to the arrival of the “Lewis Turning Point⁵¹”, which argued that for underdeveloped countries the existing “surplus” labor force in the agriculture sector could facilitate the expansion of the industrial sector without increasing wages for a period of time until the surplus labor force was exhausted – the exhaustion of the surplus labor supply is the turning point located at the point where the wages start to increase.

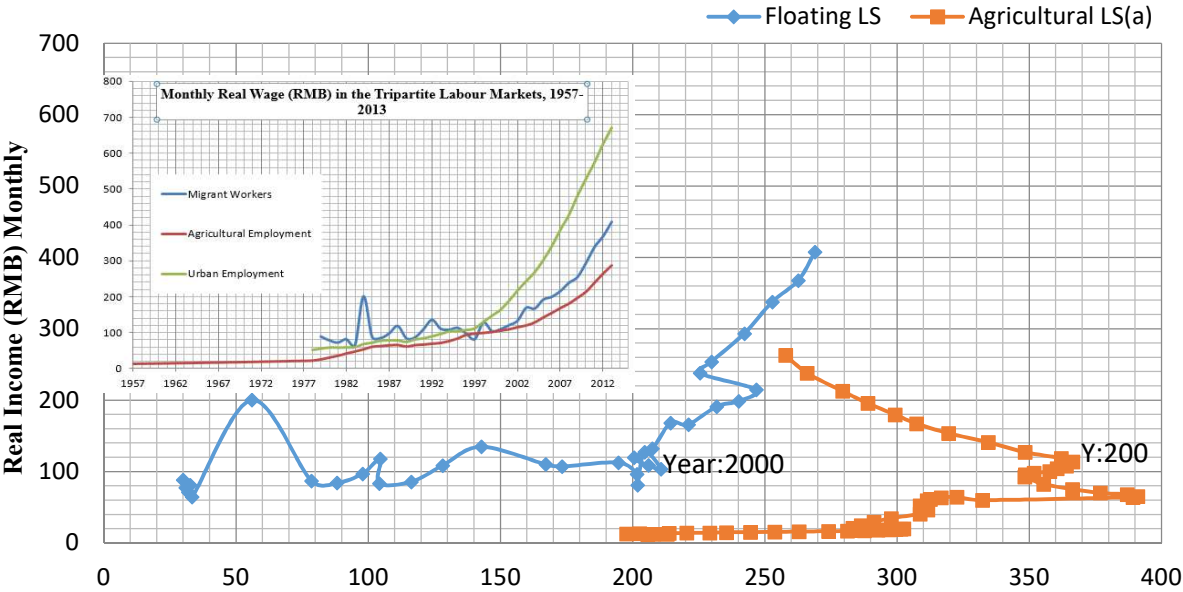
However, investigations of the impact of agricultural development, especially in terms of the income growth of farmers, and the wage determination of migrant workers, are seriously absent. Furthermore, the traditional dichotomy over the labor market division (rural/urban) also tends to neglect the inevitable transitional period of labor mobility between the rural and urban areas, and subsequently the influence on wage determination within its respective labor market.

Having outlined the drawbacks of the traditional dichotomy over the labor market, the approach of trichotomy was utilized in my previous research entitled “Labor Surplus

⁵¹ The Lewis turning point, named after economist W. Arthur Lewis, is a term used in economic development to describe a point at which a surplus rural labor force is no longer an unlimited feature, and thus induces the rising wage of migrant workers in industry.

Economy⁵² under Transitions” (Orsi 2015), as the main theoretical framework, substituting or supplementing the seminal theories of Lewis (1954, 1958, 1972, 1979), Ranis and Fei (1961), as well as the neoclassical approaches of Jorgensen (1961, 1967), Harris and Todaro (1970). The Tripartite Labor Supply Model was constructed as an innovative approach, separating the labor market into triple divisions (rural, urban, and floatation/migrant workers). It presented an alternative interpretation to the so-called “Lewis Turning Point”, highlighting the essential reasons behind the wage growth of migrant workers. Accordingly, the sudden increase of the wage level does not stem from the exhaustion of the unlimited supply of surplus labor or the arrival of a labor shortage. Instead it is because the income of agricultural producers (or rural laborers) reached the same level as that of migrant workers (see Figure 4), which fundamentally provided the conditions for the migrant workers to collectively negotiate with their employers from a favourable bargaining position.

Figure 4. Wage and Employment Evolution in China under the Tripartite Labour Supply Model, 1978-2013



Note: All the relevant data was calculated by the author. To be noted, the rural labour supply curve covered the period from 1957 to 2013.
 Source: National Bureau of Statistics, China Labour Statistical Yearbook, Population Census, and Economic Census.

⁵² A labor surplus economy is considered as a theory or model analyzing an economy that features a great number of rural labor force in excess of its capacity under a certain level of development and the reallocation process of the so-called “surplus” labor force within the economic dualism. It is an economic model often defined in terms of the transfer of a large proportion of the labor force from agricultural to industrial activities, and from traditional rural to modern urban sectors.

Labor unrest

China's rise as a top manufacturing exporter has been meteoric and is one of the most striking features of the current global political economy. Over the last decade, its share of world exports of manufactured products has almost tripled: rising from under 5% in 2000 to 13.5% in 2009 (Ceglowski and Golub 2011). However, at least theoretically at this point, raising wages should directly incur resistance from capital, possibly decreasing the advantages that have hitherto attracted investments. In practice, whether the wage was increased actively or passively, along with the prevailing phenomenon of shifting factories to other emerging countries, especially in the garment industry, the cost of labor has risen in China.

Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia and India have already gained more advantages in attracting labor intensive sectors such as apparel manufacturing. And with the ongoing cost increases, a group of garment manufacturers have already left China for neighboring countries with cheaper labor costs, or by combining Chinese production with an alternative strategy called "China Plus One⁵³" or Plus Two. For instance, although the labor cost of Chinese apparel manufacturing among the BRICS countries still remains very low (only slightly higher than India), when compared with neighboring countries, it already lost its cost advantages – its labor costs were almost 3 times higher than Bangladesh, and 2 times higher than Cambodia in 2008 (see Table 1).

Table 1: 2008 apparel manufacturing labor costs hourly in U.S. dollars

	Country	Hourly Labor Cost	Country	Hourly Labor Cost
BRICS	Brazil	3.35	Thailand	1.32
	Russia	1.01	Indonesia	0.44
	India	0.51	Cambodia	0.33
	China	0.65	Vietnam	0.38
	South Africa	1.75	Sri Lanka	0.43
			Philippines	1.07
		Bangladesh	0.22	

Source: Jassin-O'Rourke Group, 2008

⁵³ China Plus One (or China Plus) is an international business strategy that consists of the expansion of the company's current operations in China, plus one of the other countries, e.g., in a Southeast Asian country like Vietnam.

As such, there has been no sufficient reason to actively increase wages for migrant workers through a top-down approach, therefore a bottom-up struggle from workers had already begun. With the following news and literature reviews, however, different stories aimed to explain the same process, that is: There has always been a struggle over wage increases. Ever since labor migration began, mass strikes and collective labor disputes spread all over China. According to an official estimate, each year during the period from 1992 to 1997, about 2 million people were involved in labor disputes individually and 1.26 million collectively (Chen 2003, 1006-1028).

The industrial/labor unrest reached its peak during the suicides at the Foxconn⁵⁴ plant in southern China, which drew serious public attention. As of August 28, 2010, 16 workers had jumped from the high buildings at the factory, which resulted in 13 deaths. As a historical turning point, ever since, there has been an increase in strikes and collective labor disputes everywhere in China. For example, in June, 2010, around 1,700 workers at a Honda parts plant in Zhoushan, Guangdong Province, went on strike, calling for higher wages, better working conditions, and a more representative trade union; In January, 2012, more than 2,000 workers at the state-owned Pangang Group Chengdu Steel and Vanadium Company went on strike, demanding more stable contracts (China Labor Watch, January 4, 2012); On 13 July, 2015, around 1,700 workers at a coal mine in Jining, Shangdong Province were on strike due to wage cuts (CLB 2015); to list just a few.

From a broader level, data collected from the China Labor Bulletin (CLB)⁵⁵, a Non-Governmental Organization based in Hong Kong that closely monitors and collects both formal and informal records of strikes nation-wide, reported that every month, there has been different levels of collective labor disputes or strikes happening in China. Taking October 2015 as an example, there were 151 incidents, of which 127 incidents involved 1 to 100 workers; 17 incidents involved 100 to 1000 workers; and 6 cases involved more than 1000 workers. Looking at the the daily rate, for example, on the 4th of November 2015, there were 13 strikes recorded in different sectors of China, such as the bus drivers' strike in Youyang, Chongqing; Taxi drivers' strike in Lianzhou, Guangzhou; Hotel workers' protest in Beijing; construction workers protesting wage arrears in Chengdu, Sichuan; chemical workers protesting in Fuyang, Anhui; so on and so forth. Figure 5, below, developed by the CLB, vividly demonstrates an overall situation of labor unrests in today's China. To sum up, there were 2,515 cases of collective labor

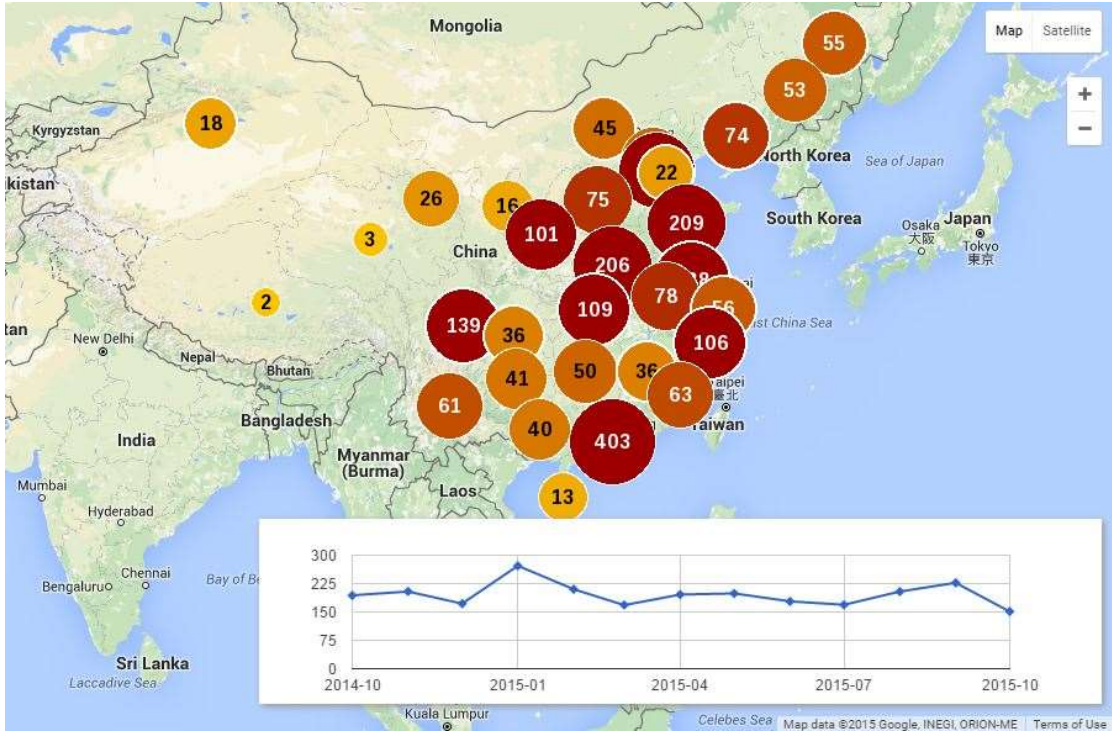
⁵⁴ Foxconn International Holdings Ltd., was first trade name of Hon Hai before it became a subsidiary in 2000. It is a subsidiary of the Taiwanese electronic company, engaged in the manufacture of computers, games consoles and phones for clients such as Apple, Motorola, Nokia, Hewlett-Packard, Dell and Sony Ericsson, etc.

⁵⁵ China Labor Bulletin is a non-governmental organization founded in Hong Kong in 1994, seeking to defend and promote the rights of workers in China.

disputes or strikes that occurred between October 2014 and October 2015. More details emerge when we categorize them into the numbers of people involved:

- Less than 100 people were involved: 1,921 cases;
- From 100 to 1,000 people were involved: 502 cases;
- From 1,000 to 10,000 people were involved: 89 cases;
- More than 10,000 people were involved: 3 cases;

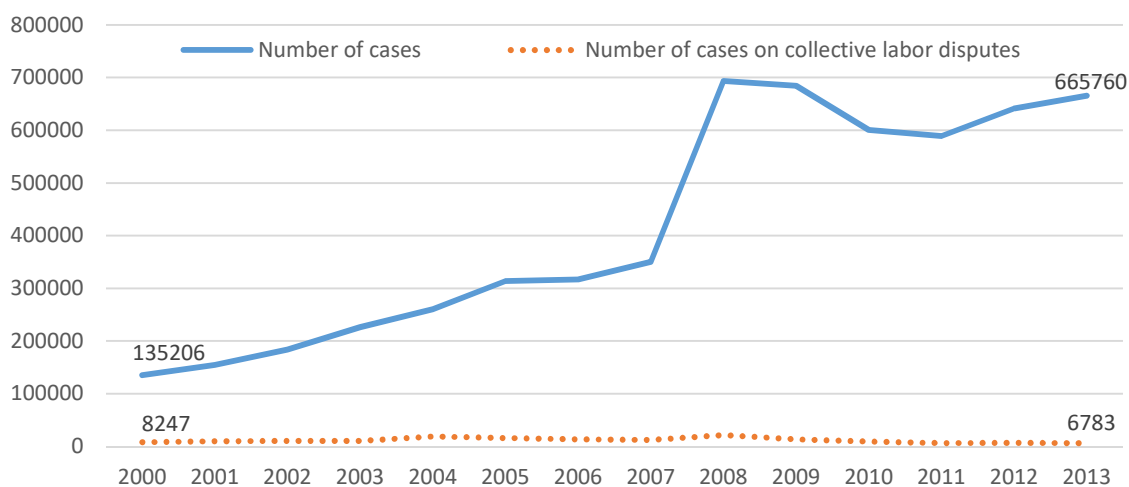
Figure 5: Collective Labor Disputes in China, October 2014 -October 2015



Source: China Labor Bulletin.

Officially, more arguments can be developed through the labor disputes cases that were disposed/judged in the legal resolution system collected annually by the National Bureau of Statistics. It has been found that the annual growth rate of the individual labor dispute cases was 14.2 percent (see Figure 6), from 135,206 cases (in 2000) to 665,760 cases (in 2013). As for collective labor disputes, according to the statistics, it seems that they declined in number from 8,247 cases (in 2000) to 6,783 cases (in 2013), to be noted, these are only the cases that have been disposed. However, the question of how many have been appealed but not accepted actually matters more, but unfortunately remains unknown to the public as there is no reliable data.

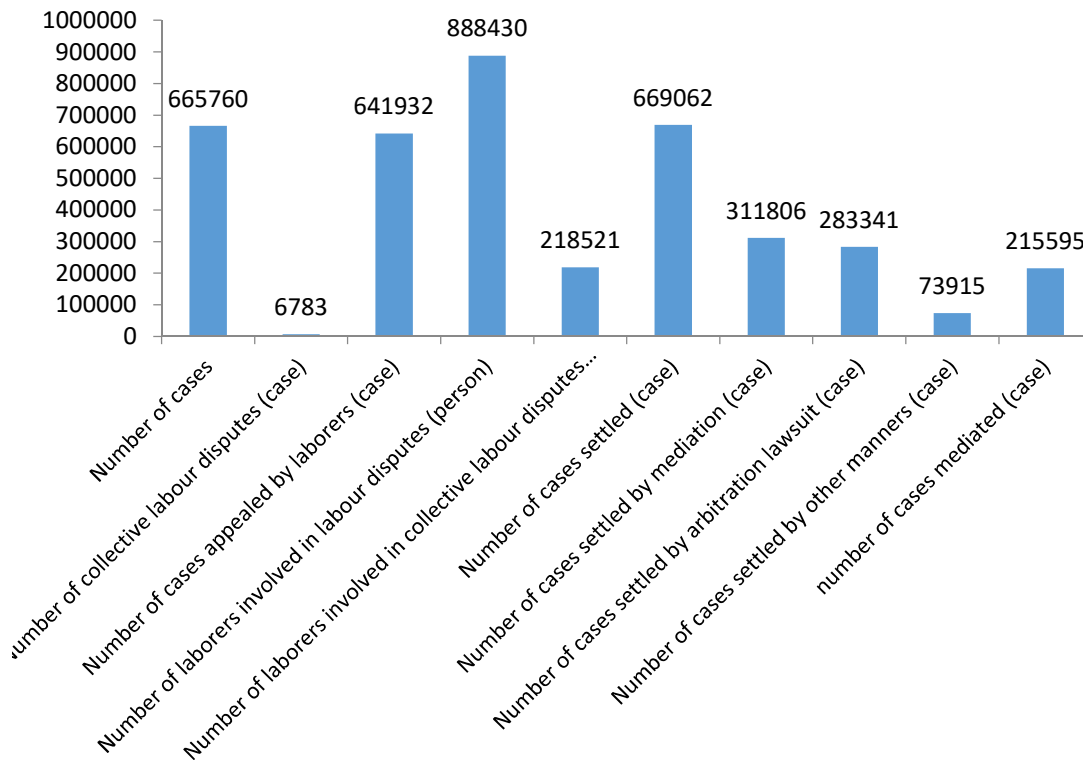
Figure 6: Number of Disposed Labor Disputes (cases), 2000-2013



Note: Collective labor disputes refer to cases that involved more than 3 persons;
Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Therefore, the process of wage increases has never been simple; each and every single increase was primarily achieved through workers' struggles whether individually or collectively. Also, each and every labor dispute related to such a process has never been peaceful. In turn, this unrest can also be attributed to the wage increase for migrant workers. In response to the deteriorating industrial unrest, the state and trade unions mainly emphasized the opportunities of the institutionalized conflict resolution system through various promulgations of legislation and efforts of further institutionalization. Several laws and regulations were introduced to establish the legal foundations of the national labor dispute arbitration system, these included for example, the Labor Law (1994), the Trade Union Law (1992), the Labor Contract Law (2007), the Employment Promotion Law (2007), and the Social Insurance Law (2010). Also, the introduction of the Labor Disputes Mediation and Arbitration Law (LDMAL) in 2007 (the most updated institutional mechanism for labor dispute settlement) was added into the current labor legislation as a legal supplementation. According to the official statistics, in 2013, there were 669,062 cases disposed through the labor mediation and arbitration committee (see Figure 7), in which 96.4 percent of the cases were appealed by workers, involving 888,430 laborers in the individual disputes and 218,521 involved in the collective disputes (NBS 2013).

Figure 7: Disposed Labor Disputes in China, 2013



Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Trade unions were mandated to deal with labor disputes under the LDMAL: Unions must participate in the mediation of labor disputes under their jurisdiction, in the name of Union Representatives Chair Mediating Committees at the enterprise level, as well as the Tripartite Arbitration Committees at district, municipal and provincial levels. However, it has been well observed that trade unions only responded positively towards the labor disputes in China when the claims were made through state-sanctioned channels, as such, following this process, unions were often less hesitant and sometimes even actively represented individual workers or groups of workers in the labor dispute process (Chen 2003). However, when workers' discontent burst into spontaneous collective action, as Chen observed, unions usually avoided representing them, and rather opted for mediation. Finally, if workers chose to form their own organizations independent of the official unions, trade unions would firmly adhere to the state's position and spare no effort to forestall, co-opt or prevent them.

Furthermore, trade unions currently engage in the industrial relations system, especially the labor disputes resolution system, according to the basic duty that official unions abide by. This is, namely, that unions can act on behalf of workers to intervene in labor disputes and is only a lawful contention under the current legal framework. Also, trade unions are set to protect only the legitimate/lawful rights and interests of workers, which explains why there is almost

no strikes initiated by trade unions so far in China; since most strikes are beyond these legitimate rights. In this sense, there is little that trade unions can do to satisfy workers' demands, raising essential questions over the discourse of the right to strike, the role of trade unions, as well as quadrilateral relations among the state, trade unions, workers, and employers under the current legal framework.

Right to strike and trade unions

Historical overview of the Labor Disputes Resolution System

After the mid-19th century, so-called modern industry began to appear in China. By the 1920s, it was estimated that there were around 4 million urban workers, of which there was an equal split between modern industrial workers and artisans/ handicraftsmen (Perry 2001). The establishment of trade unions, as an initial response to industrial disputes, had the main purpose to defend workers, to organize workers, to carry out strikes, and to support and participate in all kinds of individual and collective struggles. Similar in response to other societies, such a development either in the form of organizing strikes or any other kind of workers' alliance, local authorities responded with heavy restrictions. At that time in China, the promulgations of the "Temporary New Criminal Act (1912)" and the "Security Police Regulations (1914)" were perhaps the best examples of this. In turn, a workers' movement began to develop in China, which played a significant role in the political changes during the 20th century.

Revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy brought a new political scenario in the "May Fourth" Movement. The rise and fall of the government ruled by the Nationalist Party, as well as the government established by the Communist party, were all deeply influenced by the workers' movements in the beginning of the 20th century. There were many significant strikes, such as, the Jing-Han Railroad workers' strike (Feb 1923); Canton-Hong Kong strike (June 1925 to October 1926); Shanghai (British and American Tobacco) strike (Sep 1927 to Jan 1928); Shanghai Hudong Spinners general strike (Oct 1927); Shanghai Japanese Cotton Mills strike (Nov 1936); Anti-Japanese national workers strike (Jul 1937); so on and so forth (Perry 2001).

The strike environment continued even after the settlement of the political chaos with the establishment of the New China in 1949. During this time, there were 3 periods which were particularly intense according to Chang and Zhang's (1993) study as the following: The first one broke out in 1952, in the beginning of the socialist transition; the second one was concentrated in the period after the socialist transformation (1956 to 1957); and the last one was during the urban economic reforms of the 1980s. We should add one more period with the most recent concentration occurring since 2000 – according to the former mentioned research entitled

“Labor Surplus Economy under Transitions”.

The “Trade Union Law” was first promulgated in 1950; however, it did not provide the right to strike either for workers or for unions. Before the socialist transformation (1957) a variety of economic sectors coexisted in society. Yet, because the private sector accounted for a large proportion, labor disputes were also concentrated there. The new Communist Party government introduced a series of regulations to deal with labor disputes, and established mechanisms accordingly. More than 200,000 labor disputes were disposed from 1950 to 1955, but, with the process and completion of the socialist transformation on the capitalist industry and commerce, the number of labor disputes reduced by 30 percent per year (Shi 1999). The top state-designers believed in a system of socialist public ownership, and that the interests of both subjects of labor relations were accordant. Ever since 1955 the government began to phase out all the settlement institutions or agencies of labor disputes at all levels, which meant that there was no existing labor dispute resolution system for over 30 years. Within this period, any labor disputes were assigned in accordance with the principle of centralized processing by the State Letters and Complaints Bureau.

The recent turning point happened in 1986, when the State Council issued the “State-owned Enterprises to Implement the Labor Contract System Interim Provisions”, around the same time local governments were called to establish a labor dispute arbitration institution. The following year in July, the State Council again issued a “State-owned Enterprises Labor Disputes Resolution Interim Provisions”, so that the labor disputes resolution system was restored after 30 years of absence. In 1993, the “Regulations of Enterprise Labor Disputes” increased the scope of the legislation to all kinds of ownership enterprises. It is worth noting that within the “Labor Law (1994)”, there are particular provisions for handling labor disputes. Today, the Law of Mediation and Arbitration of Labor Disputes (2007) is the most targeted one, as mentioned earlier, serving as the key legal instrument that deals with all kinds of labor disputes.

The right to strike

Rather than ratifying the ILO Convention No. 87 on “Freedom of Association” and Convention No. 98 on the “Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining”, based on the inclusion of the recognition of the right to take industrial action and the right to strike, China ratified the United Nations’ Covenant on “Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1997)” and “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1998)” respectively. The former stipulates explicitly

in Article 8 (d)⁵⁶ the right to strike, however, only provided that in conformity with the particular country. When the Chinese People's Congress approved it, a number of provisions of the treaty were reserved, but not the most important one - Article 8 (d) (Feng 2011). Notably, Article 22⁵⁷ of the latter UN covenant only regulated for freedom of association. But in 2001, the 1998 Covenant began to consider the legal provisions of the international conventions on the right to strike, as an important reference that modified the terms of work stoppages and slowdowns. Picking up from here, and based on this modification, most Chinese scholars started to research the possible legal foundations this promised as a way out of the current dilemma in China over the right to strike.

Nevertheless, this did not mean that the right to strike had never been conferred in Chinese legislation. On the contrary, it appeared several times; the first time in 1975, with the Provision No. 28 of the Constitution which clearly stipulated that: "Citizens have the freedom of speech, communication, publication, assembly, association, procession and demonstration, and freedom to strike". Unfortunately, the amendment of the constitution in 1982 deleted the provision of "freedom to strike", and ever since then the right to strike has never been back in the legislation. This has created huge complications both in practice and in theory, as it posed a clear dilemma where all strike activity would be considered to have no legal basis.

However, the assertion that any strike in China is illegal is not fully correct. According to the Chinese legal framework, although there is indeed no provision on the right to strike as a fundamental right of citizens, the law *per se* has also never stipulated that citizens are actually forbidden to go on strike. And according to the General Principles of Civil Law⁵⁸ in China, people can do what they want unless a law specifically prohibits them. Therefore, going on strike is not considered illegal, plus there is no crime based on strikes. For example, during the period between 1954 and 1975, the right to strike was also not granted in the constitution. But the attitude from the state towards the strike was that "[...] the masses do not violate the Constitution; there is no reason to prohibit [...]" (CPC News 1957). Conversely speaking, even though going on strike cannot be considered illegal, Chinese law at the same time does not advocate taking such action, because, it does not protect the strike activities. This is mainly

⁵⁶The State Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure (d) the right to strike, provided that it is exercised in conformity with the laws of the particular country.

⁵⁷Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

⁵⁸There is an article from 2002 in the "Workers Daily" that discussed the "two principles rule of law", which introduced a consensus on modern jurisprudence in and outside the Chinese academy. Namely, two important principles of modern society ruled by law: As for Government, nothing can be done if not authorized by law; and for the ordinary citizen, everything can be done if the law does not prohibit it.

reflected by the fact that strikes do not enjoy any criminal or civil disclaimer (Chang and Zhang 1993).

Moreover, on the practical & operational level, the ambiguity and absence of any legal definition directly resulted in a timid reaction from trade unions in dealing with collective labor disputes. Therefore, workers in collective actions, often intend to bypass trade unions, and directly bargain with employers or the government. Given the differences of socio-political environments, Chinese trade unions under socialism with “Chinese characteristics” have very unique features. Exactly as Zhang and Wang (2015) stated, “the role that its trade union plays was heavily affected by the planned economic system and they do not have the typical characteristics of that of others.”

Chinese trade unions

After land reform and the socialist transformation, the working class in China was formed without much intense class struggle in comparison with most other countries, instead, the working class developed under a paternalistic industrialization oriented by the state and the party. During this period, trade unions functioned under the absence of labor-capitalist relations, until the economic transformation from the planned economy to a market one took place, which permitted the configurations of non-public ownership within the system. Therefore, there was no essential role for the unions as representatives of the interest of workers confronting state’s “exploitation”, since the pure public and collective ownership system existed until the 1980s; subsequently, trade unions functioned primarily within the workplace as a social welfare agency, much more like a coordinator between workers and the state.

Since 1978, labor disputes and its induced collective conflicts became more visible alongside the process of economic reform, which permitted the co-existence of non-public ownerships. The role of trade unions, as a representative body for workers’ interests therefore became a necessity. This could be investigated from the amendments of the Trade Union Constitution, which since its establishment in 1925 had not been amended until 1978. The Trade Union Law only came into being after 1992, in the age of neoliberalism, which included a massive lay-off process along with the restructuring reform of the State-owned Enterprises and mass privatization in the 1990s.

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is the only officially recognized trade union in China. It was formed through a very different process when compared with many trade unions in other countries, who often begin through class struggle, and later on build up their own political parties. Reversely, the ACFTU was formed after the founding of the political

party of the working class – the Communist Party of China (CPC). Although, it was officially founded in 1925, the predecessor of the ACFTU was called the Chinese Secretary of Labor Combination, and was founded in 1921 by the newly born CPC before it took power. Most scholars claim that the success of the CPC can be mainly attributed to the fact of its thriving organization of the trade unions' movements and mass movements. This gradually created the situation where the ACFTU was (and always has been) under the CPC's leadership. This revolutionary pathway and historic movement brought the Chinese trade unions and the CPC into a very close relationship, and this delicate relationship still has a big influence on the way that the union functions today.

Obviously, this delicate relationship indeed exposes Chinese trade unions to heavy criticism. However, as part of the state governing body, the ACFTU has also gained some privileges. For example, the Trade Union Constitution guaranteed and reserved important roles for the ACFTU in the political, economic and social affairs of the country, enabling it to actively participate in national decision-making processes, which could be summarized in the following areas:

- a) Reserved participation in both the National People's Congress⁵⁹ (organs of state power and legislative body) at all levels; and the People's Political Consultative Conference⁶⁰ at all levels;
- b) Reserved participation in the country's reform; and reserved role to push ahead with the establishment and perfection of a socialist market economy;
- c) Focused on the establishment of a modern enterprise system in the State-owned enterprises and the national industrial restructuring tasks;
- d) Maintained its leading role in wage and housing reforms, plus social insurance reforms, and so on.

The role of trade unions in collective labor disputes

As the ACFTU is deeply integrated into the Chinese political structures, the interviews conducted by Chen's research (2003) presented a fairly insightful analysis: As a *de facto* part of the government, all union structures above the workplace level – the ACFTU and its provincial, municipal, district and industrial branches – are able, to a varying degree, to

⁵⁹The National People's Congress is the national legislature of China, which is structured as a unicameral legislature, with the power to legislate, the power to oversee the operations of the government, and the power to elect the major officers of the state.

⁶⁰The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference is a political advisory body in China, which consists of delegates from a range of political parties and organizations, as well as independent members.

intervene in, or exert pressure on, enterprises within their jurisdictions in cases where rights abuses occur, and seek resolutions in favor of workers. Enterprises cannot completely ignore them and sometimes they are forced to take them seriously, not because they represent the power of organized labor but because they are from “above” and have a mandate as well as the resources to pursue cases. Even local or lower-level governments cannot turn a deaf ear to the opinions from the ACFTU or higher-level unions; for example, country governments cannot ignore what provincial unions say.

However, when it comes to collective labor disputes, the discourse at the root of the ACFTU and its institutional dilemma can hardly be avoided. Namely, on the one hand, its natural role of representing and defending the interests of workers; and on the other hand, its administrative role as part of the governing body of the state on labor relations. Such a double identity only works well in parallel, that is to say, whenever these roles intercross each other, typically provoked by collective labor disputes, this is when the essential problem arises. This is similar to Chen’s analysis that proposed that the Chinese official union’s reactions to labor contentions could be explained by its double institutional identity as both a state apparatus and labor organization. What role the union is apt to play in any particular dispute is determined by whether, and to what extent, its double institutional identity is in conflict.

The dilemma of the Chinese trade unions in dealing with collective labor disputes can also be interpreted from the perspective of its consciousness of its legal recognition and actual operation. From the one side, according to the Constitution, the ACFTU is merely a mass organization. So according to the aforementioned “the principle of law”, and from the perspective of jurisprudence, there should be no legal problem for the ACFTU and its branch unions to organize strikes; however, from the other side, the operations and structures of the ACFTU and its branch unions, are a *de facto* governmental organization. As such, from the top level, most of the chairmen of the ACFTU come from the CPC’s Central Committee. For example, when the ACFTU was re-activated in 1978, a member of the CPC’s Politburo, Ni Zhifu, became the ACFTU’s first chairman after the Cultural Revolution. Since then, most of the ACFTU’s chairmen have also been members of the CPC’s Politburo and some have been the members of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee.

Furthermore, even the leadership of the local unions (apart from the enterprise unions), also enjoy the same treatment as the appropriate level of local officials. In essence, these positions can be swapped with each other. The staff of the local union is treated as civil servants, since their selection process also includes the national civil service examinations (Xu 2010). Therefore, in summary, the main characteristic of the Chinese local trade union framework is

actually reflective of that of a sector of the government/party. This somehow determines the self-recognition of the Chinese trade unions as a part of the government agencies like the labor department. Thus, from the principle of the law, it cannot organize strikes, because, as a governmental organization it can do nothing that is not authorized by law. Lastly, as many other Chinese scholars have interpreted, the Chinese trade unions are actually the “non-governmental organization” within the government (Xu 2010).

Conclusion

Along with the parallel development of the labor migration boom and labor shortage, each and every labor dispute, whether individual or collective, has been pushed by the increasing awareness of workers’ rights, through either formal or informal channels. Yet, the question over “illegality” has highlighted the serious absence of the role that trade unions could play in these actions. Each and every tragedy behind these disputes clearly exposed the serious limitations in defending the interests and rights of workers under these Chinese characteristics. Since the real income of farmers reached the same level as that of migrant workers, the conditions of the labor market created possibilities for workers to have a stronger bargaining position, especially in a collective form, and negotiate with employers over wages. This can somewhat explain the sudden wage increase of migrant workers, rather than simply attributing it to the phenomenon of a labor shortage. As such, labor relations also intensified, and it can be presumed that there will be more collective actions taken by workers in the future.

The increasing number of collective incidents that were defended by workers themselves reflected how serious those enterprises had violated workers’ rights and interests. Besides, it also reflected how workers protested independent from the current union structures. Furthermore, on a profound level, it reflected the rise of a collective consciousness of the Chinese workers, which from a constructive perspective, could be considered as an achievement based on past collective actions. It is highly likely that this rise, to some degree, will push for further reform of the current layout of the Chinese trade unions.

Moreover, it was found that trade unions were absent in the process of workers’ collective actions in most cases. Admittedly, the Chinese trade union, from a macro perspective, has some unique and privileged advantages: It is included in the drafting and promoting of labor protective legislations; the establishing of workplace unions from a top-down approach; it maintains its traditional role as a welfare agency; and develops new ways of empowerment, such as the Workers’ Assistance Scheme, the Vocational Training Scheme, and so on. However, it cannot avoid the fundamental role that a union should fill, namely, the representation,

protection and defense of workers' rights, especially from the micro level.

It is exactly where this absence of the union's function in China that a cleavage developed between workers and the ACFTU as well as its branch unions. The absence as such formed a vicious circle: Workers' collective actions deliberately avoid unions and once collective bargaining starts the union staff, including the leaders, generally are disparaged by workers, this eventually results in a situation where the government steps in as the mediator between workers and enterprises, pushing both to achieve an agreement, leaving trade unions sidelined from this process. Essentially, exactly as some scholars assert, the subject of the Chinese trade unions' action will be mainly determined by, and reliant upon, the maturity of the labor groups (Wang 2008). In redressing workers' grievances, unions have functioned more as agencies of legal assistance or social work using a strategy of problem solving on a case-by-case basis, than as labor organizations that form, pursue, represent and defend workers' collective interests in a more proactive way (Chen 2003).

Through the collective actions by workers, a new way of interacting between the workers and local governments has gradually formed. This interaction is changing the traditional perception of some government officials towards workers' collective demands, which indeed helped them break away from the "maintenance of social stability" and other forms of their traditional way of thinking. Instead, they came to terms with "an unbiased mentality" to examine and respond to labor conflicts of the market economy; and accept collective bargaining as an effective mechanism to adjust labor relations (CLB 2015).

The turning point of the Chinese demographic, and the structural upgrades of migrant workers *per se*, alongside educational improvement, as well as the prevailing usage of new social media and smart phones, all contributed to new and diversified ways of organization, strikes, and the defense of labor's rights. This formed a bottom-up directional challenge to the current union structures in contrast to the former top down approach, and exposed the limitations of the old system under the new social environments. This raises some questions about how the system of the Chinese collective labor disputes resolution could be reformed in the future and whether Chinese trade unions could be reformed subsequently.

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8. Long waves of strikes in South Africa: 1900-2015

Eddie Cottle

Abstract

This preliminary study examines long waves of strikes in South Africa over the period 1900-2015. In particular, it analyses the defensive and offensive character of strikes located within the Marxian theory of long waves of capitalist development. This analysis confirms a general tendency for offensive and defensive strikes to be linked to the upturns and downturns of the capitalist business cycles and long waves of capitalist development (what can be termed the objective factor). However, while giving primacy to the objective factor, Marxian analysis has consistently maintained the relatively long-term autonomy of the class struggle (what can be termed the subjective factor). It is in view of the latter that I employ the Marxist theory of long waves of capitalist development through which the dialectic of the objective and the subjective factors of historical development of strikes can be examined.

Keywords: South Africa, strikes, business cycles, long waves, capitalism, turning points

Introduction⁶¹

This study examines long waves of strikes in South Africa over the period 1900-2015. In this study I analyze the defensive and offensive character of strikes located within the Marxist theory of long waves of capitalist development. This analysis reviews the tendency for offensive and defensive strikes to be linked to the upturns and downturns of the capitalist business cycles (7-10 years duration) and long waves (20-30 years in each phase) of capitalist development. This can be termed the objective factor, and includes reference to the means of production, material conditions and the social structure. However, while giving primacy to the objective factor, Marxian analysis has consistently maintained the relatively long-term autonomy of the class struggle – this can be termed the subjective factor and includes reference to the conscious organization of classes of people and human agency. The analysis of strike waves therefore requires the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to capture the relevant dimensions of the objective and subjective factors. I propose that the Marxist dialectic between the objective

⁶¹ I would like to thank Eddie Webster, John Reynolds and Mike Rogan for their reviews on the early drafts of this chapter.

and subjective factors can be seen as the motor of social change, allowing me to explore the dynamics of social change and acknowledge the openness of social outcomes. Thus, contrary to the ‘structuralist’ focus of mainstream social theories (economic, organizational, institutional, political) Marxist theory is dialectic and can account for an interplay of various processes and allows for dynamic change to occur within the system. In particular, I employ the Marxist theory of long waves of capitalist development through which the dialectic of the objective and the subjective factors of the historical development of strikes can be examined.

Part one of this chapter explores the question of why strikes occur at all and examines the key features of strikes, their dynamic rhythm and interconnection within the short waves (periodic cycles) and the long waves of capitalist development. Part two focuses on a quantitative analysis of strikes and their relationship to business cycles. Part three traces strike patterns in the specific long waves of racial capitalist development in South Africa.

Part one

The tendency to strike

A strike is a ‘social phenomenon of enormous complexity which, in its totality, is never susceptible to complete description, let alone complete explanation’ (Gouldner 1954, 65). The complexity of the meaning and implications of strikes often comes to the fore when offensive strikes force the attention of the state, capitalists and civil society. They lead to a varied level of interpretation not only on how events unfolded but also the impact they have made.

Strikes are a key manifestation of class struggle over the distribution of national income (Hibbs 1978, 154) and reform of the labour relations system (Webster 2016, 4-6). When offensive strikes occur they can generate an extraordinary amount of pressure on the social system, which often leads to structural changes such as the reconfiguring of the industrial relation, economic or political system. These kinds of events are referred to as a ‘turning point’ (Alexander 2013; Legassick 2012; Webster 2016).

Lenin, writing at the end of 1899, saw strikes as arising out of capitalist social relations of production where workers sell their labour for a wage to the employer and where a “constant struggle is, therefore, going on between employers and workers over wages” and under which workers, “...are compelled to organize strikes either to prevent the employers from reducing wages or to obtain higher wages” (Marxist Internet Archive [1899] 2003). Lenin further argued:

Strikes, therefore, always instil fear into the capitalists, because they begin to undermine their supremacy... [as] ... All wheels stand still...Every strike reminds the capitalist that it is the workers and not they who are the real masters...(ibid).

It was therefore not surprising that strikes became a focal point of study from their first occurrence, and that their disruption of social and legal practices drew the attention of the police, who were the first to collect data on strikes (Franzosi 1995, 15). Of particular importance in understanding the potential roles of strikes in social change are the 20th century mass strikes that began in Russia.

For Marxists, strike activities are not only about wages but are viewed as one of the key manifestations of class conflict over the distribution of national income, and at the same time are indicative of the balance of power between the contending classes. Lenin explained that the strike is a “school of war” and assists in raising the class consciousness of workers in seeing the true nature of the capitalist class, the government and the system of unjust laws that govern the capitalist system (Marxist Internet Archive [1899] 2003). Through the “school of war”, it is proposed that the working class will begin to strive for emancipation and struggle for socialism.

Rosa Luxemburg ([1906] 2005) contributed the best theoretical understanding of the mass strike. She provided the first ten-year analysis (a short-wave) of strikes from the general strike in 1896 to the 1905 revolution, in this she described the interconnection between economic and political strikes, and showed how the working class played a vanguard role in the mass strike. According to Luxemburg, the working class drew a multitude of new participants of society into a heroic struggle against the Tsarist monarchy (ibid, 24). Despite the dramatic changes in the global economy since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the advent of neo-liberalism in the 1970s, mass strikes have continued into the 21st century. The first such mass strike was the Bolivian revolution of 2003, which was followed by the Tunisian revolution of 2010 and the Egyptian and Moroccan revolutions of 2011.

Despite this, mass strikes remain rare occurrences and are conjunctural. Generally, most strikes are not a “school of war” but are aimed at the shortest resolution of an issue. These ‘demonstration strikes’ can also be “wildcat in nature” (Hyman 1989, 23-25) and can be defensive or offensive in character. From a Marxist standpoint, therefore, the study of strikes constitutes a major area of analysis of the power relationship between workers and employers not only at the point of production but also in the challenge for state power between the contending classes. Strikes as the great teacher in the “school of war” is the most important barometer in the tempo of the class struggle.

Business cycles and the tendency to strike

In 1853, Marx made the earliest linkage of strikes to the oscillations of the business cycle:

...the great alternative phases of dullness, prosperity, over-excitement, crisis and distress, which modern industry traverses in periodically recurring cycles, with the up and down of wages resulting from them, as with the constant warfare between masters and men closely corresponding with those variations in wages and profits (Marxist Internet Archive [1853] 1996).

While Marx linked strikes over wages to the oscillations of the business cycle, Marxist scholarship has largely ignored the quantitative study of strikes and the Marxist framework in strike literature is rather slim (Franzosi 1995, 11). An explanation for this lack of interest by Marxists to studying the linkages between strikes and business cycles could be that strikes became subsumed in the all-encompassing concept of the 'class struggle'. Subsequently, the rich scholarly tradition of research on strikes has been dominated by neo-classical economists who focus on the temporal dynamics of strikes relating them to the short and medium term fluctuations in the level of economic activity – the business cycle (Franzosi 2002, 10).

Business-cycle approaches to strikes view strike activity as procyclical and assume that increased strike activity generally occurs during prosperous years. The important distinction is that during periods of economic contraction the workers' struggles become defensive, i.e. they hold onto what is already gained in terms of wages and working conditions. In periods of prosperity, workers take the offensive, i.e. they demand more than what they have. The reasons being that in boom periods when workers are in high demand, workers are more willing to strike because they can find alternative employment more easily and employers are less willing to have their production interrupted at a time when profits are high. During periods of economic contraction the tendency to strike decreases, as unemployment increases the bargaining power of employers as workers are more easily replaced (Franzosi 1995, 10).

The shortcoming of the business cycle model theory is its inability to account for countercyclical strike behavior and the increases in strike intensity even under conditions of high unemployment. For example, massive unemployment weakened the unions in the late 1920s and early 1930s in Britain, but it had the opposite effect in the 1970s. In other words, social structure and social consciousness are directly related and shape each other to either create "increased stability, in others to heightened conflict" (Hyman 1989, 71). Failing to make

the connection between the objective and the subjective conditions can thus lead to serious mistakes in analysis.

In a more recent study, Casutt (2012, 28) showed that at least the cases of Austria and Germany short business cycles played a role in strike patterns during the entire period investigated (1901 to 2004). Switzerland displayed an indistinct cyclical strike pattern due to the low levels of strike activity largely as a result of a peace accord agreed to by the large metal workers in 1937. Further, the organisational fragmentation of Swiss trade unions and the favourable economic conditions in the 1950s-60s did not require strike action on the part of workers (Casutt 2012, 45-46). Thus, while the tendency to strike is linked to the objective factors of the business cycle, this alone cannot account for indistinct cyclical strike patterns or countercyclical patterns in strike activity. There are several subjective factors, such as the role of trade unions and collective bargaining that inhibit or control the timing of strike action. Furthermore, corporatist arrangements that led to long term agreements and changes in the level of development in the long cycle of capitalist development where full employment and improved living standards were achieved in the advanced capitalist countries, brought about long periods of relative social peace (Casutt 2012, 48). The latter subjective factors acted as counter tendencies to the cyclical strike movements.

We can thus conclude that when counter tendencies are weak (as few operate) then the tendency to strike will increase. Conversely, when the counter tendencies are strong (as many operate) the tendency to strike will decrease. Of course, this will not explain a sudden upheaval of strikes but will explain why such an upheaval was relatively short-lived. It is thus important to locate strike activity over a longer term in order to be able to properly discern strike patterns. Thus, we speak of the relative autonomy of class struggle and are opposed to the mechanical determinism of business cycle strike theory.

Long waves and waves of class struggle

According to Mandel (1976), cyclical movements of the capitalist mode of production are induced by competition and directly related to the rate of profit, such that, during the period of upswing there is an increase in the rate of profit and in a downswing the rate of profit declines. These oscillations, he argues, 'cannot be ascribed to coincidence' but spring from the inner laws of the capitalist mode of production. In Marx's theory of cycles and crisis, the renewal of fixed capital explains the length of the business cycle, as it is in the period of renewal that the boom occurs. Thus, Marx anticipated modern economists who now generally view investment activity as the main stimulus of the business cycle that lasts between 7-10 years (ibid. 110).

The theory of long waves of capitalist development is Marxist in origin – it was first developed by the Russian, Parvus, in the mid-1890s; the Austrian, Kautsky, in 1901; the Dutchman, van Gelderen, in 1913; and by Trotsky in 1921 (Mandel [1980] 1995). Thus, Kondratieff was not the first to develop an analysis of a long cycle of fifty years, but he was the one who marshalled substantive empirical evidence. Basing his argument on Marx's scheme of the industrial (business) cycle, Kondratieff concluded that "long waves arise out of causes which are inherent in the essence of the capitalistic economy" (Eklund 1980, 386).

Trotsky argued that Kondratieff had confused periodically recurring cycles and long cycles with the same "rigidly lawful rhythm", which he derived from Marx's industrial cycle to make "an obviously false generalization from a formal analogy" (Trotsky [1923] 1941, 112). Trotsky argued that the upward turning point of a capitalist long wave is "determined not by the internal interplay of capitalist forces but by those external conditions" (*ibid.*, 112). Mandel, in agreement with Trotsky, argued that there are a series of exogenous factors such as wars of conquest, extensions and contractions of areas of capitalist operation, inter-capitalist competition, class struggle, revolutions and counterrevolutions, that can lead to radical upheavals in the average rate of profit and thus move from a stagnating long wave into an expansionary long wave (Mandel 1995, 17). Thus, capital accumulation can be characterized by cyclical fluctuations around a long-term asymmetrical curve. The waves of industrial output consists of an expansionist long wave of 20-25 years (Mandel [1980]1995) or 20-30 years (Screpanti 1987) and a similar length for depressive long waves.

However, Mandel deepens the analysis to include changes in the labour process, which I shall now summarize. In long periods where profit levels have dropped significantly, capital tends to develop radical breakthroughs in technological developments in the field of production cost cutting and to discourage large-scale radical technological innovations. Thus capital tends to concentrate on rationalising labour costs during periods of stagnating long waves. Investment in large-scale radical technological changes generally only occurs ten years after the turn from a depressive long wave to an expansionist long wave with sharp increases in the average rate of profit. Thus there is a rhythmic alternation between basic cost-cutting innovation (during depressive long waves) and radical technological revolutions (during expansionist long waves) (*ibid.*, 30-31).

Historically, each successive long wave produced its own radical but very specific form of technology – e.g. the steam engine or information technology – each with its own form of organization and distinct radical changes to the labour process. During the expansionary long wave there is a reluctance to radically change labour organization as this would provoke strong

working class resistance, interruptions to production and a generalized increase in the level of class struggle. There is a tendency for the bourgeoisie to compromise in periods of high growth and profitability, thus possibly granting the working class some reforms (ibid., 34).

As the bourgeoisie tends to experiment with changes to the labour process only at the end of the expansionist long wave, there is now a “powerful incentive for capital to radically increase the rate of surplus value”. Thus, “toward the end of the expansionist long wave, the class struggle generally intensifies” - a turning point that develops into a “long-term class-struggle cycle”. The attempt to generalize changes in the labour process coincides with a depressive long wave and is at the same time a response by capital to weaken the power of labour. While the processes described are linked to the objective factors of the dynamics of capital accumulation, they also depend on a subjective factor, namely the capacity of the working class to defend itself and mount a counteroffensive (ibid., 34-36).

On the flip side of this subjective factor are the organization and actions of the capitalist class. Here we are referring to the relative strengths of the various political parties, the levels of democracy and mass repression. It is the interplay of the subjective factors with the objective factors that is decisive in the determination of the eventual outcome of the class struggle that is characteristic of the depressive long wave. Thus, it is the length of class struggle in the depressive long wave that determines when or whether at all the capitalist plans for restructuring can take place to increase the level of the rate of profit – another possibility is that there is a breakthrough to socialism (ibid., 37).

It is in this sense that the new expansionary long wave cannot be considered endogenous and that the whole historic period is the outcome of the ‘dialectic of the objective and the subjective factors of historical development’. Thus, we can speak of the relative autonomy of a ‘long cycle of the rise and decline of working class militancy’ or a ‘relatively autonomous long-term cycle of class struggle’ (ibid., 37-38). Since the long waves of capitalist development are asymmetrical in shape, it is preferable to use the concept of long waves of class struggle.

It is important to briefly note that Mandel has used the concept of a ‘turning point’ to describe the ‘exogenous extra economic factors’ implicated in the turn at the end of a depressive long wave to an expansionary long wave. In this sense, Mandel has used the concept of the turning point to mark the interplay of objective and subjective factors leading to changes in the pattern of the long wave of capitalist development. The criticism levelled by Beverly Silver (1995, 156) that the long wave - class struggle hypothesis is flawed because of the expectation that the downward phase of the long wave would be less intensive than the turning point of the upward phase of the long wave is a misreading of Mandel’s theory. On the contrary, it is

precisely in the depressive long wave that the class struggle intensifies and the “protracted struggle ends with such a restructuring or with a breakthrough to socialism” (Mandel 1995, 37).

We shall now turn our attention to the South African situation to examine whether both the business cycle and long wave theories of strike action hold at all.

Part Two

Quantitative aspects of strikes and business cycles in South Africa

There are three main indices of strike measurement: The number of strikes (frequency), the number of strikers (intensity), and the number of days lost (duration). In South Africa, quantitative research on strikes was historically issued by the Department of Manpower and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research during the apartheid period and the Department of Labour and the Development Policy Research Institute in the post-apartheid period. As there was a reliance on employers to report strikes to the Department of Manpower, various research reports have indicated that a major portion of strikes were not reported resulting in under reporting of strike occurrences.

However, in the post-apartheid period, the Department of Labour has improved strike data and since 1999 has published an annual Industrial Action Report. The report, however, still relies on employers but the Department also monitors all forms of industrial action, that is, industrial action related to the workplace and those that are socio-economic and political in nature. Reporting also covers industrial action irrespective of the duration or numbers of workers involved, although lunch-hour protests and pickets are excluded (Department of Labour 2003, 3). Further, the department’s statistical reports only report the incomes lost to workers but not employers and on violence perpetrated by workers and not employers, thereby exposing the biased nature of strike reports.

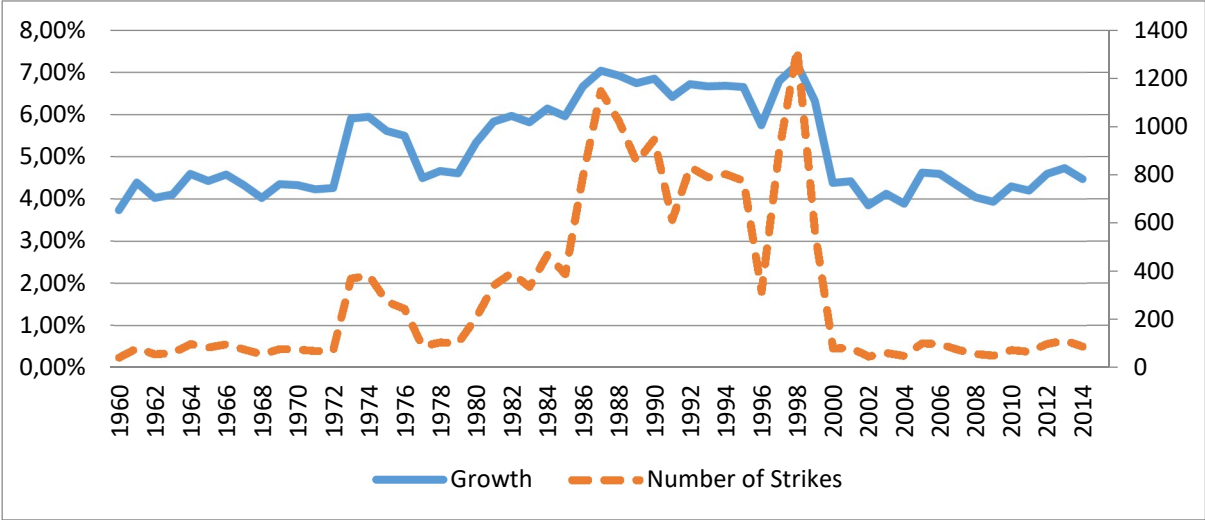
In line with the question of interest, the empirical analysis tries to establish the relationship between strike frequency and economic cycles. Due to the limitations of this chapter it is not possible to provide a full quantitative investigation into the relationship between strikes and business cycles, instead a simple linear correlation is tested. The number of strikes is defined as the dependent variable and the rate of growth of Gross Domestic Product is the independent variable. The hypothesis is that the independent variables impact the strike trends and can estimate the degree of impact, and is set from the years 1960 to 2014.

The correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to 1 , where 1 is a total positive linear correlation, and 0 is no linear correlation. In this example the r value is 0.94 , which is closer to

1, meaning that the finding is statistically significant. Thus the result showcases a significant correlation between the frequency of strikes and gross domestic product.

In order to have a visual dimension of the results in the line graph (figure 8), GDP is reflected as the percentage of growth per year and strikes as strike frequency for the period 1960-2014. It is very noticeable that offensive strikes, such as those of 1973, 1987, 1998 and 2012, coincide with increases in the rate of GDP growth.

Figure 8: Real GDP growth rate and strike frequency 1960-2014



Source: GDP data from the World Bank, strike data from Department of Manpower, Department of Labour, and the Human Science Research Council

By using the reference turning points of the business cycle from the South African Reserve Bank to locate the timing of ‘turning point’ strikes, further interesting patterns emerge. The African Mine Workers Strike of August 1946 took place on the upper turning point (peak) of the business cycle, while the 1973 strike wave took place towards the end of the upper turning point of the business cycle of September 1972 to December 1977. Both the Marikana strike and the Western Cape farm workers’ strike started in August 2012 toward the end of the upper turning point of the business cycle of September 2009 to November 2013.

Taking the results of the correlation, the line graph and the reference turning points of the business cycle comparison of major strikes, one can resolve that there is a general tendency for offensive and defensive strikes to be linked to the upturns and downturns of the capitalist business cycle in South Africa.

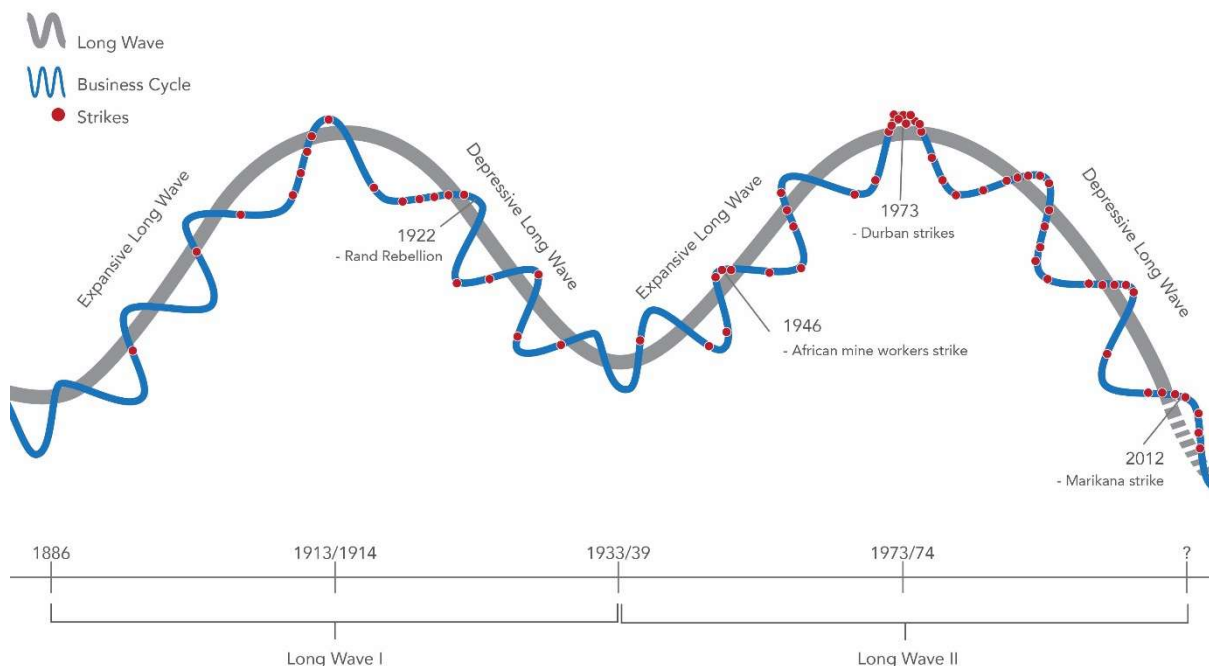
The next part integrates the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of long waves and strikes in South Africa.

Part 3

Long Waves and Strikes in South Africa

The periodization of South Africa's long waves of capitalist development is made difficult by the fact the long wave studies have tended to focus on Western industrialised countries. These studies have shown that strike waves tend to start toward the end of the upper turning point of the expansionist long waves (Mandel 1995; Screpanti 1987; Franzosi 1995). To the best of my knowledge, no such periodization of long waves for South Africa has previously been done. As the figure 9 tries to demonstrate, we are dealing with two levels of analysis – the business cycle and the long waves of capitalist development – within which to locate the objective and subjective factors in the historical development of strike movements.

Figure 9: Long waves of strikes in South Africa: 1900-2015



Source: Author's design, graphic representation not to scale.

Using the long waves periodization to examine offensive and defensive strikes and those decisive 'turning point' strikes – such as the 1922 white miners' strike, the 1946 African mine workers strike, the 1973 Durban black workers' strike, and 2012 Marikana strike – reveals further interesting patterns.

Long Wave 1: Upturn - The mining revolution (1886-1913)

This period marks the Industrial Revolution in South Africa. The industrialization of South Africa that accompanied the opening of the diamond fields of 1867 and gold fields in 1886 saw the recruitment of white skilled labour from Europe and Australia, as local skilled labour was in short supply. The moment marked a turning point in the transformation of South Africa from an agrarian country into a modern capitalist state. As deep level mining was an expensive enterprise, production costs had to be kept low and a vast cheap reservoir of labour was created through the proletarianisation of agrarian black labour (van der Velden and Visser 2006, 1). Thus a racial social division of labour commenced from the outset of capitalist social relations.

There was a rapid expansion of the gold industry between 1904-09 during which gold production doubled and the diamond industry became very prosperous (Katzen 1964, 69). In line with the long upswing, the Chamber of Mines had to ensure a greater supply and flow of African migrant labour to the mines and established the Rand Native Labour Association (1896), which functioned as a monopsony and by 1911 they were able to cut the annual cash wage of black workers by over a quarter. Furthermore, the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911 made the breach of contract and strike action by black workers illegal. Black workers' freedom of movement was also controlled through pass laws. Not only was all African labour temporary; African laborers were housed in controlled compounds which gave employers increasing power over workers to minimize political association and the formation of trade unions (Feinstein 2005, 66).

Towards the end of the expansive wave, the mine owners decided to experiment with changes to the labour process with the introduction of smaller rock drills technology, the use of which was passed onto black miners. It was from 1907 onwards that white workers more readily used the strike weapon to prevent the reduction of their labour power and to prevent cheaper black and Chinese labour from replacing them. The offensive strikes in 1913 and 1914 resulted in the recognition of white unions, and the Chamber of Mines agreed that the status quo relating to the color bar on the mines would remain (Visser 2000, 8). A debilitating factor for labour in utilizing the expansive long wave more effectively was the subjective elements, such as the racial division of the workforce, the short history of proletarianisation of black workers, and the existence of authoritarian barriers to unionization.

Long Wave 1: Downturn - consolidation of racial capitalism (1914-33)

The downturn starting in 1914 marked the beginning of a depressive long wave, and capital needed to increase the rate and mass of surplus value (profit). South Africa was not immune to

the general crisis of 1920-1924 that affected the whole imperialist chain. The class struggle intensified when the price of gold dropped and the Chamber of Mines attempted to reduce the wages of white labour and replace many with black unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Davies 1979, 145-157). The offensive strike of 25,000 white workers in 1922, named the Rand Rebellion, occurred on an upturn of the cycle. By the time the strike ended, 153 miners had been killed by the Defense Force. The outcome of the strike marked the final division between black and white workers and the weaning of white, militant workers away from industrial action through a system of job reservation. A key result of the strike was the consolidation of the alliance between an emerging Afrikaner nationalist movement and white labour (Webster 2016, 4).

The Mines and Works Amendment Act of 1926 effectively neutralized the opposition, as the law protected skilled and semi-skilled positions of white miners in certain occupations (van der Velden and Visser 2006, 3). From this point onward, all white workers, regardless of skill level, formed part of a white labour aristocracy. However, the victory of the mining houses was the generalization of changes to the labour process “upon almost every sphere of the production process” (Davies 1979, 69). Black miners were increasingly drawn into semi-skilled and skilled work but under white supervision. With the reorganization of the mining industry and the introduction of the jack-hammer, gold production by 1923 exceeded the 1916 peak level (Katzen 1964, 76). Despite increased militancy of workers, mining capital was victorious in introducing cost-cutting technologies and generally reorganizing the labour process during this depressive long wave. This restructuring was necessary for the capitalist class to redress the decline in the profit rate.

Long Wave II: Upturn - rise of manufacture and agriculture (1939- 1973)

With a gold mining boom in 1933-1939, the country rapidly pulled out of the depression and, with the expansion of manufacturing, the labour force increased by 77 per cent. Due to World War II, many white skilled workers throughout all industries were drawn into the army. As there was an acute shortage of white skilled workers, black workers were employed in increasing numbers in skilled and semi-skilled positions in the war industry. The subjective factors in this period developed in favor of the black working class. This included the increase in the social weight of the black proletariat but also the levels of self-organization.

With the growth in industrialization in the 1920s, several black industrial unions began to emerge initiated, inter alia, by the Communist Party of South Africa. Despite reluctance by the Chamber of Mines to recognize black trade unions, workers were successful in founding

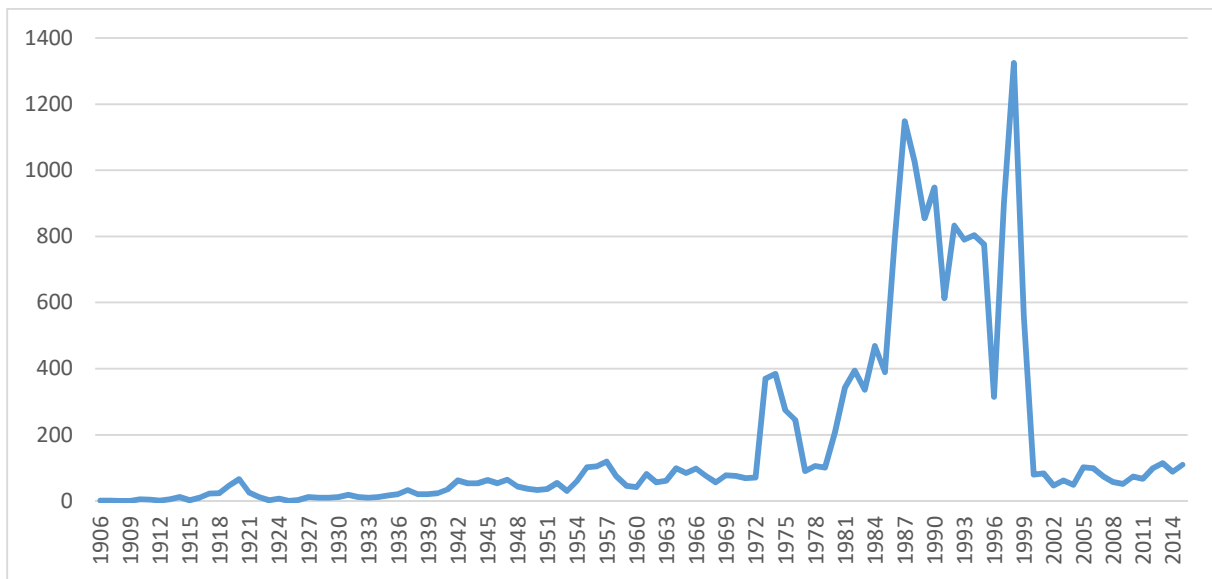
the African Mine Workers Union (AMWU) in 1941. When post-war food shortages occurred, the union demanded freedom of association, family housing, a minimum daily wage of 10 shillings and two weeks paid leave. In 1946, at the peak of the business cycle, about 70,000 workers went on a general strike. It was the largest industrial strike of that time. After five days, the police crushed the offensive strike, leaving 12 workers dead and 1,200 injured. The AMWU was forced to retreat in disarray (van der Velden and Visser 2006, 9).

The Afrikaner nationalists used the threat of the increasing strength of the black labour movement to win the 1948 election. The National Party came to power and increasingly began to intensify institutionalised racial discrimination in the workplace. This period saw a considerable increase in the racial wage gap and the deterioration of the material conditions for Africans. From this period on, strikes increasingly took on an economic and political character. Shortly after, in 1955, an alliance between the African National Congress (ANC) and the newly formed South African Congress of Trade Unions was forged (Webster 2016, 5).

Halfway along the expansionist long wave, the class struggle intensified. Between 1963-1965, real economic growth rates increased to 7.7% per annum and 4.8% between 1966-1975 (Smit and Van der Walt 1972, 44). Research and development increased rapidly towards the end of the expansionist long wave (in the mid-1960s) in the mining, manufacturing and agriculture sectors. This, Gelb (1991, 116-117) argued, was more than just cost cutting, it was also a response to the more organised, class conscious and militant black labour movement. Thus it was the interaction between the objective and subjective factors that played an important role in technological development.

Mass actions continued through the 1960s and, although strikes frequently occurred, the number of workers involved in strikes remained small. By the end of the 1960s, the average trade union strike frequency (figure 10) increased before the offensive strike wave of the 1970s.

Figure 10: South Africa strike frequency 1906-2015



Source: Department of Manpower, Department of Labour, Human Science Research Council, ILO Laboursta, and van der Velden (2006).

The offensive strikes of Durban in 1973 occurred on the upper turning point of the expansive phase of a long wave (figure 9) and are regarded as a watershed in the history of the black labour movement; heralding the revival of trade unionism in South Africa. The strikes concerned low wages, the high unemployment rate and poverty, and involved up to 100,000 black workers. These strikes were widespread and the spontaneous character of the strike movement demonstrated, for the first time, the real power of black workers. Despite the lack of formal organisation, their actions were able to bring pressure to bear on the industrial relations system (van der Velden 2006, 12). Between 1973 and 1976, the highest frequency of strikes occurred – about 318 annually compared to an average of 73 for the 1960s, 66 for the 1950s and 49 for the 1940s. It was thus the turning point of 1973 that paved the way for an increased intensity of the class struggle during the depressive long wave.

Long Wave II: Downturn - the period of neo-liberalism (1974-2015⁶²)

The depressive economic long wave that started in 1974 was triggered by the exogenic factor of the OPEC oil crisis (Gelb 1991, 2) and was seen, in part, as an expression of the structural problems in the productive sectors of the economy, viz. industry, agriculture and mining. Gelb

⁶² The year 2015 represents the end period of this study and not the end of the depressive long wave.

regarded South Africa's capitalist crisis as a 'turning point', as the economy could no longer develop in the same form and began to decay as "a resumption of sustained accumulation requires the emergence of a new model" of growth (ibid., 2). The growth model that emerged after the post-war period can be characterised as racial Fordism. This model focused on extending industrialisation in favour of sophisticated industrial goods for a predominantly white consumer market. From a real GDP growth rate average of 4.9% from 1945-1974, the growth rate for the whole of the 1980s was, on average, a mere 1.5% (ibid., 4). Thus South Africa was faced with a major structural crisis compounded by the world economic situation and the political events that deepened the class struggle.

By 1976, the stay-aways and strikes moved from the economic to the political and drew high school students into what became known as the 1976 student uprising. This represented an intensification of a long wave of class struggle. The 1973-1976 offensive strike wave characteristics were different from those in the surrounding years as the strike frequency was higher and strikes tended to be longer in duration and more intense (they involved a higher proportion of the work force and a greater number of establishments). Unlike the 1960s, the mid 1970s saw diminishing profitability and political instability, prompting capital to seek a modification of the racial division of labour and, ultimately, the possibility of removing of the job colour bar was on the table. By 1977, the government appointed an enquiry into labour called the Wiehahn Commission which led to the scrapping of job reservation laws and which was followed, in 1979, by the legalisation of black trade unions. Henceforth the trade union movement became the major representative of the working class and increasingly took a more prominent political position (Visser 2007, 1).

With the legislative victory recognizing black trade unions, an offensive 7-year strike wave took place, starting in 1980 and ending in the 1987 defeat of the National Union of Mineworkers strike. Despite this setback, black trade unionism flourished and became the world's most militant trade union movement after Solidarity in Poland. Black trade union membership increased by 300% and economic and political strikes became more commonplace in the struggle to defeat the apartheid state. Both the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African trade unions (COSATU) was launched on this strike wave, further adding to the confidence of the labour movement as a major political force. The offensive 1970s strike wave paved the way for a sudden reversal of historical trends, resulting in substantial real increases in African incomes and a significant reduction in South African inequality (Devereux 1983, 1) as well as changes in the racialised labour process.

Compared with the 370 strikes that took place in 1973, the number of strikes reached an unprecedented 1148 in 1987. Compared to the 98,378 strikers in 1973, there were 591,421 in 1987. Further, almost 6 million workdays were lost in 1987 (due to a long and massive strike in the mining industry), compared to 229,282 in 1973. The masses were on the march and a revolutionary atmosphere prevailed, and the ruling class prepared an attack on the economic front.

As the economic crisis deepened in the depressive long wave, the 1956 Labour Relations Act was amended in 1983 to allow for labour brokers – agencies that supply unskilled and skilled workers to industry. By 1986 there was a steep decline in employment (Theron, Godfrey, and Lewis 2005, 1). Steadily, the use of labour brokers and outsourcing became a common measure of cost cutting by industry, which resulted in major struggles in the workplace.

The long wave of struggle from 1973 to 1990 (17 years), established a close interconnection between the economic and political strike, and ensured a wide mass movement. In the context of both an economic and political crisis, the ruling classes were forced to review the maintenance of the apartheid system and by February 1990, the president of the apartheid state, De Klerk lifted the bans on the African National Congress (ANC) and the Communist Party of South Africa, and released Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, thereby enabling a negotiated, gradual end of apartheid.

By 1994, South Africa had achieved a political revolution but not an economic one, celebrating its first democratic elections. This was the culmination of a mass strike that had started in 1973 and had lasted just over twenty years, and – in a similar fashion to Russia's ten-year wave – had been successful in combining both economic and political strikes into a genuinely national mass movement. The impact was so significant that the ruling class sought a compromise solution that would save the capitalist system and restore profitability in a new model of accumulation, a democratic capitalist dispensation.

Marked by the abolishment of apartheid, this turning point led to structural changes in the reconfiguration of the industrial relations system, the economy, and the political system, as well as a profound change in radical and socialist thought. The outcome of the long wave of class struggle saw the apartheid system's best organised and strongest opponent, COSATU, reap huge dividends. A new industrial relations regime was established and encompassed almost all of labour's struggle demands and an array of new industrial relations institutions (Buhlungu 2010, 164).

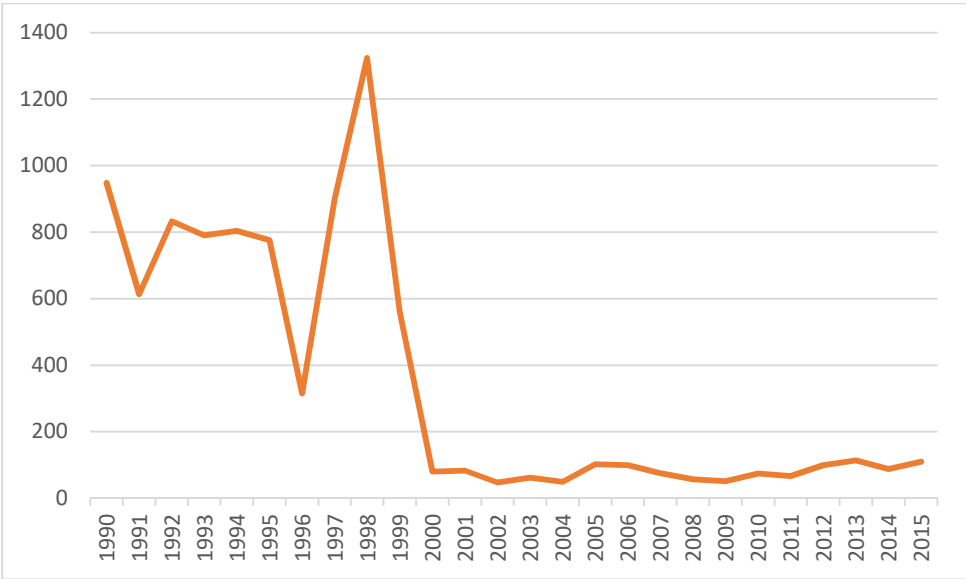
At the end of the twenty-first century, the achievements of South Africa's labour movement had no parallel, as labour movements elsewhere in the world were in retreat and

gains were being rolled back. While unions elsewhere were losing membership, unions in South Africa were gaining members. COSATU had 400,000 members in 1985, 1.3 million in 1994 (ibid., 59, 90) and 2.2 million members in 2012 (COSATU 2015, 13).

However, the battle to reorganize the labour process from the 1970s to the 1980s and the subsequent amendments to the Labour Relations Act of 1995, saw the legalization of a two-tier labour market dividing the workforce between standard and non-standard forms of employment (Theron, Godfrey, and Lewis 2005, 1). This change in legislation opened the door to a proliferation of sub-contracting, outsourcing and labour broking companies which at the same time created a crisis of representation of non-standard workers (Kenney and Webster 1998, 221). On the subjective level, this had the effect of weakening labour on the shop floor and deepening the ideological struggle between the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) on the one hand and COSATU on the other. In 1995, exchange controls were dropped and white monopoly capital – once constrained by sanctions and a militant labour movement – was liberated, resulting in massive capital flight and the initiation of the internationalisation of South African monopoly capitalism.

By 1996, the ANC, with the support of the SACP, abandoned the Reconstruction and Development Programme in favour of the neo-liberal Growth Employment and Redistribution Programme (Thomas 2007, 125). The result has been a sustained and brutal attack by capital on the capacity of the working class to reproduce itself; with consistently high unemployment rates, increases in inequality and poverty and the accrual of a rising share of national income to the capitalist class. In the final analysis, the ruling class gained a major victory over working class forces. In the immediate post-apartheid period, the trend of increased frequency of strikes (figure 11) continued, with 1,324 strikes – the highest number of strikes in South African history – taking place in 1998. However, between 2000 and 2009, the strike frequency averaged 71 per annum, which was even lower than the 1960s and these were largely defensive in character.

Figure 11: Strike frequency 1990-2015



Source: Department of Labour, Annual Industrial Action Reports, ILO Stat.

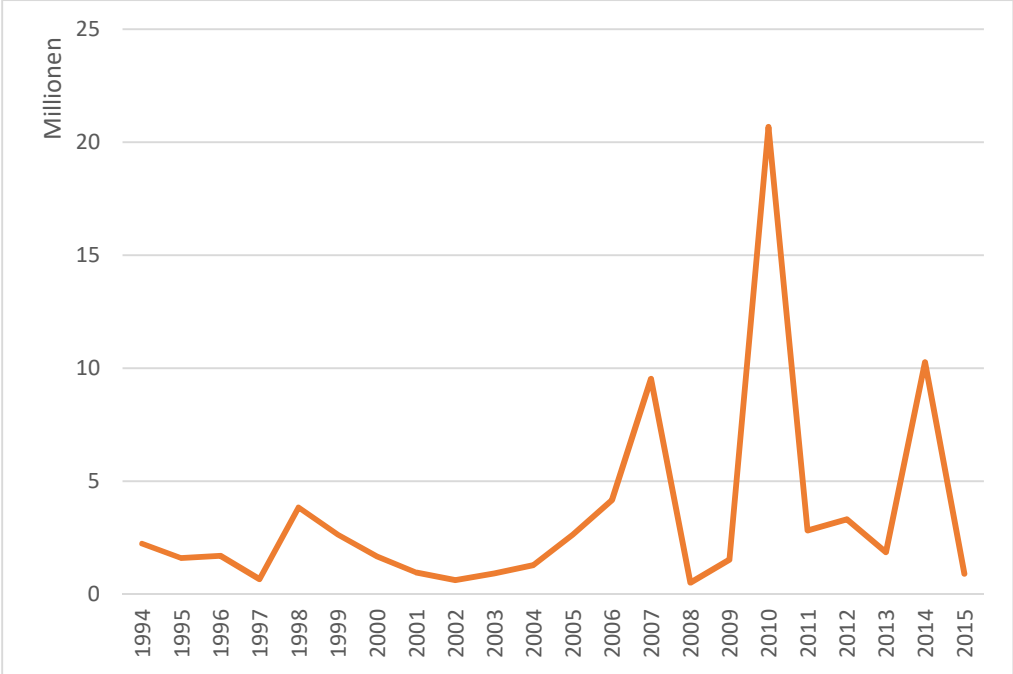
This decline in the number of pro-cyclical strikes is attributed to new counter tendencies. The amendment of the Labour Relations Act in 1995, played a significant role as the “attendant improvement in dispute resolution procedures has led to a greater predictability around the bargaining process and a sustained reduction in the incidence of strike activity” (Department of Labour 2003, 2). This new trend of centralized bargaining, which encompassed three-year agreements and the sectoral determination of minimum wages, had the effect of subduing trade unions and pushed them to conform to legislative victories. Thus the new industrial relations system acted as a counter tendency to strikes, which added to the demobilization of the working class and the subsequent bureaucratization of the trade unions.

Despite the low frequency of strike action, the year 2007 marked the beginning of a new militancy. The 2007 strikes took place on an upward turn of the business cycle and are largely attributed to the huge support of the offensive Public Service strike involving some 700,000 workers, which was closely followed by the more successful wave of 26 offensive strikes mainly led by workers committees at FIFA 2010 World Cup construction sites (Cottle 2011, 101).

While centralized bargaining and sectoral determinations continued to exert a downward pressure on strike frequency, a trend of increasing numbers of days lost due to industrial action accelerated. The 9.5 million days lost (figure 12) in 2007 more than doubled to 20.6 million in 2010. Most of the days lost were in the public sector, where some 1.3 million workers came out on another militant strike (Department of Labour 2011, 8). What was

significant about this strike was that for the first time the ANC felt that it could not control its major alliance partner, COSATU, which led the labour movement (Ceruti 2010).

Figure 12: Number of working days lost 1994-2015



Source: Department of Labour, Annual Industrial Action Reports, ILO Stat

Further, there was an unprecedented increase in the share of unprotected (mainly wildcat) strikes from 44% in 2012, 52% in 2013, 48% in 2014 and 55% in 2015. Thus, the increase in the number of days lost and the percentage increase in unprotected strikes are important indicators of a change in the mood of the working class. Between 1994 and 2012, the profit rate in the non-financial corporate sector almost doubled from 7.4% to 13.5% (Reddy 2015, 111). According to a 2013 report by Credit Suisse, South African companies are among the most profitable in the world (Steyn, *M&G*, June 14, 2016). The capitalist class has thus been extremely successful in developing a new model of accumulation through the consolidation of neo-liberalism and the generalized reorganization of work in post-apartheid South Africa. This has resulted in the most sustained and brutal attack by capital on the capacity of the working class to reproduce itself. About 54% of full-time employees – 5.5 million workers – earn below the working-poor line of R4 125 (€275) (Isaacs 2016, viii) and the official unemployment rate (i.e. excluding discouraged work seekers) averaged 23% from 2008-2014 (Statistics South Africa 2016). It is thus within the generalized deteriorating conditions of reproduction of the

working class and historical frustration that we should now situate the recent ‘revival upheaval’ of offensive strikes.

The upward phase in the business cycle was characterized by a marked deterioration in the labour relations environment...Although the mining sector bore the brunt of these disruptions, a number of other economic sectors were also unsettled by industrial action between 2011 and 2014 (South African Reserve Bank 2016)

The offensive wildcat strikes of December 2011 to April 2012 occurred on the upturn of the business cycle and were led by workers’ committees of post office workers against labour broking. This also exposed the lack of will by unions to take up the struggle of non-standard workers. These workers ended the system of labour broking in the post office, ensured permanent employment of 5000 workers and doubled the salaries of workers to R4,000 (€258) (Dickinson 2015, 12). The post office workers became the first group of workers in South African history to reverse the labour broking in full and win a 100% increase in wages.

Both the Marikana strike and the Western Cape Farm Workers’ strike started in August 2012 toward the end of the upper turning point of the business cycle of September 2009 to November 2013. Rock drillers initiated a wildcat strike at Lonmin, a platinum mine, in pursuit of a pay raise to R12,500 (€806) per month. The strike was led by an independent strike committee and the majority union, the NUM, actively opposed and sabotaged the strike siding with Lonmin management (Alexander 2013, 607-608). On the 16th August, a special paramilitary task team forcefully broke up a peaceful assembly of workers killing 34 mine workers. This became known as the Marikana Massacre. While massacres of this kind ought to lead to defeat, the Marikana strikers carried on in “one of the most remarkable acts of courage in labour history” (ibid., 609). However, this strike secured only a partial victory, with a 14% increase in wages.

The historic Western Cape Farm Workers’ strike lasted from 27 August 2012 to 22 January 2013. The strike and associated community uprising spread to 25 rural towns and was led largely by seasonal workers coordinated by “locally based organizations or vanguard groups” (Wilderman 2015, 8-13). The farm workers’ strike was historic as it was the first strike wave in the post-apartheid period to unite workers and communities, and this forced the hand of government to announce a 52% increase in the daily minimum wage. In general, employment figures in the agricultural sector indicate a trend towards the stabilization of employment along with a significant shift from casual and seasonal to permanent employment (Plaas 2014). Both

these factors are reversals of previous trends, marking the beginning of changes in the labour process brought about through the agency of farm workers against capital.

A year after the farm workers strike, on 22 January, the longest and most expensive strike in South African history broke out in the platinum industry organized around a demand for the Marikana living wage of R12,500 (€851) per month. The interesting fact here is that the offensive strikes and struggles from 2014-2015 occur on the downturn of the business cycle. This is a strong indicator not just of the 'relative autonomy of the class struggle' but that the ability of the working class to defend itself was being asserted and a change in consciousness was occurring. The 70,000 strong, five-month platinum strike hit 40% of global production. The stoppage dragged the economy into contraction in the first quarter of 2014 and cost the companies almost R24bn (€1.6bn) in lost revenue. The final agreement between the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) and the three platinum producers included a R1,000 per month salary or 20% increase for lower earners (Bell, *Fin24*, June 24, 2014).

On July 1, just over a week after the platinum strike, the 220,000 workers of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) downed tools, demanding a salary increase of 12%. The strike, lasting one month without pay, concluded with a 4% real wage increase. While labour brokers will not be banned as NUMSA had demanded, it was agreed that a number of regulatory instruments would be introduced, including the appointment of compliance officers to act on complaints of alleged abuse and noncompliance (Steyn, *M&G*, July 28, 2014).

The Marikana strike wave changed the political landscape and gave impetus to the nationwide 2015 student "Fees Must Fall" protests at higher education institutions and later expanded to include the "Outsourcing Must Fall" campaign. In the absence of leadership by the National Health Education Allied Workers' Union, workers were mainly being led by workers' committees, which developed a call for an end to outsourcing at higher education institutions nationally. The combined actions by students, workers and academics, ensured that almost all universities across South Africa agreed to end outsourcing on campuses and to employ workers on the same conditions as full-time workers, resulting in most wage increases being between 66-163%. This event was an expression of a new level of consciousness and unity, with significant implications for the power relations at tertiary institutions. It constitutes the third instance of a reversal of labour process restructuring in the current period.

However, does the gradual increase in the number of offensive strikes starting in 2007, the occurrence of the Marikana Massacre and the farm workers' revolt of 2012, the five-month platinum strike (the longest in South Africa history) and the one-month metalworkers' strike in 2014 indicate that a new wave of offensive strikes has begun? Or is the latter just a short-lived

‘revival’ upheaval on a depressive long wave of defensive strikes? A key question is: Has South Africa reached a turning point?

There are several structural dimensions that are being affected. On the economic side, we have seen direct challenges and changes to the labour process and huge costs associated with strikes to the economy. On the industrial relations level, there is pressure by business and the formal opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, for changes in the law to undermine the right to strike (*News24*, 30 July 2014). Further, in January 2015, the Labour Relations Amendment Act (No.6 of 2014) took effect, ensuring that vulnerable groups of employees, especially those employed through labour brokers, get adequate protection (Patel 2014). On the political level, a new opposition to the ANC, the Economic Freedom fighters, was formed in 2013, and the more militant NUMSA was expelled from COSATU in 2015, setting the stage for the launch of an alternative, politically independent federation. Further, in 2015 we saw the biggest university protest wave in South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994. Also, in the 2016 municipal elections, the support for the ANC – the manager of neo-liberalism in South Africa – fell, indicating a possible loss of hegemony.

While some have argued that the Marikana strike wave is not a turning point, they have limited their analysis to a formalistic view of the events as a specific ‘labour dispute’ gone wrong and cite the fact that the labour relations system remains intact (Friedman 2012; Bhorat and Oosthuizen 2012). Other mainstream economists instead focus on the irrationality of the action in terms of loss of income to workers. Does the fact that Marikana workers lost 12% of their annual wages, that R10 billion in wages were lost in the 2014 Platinum strike, or that NUMSA workers only gained 4% in its one-month strike, relegate the strike waves as defensive incidents? By focusing on the formalism of industrial relations and economic views, the above perspectives fail to comprehend the complexity of strike dynamics and the historical process of class struggle that is being unleashed. As Marx said, regarding the dynamic of strikes:

In order to rightly appreciate the value of strikes and combinations, we must not allow ourselves to be blinded by the apparent insignificance of their economical results, but hold, above all things, in view their moral and political consequences (Marx 1853).

Conclusion

This preliminary study examined the defensive and offensive character of strikes located within the Marxist theory of long waves of capitalist development. Unlike Mandel’s exposition of long waves of capitalist development, which did not deal with the correlation between strikes and

the shorter business cycle but mainly class struggle cycles and long waves, I incorporated the business cycle approach to strikes into long wave theory to develop a clearer picture of strike movements. This allows us to observe the tendency for offensive and defensive strikes to align to cyclical fluctuations of the business cycle in both expansionary and depressive long waves. The difference is that during an expansive long wave, strikes are fewer and shorter in duration, while in the depressive long wave, the frequency, intensity and duration of strikes increase and the class struggle intensifies. Thus strikes in South Africa are generally pro-cyclical, fluctuating around the long-term asymmetrical curve of capitalist development.

All the offensive strikes regarded as turning points in South Africa, such as the 1992 Rand Rebellion, the African Mine Workers' Strike of 1946, the 1973 Durban Strikes, and the 2012 Marikana Strike took place on the upturn of the business cycle. The 1973 Durban Strikes thus far constitute the only strike wave to occur on the turning point from an expansive long wave (1939-1973) to a depressive long wave (1974-ongoing) and stand as a watershed in the history of the labour movement that heralded the revival of trade unionism in South Africa.

Motivated by the desire to radically increase the rate of surplus value the attempt to generalize basic cost cutting innovation and impose changes to the labour process during the two long depressive phases of 1914-33 and 1974-present resulted in the intensification of class struggle. This is important in understanding the current wave of offensive strikes, which is not only a result of greater immiseration of the working class but is also a direct challenge to the labour process as workers demand an end to outsourcing and labour broking. What is significant here is that the most sustained attack on the neo-liberal cost cutting labour process occurred in the post office, the higher education system and, to a small degree, the farming sector. The 2014 NUMSA strike is indicative of the fact that the challenges to the labour process are set to unfold in the private sector as well. Thus it is the interplay of the subjective factors with the objective factors that allow for dynamic changes to the capitalist labour process to occur.

Unlike the 1973 strike wave, which saw a burst in the rate of strikes, days lost and number of workers involved, the post-Marikana wave has only seen a dramatic increase in the number of days lost due to industrial action. The key differences in these two turning points are, firstly, that in the post-apartheid period the counter tendencies are much stronger and extensive within the industrial relations system, and, secondly, that the organised labour movement exerts a downward pressure on the intensification of class struggle. However, as social structures and class consciousness are directly related and influence each other, what we are witnessing is that an increasing share of unorganized and organized workers are bypassing trade unions and the industrial relations system, resulting in increased conflict.

We are thus entering a new period where the victory of neo-liberal capitalism in creating a more flexible labour force through changes in the labour process is being challenged by the very workers this barbaric system created. As we have seen, the new vanguard of the labour movement is mainly being drawn from the disposable reserve army of labour; the casual, part-time, migrant and seasonal workers employed mostly by sub-contractors or labour brokers. In the long waves of the rise and decline of working class struggle, it is truly remarkable that it has taken South Africa's working class about two decades in the 'school of war' to see that a new model of accumulation – a neo-liberal democratic capitalist dispensation and its industrial relations system – is not in their interest.

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Part IV: The mobilization and strategies of migrant workers

9. Resistance practices of migrant domestic workers: the case study of Ukrainian workers in Italy

Oksana Balashova

Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the dynamics of resistance practices of Ukrainian migrant domestic workers in Italy. First, the article explores the issues around the gender order and women identities under the Soviet Union and in contemporary Ukraine in order to establish the social context of pre-emigration. Based on extensive fieldwork, it further examines the everyday forms of workers' resistance both in the privacy of the household and in public spaces.

Keywords: Ukrainian migrant domestic workers, Italy, identity, representation, resistance practices

Introduction

In the last two decades Ukrainian labor migration to Italy grew considerably. The demand for domestic and care workers in Italy, supported by the deeply-rooted familial welfare system, has propelled large flows of migrant workers – with few other options – to enter into the domestic work sector. Legislation regulating labor relations in the sector in Italy is relatively well developed in comparison to other European countries. However, workers continue to frequently experience poor working conditions, discrimination, lack of maternity and health care benefits, and confront persistent practices of precarious and informal employment. Recent years have seen a surge of activism within the ever-growing Ukrainian community in Italy. Further exploration is needed to determine the causes of this increase, though it may be related both to resent political and military crises in Ukraine, as well as the possibility of increasing consciousness among the migrant workers about their dire employment situation. A closer look into migrant workers' mobilization is necessary to understand the dynamics and character of their struggles, and in particular to understand what opportunities for successful rights advocacy emerge from within this community and in allied civil society.

How do workers negotiate their individual and collective identities? Do domestic workers wage the majority of their struggles in the privacy of the household, or bring them to the public? Do they act alone, with others, formally or informally in association? What elements form the basis for organizing and resistance of the domestic workers? While there is a lot of

scholarship focusing on the resistance practices of domestic workers both within and outside the labor movement, research on the practices of resistance by migrant workers from Eastern Europe is lacking. Given the large, growing, and dynamic Ukrainian community working in the domestic sector in Italy, this community presents a rich opportunity to explore the factors around the development and success of resistance and organizing. This paper intends to investigate the issues around individual and collective everyday forms of resistance of Ukrainian domestic workers while taking into consideration the impact of such categories as class, gender, ethnicity, and age.

Unfortunately, a great deal of scholarship on migrant domestic workers tends to diminish or minimize the agency of workers, putting women workers into a perhaps paternalistic framework of victimization. It is common to describe them in atomized and minimizing terms, portraying them as vulnerable laborers isolated in private households (Schwenken 2005, 8). In contrast, in my research I consistently found them to be workers with a strong and specific identity as self-conscious migrants that are capable of engaging in struggles for better working and living conditions. As argued by Leyla Keough, women's identities are multi-faceted and involve numerous positionalities of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and citizenship (Keough 2006, 436). In line with this statement, I refer to the identities of Ukrainian migrant women in Italy as previously socialist, Orthodox or Greek Catholic, as Ukrainian women workers hold specific positionalities in regards to their class, education, work trajectories, linguistic abilities, and age. In this paper, I will explore the factors that shape these positionalities and examine their impact on the formation on Ukrainian migrant women's identities in Italy and their resistance practices. Throughout, I will endeavor to impartially evaluate agency, and try not to perpetuate stereotypes or use the language of weakness that stem from the specific demographics of the workforce, or location of the work (domestic and household).

The research is informed by qualitative methods such as in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observation conducted between November 2014 and May 2016 in Italy. The research was carried out in three main locations: Bologna, Rome, and Naples, which allowed for the evaluation of the migratory experiences in the diverse contexts of Northern and Southern Italy. A total of 45 interviews were conducted with Ukrainian domestic workers, representatives of Ukrainian migrant associations, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, and Italian as well as Ukrainian trade unionists. The majority of Ukrainian domestic workers were identified by the snowball method while interviewing community leaders, trade unionists, and priests of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. Additionally, participant observation was

conducted while attending trade union help desks and clinics for migrant workers, religious gatherings, and trade union events organized for migrant domestic workers. Throughout the field trip phase in Rome, Bologna, and Naples, observations were conducted in public parks and parking lots of Ukrainian buses that serve as traditional places of weekly meetings and exchange for Ukrainians. The chosen methods allow for a better understanding of the experiences and practices of the interviewees in the specific context of their individual biographies and broader social settings, thus providing for a more “holistic approach” (Devine 2002, 99).

The paper starts with providing a brief overview of Ukrainian migration to Italy, followed by the analysis of the gender order and women’s identities under the Soviet Union and in contemporary Ukraine. This provides a necessary foundation of the social context, pre-migration. The paper will further explore the possible impact of the socialization of Ukrainian migrant domestic workers on the formation of their identities in Italy. Finally the paper will proceed to examine the struggles and resistance practices of Ukrainian migrant domestic workers in the household and public spaces.

Contextualizing Ukrainian migration in Italy

Since gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine experienced a consistent pattern of large emigration flows. Triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the mass emigration processes of Ukrainians became an inseparable feature of the current socio-economic picture of Ukraine. Shattered by dramatic social and economic transformations, the decision to pursue a path of labor migration often presented a survival strategy for members of average Ukrainian households. According to the 2013 ILO labor migration research, about 1.2 million Ukrainians had a job or searched for a job abroad in 2012 (ILO 2013). However, other sources estimate the number of Ukrainians employed abroad at about 4.5 million, with over 2 million working in Russia and about 1.7 million in the European Union (EU) (Markov, Ivankova-Stetsyuk, and Seleshchuk 2009). In the EU, Italy is the second largest destination country for Ukrainian migrant workers (ILO 2013, 36), after Poland. According to the official Italian statistics, there are 233,726 Ukrainians living in Italy (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali 2015, 20), while the unofficial estimations rise up to over 600,000 people (Markov, Ivankova-Stetsyuk, and Seleshchuk 2009, 30).

One of the most salient features about Ukrainian migration to Italy is its particular gender and age composition. According to the 2014 Report of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies on the Ukrainian Community in Italy, 80 percent of Ukrainians residing in Italy are

women mainly between 40 and 59 years old (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali 2014). Even though the employment of Ukrainian migrant workers is showing some signs of increasing diversity, the data reveals that the majority of them (73.6%) are still employed in the domestic and care work sector (ILO 2013, 45). Given the education and economic context of the former Soviet Union, Ukrainians are often abandoning high-skilled employment in Ukraine to seek domestic sector jobs in Italy. This dynamic leads to contradictions in class mobility, expressed in the simultaneous increase in their financial position and decrease in their social status. Additionally, their employment is often negotiated through a number of ethnic stereotypes (e.g. particular skills and suitability of Ukrainian women for domestic work) that limit workers' ability to search for alternative employment options and thus confine them to the domestic work sector.

In spite of specific national legislation and a relatively long tradition of trade union bargaining in the domestic work sector (Sarti 2010), there are still considerable gaps in terms of social and labor protection in Italy. Law No.339 that dates back to 1958 recognized domestic work as a form of employment and set a number of labor standards in the sector. In 1974 the first collective bargaining agreement was signed, which introduced a number of important provisions including minimal wages, maximum working time and a classification of occupational levels. Important amendments to the collective agreement occurred in 2007, when a more comprehensive classification of occupational levels was introduced, working time was reduced and a possibility of job-sharing was formalized.

These problems, and the overall situation of migrant workers are further exacerbated by the high informality and segmentation of the Italian labor market, as well as the imperfection of the national legislation (Reyneri 2003; Scrinzi 2008). For example, the requirement of at minimum 20-hour-per-week job contracts for the purpose of work permit renewal, in practice translates into a vast number of 25-hour-per-week jobs providing a reciprocal convenience for the employer (saving on social security contributions) and for the worker (a possibility to extend the work permit). Another example is the fact that the immigration law forbids the redemption of paid social contributions if the worker returns to the country of origin before reaching the age of 65. This creates an incentive for irregular employment for those domestic migrant workers that aim to pursue shorter-term employment in Italy. At the same time, the near absence of official employment agencies for domestic workers provides a fertile ground for the operation of informal groups that provide costly and often unreliable services to workers. The most common way to search for work remains through word-of-mouth in migrant networks, as well as through churches and migrant associations. This leads to the further entrenchment of

informality in the domestic work sector, and renders the situation of migrant workers more precarious.

The particular character of domestic and care work includes both the professional and emotional involvement of employees. Work in private households often involves abuse and exploitation, but also offers space for negotiating inequalities and combatting hierarchies. In some cases, workers prefer to negotiate at the workplace, employing individual acts of “immediate struggles” (Parrenas 2001, 188) to undermine their employers’ authority and negotiate better wages and working conditions. In others, workers wage collective struggles through strikes and demonstrations, or choose to pursue their interests by organizing in associations or trade unions and building alliances with civil society organizations (Boris and Nadasen 2015, 5–7). In many cases, domestic workers start organizing around common identities based on ethnicity, gender, age, or language. In order to understand the emergence and dynamics of migrant workers’ mobilizations I also explore the workers’ collective identities. Following the definition of Polletta and Jasper, I define collective identity as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution” (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 298). I treat collective identity not as a fixed category, but one that is being continuously shaped and modified. It can be a part of a personal identity, and may be perceived as an imagined shared position or relation. In line with this argument, I will explore the potential impact of socialization in the Soviet Union and contemporary Ukraine on the formation of migrant women’s identities in Italy, as well as its effect on mobilization and resistance practices for domestic workers.

Gender order and women’s identities: From the Soviet Union to contemporary Ukraine

The majority of the Ukrainian women interviewed for this research were between 40 and 60 years old, and thus grew up and spent a considerable part of their lives in the Soviet Union. I argue that the Soviet gender order and gender-related policies have serious implications on the identities of migrant women currently engaged in the domestic and care work sector abroad. In order to explore the potential impact of socialization it is important to look deeper inside the Soviet gender order and policies, division of labor, and gender organization of a socialist household. Here I refer to “gender order” following the definition of Raewyn Connell as a “whole societal pattern of gender relations”, in contrast to the concept of a “gender regime” reserved for gender relation patterns in one particular institution (Connell 2006, 839).

In part, the Soviet Union promoted gender equality and related policies due to the need to ensure the participation of both male and female workers in the labor-intensive and capital-

poor industry. The state often claimed that the policies pursued aimed to emancipate women through the state taking over a part of the reproductive work and allowing the women to integrate into the labor market. However, many of the state's policy promises remained unfulfilled, and women were often bound to the double burden of paid productive and unpaid reproductive work (Zhurzhenko 2001, 37). Moreover, women's roles were still constructed as those responsible for mothering and taking care of the "social cells" of the Soviet society. The idea of a "superwoman" was particularly reinforced during the Stalin era. This idea emphasized women's reproductive role while at the same time supported their participation in the workforce (Racioppi and See 1995, 822). This "stereotype of femininity" was normalized by the state, and absorbed by numerous generations of Soviet women (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2004, 312). The prevalent "working mother" gender contract presumed the balancing of both family and professional chores, for which the state gave the basic social support like health care, maternity, and childcare benefits etc. The collective identities of women were thus derived from two major sources: a principal traditional role of a mother, and a supplementary role of being a part of the workforce (Zhurzhenko 2001, 38).

Though the responsibility for social reproduction was partly ensured by the state, it still largely remained the domain of the women themselves, often supported by older generations within families. Due to the relatively young retirement age, the responsibility for home chores and taking care of the children often shifted to pensioners (Semenova 1996). In order to ensure the inclusion of women in the labor force the state did provide a relatively developed social infrastructure with its system of kindergartens, day care centers, maternity facilities, and collective dining halls (Solari 2014, 138). This partial socialization of reproduction, though not a complete delegation of the housework to the public sector, substantially weakened the demand for paid domestic work. The domestic work sector as such was never fully professionalized. In the 1950s, paid domestic work was a mostly informal "bridge occupation" for women moving to the cities from rural areas, or an employment opportunity for women with limited civil rights, e.g. from politically repressed families (Rotkirch, Tkach, and Zdravomyslova 2012, 5). In later decades the pre-school and day-care centers system was further expanded and the already low demand for domestic workers decreased.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought with it the shock of drastic economic and social transformations. The situation was worsened by the transition of the Ukrainian economy, which resulted in growing inequalities, privatization, an increasing gap in education opportunities, and worsening working conditions. One of the consequences of the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the erosion of gender relations in Ukraine (Näre 2014, 225). The drastic

decrease of state social programs led to many women having to return to traditional child-rearing roles. This “re-traditionalization” was reinforced by a free market ideology that called for the “normalization” of the post-soviet society and its return to a “genuine” division of labor (Zhurzhenko 2001, 36). The newly emerged patriarchal gender ideology was sustained in the political discourse and was instrumental in the adjustment of women to the “new market society”. The framing of reproduction work as “naturally” female justified transferring the cost of reproduction to individual households. The lines of separation between “public” and “domestic” jobs became much more distinct, with the latter being framed as unproductive, “traditionally female”, and not requiring monetary remuneration. The image of a working mother has thus been substituted with an image of a mother, wife, and homemaker. With the abolition of the state policies that had promoted the massive female participation in the labor force, the women were requested to resume their “traditional” occupation of caring for the family (Racioppi and See 1995, 824).

This erosion of the “working mother gender contract” gave way to the development of novel post-Soviet women’s identities. According to Tatiana Zhurzhenko, these new collective identities are mediated by a market ideology and consumer capitalism, and find their expression in two contrasting models: that of a businesswoman, and of a housewife. The businesswoman identity, by presenting the image of a successful woman entrepreneur, served to legitimize the new economic order and a free market ideology. Women were encouraged to balance between career and family, and not to forget about the importance of reproductive labor in the construction of Ukrainian statehood. Moreover, in the public discourse businesswomen are portrayed as those performing a special “moral” function, responsible for the introduction of ethical norms into the business sphere. This dynamic often led to marginalization, with women confined to low-status and less remunerated positions (Zhurzhenko 2001, 41–43).

The identity of a housewife is closely connected to the revival of Ukrainian statehood and the imaginary employed in the public discourse to justify the new gender politics. A number of authors have indicated the important role that the image of the ancient goddess *Berehynia* played in the return to the pattern of traditional gender roles within families (Rubchak 2009; Solari 2014; Verdery 1994; Zhurzhenko 2001). The mythologized images of the mother-caregiver were, and still are, widely used in order to construct a new female image around the “woman mother”, liberated of the burden of previously compulsory participation in the labor market and allowed to finally return to the peaceful haven of family work. This narrative, claiming to “empower” women, liberating them after the painful Soviet experience, is in fact applied to legitimize the ever-growing gender injustices in the country. In the backlash against

everything associated with the Soviet Communist Party policies, women also almost universally embraced this “new” “traditional” pattern as a contrasting model to the Soviet variant of gender equality. However, this widely accepted gender role didn’t coincide with real life experiences, as the dire economic situation forced many women to work while at the same time performing domestic duties. Regarding this movement, some scholars have talked about a type of “anti-feminism” in Eastern Europe, where some women have been fighting for freedom *from* the labor force (Occhipinti 1996, 16) since often only low-paid and low-status jobs were available.

Due to the dire economic situation, low wages, high unemployment levels, and the structural limitations of starting a business, the previously described housewife and business identities were – and are – in reality only possible for a very limited number of Ukrainian women. They are often pushed to search for strategies of economic survival, thereby going beyond the identities imposed by the society. One of the most common strategies consists in turning towards informal businesses or self-employment. These are seen as measures of last resort as they are often low-paid, lack any social protection, and usually require the abandonment of any prior professional occupation (Ryabchuk 2016, 690). In this light migrating for work abroad presents itself as one of the preferred strategies for women to secure their individual and family survival. For many it offers a change only in the economic activity and not in the gender relations, as many women had for a long time already been the main breadwinners in the family after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Näre 2014, 226). In fact, pursuing a migrant labor path enables many women to continue performing the breadwinner function in their families. The migration of older women – since the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian female workers in Italy are between 40 and 59 years old – is often seen as the most reasonable solution due to even smaller chances of their (re)inclusion into the labor market in Ukraine. Additionally, it is often exactly employment abroad that allows migrants’ daughters and sons to perform the traditional roles of “Berehynias” and “patriarchs” back in Ukraine (Solari 2010, 227). Their remittances help to support the maintenance of the “traditional” family model, with the gender division of labor assigned by society and promoted by a free market ideology. As for the migrant women themselves, it remains necessary to examine how their path as labor migrants, and specifically their employment in the domestic work sector, impacts their identities and influences their resistance patterns.

“It’s better to lose job than dignity”: The struggles of migrant domestic workers in the household

Based on empirical data, I argue that Ukrainian migrant domestic workers in Italy possess multiple subjectivities as domestic sector workers, mothers, religious people, and patriots. Each of these subjectivities is manifested through specific discourses, practices, and resistance patterns employed either in their workplaces or in public spaces.

In contrast to a small and informal domestic work sector in Ukraine, the growing domestic labor market in Italy has been more regulated over the last few decades. For Ukrainian women, employment in domestic and care jobs on the Italian labor market represents the most widespread practice due to limited work options. I argue, that their labor experiences there are to a large extent shaped by their socialization in the Soviet Union and modern Ukraine, where their identities were influenced by specific gender orders, an asymmetrical gendered division of labor, the depreciation of paid and unpaid reproductive work, and the perception of the domestic work sector as legitimately informal. Apart from having to deal with multiple bureaucratic procedures related to regulating their employment situation, workers also have to negotiate novel working identities upon assuming new employment responsibilities in the private space of Italian homes.

In the domestic work sector there are frequent discourses both from the side of employers and employees of being “one of the family”, and constructing their relationship as a familial rather than that of employee and employer. According to Parrenas, such constructions often lead to greater exploitation of the worker (Parrenas 2001). Linda McDowell also stresses that an employer’s discourse of family belonging often increases the link with the worker while reducing financial obligations (2006). Some scholarship on domestic and care work points out that domestic workers construct their employment relationships on emotional and personal, rather than a professional level (Miller and Kaufman 1996). However, another strand in the literature points out that workers often employ a strategy of “professionalizing” their employment in order to strengthen their bargaining position as wage workers (McDowell 2006, 841). As stressed by Pratt, the “discursive battles” whereby a domestic worker challenges the relations of intimacy, are important for the redefinition of domestic work as such, shifting it from the gendered frame of being part of the employers’ family and putting it “within the language of class” (Pratt 2004, 50). The professionalization of domestic work is an important strategy for the recognition of domestic work as both labor and as a profession, and is a significant step towards the possibility of domestic workers claiming labor rights and the right to organize. Moreover, the discursive practices of professionalization are supposed to lead

towards a greater probability of workers' joining and expressing their claims for achieving better labor and social conditions.

Following on from the empirical findings of this research, Ukrainians indeed often emphasize “professional” rather than emotional relationships with the employers while discussing their employment in the domestic work sector. However, trade union membership among the Ukrainian migrant workers in Italy remains low, and collective claims for better wages and working conditions are rare. Instead, they often tend to transfer their struggles to the private spaces of their workplace. Workers introduce subversive acts into the daily routines by manipulating the emotions of their employers in order to influence the script of domestic work and threaten the authority of their employers. According to Parrenas, such individual subversive acts are in fact a form of collective struggle rooted in collective consciousness, a “hidden transcript” used by workers for empowerment and decreasing their dependence on employers (2001, 189–195).

While dealing with their employers, many workers prefer to maintain a formal stance and avoid emotional responses. A few interviewees stressed the importance of maintaining emotional distances and not disclosing personal information with the employers. *“I tried to always remain calm and reason with my employer when she is wrong. Also, I have to be very careful talking about myself and my family, because eventually all this information can be used by the employer against me. I had cases like this, and now I am careful”* (Anna, domestic worker, Rome, October 2015). In spite of the lack of tradition of paid domestic work back home, Ukrainian domestic workers manage to negotiate new professional identities, by avoiding excessive emotional relations with their employers. Workers tend to conceal their previous professional qualifications and experiences gained in Ukraine, instead emphasizing their (novel) professional position as an employee in the field of domestic and care work in Italy. *“Even though I am a doctor by training, I never present myself as such, when I come to work I don't tell anybody that I'm a doctor, that I know and can something... I come and perform a role of a domestic worker, and I am following this role”* (Iryna, domestic worker, Rome, December 2014). *“I don't consider myself to be a servant. I think that I come to work, that I am officially working. I come and work my hours, then go to other work or return home. No, I don't consider myself a servant”* (Oksana, domestic worker, Bologna, June 2015).

Demanding respect and asking for “humane treatment” is often an important strategy of domestic migrant workers in order to mitigate their subordination to their employers (Näre 2007, 10; Vianello 2014, 90). The notions of “pride”, “respect”, and “justice” play equally important roles for many Ukrainian women. The majority of interviewees demonstrated a

strong sense of pride and showed no hesitation to leave their workplace in case of a lack of respect and decent treatment from the employer's side. I found that this strategy became particularly strong after the worker acquired more power through language knowledge and legalization. *"When my employer started insulting me, I first tried to use good reasoning with her, explain why she was wrong. When it didn't work I just packed my suitcase and left. It's better to lose job than dignity"* (Oksana, domestic worker, Naples, October 2015).

When describing the experiences of Filipina domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles, Rhacel Salazar Parrenas introduces the concept of "contradictory class mobility." This concept describes the major dislocation defining the experiences of domestic workers that manifests itself through the simultaneous decline of social status and improvement of financial status (Parrenas 2001, 150). Francesca Alice Vianello in her research on Ukrainian domestic workers in Italy goes further in claiming that they are going through a "double process of downward mobility." The first one was triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the consequent drastic changes including job losses, inflation, wage arrears, and devaluation of social status. The second process of downward mobility occurred when Ukrainian migrant women had to undertake low skilled and poorly paid jobs upon their arrival to Italy (Vianello 2014, 94).

We thus can talk about the multiscalarity of classes, when workers often find themselves in the middle of double class processes in two different contexts. In Italy, Ukrainian women employed in the domestic sector find themselves relegated to a certain class position – that of a "new servant class" (Gregson and Lowe 1994). Workers are compelled to sell their labor power, often in exploitative working conditions that are particularly common among live-in domestic workers. At the same time, employment in the domestic sector abroad allows Ukrainian migrant workers to maintain a certain lifestyle for their families back home. It also may, at least potentially, allow workers to accumulate certain capital and open the possibility for starting a business, purchasing property, and employing labor tenants in the country of origin. This double process allows us to treat class as a fluid rather than fixed category, providing an insight into the complex processes of class transformations in the transnational space.

In order to combat social devaluation in Italy, Ukrainian workers employ a number of resistance mechanisms. The women often conceptualize their migratory experience as a necessary and temporary (while in fact often decades-long) means to pay for education and sustain a higher life standard for their families in Ukraine. *"I came to Italy to pay off my debts and support my family, and planned to work here for one year at most. I paid off the debts, but then I had to pay for the education of my children, then for their weddings, then for their houses.*

And so it goes on. But I will go back to Ukraine as soon as I can, yes” (Maria, domestic worker, Bologna, June 2015). Of note, it is often the older women who are charged with the task of securing the income through pursuing a path of labor migration to Italy. My interviewees frequently underlined the decision to allow the younger generation to stay and raise their families in Ukraine as morally just. *“I am constantly repeating to my son (since he wanted to leave for the UK): Andriy, my sufferings are enough, everything that I was through these 14 years in Italy. Please, I am here for your sake. You have a house, you have everything in the house – so just stay home and live. I have already lived my life, I can stay here a bit more and then come back home”* (Maria, domestic worker, Bologna, June 2015). Such a conceptualization of labor migration as both a necessary sacrifice and a short-term project, however, leads to the workers accepting rather than revolting against unfair employment practices in Italy.

At the same time, the gendered decision to take on the role of the breadwinner for the whole family might well indicate the rebellion against the dominant gender roles and women’s identities in Ukraine. Due to the dire economic situation in Ukraine, older women in particular are faced with the choice of either taking part in the poorly-remunerated informal businesses or performing unpaid care work for their families. A number of my interviewees strongly voiced their preference for playing an active role as a breadwinner abroad rather than conforming to the dominant “housewife” identity. *“I don’t want to become a nanny, to stay with my grandchildren only. I have to work. I always go forward, because I always want to do something”* (Oksana, domestic worker, Bologna, June 2015).

Adopting racialized discourses and differentiating themselves from domestic workers of other nationalities was also a common strategy to respond to social devaluation among Ukrainian women. They often described themselves as more reliable and hardworking, as well as possessing better skills for languages and integration into Italian society than other groups. This strategy can be attributed to the particularities of stratification of the domestic work sector in Italy, where worker’s remuneration and working conditions often depend on where the women come from and the particular cultural and bodily characteristics attributed to them (Scrinzi 2004). *“It’s much easier for Filipino women to work as servants... We, Ukrainians, are much better educated and used to different jobs, we are smart and can do much better than that* (Marianna, domestic worker, Rome, December 2014). *“Filipinos are much faster, they are hard-working. But we have our own opinion, they don’t. They only know to say ‘si, si, si’ ”* (Focus group discussion, Bologna, June 2015).

Education plays a symbolic role in the life of Ukrainian migrant workers in the

destination society. In comparison with other female migrant workers, Ukrainian migrants have the largest share of tertiary educated people, amounting to 26% (Marchetti, Piazzalunga, and Venturini 2014, 7). However, due to the difficulty of obtaining official recognition of their studies and professional credentials in Italy, employment in the domestic work sector remains one of the few job options. After having to abandon their employment as teachers, healthcare workers, and office employees, workers very often use the class and social position of their employers as an indicator that they measure their own social debasement against. Since most of the Ukrainian female domestic workers in Italy were socialized in the Soviet Union, they view education as an important means of social stratification and as a tool for achieving prestige and higher social position. Looking for middle-class employers with higher educational degrees is not only perceived as a chance for higher remuneration and better working conditions, but is also a strategy for accepting subordinate positions more easily.

The analysis of the empirical data might suggest that all struggles by Ukrainian migrant workers are waged in the privacy of Italian households, where workers tend to emphasize the professional nature of their relationship with their employers, thus increasing their bargaining power and decreasing their dependence of the employers. The positionality of a “worker” that they develop in the course of their migratory experience is important for negotiating their own spaces and dictating the rules one-on-one with their employers. The positionality of the “sacrificing mother” and conceptualizing work experience in Italy as only “temporary”, on the other hand, often leads to them accepting unfavorable working conditions. However, the negotiations and struggles of domestic workers are not limited to their workplaces only. In the following part I will examine various forms of migrant workers’ representation, as well as examine the relevance of workers’ identities as “patriots” and “religious people” for their activism in the public spaces.

Struggles in public spaces and workers’ representation

Ukrainian workers’ representation in Italy is carried out by a wide net of organizations that have all engaged with various migrant worker communities to a different extent. These organizations range from traditional Italian trade union organizations like Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (Italian General Confederation of Labor - Cgil), Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (Italian Confederation of Workers’ Trade Unions - Cisl), Unione Italiana del Lavoro (Italian Labor Union - UIL), Christian labor organizations for domestic workers like Associazioni Cristiane dei Lavoratori Italiani - Collaboratrici Familiari (Christian Associations of Italian Workers – Domestic Workers - ACLI COLF), to a number of Ukrainian-run “quasi

unions” (Bonner 2010, 5; Johnstone 2013, 34) and migrant associations that usually offer assistance on more issues than just employment. The practice of settling labor related issues in private has implications for domestic workers’ interactions with trade unions and related organizations in Italy. In spite of the frequent need of assistance to regulate various aspects of professional life like tax payment or the settlement of labor disputes, Ukrainian migrant workers’ relationship with the Italian trade unions remains tenuous. One might suppose that the difficulties partly lie in the lack of trust that workers from Post-Soviet countries exhibit towards trade unions, and their desire to disconnect from their Soviet past, where unions were an inseparable part of the state socialist system. Trade unions during that period performed a directive role including in and outside the workplace, rather than representing workers’ interests in opposition to the state and the employer (Clarke 2005, 3). Indeed, the majority of the interviewed Ukrainian migrant women in Italy associated trade unions with “*institutions distributing Christmas presents and free travel vouchers*” (Anna, domestic worker, Rome, October 2015). This attitude, without hesitation, was often transferred towards the current trade union organizations in Ukraine, who were described by migrant workers as “useless”, “nonexistent” and “in deep crisis”.

However, the empirical data collected throughout my field research in fact shows that Ukrainian domestic workers disassociate the Italian workers’ organizations from the idea of trade unions stemming from their Soviet and Ukraine experiences, and exhibit trust and readiness to address the Italian organizations. When confronted with the necessity of solving work-related issues in Italy, Ukrainian workers show no hesitation in asking for assistance from the unions, provided they have received a positive testimony from a fellow worker. “*Cgil, they help migrants. They are on our side. There are other such organizations, like Cisl. They defend workers’ rights*” (Oksana, domestic worker, Bologna, June 2015). However, often workers have a very vague (if any) idea that the organization they address is union-run. Workers display a more instrumental approach, based on the practical experience of their fellow citizens. A more participatory approach is rare due to the lack of tradition of mobilization and collective struggle around work-related causes among Ukrainians. As argued by David Ost, due to the socialist past the workers possess weak labor class identity, pro-capitalist ideas, and an undermining conception of self (Ost 2000). The willingness to engage in struggles for better working conditions might also be impacted by the before-mentioned conceptualization of their employment in Italy as short-term, and a tendency to settle labor-related issues one-on-one with the employer.

Italian unions, from their side, responding to the general trend of a loss of power and membership due to structural and political-legislative changes in the labor market, have also increased organizing efforts towards precarious and informal workers (Baccaro, Carrieri, and Damiano. 2003, 45). These efforts include using innovative strategies and working with other civil society organizations, including migrant groups. One of the generally employed union strategies stresses the importance of organizing through shared identities (Martinez Lucio and Perrett 2009). The organizer in this case possesses similar characteristics to the target group (such as ethnicity, languages, religion, age etc.), which helps to create an image of a union able to represent migrants' specific interests. Italian trade unions practice using migrant operators as 'bridge-persons' between the migrant groups and trade unions (Marchetti 2012, 13–15). However, these operators encounter certain limitations due to their intermediary position between the two groups, which may lead to them being marginal in both (*ibid.*). Other challenges consist in a lack of trust towards unions from the side of migrants and difficulty in establishing lasting cooperation. As the Head of Association of Ukrainian Women Workers in Italy points out, little efforts have been made in the past years to cooperate closely. *“Yes, we work with Cgil... But I can't say we have a close contact with them. If they need something, then they invite us for a conference. In fact, they are not very interested in working with small organizations. We didn't really do anything together in the last years”* (Svitlana, Association of Ukrainian Women Workers in Italy, Rome, November 2014).

The relationship with trade union organizations is further complicated by the lack of outreach for (Ukrainian) migrant workers from Italian trade unions themselves. Since Italian trade unions still enjoy a relatively authoritative position as a social partner recognized by the state, it diminishes their reliance on mobilizing, campaigning, and alliance building as an internal source of union strength (Heery and Adler 2004, 60). In fact, most Ukrainian workers are attracted to the unions not due to aggressive union campaigning, but rather as a consequence of receiving assistance through union immigration offices and union-run welfare agencies that provide information and legal support. *“...I am not going to see if [the organization] is from communist or democratic party. People simply need services, so they go”* (Liuba, Association “Ukraine-Italy”, Bologna, June 2015).

As working with the “traditional” trade union model is often seen as problematic for Ukrainian domestic workers, in the last decade they have established a number of NGOs and membership-based organizations. Currently over 100 Ukrainian organizations are present in Italy. This presents a sharp difference from the beginning of the 1990s, when the first wave of Ukrainian migrants had only a limited number of mostly religious Italian organizations at their

disposal. The activities of currently existing Ukrainian associations range from organizing cultural events and political mobilizations to providing free legal assistance for resolving labor disputes or obtaining residence permits. In many cases migrant domestic workers come together in order to find solutions for their problems, or form groups on the ground of their cultural or religious affiliation. These organizations often undertake the role of advocating on behalf of domestic workers, sometimes in coalition with other migrant associations. *“We participated in demonstrations many times, starting from 2002, when we began coming together as an association. We were by ourselves, it was difficult to organize a demonstration so we joined the one already organized one together with other countries – Bangladesh, Morocco, all together. In 2002 it was about legalization, [migration] amnesty, sanatoria. We have been advocating for it for a very long time”* (Tetyana, Central Coordination Council of Ukrainian Associations in Italy, Rome, November 2014).

In 2002 the Central Coordination Council of Ukrainian Associations in Italy was created, bringing under its umbrella over 20 organizations with the purpose of coordinating their activities and advocating for Ukrainian migrants with a stronger voice. This gradual formalization of Ukrainian networks in Italy can be attributed to the lack of institutional setup to assist the migrant workers as well as the strong leadership initiatives of individual Ukrainian women. Wendy Pojmann in her research on self-organization initiatives of Filipino and Cape Verdean women in Rome emphasized the role that agency played in the activism of migrant women who were led by their desire of self-empowerment (Pojmann 2007, 33). In the case of Ukrainian migrant workers, there is a similar driving incentive to satisfy gender-specific needs backed by the initiative of individual women. *“We founded the Association in 2010 given the situation of our people, our women, because 80 percent of them are women. They didn’t have their own home, they wanted to hear their native language, connect to own tradition. They had problems with documents, bureaucratic issues, cause Italy is a very bureaucratic country. We saw this problem and founded the association together with a few lawyers* (Liuba, Association “Ukraine-Italy”, Bologna, June 2015).

Another positive example is the Association of Women Workers in Italy, a volunteer organization based in Rome engaging with cultural, educational, and information activities for migrant women. It has implemented joint projects with the Christian Association of Italian Workers (ACLI), the Italian National Office against Racial Discriminations (UNAR), as well as migrants’ associations like the Filipino Women’s Council and the Association of Cape Verdean Women in Italy. Among other initiatives were projects pushing for the protection of women’s rights, for the elimination of negative images and stereotypes of immigrant domestic

workers, the organization of free IT courses for establishing better connections with families in home countries, and financial education.

Though positive examples of Ukrainian organizations pushing for the protection and empowerment of domestic workers in Italy do exist, only a limited number of associations see labor problems as important issues to tackle. Among the vast number and variety of organizations, only a few of them can boast of a large membership or activities that go beyond the promotion of Ukrainian culture. Moreover, my interviewees frequently mentioned problems such as a lack of resources to sustain the activities of their associations, difficulties to organize and engage domestic workers who remain isolated in households, and a lack of interest from larger trade unions in establishing a lasting cooperation. Another difficulty lies in the lack of trust from the side of the migrant workers themselves towards the existing Ukrainian organizations. *“People are cautious about the word “association”. Afraid of any union. Some think that it’s a sect, some think that it’s some sort of a trade union, the kind that existed before... It was a frequent practice in Ukraine to organize some sort of unions that were disappearing the day after. So people are afraid that the same thing will happen in Italy”* (Liyba, Association “Ukraine-Italy”, Bologna, June 2015).

In terms of public struggles waged by Ukrainian migrant workers in Italy, it is important to note the sharp increase of participants in public events in the last few years. In fact, one can differentiate two distinct periods: before and after the “Maidan” protests. While activities in Italy before the 2004 and 2014 crises in Ukraine were mostly focused around the issues of Ukrainian culture and were supported by Ukrainian cultural associations, after “Maidan” there was a remarkable shift towards the political dimension and national identity-building. Numerous demonstrations all over Italy aimed to attract attention to the crisis in Ukraine, and fundraising and collecting of humanitarian assistance occurred. Myriad events were organized in multiple Italian cities by migrant organizations, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, and individuals. As noted by Natalia, a Ukrainian functionary of the Italian UGL trade union in Rome, *“Maidan has woken people up, I didn’t expect it from the community. From November on we had demonstrations twice a day... The phenomenon of “Maidan” consists in uniting very diverse people...All sorts of people were coming, all were standing together”* (Natalia, UGL trade union, Rome, October 2015).

Particularly important in the development of a national consciousness among Ukrainians in Italy is the role played by church groups. Scholars often note the importance of religious institutions in shaping the identities of migrant workers. For example, Kurien in her research notes the increasing religiosity among Hindu Indian immigrants after their arrival in

the United States, and the importance of religion for the formation of community (Kurien 1999). Likewise, Sarah Schilliger in her work on the Polish care workers in Switzerland underlines the importance of the Church as more than just a place of faith and religiosity. She points out that it is used by Polish workers for building networks, and represents a transnational space, a piece of the motherland offering the possibility to break up the daily routine and temporarily flee from the control and exploitation experienced in the households (Schilliger 2015, 166).

In the case of Ukrainian migrant workers in Italy, particularly salient is the role played by the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC). Being a part of the Catholic Church in full communion with Rome, the UGCC enjoys large institutional support in Italy. Apart from performing the usual settlement practices and providing the institutional framework for the formation of the Ukrainian community, it pursues a larger transnational political project of developing national consciousness and facilitating the return of Ukrainian workers home (Solari 2006). Not incidental in this respect is the active support of the UGCC for the pro-Ukrainian demonstrations and their facilitation in collecting humanitarian assistance for the Ukrainian army, as well as promoting the idea of national unity and patriotism during the religious services. As noted by the UGCC Priest in Naples, *“the problem is that there is no idea. People that don’t have an idea cannot create an ideology. Some time ago a woman approached me and said: One should do this and that. But who has to do it? Maybe you?... Every person who came here, who wanted some peace – simply went to the West. Those who want to do something [in Ukraine]– stay and do it”* (UGCC Priest, Naples, October 2015). The surge of patriotic activism following the events of 2014 can be interpreted as a justification for migrating, which is often regarded as betrayal. The Ukrainian state portrays emigration as negatively impacting the construction of a national identity, regarding it as a “benchmark of patriotism” (Vollmer 2015). Performing acts of patriotism, actively supported by the religious institutions in Italy, provides a possibility to prove migrants’ national belonging and assert their moral worth.

While the resistance and struggles for better wages and working conditions are being mostly waged in the privacy of the household, the struggles of Ukrainian migrant (domestic) workers in the public space remains confined to the reassertion of their national identity. Collective struggles around labor issues and the empowerment of migrant domestic workers, while staying on the agenda of numerous Italian and Ukrainian organizations, up to date remains limited. A lack of cooperation between trade unions and migrant associations, insufficient resources, the trust deficit, and the isolation of migrant domestic workers in private households act as constraints for larger advocacy and empowerment action. Thus, in public spaces the struggles of Ukrainian migrant workers remain conditioned by their subjectivities as

“patriots” and “religious people.”

Conclusion

The migration of Ukrainian women to work in Italy, originally pushed by drastic social and economic transformations, continues in large numbers today. Ironically, while escaping the prevailing housewife identities in Ukraine and becoming major breadwinners for their families back home, women find themselves constrained to do the same domestic and care work abroad, joining the ranks of workers in the globalizing care industry. While the domestic work sector in Italy is relatively well regulated, law enforcement and the rule of law, particularly in the South of Italy, remains sparse. Workers often find themselves in precarious working conditions, particularly in cases of informal employment. In order to negotiate better wages and working conditions, Ukrainian migrant domestic workers often shift their struggles to the private spaces of Italian households. Strategies frequently employed by the workers include constructing employment relationships on the professional rather than personal level, conceptualizing work in Italy as a temporary labor migration project and a necessary sacrifice, adopting racialized discourses of differentiation, looking for middle-class well-educated employers and demanding respectful treatment.

Ukrainian workers’ activism in public spaces, on the other hand, rarely concerns labor issues. Instead, numerous protest actions in almost every large Italian city have been centered on the issues of workers’ national identity and belonging in the patriotic sense. Cultural and identity-building actions also remain at the core of various Ukrainian associations in Italy, while cooperation with the Italian labor movement is often seen as problematic. As with domestic workers around the globe, the structural factors limiting a larger outreach are workers’ isolation in private households, their dependence on their employers, a lack of information, and high informality levels. In spite of the lack of reservation on the part of Ukrainian domestic workers to approach trade unions, organizing among these workers remains challenging, not in the least because of a weak class-consciousness linked to their Soviet past. Instead, workers build the strongest solidarities around their identities as Ukrainians, reasserting their national belonging through acts of patriotism. When and if these factors are well understood by advocates and trade unions, there may be a way forward in organizing and self-organizing among Ukrainian migrant workers in Italy.

It is hoped that this paper contributes to the global debate on migrant domestic workers’ resistance and organizing practices. Focusing on the Ukrainian community in Italy, it highlights the connection of the workers’ labor migration experiences to the larger processes of post-192

Soviet transformation. Further research would benefit from exploring the issues around collective East European women's identities in more detail, as well as adding a comparative perspective on resistance and empowerment practices of other migrant communities in Italy.

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10. Dimensions of precarity of migrant domestic workers: Constraints and spaces in labor organizing in Malaysia

Verna Dinah Q. Viajar

“Organizing migrant domestic workers in Malaysia is very difficult – the level and extent to which political organizing can take place needs to be contextualized within those gendered and racialized transnational processes that feed into the construction of female workers from states such as Indonesia as a key source of low cost socially reproductive labor, the effective confinement of many workers to the household, as well as the role of authoritarian practices of labor repression that characterize Southeast Asian labor regimes” (Elias 2010a, 854).

Abstract

This paper seeks to analyze the constraints and spaces in organizing migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Malaysia brought about by the interlocking dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia. It examines to what extent trade unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and MDWs can claim rights for domestic workers and how their organizing strategies are shaped and informed given Malaysia’s specific political-economic and social context. Confronting two significant issues on domestic work, this paper examines the hegemonic notion that domestic work is non-work embedded in class, gender, and racial hierarchies; and the deepening of precarity for MDWs brought about by the specific political-economic context of Malaysia expressed through its production relations and labor control regime. In utilizing the neo-Gramscian and social reproduction theories, this paper develops the three dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia comprising of (a) job/work-based precarity; (b) status-based precarity; and (c) national-based precarity. This paper argues that based on the current migrant rights activism in Malaysia, the domestic workers’ organizing of trade unions and NGOs substantially addresses national-based precarity but is yet to challenge the work-based and status-based precarity of MDWs in Malaysia.

Keywords: Migrant domestic workers, labor organizing, precarious work, trade unions, NGOs

Introduction

Labor organizing and domestic work usually do not mix. Domestic workers have been previously referred to as ‘unorganizable’ (Ford 2004, 103) given their invisibility, isolation in the household as a workplace, and the non-recognition of domestic work as work. But the ‘unorganizable myth’ (Ford 2004, 103; Rosenthal 1979, 36) has since been shattered as

domestic workers in many parts of the world organize into workers' networks, associations, trade unions and other types of collective organizations. However, domestic workers are organizing under different circumstances than other formal and waged workers. In the increasingly neoliberal global economy, the demand for domestic workers has created an opening for the movement of MDWs across national boundaries.

The mostly female and temporary MDWs working in foreign households are most often in precarious conditions. Such is the case in Malaysia where domestic work is not yet recognized as formal work, excluding domestic workers from coverage under the labor laws that still in the 1955 Employment Act call domestic workers "domestic servants". Malaysia is the largest labor-receiving destination of migrant workers in the Southeast Asian region. As Malaysia experienced economic growth in the last decades, there has been a high demand for domestic workers as more local women choose to work outside the home and need domestic workers to take care of their own households. Local Malaysian workers are no longer willing to take this work because of the low wages and bad working conditions (i.e. more than 8 hours work). This demand is filled by migrant domestic workers from neighboring but poorer countries including Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Nepal. The MDWs in Malaysia are mostly low-paid, trapped in difficult work conditions, and vulnerable to physical, psychological and emotional abuse.

Due to the increasing reports of human rights abuses against MDWs, Malaysian trade unions and NGOs have been trying to organize them since the early 2000s. Despite restrictive labor laws and the repressive labor control regime, trade unions and NGOs in Malaysia are trying to by-pass these constraints by organizing domestic workers and pushing to change laws to recognize them as workers. The most prominent example of successful MDW labor organizing in Asia has been the organizing of local (Chinese) and migrant (i.e. Filipina, Indonesian) domestic workers in Hong Kong. The organizing of domestic workers in Asia has been happening since the mid-1990s in order to demand recognition and lift the veil of exclusion of paid domestic work. However, MDW labor organizing in Malaysia has been difficult and unsustainable, unlike that which occurred in Hong Kong. According to Juanita Elias, organizing domestic workers in Malaysia has been difficult because such an agenda needs to be contextualized along (1) the gendered and racialized transnational processes affecting female migrants from neighboring countries; (2) the nature of domestic work being confined within the household; and (3) the political-economic context of Malaysia itself (Elias 2010).

Based on the above-mentioned factors, this paper seeks to extend this analysis and offer an analytical framework upon which to examine the peculiar context and conditions of MDWs

that characterize the constraints and spaces of the organizing agenda of trade unions and NGOs in Malaysia. The analytical framework developed in this research refers to the dimensions of precarity that confronts the life of MDWs. This paper focuses on three dimensions: (1) The hegemonic notion that domestic work is non-work which is embedded in class, gender and racial hierarchies; (2) the temporary and precarious status of the migrant worker; and (3) the specific political-economic context of Malaysia expressed through its production relations and labor control regime. The power and social relations embedded in these dimensions, which this paper refers to as ‘dimensions of precarity’, perpetuate the disempowerment, exclusion and disposability of MDWs. Understanding the social relations and institutions that shape and inform these dimensions of precarity may contribute to the search for strategies for trade unions, NGOs and MDWs to claim rights for domestic workers in Malaysia (Piper 2007).

Primary data for this study was gathered through fieldwork research in Malaysia in 2013 and 2014 spanning 4-6 weeks each year. In terms of research methods, the study utilized semi-structured interview and participant-observation methods and participation in social gatherings (i.e. picnics and birthday parties) of Filipino domestic workers and trade union- and NGO-organized conferences on domestic work in Malaysia.

Taking the case of Malaysia and the terrain of the “Maid Trade”

Malaysia is the highest recipient of migrant workers in Southeast Asia. Migrant workers are integral to the Malaysian economy, especially in the agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and domestic service sectors. In these sectors, foreign labor was officially estimated at more than 2 million in 2014 (Ministry of Home Affairs 2016), but it was evaluated that there could be an additional 1.9 million migrant workers working undocumented in Malaysia (Huling 2012, 642). Presently, migrant labor in Malaysia comprises around 20% of the total workforce, but some assume this number to actually be more than 30% or ‘one in three workers is a migrant worker’ (Robertson 2009, 1), and composes as much as 90% of the workforce in the plantation agriculture, construction, and domestic service. As Malaysia’s economy took off in the 1980s, economic development spurred the demand for migrant workers not only in the agriculture and construction industries, but also in domestic service. In domestic service, the number of MDWs officially registered as “Maids” in the country has spiraled from 70,000 in the 1990s (Chin 1997; Gurowitz 2000) to 156,000 in 2014 (Ministry of Home Affairs 2016), this is compared to only about 5,000 local domestic workers. However, according to trade unions and NGOs in Malaysia, the MDWs figure could be close to 250,000 given the high incidence of ‘undocumented’ MDWs. The majority of MDWs in Malaysia come from Indonesia, while the

rest come from the Philippines, Cambodia, Nepal, and Bangladesh. The ‘Maid Trade’ in Malaysia is a lucrative and growing industry involving numerous manpower/recruitment agencies, the immigration institutions, the host/sending governments, and the MDWs. Costs run high due to the high demand for domestic workers – around 30,000 MDWs per year. The fluctuating supply of MDWs increases the employers’ fees in hiring domestic workers. Hiring a migrant domestic worker can cost an employer RM8,000-15,000 (c.a. Euro 2,000-3,000), and monthly salaries of foreign domestic workers range from RM600-1,200 (c.a. Euros 150-400). In the recently adopted minimum wage policy in Malaysia, domestic workers remain effectively excluded from coverage.

Domestic workers in Malaysia face many difficulties and flip between different states of precariousness. The different civil society actors such as trade unions, NGOs, religious groups, as well as the embassies from sending countries, address MDWs’ issues on different fronts. Upon analyzing empirical data from the field, this study identified the mostly interconnecting conditions besetting MDWs in Malaysia around labor, immigration, human rights, humanitarian, and welfare/social issues. Referring to labor rights issues, where most problems of MDWs are found, violations include denial of rest days, unpaid wages, long work hours, illegal deductions on wages, bad working conditions, and exclusion from labor and social protection. Issues linked to their immigration status include the withholding of passports, having the work permit tied to one employer, and criminalization upon break of contract. The different forms of abuse, such as physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual, fall under human rights issues, whilst instances where food was withheld, they were locked inside the house, and a lack of healthcare fall under humanitarian issues. MDWs are also prohibited to use cell phones preventing them from communicating with their families. Moreover, they experience suppression of religious/cultural beliefs, classified in this study under the welfare/social issues. Trade unions, NGOs, MDWs’ self-organized support groups, and other civil society groups (i.e. religious groups) respond to these issues in different forms and strategies. Their actions range from advocating policy reform on laws to cover domestic workers, single-issue campaigns (i.e. one day-off per week); service provision (i.e. shelters); rescue of abused MDWs⁶³; case management; and labour case representations.

⁶³ Mostly involving NGOs and self-organized MDW support groups in coordination with local police, rescues were conducted based on reports of abuse (i.e. rape, torture) of MDWs or MDWs being locked up inside the household without food.

Table 2: MDW issues and forms of rights violations in Malaysia

Issues	Forms of violations
Labor rights issues	Denial of rest days; unpaid wages; long work hours; illegal deductions on salaries; bad working conditions; maltreatment by employers; exclusion from labor laws and benefits.
Immigration status	Withholding of passports; work permit based on one employer, one contract; criminalization of status upon breaking employment contract or running away from employers.
Human rights issues	Rape and torture, other physical, psychological, or verbal abuse and gender violence.
Humanitarian issues	Food withheld; locked inside the house; no health insurance or benefit
Welfare and social issues	Prohibition to communicate with family, outside world; suppression of religious or cultural practices.

Source: own analysis from empirical data.

Dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia: Towards an analytical frame

“Precariousness and precarity are intersecting concepts”, as Judith Butler (2009) explains, life is precarious because it is temporary in nature, but precarity connotes the induced and/or failure of social, political and economic institutions to arrest the heightened risk of mortality (Butler 2009, 25–26). Whether poverty, starvation, displacement, “exposure to violence without protection” or even state violence, precarity refers to “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death” (Butler 2009, 25). This study approaches the problematique through the neo-Gramscian and social reproduction theories to allow a multi-layered gender, racial, and class analysis on the dimensions of precarity of MDWs in the Malaysian political economy.

The neo-Gramscian approach anchors its critical analysis on the core concept of hegemony seen as domination through a combination of overt coercion and consent through “intellectual and moral leadership” of a particular social group (Cox 1983; Gramsci 1971). When understood as a system of power relations, hegemony is “an expression of broadly based consent, manifested in the acceptance of ideas and supported by material resources and institutions, which is initially established by social forces occupying a leading role within a state, but is then projected outwards on a world scale” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 87). The neo-

Gramscian approach emphasizes the non-deterministic and historically anchored analysis of power, production and social relations to understand social contexts and change. Power relations run through three historical structures that interact in a reciprocal relationship consisting of material capabilities⁶⁴, ideas⁶⁵ and institutions⁶⁶. Institutionalization and institutions themselves contribute to maintaining hegemony as they solidify and reproduce a particular material capability, for example the hegemonic relations of production sustained by shared notions or ideas of what development looks like. The three historical structures are embedded in the analysis of social forces, forms of state, and world order emerging from the social relations of production constituting the hegemonic order. Changes in the relations of production engender the emergence of “contending social forces” which shape the forms of state within an existing world order (Bieler and Morton 2004; Cox 1981). The social forces concept refers to changes in the production relations that provoke struggles and the emergence of historic blocs. The conflict between social forces and the existing world order shapes the ‘forms of state’ or the state-society relations. The relationship of production and power in this framework is focused on “how power in *social relations of production* may give rise to certain *social forces*, how these social forces may become the bases of power in *forms of state* and how this might shape *world order*” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 89).

In examining the context of disempowerment, exclusion and disposability of MDWs in Malaysia, this study brings in the essential analytical anchors of social reproduction theory. Social reproduction theory emerged within the Marxist-Feminist school of thought to complement class analysis when looking at the world today, which is both increasingly gendered and racialized. Further, social reproduction theory intends to deepen and highlight the relation of class and gender in any analysis of contemporary social phenomena and entrenched inequalities. The ontological foundation of social reproduction theory anchors on the notion of “new multiple forms of commodification, but also new patterns of exploitation, and control of labor in the production–reproduction relationship” (Bakker and Gill 2003, 18). Social reproduction theory incorporates feminist political economy into a historical materialist analysis of power, production and social relations. The feminist historical materialist ontology

⁶⁴ *Material capabilities* refer to the “technological or organizational capabilities” needed to create or transform natural resources into wealth, armaments, or industries (Cox 1981, 218)

⁶⁵ *Ideas* are referred as “shared notions of social relations and collective images of social order held by different groups of people” (Cox 1981, 218) which are engendered and in turn engender institutions and material capabilities.

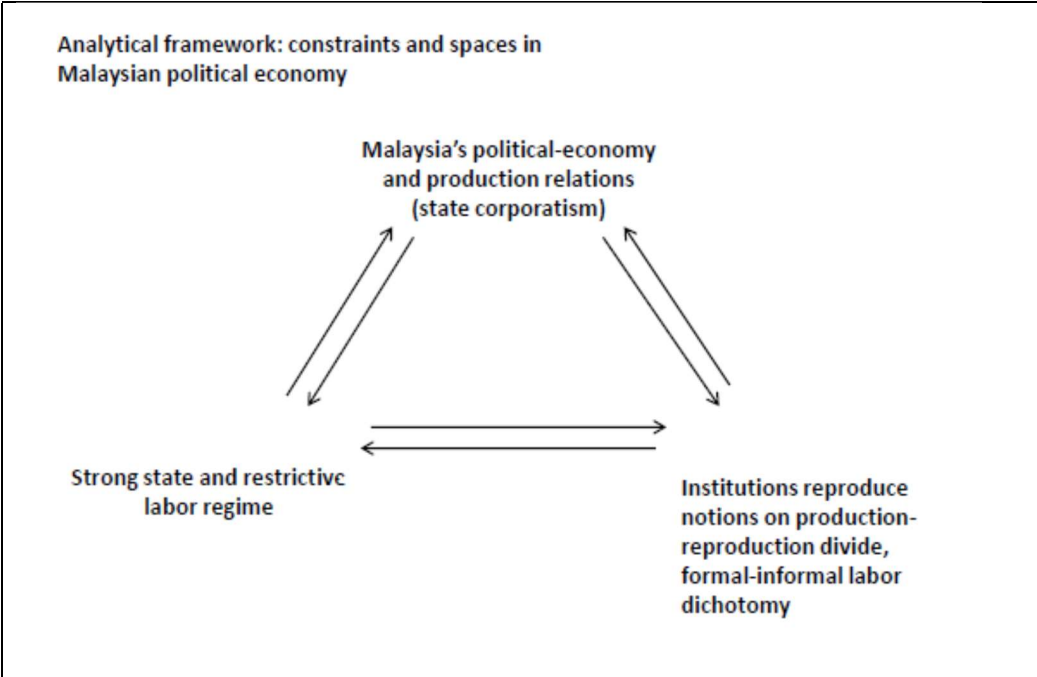
⁶⁶ *Institutions* could be laws, state and non-state institutions that perpetuate the relations of these dimensions and the given order wherein “Institutions are particular amalgams of ideas and material power which in turn influence the development of ideas and material capabilities” (Cox 1981, 219).

takes Gramsci's notions on education, culture and other institutions as vital components in the socialization of human beings to the world of work, and introduces the social and state order as part of the natural order (Bakker and Gill 2003; Gramsci 1971). In analyzing through the interconnection of gender, race, and class in paid domestic work, the social reproduction approach explores the multi-dimensional relations between capital and labor at national and global scales, gender and class in modern capitalism, race and imperialism, and "interconnections between workplaces and households" (Ferguson and McNally 2014). These interconnections refer to what Ferguson and McNally have argued as today's late capitalism reconfigured spaces of capital, work, gender, race and social reproduction, which has produced 'zones of precarity' (Ferguson and McNally 2014, 1). In today's globalized neoliberal order, the movement of capital is related to the movement of people, presently represented by the hyper-precarious migrant worker. Likewise, this is connected to the flow of wages supporting local social reproduction as wage remittances to sustain families of migrant workers elsewhere (Ferguson and McNally 2014). The feminization of migration, particularly in domestic service, opens up the gender dimension in this phenomenon. Saskia Sassen positions the low-paid domestic workers as one of the "other workers in the advanced corporate economy", as they provide invisible services for the high-level professionals in the global economic system even in such industries as international finance (Sassen 2009). Nakano Glenn further related the racial dimension in the gender division of reproductive labor, where paid domestic work was usually done by colored women (Glenn 1992).

Through these theoretical underpinnings, this paper proposes an analytical framework to examine the relations of social forces, forms of state, and political-economic structures of Malaysia that constitutes the constraints and spaces in organizing domestic workers. This study argues that the interplay of Malaysia's state-corporatist production relations, the role of institutions, and the socio-cultural notions of domestic work as non-work engender the dimensions of precarity for MDWs in Malaysia. State corporatism is a form of the social relations of production wherein the state organizes the economy, as the dominant employer class has not maintained hegemony. Characteristic of late industrializing countries, the state in corporatist state production relations "imposes authoritatively upon industry an organization of formal representation for employers and workers intended to maintain order, to regulate working conditions, to promote social harmony, and to eliminate conflict" (Cox 1987, 80). However, the form of state is in turn comprised of social forces that emanate from the changes in the production relations. Malaysia's production relations give rise to hegemonic social forces (such as the Malay dominated political and economic bloc), which became the bases of forms

of state anchored on institutions that perpetuate specific relations of labor and capital (productive-reproductive/formal-informal divides). Outlined below is the analytical framework of this study, which relates to the structural, institutional, and social constraints and spaces that inform and shape domestic workers’ organizing in Malaysia.

Table 3: Analytical framework in examining constraints and spaces of MDWs organizing in the Malaysian political economy



Source: Own analysis based on theoretical frames and empirical data.

In applying this analytical frame, this analysis of Malaysia’s political economy examines the Malaysian relations of production that result in the form of state and hegemonic ideas on productive-reproductive and formal-informal labor divides. Through the supply of raw materials, Malaysia has been integrated into the world economy since the British colonial period. In the post-war period, it embarked on a mainstream development strategy towards “modernization, industrialization and economic growth” (Lee 2004, 76). The post-war production relations of state corporatism engendered the rise of the Muslim-Malay ethnic class as a historic bloc in the post-colonial state. In Malaysia, the state exercised coercion through authoritative political and economic policies supported, and consented to, by the majority Malay ethnic group that emerged as the historic bloc in the post-colonial period. Their position was strengthened after the shift to neoliberal policies in the 1970s.

The country’s current development strategy encourages a fragmented and low-cost labor market (i.e. migrant, women workers) held together by a corporatist and coercive state

with specific social and political goals. These national, economic, and political policies maintain a pluralist yet stratified society affirmed by the state and supported by the dominant Malay ethnic population and Islamic religious groups. The ideological influence stems from the notion that the Malaysian Peninsula belongs to the '*Bhumiputera*' (Sons of the soil) and non-Malays consent to this. Taking control of the institutions and material capabilities, this historic bloc ruled with consent and coercion supported by the state institutions and laws. Political opposition parties exist and they challenge and sometimes try to push the incumbent political party (Barisan Nasional) towards a more inclusive and democratic Malaysia. Yet opposition parties, regarding foreign labor, also play the nationalist card and affirm the dominant political-economic and social structures (Case 2004).

Malaysia exhibits features of 'state corporatism'; monopoly capitalism dominates with the subordinate production relations typical of primitive labor market and household modes. Malaysia requires cheap labor found in migrant labor as its economic strategies are based upon export-oriented, and investment-led industrialization. Local labor has rejected the low-paid and dangerous jobs, which are now filled by migrant labor from poorer countries particularly in agriculture, construction, and domestic services. This economic strategy emanates from a decisive shift from the dominant political and economic social forces in Malaysia, particularly the Malay ethnic class, to generate wealth within the global neoliberal capitalist framework and fuel the Malay affirmative action⁶⁷. The success of such an economic strategy requires a strong state to be involved in shaping the country's economy and labor regime. The dominant economic class (they could be Malays and Chinese-Malays) influence and shape the labor relations framework to produce cheap labor for its primitive accumulation production relations.

Civil society groups such as trade unions, human rights groups, and NGOs are located in a constrained political space, while the political and economic institutions were structured to maintain the national political, economic and social order. This political-economic and social relation engenders a labor regime designed to stabilize the status quo and enforce the national development agenda by controlling labor and trade unions. In the process, the Malaysian labor regime remains focused on the formal sector and perpetuates a production relation that excludes the reproductive sphere. Compared to the employers and government, the Malaysian trade unions are increasingly in a weak position in the institutionalized tripartite framework that

⁶⁷ This refers to the set of policies giving preferential treatment and special status for the Malays, the dominant ethnic group called "Bumiputera" or sons of the soil, initially to alleviate them from poverty. These special rights cover political, economic and social benefits such as educational subsidies, housing, capitalization, etc. The affirmative action also requires foreign investments must consist with 30% equity from Malays before it can operate in Malaysia.

shapes the low-cost labor policies. Whilst the tripartite framework provides permanent representation for trade unions in shaping the national labor policies, the tripartism framework itself is based on consensus decision-making, which constrains trade unions' ability to oppose decisions both within and outside the system. On the other hand, non-government organizations, located outside of this framework, can only engage at the political level and can only become more confrontational with the government and employers on social, civil, and political/human rights issues.

The key part of this framework is that the dimensions of Malaysia's production relations, the state and labor regime, and institutions, support each other and perpetuate the non-recognition of domestic work and exclusion of domestic workers from the labor regime. The separation of productive and reproductive work relegates domestic work to the informal sector where the most precarious workers can be found. The informal sector, including domestic work, is mostly unregulated, which explains the lack of labor regulations on day-offs, wages and office hours for domestic workers. The invisibility and non-recognition of domestic work subjects domestic workers to abuse, and deepens labor exploitation. These political-economic and social structures reproduce the interlocking dimensions of precarity for MDWs in Malaysia that likewise inform and shape the organizing agenda of MDWs through the trade unions and NGOs.

Dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia

The political-economic and social structures surrounding the constraints and spaces for domestic workers' organizing inform and shape the intersecting dimensions of precarity for MDWs in Malaysia. The dimensions of precarity leading to the disempowerment, disposability and exclusion of MDWs are engendered and reproduced through (a) work/job-based, (b) status-based and (c) national-based precarity. Power relations run through these dimensions at the household, national and global levels anchored on three points, (a) the continued devaluation of domestic work reproducing the productive-reproductive and formal-informal labor dichotomies; (b) the deportability of migrant workers as hyper-precarious workers under a global neoliberal capitalist order; and (c) the non-recognition of domestic work as work thereby excluding MDWs from labor regulations and protection in Malaysia. Through these dimensions of precarity, MDWs are situated in conditions of *disempowerment*, *disposability* and *exclusion*.

In *work/job-based precarity*, the contested notions on the nature of domestic work as either "work like any other" or "work like no other" (see Smith 2012) underline the notion of domestic work as reproductive work, yet also widely considered still as non-work. Gender

inequality is situated at the core of the devaluation of domestic work and invisibility of reproductive work in the productive sphere under capitalist development (see Bakker and Gill 2003). The invisibility of domestic work reproduces the disempowerment of the mostly women domestic workers. This study anchors the debates on domestic work within the broader aspect of power relations within a given social order. Domestic work embedded in the household, which is the most often ignored mode of social relations of production (Cox 1987), reproduces the productive-reproductive dichotomy in capitalist relations. This dichotomy further perpetuates the formal and informal labor divide where domestic workers as informal workers are subordinate to formal labor in the productive sphere. The persistent non-recognition and devaluation of domestic work is concretely manifested in the unequal power relations between the employer and domestic worker inside the household. The household, also located in an ambivalent workplace-private space, becomes the site of disempowerment for domestic workers as evidenced by the high incidence of abuse and repression of MDWs' labor and human rights. In relation to organizing MDWs, working individually inside the household renders domestic workers invisible and isolated from building communities with other MDWs. The implication for the work/job-based precarity in organizing MDWs in Malaysia is likewise linked to the temporality of their status and their deportability, which impacts on the sustainability of building collective organizations.

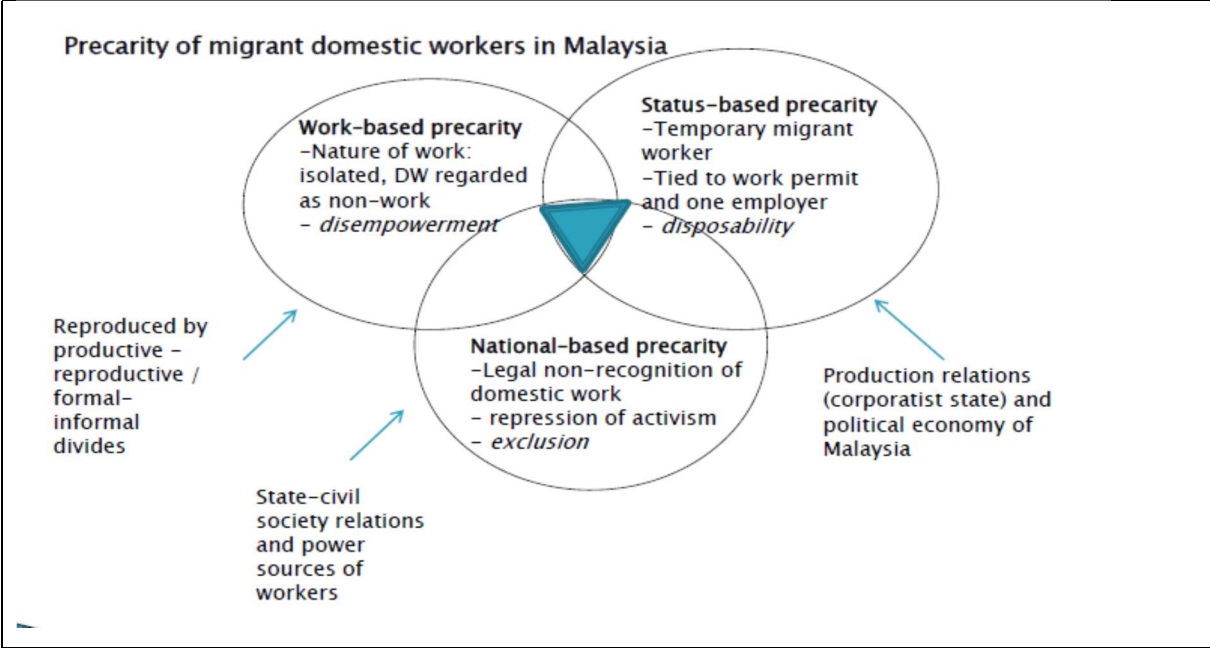
The temporary status of MDWs in Malaysia under the guest worker program reproduces the precarity of MDWs relating to their status as migrants. The guest worker program in Malaysia provides a work permit based on a contract with one employer. Following a break from this contract, such as running away or lodging a labor complaint, the employer can sever their work permits, which immediately makes them criminally liable and they can be immediately deported. The 'one-employer, one work permit' policy under the guest-worker program discourages MDWs to report abuse and labor rights violations because they will be deported immediately. This study places the temporary migrant labor program within the historical construction of Malaysia's production relations expressed through its contemporary political economy. After Malaysia's colonial experience, industrial development coincided with the formation of a dominant political-economic bloc that supported specific national goals in the construction of a Malaysian society. Emerging from contestation between the different social forces, the dominantly Malay historic bloc crafted a hegemonic development agenda that gained consent and support from other social forces. However, the hegemonic political-economic (state-led export-oriented economic program) and socio-cultural (ethnic/racial and gender hierarchies) agenda required a corporatist state production relation, where the state

utilized coercive measures through state and non-state institutions to maintain such a hegemonic project. The state corporatist production relations in Malaysia are explicitly expressed in its labor control regime regulating all aspects of the industrial relations system. The state implemented and is still responsible for the temporary migrant labor program upon which the marketized recruitment of foreign domestic workers is subsumed. Malaysia's foreign migrant labor program through its restrictive migration and labor policies intensifies the deportability of migrant workers and strengthens the notion of the disposability of workers. In relation to the dimension of '*status-based*' precarity, social reproduction theory cites the temporary migrant workers' program or guest workers' program in the current global neoliberal order, as a program that heightens the deportability of migrant workers who are increasingly becoming the hyper-precarious workers in the contemporary period (see Ferguson and McNally 2014). Temporary guest worker programs in Malaysia, as well as in Taiwan and Singapore, further commodify domestic workers, while care work is becoming increasingly marketized as exemplified by the privatized "Maid trade" sectors in these countries. This paper advances the notion of disposability, particularly in the domestic service industry, where domestic workers are often considered non-workers and invisible in the productive sphere.

Expressed through the restrictive and exclusive labor policies under the Malaysian labor control regime, the dimension of '*national-based precarity*' is anchored to the non-recognition of domestic work as work and is further supported by the unequal power relations within the state-civil society relations in Malaysia. This dimension pertains to the exclusion of domestic workers from Malaysian labor laws and regulations, which still considers domestic work as 'non-work' and instead classifies them as 'domestic servants'. The lack of legal recognition of domestic work in Malaysia prevents domestic workers from enjoying labor rights such as paid rest days, limited working hours, and fair wages. This dimension of precarity prevents MDWs as well as trade unions and NGOs to claim labor rights and representation within the industrial relations framework of Malaysia. The restrictive state-civil society relations at the national level constrains any possible activism by human/women/migrant rights organizations, religious groups, trade unions, and the self-organized MDW support groups. In relation to organizing MDWs, the non-enforcement of days-off for domestic workers in Malaysia prevents these workers from connecting with each other and building solidarity.

The scheme below illustrates the analytical frame in explaining the dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia.

Table 4: Dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia



Source: Own analysis based on theoretical frames and empirical data.

The extent, constraints and possibilities of MDWs’ organizing in Malaysia

The overlapping space between the three dimensions of precarity discussed above inform the demands and issues of trade unions and NGOs (i.e. human rights, migrant, and women’s groups) seeking to represent, engage and empower MDWs in Malaysia. The non-state actors, trade unions and NGOs, included in this study are referred to as both collective and voluntary organizations with specific political and institutional visions. In response to the dimensions of precarity of MDWs in Malaysia, these groups have launched campaigns for the recognition of domestic work as work and the recognition of workers as workers to address MDWs’ work-based precarity. Trade unions and NGOs likewise have lobbied to amend the labor laws in Malaysia aiming to transform the political-legal structures, such as the provision of the one day-off per week for domestic workers. The goal here is to regulate the conditions emanating from the dimension on national-based precarity. In response to the dimension on status-based precarity, trade unions have represented migrant workers in court on labor complaints against employers and fought for a special pass that would enable MDWs to stay while waiting to resolve labor cases.

For the purpose of examining the strategies and approaches of these collective organizations, this study considers the local and regional trade unions and NGOs in Malaysia

as presently constituting the nascent and emerging Malaysian labor movement⁶⁸. This paper argues that the labor movement in Malaysia is nascent and emerging because of the continued control of the state and capital on the political and labor issues, and the weakened bargaining position of the Malaysian trade union movement. This study includes the human rights, migrant, and women NGOs as part of the labor movement. During the current national campaign to include domestic workers in the labor laws of Malaysia, NGOs have taken a more confrontational and oppositional role against the state and employers. In coordination with NGOs – and establishing an unspoken division of work – the recognized trade union center in Malaysia engaged the state and employers through the labor tripartite system to amend the laws and recognize migrants and domestic workers. The campaign resulted in the government issuance of a labor order to allow domestic workers a day-off per week and a stern warning towards employers against withholding of MDWs' passports.

Activism, in general, has been flourishing in Malaysia over the last two decades despite the constrained political space and democratic deficits. Weiss (2004) has pointed to the existence of “a strong, centralized state” that “discourages critical engagement” as one of the main factors shaping the strategies and discourses of Malaysian activists (Weiss 2004, 129). Acting within these constraints, Malaysian activism, or activists, more often than not utilize “transnational rights-related mechanisms” to legitimate their interventions in national and political affairs (Weiss 2004). The use of transnational norms in engaging issues of MDWs also influences the strategies of trade unions and NGOs. The trade unions involved in organizing and registering a Domestic Workers' Association in Malaysia invoked external and transnational norms and rights such as the downgrading of Malaysia to Tier 3 status in the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report⁶⁹. Similar in strategy, the Malaysian NGOs tackled the abuse of domestic workers by invoking the international human rights norms and individual freedoms against slavery. The political and legal restrictions in expressing dissent, as well as the strict migration policies and the restrictive labor regime limits the ability of trade unions

⁶⁸ This paper takes the definition of a labor movement as having “identifiable and socially significant acts of protest, and such acts of protest must either take a form or pursue objectives that can be unambiguously traced to the condition of waged labor”(Research Working Group on World Labour 1986). The two elements here, namely acts of protest and aims, related to waged labor constitute a labor movement, and spring from the world systems approach to studies of world labor. The emergence of a labor movement results in the clear delineation of class interests between labor and capital leading to conflicts of interest formed by the emergence of workers' consciousness.

⁶⁹ The US TIP Report is an annual report from the US State Department that assesses the incidence of trafficking and bonded labor around the world. Countries are evaluated along a three-Tier system, the highest being Tier 1 (complying laws against trafficking), Tier 2 (on watchlist due to incidence of trafficking and no effort to address the problem), and Tier 3 (not complying to anti-trafficking laws and no intention to do so). Malaysia has been placed either in Tier 2 or 3 in the last 5 years.

and NGOs to address migrants' rights domestically. However, Elias has noted that the activism of social groups in Malaysia mainly focuses on the rights-based approach and advocacy in addressing the invisibility and violence against MDWs (Elias 2010b). However, she has argued that the rights-based framework based on the liberal-universal conception of human rights may not be enough to uplift the conditions of MDWs in Malaysia (Elias 2010a).

At present, trade unions, human rights, women, and migrant NGOs in Malaysia have formed a coalition to advocate for domestic workers' rights in specific joint campaigns and awareness-raising events. However, most of these organizations have their own independent strategies and actions in addressing the different issues and concerns of MDWs in Malaysia. In organizing a national Domestic Workers' Association (DWA), Tenaganita and the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) combined their resources in this joint endeavor. The MTUC, through its Domestic Workers' Desk established in 2005, had already by 2007 tried to register a Domestic Workers' Association but it was rejected without clear grounds. On August 10, 2014, the MTUC and Tenaganita launched a second attempt to register the Domestic Workers' Association at the Register of Society (ROS)⁷⁰. However, the ROS ruled against the registration for the second time without explaining the grounds for rejection. Due to the exclusion of domestic workers in Malaysia's labor laws (i.e. Employment Act, Trade Union Act), domestic workers cannot join or form trade unions. The formation of civic associations must register first through the ROS. However, the ROS is very strict in filtering political organizations from registration. The associations registered under the ROS must refrain from political activities and statements and focus mostly on social or community activities and other recreational programs.

The trade unions in Malaysia have been more successful in organizing documented migrant workers, mostly male, particularly in the agricultural, construction, and electronics industries. Through the collaboration of global unions (Building and Woodworkers International/BWI, UNI Global, Public Services International/PSI) and national labor centers in Malaysia (UNI-MLC⁷¹ and MTUC), the Nepali Migrant Workers' Association successfully registered as a union affiliated with the MTUC in Malaysia and with the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)⁷² in Nepal. According to the trade unions, the organizing

⁷⁰ The Registrar of Societies of Malaysia under the Ministry of Interior is tasked to "...administer and enforce the Societies Act 1966, Societies Regulations 1984 and policies pertaining to societies; control and supervise societies so as not to become incompatible with peace, welfare, security, public order, decorum or morality of Malaysia." (see <http://www.ros.gov.my/index.php/en/soalan-lazim>).

⁷¹ UNI-Malaysia Labor Congress is a labor center formed in 2003 composed of service trade unions from the MTUC and is affiliated with the global union UNI.

⁷² GEFONT is the national trade union center in Nepal.

collaboration among these trade unions continues today and has paved the way for migrant workers from other nationalities to form similar organizations. This collaboration among trade unions at the regional and national levels also extends to the trade unions in sending countries. Recognizing the mobility and temporary nature of migrant workers in the construction industry, the BWI is initiating the concept of “portable union membership” (Interview, Apolinar Tolentino, BWI-Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator, July 2013, Kuala Lumpur), wherein workers are members whether they are in their countries of origin, in transition, or at their destination country. Faced with practices that aim to deepen the deportability and disposability of workers, this experiment in mobile and network trade unionism is perhaps a step in a new direction of organizing.

However, there are non-union-, non-NGO-based collective self-help support groups that exist among the Filipino migrant workers in Malaysia. Filipino migrant workers in Malaysia formed two religious-based migrant associations, namely the “Filipinos for Malaysia” and “Tahanang Filipino”⁷³, both based in St. John’s Church in Kuala Lumpur, and a non-religious-based support group (Pinoy Support Group) located in Penang. The “Tahanang Filipino” is registered to the ROS and has been in existence since the early 1990s. It is a full-functioning organization with elected officers, dues-paying membership, a choir group, an education program held every Sunday, recreation trips, and sports events. Religious-based organizations refrain from voicing political opinions because they are only allowed to be a non-political religious group, and if they violate these rules, their registration with the ROS might be rescinded. The “Tahanang Filipino” is broad enough to include Filipino expatriates, regular migrant workers, and domestic workers so that it can pressure the officials of the Philippine Embassy to start a dialogue and debate with them on the problems of the migrant workers in Malaysia. Domestic workers within of these organizations participated in the formation of the DWA initiated by the MTUC and Tenaganita. Another non-union, non-NGO Filipino migrant organization is the Pinoy⁷⁴ Support Group based in Penang. Initially assisted by human rights NGOs in its formation in the early 2000s, it has become a self-organized migrant support group at present. Its membership comes from Filipino expatriates, documented migrant workers, and domestic workers in Penang. While they actively pursue sports and recreation activities for the Filipino migrant community, the group also broadly assists with different problems such as issues of abuse, death, and complaints from MDWs. The group finds shelter for ‘runaways’, abused domestic workers and the undocumented (those whose work permits have expired but

⁷³ Translated in English as “home of the Filipino”, the word *Tahanan* is the Tagalog word referring to house/home

⁷⁴ Alliteration from the word “Pilipino”, which means a citizen of the Philippines.

who don't want to leave) by installing them in safe houses, finding alternative employment and legal assistance. On emergency cases such as doing rescue missions or reporting abuses to the police stations, this group seeks assistance from women NGOs and the Philippine Embassy.

Strategies in organizing MDWs in Malaysia: Beyond 'unionizing' and 'associational' models

The substantial presence of non-union organizations such as migrant, women, and human rights movements in organizing domestic workers prompted a prominent discussion on whether domestic workers are "organizing or unionizing" (Ally 2005). Except for Hong Kong, MDWs "have little access to trade unions in receiving countries in the region" (Piper 2010). The challenge of organizing MDWs has fallen on non-union, non-state, voluntary and externally-funded human rights and migrants' organizations. Based on the "flurry of organizing activity amongst domestic workers" in Latin America, Africa, Europe, US and Asia in the last two decades, Ally proposed the 'associational' and 'union' models of domestic workers' organizing (Ally 2005, 188). Her study also touched upon the delicate balance of trade union-NGO relations as she examined to what extent the non-union based organizing or associational model hindered trade union organizing of domestic workers. However, experiences in Asia on domestic workers organizing go beyond the bifurcated 'associational' and 'union' models.

Aside from deviating from these two models, labor organizing of local and MDWs in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia, also deviates from the traditional trade union organizing strategies. Local domestic workers organizing in the Philippines, Indonesia and Cambodia have started off as networks and associations, which then gradually assert their trade union identities. Most often, domestic workers' associations function towards the defense and representation of domestic workers rather than playing the traditional and institutionalized role of a trade union in workplace representation and collective bargaining. These domestic work networks or associations defend, advocate, and negotiate rights for domestic workers similarly to a trade union, yet are not recognized as trade unions. Presently, more and more trade unions are becoming involved in organizing local and MDWs, but usually in concerted actions and alliances with migrants/human rights NGOs that existed before them. The most prominent example of MDWs' organizing is in Hong Kong where they had undergone a long organizing process that required a dynamic relationship between migrant groups, trade unions, and other NGOs. The work of domestic workers' organizing in Malaysia, however, is still unfolding.

In Malaysia, the goal was to organize a domestic workers' association that was meant to represent, defend, and claim labor rights for local and MDWs. However, the registration of the

association has been derailed twice in the last ten years. Through the rights-based approach of the trade unions and NGOs in reforming labor legislations to cover domestic workers, a few gains were achieved such as a policy on day-offs for domestic workers and humanitarian assistance for abused MDWs. These initiatives from trade unions, NGOs, religious groups, and self-organized support groups seek to alleviate the vulnerabilities of MDWs along the dimension of ‘national-based precarity’. However, responses addressing ‘status-based’ and ‘work-based’ precarity of MDWs in Malaysia remain largely unfulfilled. Trade unions face difficulties in pushing for radical amendments to the Employment and Trade Union Acts that would cover domestic workers. Even though Malaysia’s industrial relations system has a tripartite design where capital, labor, and the state are equal social actors, the Malaysian trade unions are increasingly outvoted and outvoiced in determining labor policies in the country. The Malaysian trade unions have historically believed that the presence of cheap migrant labor drives down the wage rates and benefits of local workers, and that hiring more foreign labor takes away jobs from the unemployed local workers. In some instances, the trade union movement has been reluctant to play its opposition card to the state’s hegemonic economic strategy. The change in the mind-set and agenda of Malaysian trade unions to include informal workers, migrants and domestic workers is just beginning. Further inroads towards organizing this “new proletariat” or “other workers” may happen in the hopefully not so distant future. Towards formulating strategies in organizing MDWs, the dimensions of precarity of MDWs may shed light on the interconnected sources of precarity for MDWs working in Malaysia. This paper argues that the dimensions of precarity influence and shape the constraints, spaces, and extent of labor movement activism in Malaysia who are mobilizing for, and on behalf of, MDWs.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the specific context of MDWs within the Malaysian political economy and labor regime by developing an analytical framework on MDWs’ dimensions of precarity in Malaysia. Approached through the lens of neo-Gramscian and social reproduction theories, the disempowerment, exclusion, and disposability of MDWs in Malaysia emanate and are reproduced through work-based, national-based, and status-based precarity. The vulnerabilities of MDWs stem from the non-recognition of domestic work as work because it is perceived as lowly, unpaid, and largely women’s work. This perception is institutionalized in Malaysia’s labor laws that further reinforce the productive/reproductive and formal/informal divide. Being the largest migrant-receiving country in the Southeast Asian region, the majority of domestic

workers are migrant women trapped inside restrictive migrant regulations such as ‘one-employer, one-work permit’ policy that silences MDWs from complaining about bad working conditions and abuse due to their temporary status as guest workers. These dimensions of precarity exist and are reproduced within the specific political, economic, legal, and social structures of Malaysia.

Whilst trade unions and NGOs in Malaysia involved in organizing domestic workers have formulated strategies in recognizing domestic workers as workers and broadening representation of MDWs, most trade unions and NGOs remain focused on rights-based approaches by invoking transnational and universal rights. However, other forms of resistance and organizing from domestic workers themselves and self-organized migrant collective groups are emerging that have begun to approach the precarious conditions of MDWs along class, gender, and racial lines. Different models of organizing beyond the bifurcated ‘unionizing’ and ‘associational’ models of organizing domestic workers have also emerged. Non-union and non-NGO-based support groups of migrant workers in Malaysia likewise relate with religious groups and embassies of sending countries in Malaysia. In the terrain of empowering MDWs, perhaps a labor movement in Malaysia may finally emerge comprising not only trade unions and NGOs, but also other collective and self-organized networks of migrants and MDWs.

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2. Apolinar Tolentino, Regional Coordinator, Building and Woodworkers International-Asia Pacific, 17 July 2013, Kuala Lumpur.
3. Glorene Amala Das, Program Director Tenaganita, 16 July 2013, Petaling Jaya, Selangor.
4. Hermie Camba, President, Pinoy Support Group (PSG), 14 August 2013, Penang (unrecorded).
5. Mhd. Khalid bin Atan, former President, Malaysia Trades Union Congress, 12 August 2014, Kuala Lumpur.
6. Mohamed Shafie BP Mammal, President, UNI-Malaysia Labor Center (UNI-MLC), 13 August 2013, Kuala Lumpur.
7. Parimala Moses, former Program Officer of Domestic Workers Desk-MTUC, Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), 13 August 2013, Kuala Lumpur (unrecorded).
8. Ruly Cagadas, President, Tahanang Filipino, 31 August 2014, Malacca.

11. Legal consciousness and rights claims of East African migrants in Britain

Aishah Namukasa

Abstract

This paper utilizes the socio-legal concept of legal consciousness to analyze East African migrant workers' lived experiences of various facets of the law and their strategies of claiming rights under Britain's managed migration policy. I expound on migrant workers' coping strategies and struggles against civic stratification, i.e. differentiation practices such as rights restrictions, racialization and maneuvering precarious legal status. Migrants act either individually or collectively to claim rights. Depending on the available political and legal opportunities of mobilizing and organizing in collaboration with civil society, rights-claiming at these levels may involve invoking international human rights norms. The findings are premised on qualitative data derived from interviews, field observations, and a literature study.

Key words: Legal consciousness, racialization, civic stratification, law, migrant rights claims

Introduction

The exploitation and racialization of migrant labor under labor migration programs such as the British points based immigration system (PBS)⁷⁵ (Sumption 2014) has led to a rise of critical scholarship probing migration management and protective rights-based approaches (see Geiger and Pécoud 2012). This paper develops these academic debates further by offering a socio-legal⁷⁶ analytical contribution to discussions on legality, the construction of migrants' precarious legal status as racialized and gendered processes (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2007), and migrant rights claiming strategies. Studying law as a socially constructed phenomena necessitates analyzing the role of legislation in creating migrant subjectivities (Sarat 1990, 379) as well as how the law is perceived by migrants in the UK. My analysis draws on the concept of *legal consciousness* – what people think, feel and say about the law and how they act within it (Silbey 2001). This concept is employed to *analyze the actual lived*

⁷⁵ The UK uses the term “PBS” to describe its economic migration selection system of non-European Union (non-EU) migrants. For instance, doctors and nurses can migrate under Tier 1 and Tier 2, students who can work as care-givers and nursing aides migrate under Tier 4 if they have a sponsoring educational institute. Low skilled workers are covered under Tier 5. Notably, domestic workers (who also perform caring roles) were excluded from the system.

⁷⁶ This interdisciplinary research draws on critical legal studies and political sociology studies.

experiences of law, and the rights claiming strategies of East African migrant healthcare workers in Britain. Through the concept, we are able to study and trace the ways in which law is perceived and interpreted by migrant workers as they engage, avoid, or resist it and produce legal meanings (Silbey 2005; Sarat 1990). Legal consciousness as a part of the production of legal meanings is understood together with its role in the collective construction of legality, or the rule of law (Silbey 2008). Drawing on the insights of critical legal studies, the notion of legal consciousness reminds us that law is not only constructed by society but it also structures society (Halliday and Morgan 2013, 3).

Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey constructed three useful common schemas of legality; abstracted from their respondents' accounts and resynthesized into narratives of legality they label "before," "with," and "against" the law (Ewick and Silbey 1998; Silbey 2005, 348). The law can be perceived as something detached and objective that one has to follow ("before the law"); a game in which one negotiates claims against others ("with the law"); or a painful experience of vulnerability and arbitrariness ("against the law") (Schwenken 2013, 136). These different forms of consciousness or ways of participating (with the law) work with each other to constitute the power of the law or legality (Silbey 2005, 357). Migrants' lived experiences, practices, and strategies of claiming rights are examined as part of the way they engage and give meaning to the prevalence of the rule of law in the UK. Law e.g. immigration law constructs precarious migrant status and illegality (Dauvergne 2008), while at the same time labor law and international human rights law can be seen as a solution for claiming rights against the state's restrictive immigration law and policy.

I examine migrants' collective engagement with civil society to resist and challenge restrictive law – for instance the immigration regime – and claim rights. Migrants' rights claims require the states' enforcement and compliance with international human rights norms (Cholewinski 2010) as well as human rights in practice whereby migrants act individually, and in collaboration with social movement actors (to demand rights) (Piper 2007, 14). Herein rights are understood not only as legal entitlements, involving judicial processes and formal compliance, but are a part of political processes that are refined through social struggles, whereby society-based movements play a dynamic role in advancing those struggles (Piper 2007, 8–9). I examine the legal opportunities (Hilson 2002) available to migrants in the UK and analyze whether East African migrants collectively utilize these opportunities to claim rights.

My empirical research is based on a transnational case study of law from the perspective of some East African nationals of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in the UK. I draw on some of my qualitative interviews with migrant healthcare workers that were working (or had worked)

in the UK⁷⁷. The in-depth semi-structured interviews with migrants were conducted in 2011 in England and in 2012 in Kampala, Uganda, with follow-up interviews with some of the respondents on their immigration status in 2014 - 2016. In Kampala, I interviewed migrants who were on holiday and others that had returned permanently. The interviewees were acquired through snow-ball sampling following contact information provided by previous interviewees. The respondents have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities. A few of my interviewees were involved in unions and two were representatives of their respective migrant community organizations. My data analysis is informed by observations I made in the field. Conducting a detailed literature study and an analysis of the implementation of labor migration programs provided useful insights into the differentiation practices of various UK governments through legislation towards non-European migrants' rights.

The paper is divided into five parts including the introductory and conclusive ones. The second part is a historical overview of how immigration legislation was previously applied to restrict immigration from racialized British subjects from its colonies in Africa. In the third part, I examine the intersectional role of the categories of race, social class, migration status, and gender in shaping migrants' rights experiences. The fourth part is an analysis of specific migrants' legal consciousness and strategies of claiming rights, while the fifth part concentrates on migrants' collective engagement with civil society, and their awareness of transnational rights norms.

The UK's regulation of immigration

A brief historical analysis of the UK's governance of migration (especially to stem immigration from its former colonies) establishes how legislation was applied to restrict immigration from racialized British subjects. After 1945, the post-war government recruited migrant labor from within Europe under the European Volunteer Workers' Scheme and to a lesser extent by recruitment from its colonies, to feed the demand for workers in the newly founded National Health Service (NHS) (McDowell 2009). During the 1950s and 1960s most immigration unfolded spontaneously as "subjects" from the Caribbean, South Asia, and parts of Africa made their way to the *'imperial motherland'* at a time when a section of the British public shared a common idea that immigrants threatened the employment of British workers, and opponents of immigration averred, *"They'll take our jobs"* and *"They will not work"* (Hampshire 2005, 87).

⁷⁷ I interviewed twenty-eight migrants working in professional healthcare (e.g. care-givers, nurses and doctors). Among my interviewees was a student nurse that worked as a nanny for the family she lived with. This revealed migrants' appropriation and negotiation of existing categories to earn a living in the UK.

These negative discourses vilifying refugees and so called ‘*economic migrants*’ continue today within the UK especially through yellow journalism and the rise of right-wing populism.

Through the 1960s until the 1980s, the UK employed restrictive immigration legislation, e.g., the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and the 1971 Immigration Act, to sever its ties with its former colonies⁷⁸ and construct its former colonial subjects (with the same citizenship status and rights as indigenous Britons) as migrants that did not belong in Britain, creating a racialized and stratified system of migration management (Hampshire 2005, 16–18). The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 had a racialized long-term effect of creating a “*distinction between the predominantly white British citizen who could claim lineage within Britain and the predominantly black Commonwealth citizen who could no longer claim to be ‘British’, which in turn barred the Commonwealth immigrant from entering Britain*” (Smith 2008, 373). The limitation of British subject status through legislation, steadily reduced the entry of migrant East African nationals, which set the stage for increasingly turning to legislation to restrict entry of certain migrants and limiting who could belong to the motherland.

The period between the late 1960s and 1970s is intriguing for migration, labor relations, and social movement studies. From 1962, the government imposed increasingly strict immigration controls, mainly in response to growing racist pressure (Connolly, Marino, and Lucio 2014, 14). During that time, trade unions did not take up black migrants’ causes, e.g., against racial discrimination, immigration controls, and racism in the workplace, as a part of the British labor movement’s struggle (Smith 2008, 370–71, 383–84). As Connolly, Marino and Lucio discuss, British unions failed to oppose racist immigration laws, and often tolerated racist practices by their own officials and representatives (2014). Official union policy was that immigrants were workers like any others, and that special arrangements would be divisive. From the early 1970s, Asian and black workers led a number of high-profile strikes against discriminatory employment practices, at times against official trade union resistance. As they further argue, partly in response to these disputes and the growth of a cadre of black trade union activists with their own informal structures, many unions began to develop anti-racist policies and practice (Connolly, Marino, and Lucio 2014, 14).

Under the Labour Government between 1997 to 2007, Britain embraced a doctrine of managed migration by liberalizing the economic migration system and passing legislation in 1999, 2002 and 2004 that restricted the number of asylum seekers to assuage public concern (Somerville 2007, 3–4; Murray 2011, 10–11). An increased number of traditional work permits

⁷⁸ These colonies included the East African countries Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

were granted and new temporary schemes were introduced for high skilled non-EU workers, such as the Highly Skilled Migrants Programme (HSMP) (the earlier version of the PBS) and low skilled workers in specific sectors. In 2008, the UK introduced the new PBS, modelled on the Australian General Skilled Migration Programme, replacing the old numerous routes and categories (Home Office 2006). These historical developments are relevant for understanding the current situation and experiences of East African migrants in the UK, some of whom have since become permanent residents and citizens despite initially starting out as workers under temporary migration schemes in the late 1990s to the 2000s. Tracking the evolution of these programs reveals that the immigration policy was racialized, and the appeal to belonging was little more than a gloss on the racial logic which underpinned the legislation (Hampshire 2005, 18). The construction of racialized migrant subjects is the main facet of law revealed herein. The UK turned to legislation to restrict migration and migrant rights which emphasized the divide between migrants, citizens and permanent residents (Anderson 2013). I examine migrants' rights experiences and legal consciousness below.

Multifaceted rights experiences and legal consciousness

The UK divides migrants for admission purposes according to countries of origin i.e. non-EU versus EU. It particularly emphasizes the bifurcation of non-EU migrants' skills into highly skilled and low skilled⁷⁹ categories for admission under the PBS. Additionally, the supply and demand structures of specific types of migrants (for example in the healthcare sector) follow gender stereotypes and roles, and the rights and entitlements that are attached to, or the result of, specific modes of entry are therefore also gendered (Piper 2007, 16)⁸⁰. The hierarchical construction of the ideal migrant subject and their rights are visible in the differentiation made between non-EU migrants whose countries do not have Memorandums of Understanding (for the export of labor) (Wickramasekara 2015) with the UK, for instance, migrants from East African countries including Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The UK's differentiation practices of migrants and their rights, especially at the time of 'lawfully' selecting and admitting migrants are known as "civic stratification" (Morris 2003). Civic stratification creates precarious migrant labor. The UK's migrant selection and construction of ideal migrants is explained by Kato, a male Sonographer. He previously had the HSMP visa and at the time of the interview had the

⁷⁹ Low skilled migrants are not allowed to migrate with family members nor family reunification.

⁸⁰ I elucidate on this further below.

Tier 2 visa. He said: “*They*⁸¹ *only want specific migrants that they need to come... They only want a certain set or group of migrants with certain skills to come, not everyone*” (Interview with Kato, London, 8.11.2011). These regulated skills include medicine and nursing and appear on a yearly shortage occupation list. The related regulations governing these professions can determine professional belonging (MAC 2015; Hausner 2011). Upon arrival in the UK, migrants’ access to entitlements is determined by both formal and informal sets of rules and regulations defined by law, social norms and conventions (Piper 2007, 16). When the social dimension is incorporated into the analysis, it brings to the fore broader issues of migration and reminds us of the daily reality, and the actual situation, of migrants who need employment, housing, and education (ibid).

The diverse number of people migrating under different circumstances means that there are “multifaceted migration experiences” (ICJ 2014, 32), which include indecent working conditions and discrimination both at work and in society (Crépeau 2014; Anderson 2013, 174–76). Almost all interviewees regardless of skill categorization mentioned experiencing racialization at work, in spite of racism being prohibited by the UK Equality Act. Maurine, a female care-giver articulated: “...*Racist employers or some racist elderly people who were not used to seeing black people and possibly don’t like you because of that. It will always be like that*” (Interview with Maurine, London, 3.12.2011). Another migrant nurse said that some “old people” do not like nor want to be touched by a black nurse (Interview with Teopista, London, 30.10.2011). Hajati, a support worker, described her negative experiences with racism and linked it to color differentiation saying: “*What I can describe is for example our color black and white. So someone can say "you black monkey". Why would you bring that?*” (Interview with Hajati, London, 22.11.2011). Basing on her religion, she had also experienced instances of Islamophobia at work when she was bullied by her colleagues and reported to her manager. Scholars have examined instances where migrants have experienced Islamophobia as religious discrimination and as cultural racism (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015). Other migrant nurses have narrated their own experiences with racialization in the Scottish Parliament to lobby for better working conditions in the UK (Taylor and Mcgeoch 2010).

Examining migrants’ lived experiences reveals the intersectional effects of their social-economic class, gender, and race in connection with different UK laws and policies. Although seemingly neutral, presented as ‘classless’ and ‘raceless’ (Anderson 2013, 46), due to requiring all non-EU migrants to meet specific points, the PBS contributes to less rights for specific

⁸¹ He referred to the UK and its different administrative agencies such as the Home Office, the UK Visas and Immigration (then known as the UK Border Agency) in plural as “they”.

migrants, especially those deemed low skilled. The restrictive conditions migrants must fulfil to remain in the UK mean that although these ‘neutral’ immigration policies (since migrants only have to prove that they meet specific points or have a certain income), in reality they emphasize the gendered and racialized effects of migration processes. The conditions mean that some black female nurses from East Africa could not easily meet the points because of maternal leave or low salary in their country of origin. For instance some female nurses could only migrate (for work) as dependents of holders of work visas who themselves are able to work in any sector, or as visitors and then could later work as “deskilled” and undocumented labor in care homes and in private homes (field observation). At the same time, some African migrants’ applications were highly likely to be rejected by visa officers. Kato talked about how he felt penalized by having his work visa application rejected because his employer had not written his job description and the immigration bureaucrat mistook him for a dependent. “...*They made a mistake. Instead of making me the main applicant they indicated there that I am a dependent. Yet a dependent’s visa does not have any restrictions. Can you imagine if I get a visa and then you come on it as my dependent you are free to work for anybody*” (Interview with Kato, London, 8.11.2011).

Care work illustrates the relations between race, poverty, and immigration, and the gendered consequences of the limited conceptualization of skill and the nature of the labor relation (Anderson 2013, 176). It is a reminder of the heterogeneity of migrants, whereby many of the employers of these workers are themselves ‘migrants’, but given that they are wealthy, their experiences of immigration are very different (ibid.). Some of the interviewees hired fellow migrants as childminders whereby some of these workers could be categorized either as occasional domestic workers or care givers, while at the same time they were students for visa purposes under the PBS (field observation). Highly skilled migrants with a higher status employ fellow migrants that occupy a lower class position as domestic workers or as care-givers (for elderly family members). When the former violate the latter migrants’ rights, it reinforces their precarity. The UK’s concentration on a ‘bifurcation of skills’ means that migrants with gendered skills, such as domestic work that cannot easily be classified as either high or low skilled, were excluded from the Tier system. In this way, immigration status reveals caring work to be considered as both work and not work in the UK, with the outcome being that visas not only trap migrants in ambivalent social relations, but also affect the sector generally

(Anderson 2013, 11)⁸². Thus, not only the immigration laws but also employment laws (among others) contribute to migrants' precarity.

Migrants' precarity is reinforced when they are undocumented or work illegally against the law. Zimula, a 50-year-old female, performed care work with migrant communities and received payment in hand since she had no 'papers' (Interview Zimula, London, 21.11.2011). She agreed that her situation was precarious and she was easily exploited by an agency that she had registered with in the very beginning, when she began working in the UK. The agency withdrew her salary on realizing that she had no work permit, as they did not want to pay the exorbitant fines that would be imposed on them for hiring an undocumented migrant. Zimula had worked under a visit visa even though under this visa migrants are not allowed to work (UK Home Office 2016; Dauvergne 2008). This visa had expired at the end of 2010, but she could not report the agency to anyone for fear of deportation since she said she had "*broken the law*" (Schwenken 2013, 136–37; Silbey 2005, 334). She had used the visit visa to circumvent the requirements of the Points Based System, having been told by 'friends' in the UK that with the visit visa she could work in the UK. These experiences highlight the situation of migrant workers with the most precarious status (the undocumented), who may not be able to access the law out of fear, or seek any form of redress since they have acted outside and against the law, and would rather avoid the law than engage or resist it. This legal consciousness involves *avoidance of the law* by not trying to draw attention to herself, in addition to demonstrating her evasion of the law's power. The "against the law" legal consciousness of undocumented migrants is a problem for most rights-based advocacy strategies (Schwenken 2013, 137). Legal consciousness depends a lot on migrants' personality and their lived experiences. Here we see that undocumented migrants may not easily seek assistance out of fear of deportation, and the punitive arm of the law. Meanwhile, migrants with legal status or permanent residence status easily approach the law and act as representatives of other migrants in order to claim rights.

Migrants categorized as highly skilled or low skilled by the UK for visa purposes (as all workers regardless of classification) find themselves with "precarious legal status" due to their uncertain immigration status, as a result of rapid changes to immigration laws and policies such as the visa renewal conditions. Restrictive conditions on family reunification and switching or being tied to a sponsoring employer were normal expectations for migrant interview

⁸² Domestic workers' rights occupy a grey area in British employment law, whereby these workers are excluded from coverage under the weekly forty-eight-hour restriction set out in the Working Time Regulations for the limitation of working hours, and the Health and Safety Executive has no remit to inspect private households. See Anderson (2013, 163) for a detailed discussion on this sector, law and policy.

participants that had Tier 2 visas. For instance, Kato felt he was dependent on his employer under the Tier 2 visa through the ‘certificate of sponsorship’. According to him: “*They (UK Home Office) call it a Certificate of Sponsorship, which is given to the employer and then the employer just gives you a copy to use to apply for the visa.*” (Interview with Kato, London, 8.11.2011). These certificates of sponsorship can be withdrawn at any time by the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) which forces businesses to pay for frequent legal advice (Murray 2011, 6). During that time Kato had permission to stay in the UK if he still worked for the sponsoring employer. Additionally with the Tier 2 visa (at the time of my first interview with him), he could easily lose his legal status in the UK at the will of his employer. Kato’s experience of *precarious legal status* is one example of the role of immigration law in creating immigration statuses and categories that can distort migrants’ legal status and access to rights within another legal regime, i.e. labor law, which is meant to protect all workers irrespective of immigration categorization. While I focus mainly on the overlap of migration, labor and the rights regime, there has been some research on the overlap of the gender, care and migration regime especially in the realm of care work (see, e.g., Schwenken 2013, 134; Lutz 2008).

Legal consciousness as a migrant rights claiming strategy

After having linked migrants’ precarisation to states’ migration control, laws and policies, and highlighted the racialization and gendered implications thereof, in this section I examine migrants’ experiences of claiming rights for themselves irrespective of the restrictive conditions that they might encounter in the UK. Legal consciousness is used to name analytically the understandings and meanings of law circulating in social relations; that is, what people do as well as say about law, and is understood to be a part of a reciprocal process, in which the meanings given by individuals to their world become patterned, stabilized, and objectified (Silbey 2008). Here, legal consciousness is part of ordinary migrants’ practices in dealing with the law in their daily lives. At the risk of repetition, what should be underlined is the ways in which migrants act individually, collectively, and/or transnationally to claim rights, and some of the actors that support them. In certain instances some migrant workers have turned to the law as a mobilization tool to demand rights (Satterthwaite 2004). Awareness of avenues to claim rights in the UK is key here, as Kato mentioned in regards to his migrant status at the time: “*...because it’s a temporary thing, I mean when you are a migrant, your rights are restricted for a certain time. You are given rights after a certain time. There is a process through which you can go through to attain full rights. So to a certain extent they are right to do it... But maybe what they should do is reduce the initial period which is like probation.*” (Interview

Kato, London, 8.11.2011). While the legal consciousness of Gladis, a female migrant student working as a care-giver in a nursing home, is obvious when she said she had not experienced any human rights violations at work, she said “...*at least there are laws governing everything in the UK (...) In that people are trying to do whatever they do according to the law because the law protects you. You have the right to sue anybody*” (Interview Gladis, London, 23.11.2011). What can be assumed with this statement is that she is aware of the law as a useful empowerment tool that protects (see Calavita 2006).

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that they were unable to access judicial redress in courts as they found the process expensive. Two female highly skilled migrants (Akini and Gladis) mentioned how they had hired and consulted lawyers to represent their interests at the Home Office and at a Small Claims Tribunal, respectively. Following the Home Office’s decision to deny her application for a Tier 2 visa extension, Akini filed an immigration appeal to be able to continue living and working in the UK (Interview Akini, London, 5.10.2011). Gladis mentioned that she had a tenancy dispute with her landlord over a deposit on rent and had sued the landlord.

All these narratives should be taken to conclude that trials as visible *legal battles*, are the outliers of the law’s more routine activities (Silbey 2005, 332). Gladis connected her landlord’s reaction to her immigration status assuming that her landlord “*thought she had no documents*” and that she “*would not take her case further*”, which demonstrates the precarity some migrants face under the “rule of law” when they are undocumented as well as the “hegemonic tale of not having rights” (Schwenken 2013, 136). On the other hand, it also demonstrates the landlord’s own “legal consciousness”, the all-permissiveness and abuse on the assumption that migrant workers are undocumented and not able to claim their rights⁸³.

For other individuals that are unable to access rights using the court system, local area Members of Parliament (MP) have been supportive. For instance, one female East African nurse that had applied for asylum in the UK mentioned the important role played by her then local area MP. Namu said: “*I went to the MP because I am on the voters’ registrar. Since I am on the voters’ registrar the MP has to help me...Initially they (Home Office bureaucrats) were not writing to me but they know where I live and everything, so they’ve been writing to the MP...when the MP writes to them, then they write to the MP*” (Interview with Namu, London, 16.11.2011). Irrespective of her semi-legal status, the MP had really helped her by writing

⁸³ Given space constraints, it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine legal consciousness of other actors such as employers, lawyers and agencies involved in the migration industry.

numerous letters to the Home Office on her behalf and even did this while knowing “she had no papers”.

As seen above, migrants are able to claim rights individually. In other instances migrants have formed migrant-self organizations, or joined already existing NGOs and trade unions in order to mobilize themselves and campaign against repressive laws and immigration conditions. I examine migrants’ collective rights claims below.

Collective rights claims: Legal opportunities for policy reform

Migrant workers are able to seek change in their conditions through engaging with civil society, such as NGOs that focus on social rights and trade unions (Scholte 2001). Workers’ organizing is a core right and labor standard. In the UK, East African migrants’ collective organizing practices are evident in their joining migrant community or religious affiliated associations that organize access to services that they may not be able to access from the state or locally. Focusing on migrants’ collective actions to identify their legal consciousness on matters of collective dissent (see, e.g., Halliday and Morgan 2013) involves examining available legal and political opportunities and strategies taken by migrants and migrant rights movements. Such migrant rights movements are part of global social movements (Piper 2015). Under social movement scholarship on *protest and lobbying* we see the interplay between protest and conventional politics, but need to examine the *role of law and the courts* or litigation (legal opportunities) in advancing the interests of the movements (Hilson 2002, 239). From a socio-legal perspective it is necessary to examine recourse to law as a distinct strategy (of its own right) to claim migrant rights.

Civil society actors including NGOs and trade unions in the UK have been successful in helping individual migrants to attain redress from abusive employers, as well as to speak out against these abuses. Furthermore, to counter the exclusion and inequality that migrants face, some migrants and organizations have set up self-help and support groups through community organizations and NGOs. Most of my interviewees were mainly organized within nationality-based associations, which provided useful networks for attaining employment. Moreover, a lack of citizenship or permanent residence status may not limit access to services if they are available through other public or private institutions (e.g. ethno-cultural and faith-based) (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2007, 252). For instance, migrants are able to form national organizations that assist them, e.g., in coping with their emotional labor (e.g. care work), repatriate deceased members to the countries of origin and organize remittances.

In November 2005, trade unions engaged with migrant rights issues at the local level in Manchester, where following the initiative of local trade union branches a conference was held to launch a campaign within the union movement to build stronger support for refugees and people refused a residence status (Flynn 2006). There have been many organizing campaigns designed to represent the interests of migrant workers; for example, the main public sector union UNISON established a Migrant Worker Participation Project (Connolly, Marino, and Lucio 2014, 15). Other trade union incentives to engage with migrant issues include the formation of a network of nurses called the Overseas Nurses Network (ONN) within UNISON. The ONN, in the past, ably represented migrant nurses at the Scottish Parliament, narrating their unique stories; the difficulties in obtaining and reapplying for visas, racism and discrimination in the workplace, not having their skills recognized by employers, and starting their lives over in a foreign country (Taylor and Mcgeoch 2010). The presence of the Labour Government from 1997 to 2007 created greater situational political opportunities (Hilson 2002, 250) for the migrant-rights movement. Unlike in the 1970s when the unions did not take up migrants' causes, some unions have made migrant workers a key target of their organizing campaigns, focusing on those sections of the labor market, e.g. healthcare, that have seen the largest rise in migrant workers over the last decade. Yet integration into the wider union is as yet only tentative (Connolly, Marino, and Lucio 2014, 15).

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that they were not members of unions. The few that were members such as Yokana, a male psychiatric nurse, provided information on organizing fellow workers, including migrants: *"I am in one of the major unions in the UK called Unison which deals more with the public servants. It is the biggest union of the UK. The reason why I joined the union was to develop my knowledge about the rights of the workers... I wanted to know what my rights are as a public service worker."* (Interview with Yokana, Kampala, 17.02.2012). Another male mental health support worker, Sulaimani, was registered with a union at his workplace but didn't actively engage with it. He said: *"It's just a union for workers. Just joined it for the sake... They are taking money from me. But the reason why I am a member is because I wanted to learn more: What do they do? How do they go about it? I decided not to cancel my membership"* (Interview with Sulaimani, the Midlands, 5.11.2011). Yokana was a permanent UK resident while Sulaimani was about to become one at the time of interview, and perhaps this explains their membership in unions. These interviewees' engagement 'with the law' and thus the development of a legal consciousness (Silbey 2005, 357) is evident in their knowledge of unions and workers' rights which are regulated by labor law and human rights law.

On the other hand, most females I interviewed were members of community based organizations but not unions. For example, Gladis said she was not in a union saying, “*I hate politics.*” (Interview with Gladis, London, 23.11.2011). This is not surprising because in East Africa some governments, for example the Ugandan one, quash opposition. It partly explains Gladis’ equating trade unions with politics and something that she hates. Women’s representation within unions has also been explained by cultural differences in countries of origin and fear of politics (Taylor and Mcgeoch 2010).

Within some parts of the East African community, females predominately perform reproductive work in their homes which means that they may not have time for structured union activities unlike community organizing. When asked about organizing and trade unions one registered nurse Meeme said: “*Because I have not been exposed to them. I suppose that’s why. And I have got little time on my fingers*” (Interview with Meeme, London, 4.11.2011). On the other hand she was active in her community self-help group. I noticed that female migrants were mainly active in organizing community and religious gatherings which were useful for planning childcare, networking, accessing the labor market, and repatriating the deceased (field observation).

Migrants may face difficulties in joining trade unions partly due to their precarious legal status under immigration law and policy. Meanwhile, migrants without visa restrictions (especially permanent residents) were able to act as representatives in trade unions. Yokana explained his position in the union: “*I am a steward and a representative. I tend to represent the workers from my area. I also find that I work beyond my workplace area because people will contact you when they have disciplinary issues, are not happy with work conditions and have issues with managers. You are working as a chain between the workers and your employer*” (Interview with Yokana, Kampala, 17.02.2012). He is easily incorporated into the union structures because of his permanent resident status. However, the lack of state support for collective rights and regulation (for all workers regardless of immigration classification) remains a challenge for trade unions in the UK (Connolly, Marino, and Lucio 2014, 17; UNISON 2016).

That some migrants do not participate in trade unions can partly be attributed to visa conditions, where migrants under the PBS are expected to remain employed in order to remain legally in the UK. The interviewees repeatedly stated that they had to work to retain their work visa so they had no time to organize in trade unions and labor associations. The migrants who were not a part of a trade union or very active in a community association, mainly connected their experiences of not organizing to their own countries of origin, this was particularly true

for male interviewees. Kato: *“I don’t find them constructive in terms of enhancing anything about either my rights or my pay. I would be part of one if I thought they would be useful. But at the moment I don’t see, because all workers’ rights are legislated by the government, which is already there, so there is nothing the unions can do to the employer”* (Interview with Kato, London, 8.11.2011). Kato’s disinterest in unions arguing that all rights are legislated further demonstrates the main legalistic view of rights on paper or in theory (Piper 2007, 18). It supports one stance of law as detached and objective that has to be followed (“before the law”) (Schwenken 2013, 136). His view is that the legislation means unions cannot do anything to employers. Kato seems to take the presence of workers’ rights legislation for granted and downplays the role of unions. His legal consciousness also points to the enduring power of law in creating legality and illegality in sovereign states premised on the rule of law (Silbey 2005, 329).

From analyzing my interview data, it appears that migrants’ ability to protest is constrained by visa restrictions that require continuous employment, and against litigation by the expenditure involved. Nonetheless, there are examples of migrants’ political engagement with the law through participating in migrant rights campaigns, and filing legal cases or relying on previous successful litigation to influence political campaigns for more rights. The NGOs have assisted individual migrants to file cases that seek judicial review in employment tribunals and courts. In this way these organizations and migrants take advantage of this available legal avenue to claim rights (Hilson 2002, 239).

One example is the migrant led collective action campaign by the HSMP Forum to organize against the UK’s retrospective usage of law and policy to reduce migrants’ rights. This successful migrant movement relied on available legal and political opportunities to claim migrant rights. The organization is composed of mainly migrant non-EU highly skilled workers mainly from Asia, who lobbied and sought legal review to claim their rights in 2006 (HSMP Forum 2015). This NGO took its name from the UK’s ‘Highly Skilled Migrant Programme’ (HSMP), (the earlier version of the Tier 1 and 2 visa), which was introduced in 2002. Under the scheme migrants could move to the UK for 12 months, access any job and could qualify for permanent residence after four years. The Policy guidance for the HSMP scheme was expressed as follows:

This programme is a new way of allowing individuals to migrate to the United Kingdom. It aims to provide an individual migration route for highly skilled persons who have the skills and experience required by the United Kingdom to compete in the global economy”

(see HSMP Forum Limited v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Administrative Court) 2008, vol. [2008] EWH, para. 1).

The migrants were aware that they could get legal redress by instituting a case in court. By accessing the UK High Court, the HSMP Forum instituted an application for judicial review on behalf of all migrants in 2008, against the Secretary of State for the Home Department. In this way, the organization – together with the migrants it represented – played a role in resisting and calling for the rescission of the laws and policies that the UK employed to retrospectively “claw-back” migrants’ rights following unfair changes to the HSMP visa in November 2006 (see the case of HSMP Forum Limited v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Administrative Court) 2008). The Labour Government at the time had introduced retrospective changes by increasing the duration (from four to five years) that migrants had to reside in the UK before they could apply for permanent residence. The HSMP adopted litigation as a key strategy as its migrant leader (a cause lawyer – that is a lawyer actively engaged in social movements) (see Sarat and Scheingold 2006), and its highly skilled network had direct experience of the law (Hilson 2002, 241). For instance, the HSMP’s application was backed by a letter from the Immigration Law Practitioners Association, a body that organizes lawyers working on immigration issues. In a letter dated 16th November 2006, the Association complained to the Minister about with the manner in which the changes had been introduced; without a chance of formal consultation nor any notice provided to non-EU migrants concerning the measures that were announced on 7th November and came into effect on the 8th of November 2006 (HSMP Forum Limited v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Administrative Court) 2008, vol. [2008] EWH, para. 24). This letter was used as evidence by the HSMP to back up its claim against the government’s retrospective action. Notably, some of the migrants under the scheme included doctors, nurses, and lawyers. This practice of resisting the UK’s immigration policy via judicial review can be termed as collective legal consciousness (Kurkchian 2012) of the migrants in collaboration with civil society under the highly skilled migrants’ visa.

The judge held: *“I find that the terms of the scheme, properly interpreted in context and read with the guidance and the rules, contain a clear representation, made by the defendant, that once a migrant had embarked on the scheme he would enjoy the benefits of the scheme according to the terms prevailing at the date he joined”* (HSMP Forum Limited v Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2008, para 57). The judge found in favor of the HSMP Forum Ltd: *“I am satisfied... that the defendant proposes to act unlawfully and the Court should intervene”* (HSMP Forum Limited v Secretary of State for the Home Department

(Administrative Court) 2008). Following this decision all migrants, including East Africans under the HSMP visa at that time (e.g. my interview participants Yokana and Meeme), were entitled to rely on the original terms of the scheme rather than being forced by the government to comply with unlawful rules that would reduce their rights under the revised scheme. This example of judicial review confirms that judicial processes are one of the several locations of rights based struggles and demonstrate the importance of engagement with social organizations that institute rights claims or use rights as the basis for social action (Piper 2007, 22). Presently the HSMP Forum represents migrants belonging to all immigration categories, including those already settled in the UK, and campaigns on various immigration issues. It portrays itself to represent non-European migrants of all nationalities and cultures (HSMP Forum 2015). It has made and continues to make submissions to the UK government and organize demonstrations particularly related to the interests of highly skilled migrants under Tier 1 and 2, and has lobbied various government bodies to influence change of the immigration policies and legislation that negatively affects migrants.

Domesticated transnational rights norms

Having examined migrants' collective actions to claim rights through protests, lobbying and litigation, attention should be confined to the migrants' awareness of domesticated transnational rights norms as a part of their transnational legal consciousness. Migrants, including those that are undocumented or in a precarious legal status, can draw on transnational legal consciousness, which refers to knowledge of existing international human rights norms and has various sources or forms including the United Nations and International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions to claim rights (Schwenken 2013, 138). The UK opted-in and incorporated international conventions, such as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) into its domestic law, this convention has been very important in terms of the individual's right of redress (Morris 2003, 71, 95–96). The UK Human Rights Act 1998 guarantees the rights of everyone in the UK regardless of whether they are British or not. I observed that some of the interviewees (e.g. Gladis and Sulaimani) were aware of this legislation (the Human Rights Act) and other international conventions, which is part of their transnational legal consciousness.

The state may cling to its sovereignty (Dauvergne 2008) through actions such as restricting migrant rights, but the exercise of this power, especially for migrants already in the UK, can be restrained by its domestic courts. The UK domestic courts have the duty to interpret the UK's obligations to respect human rights guaranteed under the ECHR. Judges at the national

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level can decide against the interests of the government. In this way judges actually make political decisions (Erwing 2010, 2112) that may benefit migrants contrary to the government's objectives.

A proposed British Bill of Rights threatens the existing domesticated transnational protection of rights for everyone. The European Court of Human Rights judges offer a higher standard of protection than their counterparts in the UK Supreme Court (Erwing 2010, 2129). In most cases the judges may not challenge government policy unlike their counterparts in Strasbourg (*ibid.*). Some examples include domestic courts being content with the swinging restrictions on the right to strike, the stop and search powers of the police and the use of house arrest under control orders and immigration power (Erwing 2010, 2136). Yet domestic courts remain an avenue for instituting migrant rights claims drawing on domesticated international human rights law, including the UK Human Rights Act. Migrants' knowledge of these avenues of redress remains a form of transnational legal consciousness, which they can act upon to claim rights.

Conclusion

A socio-legal analysis of migrants' narrated rights experiences revealed they were both coping and struggling against different facets of the law including exclusionary differentiation practices under immigration law, and racialization at work and within society in spite of anti-racism legislation. The narratives and practices revealed migrants' legal consciousness where they acted individually or collectively and their awareness of transnational human rights norms. Most interviewees belonged to migrant ethnic-community and religious-based organizations that organized certain economic and social rights that they could not access due to restrictions by the state under the immigration regime. The respondents perceived litigation as an expensive but necessary avenue in seeking rights or justice. Highly skilled migrants in a higher social-economic class were more likely to turn to the law as a form of redress. At the same time, the UK's PBS program that requires migrants to always be employed and have a steady source of income constrained migrants from engaging with unions or protests. The interviewees revealed that they could not participate in such protest actions due to time constraints, as they had to remain employed to retain their legal migrant status. Achieving immigration policy reform for highly skilled migrants by lobbying, protesting and litigation (judicial review), reveals the benefits of both political and legal strategies to claim rights. Migrants from different social classes and immigration categorization are yet to unite to demand more rights collectively, this

may be partly due to the UK's exclusionary civic stratification of migrants that grants them different rights depending on their immigration status and income.

The revealed forms of legal consciousness, which include participating with, engaging in, avoiding or resisting the law, interact with each other to constitute the enduring power of legality or the rule of law in the UK. The different schemas including where the law is dominating and the counter responses of dissent against restrictive law are present at the same time. I have elucidated these different schemas of legal consciousness by examining narrations of every day experiences with the law of migrants including those with precarious residence status, the undocumented and those with permanent residence status. I found that there were migrants who hid from or avoided the law and others that resisted or engaged the law as individuals and as part of NGOs and trade unions. The different responses to the law depended on the individual's personality, behavior, culture, the specific experience of law, class or socio-economic position and whether they have legal residence status. More research is needed on the collective legal consciousness of heterogeneous groups of migrants engaging with civil society and claiming rights against restrictive immigration law (and other laws) and policy. This requires focus group interviews and discussions with the selected migrant groups in order to attain more collective responses for comparative purposes of the different schemas of legal consciousness and dissent. Analyzing transnational legal consciousness, specifically focusing on migrants' proactive strategies and resistance to restrictive laws and policies, is an emerging research area within critical migration and socio-legal studies.

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Part V: Social movements beyond urban spaces

12. Communal territorial rights and the role of class, race, and ethnicity in recent agrarian struggles in Latin America

Jairo Baquero

Abstract

Several processes have affected the regions of Latin America in recent decades: There has been an expansion of land rights based on the communalization of land tenure, which have turned into 'territorial rights'. This produced social movements that have utilized territory as a stake in their struggles. Also, there has been an expansion of capitalist accumulation related to agribusiness and mining, associated to processes of primitive accumulation. The interplay of these processes has shaped the way contemporary social struggles have developed in rural settings. Long-term processes of capitalist accumulation have produced an overlap between land conflicts and labor disputes entailing class struggle. Even so, contemporary land rights have been increasingly significant on the basis of ethno-adscriptions. This chapter aims to stress that social classes still play an important role in the analysis of rural inequalities, but in relation with other categories such as race and ethnicity. By adopting an intersectional approach, I deploy qualitative methods to analyze the role of the social class category as entangled with race and ethnicity, within contemporary struggles over land and territory, with a special focus on the Chocó region in Colombia.

Keywords: Territorial rights, intersectionality, social classes, race, ethnicity

Introduction

Recent trends in Latin America include the government implementation of neo-extractive policies and the expansion of agribusiness to achieve development goals. These processes have led to increased pressure on territories, resources and populations which are located in areas with rich natural resources, such as indigenous people, Afro-descendants and mestizo peasants, producing socio-environmental conflicts. Nevertheless, these processes have also been accompanied by the rise of social mobilization, articulated around social and ethnic affiliations and environmental demands. Furthermore, local, national and international institutions and laws have emerged in recent decades, aiming to protect such territories, as well as the rights of those populations. These include collective territorial rights for Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples that aim to regulate the ownership and use of natural resources.

This chapter claims that the encounter of those processes – neo-extractivism and collective territorial rights – is producing several challenging situations at the local level, including dispossession, land grabbing, and the issues associated with the definition of the subjects that fit into those identities (e.g. “Afro-descendants” and “black communities”) created by the laws. This chapter offers an analytical discussion on the relationship between territory, land distribution, social categories and land conflicts. The analysis of the intersection of those elements is essential in understanding the complex situations that emerge from, and the effects produced by, conflicts linked to the expansion of territorial rights in the midst of violence and competing economic interests in the region.

In previous works that studied the expansion of communal land rights, the category “social classes” has been made invisible. It appeared as if class was no longer a relevant category to analyze socio-economic and political reality. However, this chapter demonstrates the relevancy of social classes and proposes to analyze them in relation to other categories such as race and ethnicity, as it is necessary to overcome the binary “social classes” versus “race and ethnicity”. Some works have focused on a class-based approach (Veltmeyer 1997; Petras and Veltmeyer 2001), this is also prevalent in some works on land reforms and the analyses of the situation in rural Latin America (Kay 2006). Conversely, other works have focused on the role of race and ethnicity. For example, Plant and Hvalkof (2001) note the heterogeneity of issues of indigenous identity and land tenure concerns. Hooker (2005) discusses the disparities between land rights gained by indigenous and Afro-Latin groups amid the multiculturalism in Latin America. Hale (2006 & 2011) analyses the indigenous and Afro-descendant communal land rights in Latin America, amid neoliberal policies. And Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998) analyze the emerging demands of indigenous and Afro-descendant population for land and cultural rights. Yet, there are only a few works that propose to combine both class and identity struggles in the case of indigenous and peasant mobilization (Otero 2003). More research is demanded on the role of social classes in relation to race and ethnicity in the rural areas of Latin America. The study of these issues is crucial, given the recent expansion of territorial rights based on ethnic identities, and land conflicts associated with dispossession, land grabs, new strategies of land control and land restitution.

This chapter aims to contribute to this literature, by offering an intersectional approach to the analysis of land rights and land conflicts in rural Latin America. The main question addressed in this chapter is: How have the recent processes of collective titling and agribusiness expansion shaped and/or transformed the structures of inequalities and social resistance at the rural level in Colombia?

My analysis is based on qualitative research methods (fieldwork, observation, interviews, and press revision). I conducted fieldwork in Chocó between 2011 and 2013. Chocó is located in the Pacific coastal area of Colombia. It is the poorest region and has the largest population of Afro-descendants nationally. It is also inhabited by indigenous communities mainly from the Embera groups. There are also mestizo (mixed) people and a minority white population. The Afro-descendant population in Chocó has been granted communal land rights since the 1990s. The new Constitution of 1991 defined Colombia as a multicultural and pluri-ethnic country. The Transitory Article 55 (AT-55) and the Law No. 70 of 1993 defined the collective territories of black communities, opening the path to collective titling. Law 70 aimed to protect the cultural practices of black communities and their social and economic development. Even so, the violence and expansion of economic ventures such as agribusiness in Chocó since 1996 have prevented these communities from enjoying these rights. Paramilitary groups forcibly removed thousands of people who were granted land rights. Consequently, this chapter seeks to analyze the role of social classes, as intersected with race and ethnicity, in the situation of those populations, after gaining land rights, and after being forcibly displaced through violent dispossession.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section contains a discussion of the existing literature. The second section offers an analytical scheme to analyze intersectionality as related to class, race, ethnicity and land rights. The third section analyses the Colombian case with emphasis on the Chocó region and the enactment of laws that endowed Afro-descendants with territorial rights. Finally, some ideas are presented regarding the relation between intersectionality, territorial rights and social mobilization.

Previous literature on communal land rights

This section discusses previous approaches to rural development and the expansion of communal land rights. Different scholars have studied the interplay between land rights and social categories, aiming to research different types of inequalities in Latin America. They note that land ownership inequalities affect different social categories fashioned by class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Due to space limitations, I will not develop an in-depth analysis of the relationship between gender and land rights. Nevertheless, this issue has been studied by different scholars, who claim that land inequalities include the existence of gender gaps in land ownership in Latin America (Deere and Leon 2001). These authors claim that in a sample of Latin American countries only one-quarter of the landowners are women, due to certain social and economic mechanisms that privilege male ownership in private and public spheres.

Firstly, the analysis of rural inequalities has focused on class-based analyses. These approaches criticize the effects of the expansion of land rights based on ethnicity and cultural difference. For them, these rights have not overcome historical rural class inequalities (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001; Kay 2006). Notwithstanding, traditional rural analyses also note that rural poverty has an ethnic dimension in Latin America, with its origins in the colonial period. This discrimination continued in the post-independence period, against indigenous people and Afro-descendants. In recent decades, massive social mobilizations took place giving pace to new political rights. The situation in rural Latin America is problematic, including the presence of poor and not poor indigenous and peasant-worker populations as well. Multiple inequalities may coexist, including poor peasants living nearby or with poor indigenous populations. When some of these groups receive land rights, it may create local conflicts over access to resources, the borders of properties, and the definition of rights' beneficiaries.

In some sense, the classical agrarian literature focused on rural social classes producing an invisibilization of the indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples' rural issues. These populations have been taken as marginal populations, or as populations inhabiting marginal territories – frequently lands owned by the state such as public lands. There is a reductionism in the treatment to those communities; they have been taken as those people living beyond the agricultural frontier. I claim that this “frontier” has been the frontier created by capitalism. Beyond this frontier there are no social classes and the goals of capitalism is to create classes by incorporating those populations and their resources into the areas within the capitalist sphere. However, I note that this binary is not so clear.

Secondly, some works have focused on the role of racial and ethnic categories for analyzing land rights, giving less importance to social classes. There are analyses on the rising land rights gained by Afro-descendant communities in Latin America (Hooker 2005; Hale 2006). Hooker (2005) stresses the disparities between land rights gained by indigenous and Afro-Latin groups amid the multiculturalism in Latin America. For her, “the main cause of the disparity is the fact that collective rights are adjudicated on the basis of possessing a distinct group identity defined in cultural or ethnic terms” (2005, 285), where indigenous people are better positioned to produce those identities and claims. This author criticizes the focus of the state on cultural difference to grant land rights. This is risky because Afro-descendants and indigenous people could be victims of discrimination despite these rights. Hale (2006, 2011) also analyzes the indigenous and Afro-descendants' communal land rights in Latin America in the context of neoliberal policies. The author highlights that in the past struggles over rights to land focused on the opposition between an oligarchic state and a popular and revolutionary

mobilization. Nevertheless, nowadays those struggles crystalize around the demands for indigenous rights, cultural autonomy, and are based on the language of cultural difference (Hale 2006, 99). In recent decades, the main adversaries of indigenous people and Afro-Latin populations have been articulated in neoliberal policies, affecting the development of those populations at the local level through their impacts on access to resources. Hale offers the concept of “neoliberal multiculturalism” in which neoliberalism – with its economic policies – is a strategy of governance that also includes the recognition of cultural rights among its principles. Multi-communal territories, such as in Central America, became the idiom of indigenous and Afro-Latin claims, by linking rights with identity, and territory. The communities that gained communal land rights began to use the language of the international institutions and the government to raise their demands and to produce social mobilization. Critiques of the identity-based approach also claim that the expansion of capitalist social and economic relations aims to destroy the cultural and social practices of the indigenous people and Afro-descendants, through seeking their integration into the market (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998).

Plant and Hvalkof (2001) discuss the heterogeneity of issues of indigenous identity and land tenure concerns. In this view, the indigenous aspirations on land rights are not uniform, which may determine the design of land titling programs. Some indigenous groups have sought integration into the markets. But it is also important to protect the cultures and traditions of those people. However, these authors have not considered that land rights have been given in the last decades *through* market land reform strategies, and by spreading communal land rights based on ethnicity. In actual fact, new social groups have begun to identify themselves as indigenous or Afro-descendants to gain land rights.

Thirdly, there have been a few authors from diverse perspectives that have studied the relation among social categories (class, race and ethnicity) in rural inequalities. These works are relevant for this discussion, because they show the heterogeneity of processes of land titling, including the multiple goals within – and between – indigenous groups, and their relationship with the peasant communities. Some authors note that class and identity struggles cannot be separated in the case of indigenous mobilization (Otero 2003). The indigenous and peasant population are both affected by economic globalization. Indigenous peoples use institutionalized categories such as “Indians” or “indigenous” to formulate their demands.

There have been transformations in the nature of struggles for land and agrarian reform. This shift partially stems from the changes in the economic models in Latin America. The absence of land reforms in the region (Kay 2006) brought about the increasing power of

landowners, financial capital and transnational corporations, deepening class inequalities. However, it also brought about the growing role of social movements – such as La Via Campesina who have demanded agrarian reform – in articulating demands for land and territory, or “a new vision of agrarian reform and the sovereignty of peoples over their territories” (Rosset 2013, 721). Thus, peasant “movements [...] have been profoundly affected by encounter and dialog with non-peasant peoples, moving from a narrow focus on land to an expanded vision of territory. A constant in the struggle [of La Via Campesina] has been the use of land occupations as a tactic, [...] with an ever-greater emphasis on food sovereignty, healthy food and protection of the Mother Earth as arguments in favor of agrarian reform.” (Rosset 2013, 735). Another example of peasant struggles for territories and lands can be the *Zonas de Reserva Campesina* in Colombia, a sort of peasants’ collective property. They emerged in the 1990s supported by the government; they sought the defense of small rural properties and environmental protection, under the discourse of food sovereignty. These cases of La Via Campesina and the *Zonas de Reserva Campesina*, can be taken as examples of the integration of territorial and land struggles, in which peasants have introduced environmental aims into their demands, like the indigenous people and the Afro-descendants.

From this analysis, it is crucial to distinguish between land and territory. On the one hand, there are multiple perspectives on territory depending on the position of the actors, as well as their goals. From the local communities’ perspective, territory is a broader element, which includes the demand for the protection of the environment, and of communities’ cultures and their relationships with nature (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998). Contemporary approaches have also noted the cultural and social value that communities and social movements give to their resources and living places, contrary to previous views on resources that focused on “land” (Rosset 2013). But territory may also be related to political processes in which different actors including the government and other competing political actors aim to exert power and control on space (Elden 2010). On the other hand, land refers to the transferability and ownership of resources. Land is the economic dimension of the territory and is related to the distributional and productive side of these natural resources. The “traditional” studies of rural sociology focused on land issues without considering in-depth the importance of cultural practices and the environmental preservation goals of the rural populations. The recent territorial approach – or territorial turn – seeks to overcome those shortcomings by noting a broader perspective on territory, including cultural values, traditional practices, and the environmental goals of local communities (Rosset 2013), alongside the importance of land ownership and land distribution.

After having reviewed the literature, this chapter claims that the recent processes of expansion of communal land rights based on ethno-identities, as well as the importance of the territorial turn, have important implications for the analysis of rural inequalities. I note that these processes, alongside with processes of violent dispossession and spread of agribusiness, have produced impacts on the structure of rural inequalities in Latin America. However, as I will explain for the Colombian case, those inequalities cannot only be analyzed through the classical lens of social-class analysis. An intersectional approach to rural inequalities may be more precise to understand recent inequality dynamics.

An intersectional approach to rural inequalities

Intersectionality has been proposed as a concept, a methodology and a perspective to analyze social inequalities (Hill-Collins and Bilge 2016). Intersectionality mainly criticizes so-called additive analyses of oppression (Spelman 1982). Firstly, the additive view explores oppression through binaries of social categories (e.g. male/female, blacks/whites, indigenous/non-indigenous, urban/rural, etc.). In this sense, these categories may imply that a person may embody multiple personal and social characteristics. Secondly, the dichotomous analyses include a ranking between the dominant groups and the subordinate groups. The production of these rankings leads us to analyze if they are oppressed by sex, or by gender, but critically the question of whether they are oppressed in multiple forms at the same time is not considered. It is crucial not to only analyze each form of oppression, but to check the effect of the combination of multiple forms of oppression and how they work together. The way the categories interplay is context sensitive: “In certain contexts, such as [...] contemporary South America, racial oppression is more visibly salient, while in other contexts [...], social class oppression may be more apparent” (Hill-Collins 1993, 37).

Seeking to overcome the additive approach, Hill-Collins proposes to analyze the way that oppression is structured and maintained in the political economy of societies. The class, race and gender categories may work in parallel but also as entangled systems to give form to modalities of subordination and domination that deserve to be studied (Hill-Collins 1993, 37). The author proposed to analyze three dimensions of oppression through the intersectionality lens: The institutional dimension of oppression, the symbolic dimension of oppression, and the individual dimension of oppression. The first one refers to the way race, gender, and class interlock as systems of oppression. The author offers the example of the plantation system. Slavery is both a racist, class and gendered institution. The plantation included a chain of

command with a white master, with a white wife, commanding non-white servants (women and men), helping to reproduce the capitalist political economy (Hill-Collins 1993).

Second, the symbolic dimension is related to “societally-sanctioned ideologies used to justify relations of domination and subordination” (Hill-Collins 1993, 39). Examples of this could include how there are stereotypes on men and women, on white and non-white persons, and on different social classes, that help to sustain patterns of domination, including symbols that are applied to each social group.

Third, the institutional and symbolic systems of oppression produce diverse individual experiences in terms of the reception, effects of, and by, forms of oppression. Personal biographies reflect diverse everyday life experiences that are examples of the ways in which intersectionality operates.

Finally, Hill-Collins also explains the mechanisms by which these multiple systems of oppression may operate to produce social mobilization. Not everyone lives and experiences oppression in the same way, and this fact affects the forms of social relations (e.g. some persons communicate their demands through class demands, but others may stress the racial issues). It is necessary to recognize the existence of power asymmetries between persons that form parts of this oppression (e.g. white and non-white persons). In order to facilitate social mobilization, it is necessary to identify common causes among individuals and among groups to overcome differences. It is also necessary to build “empathy for the experiences of individuals and groups different than ourselves” (Hill-Collins 1993, 43).

In order to use intersectionality to analyze rural inequalities, I will conceptualize social categories of class, race and ethnicity. While Hill-Collins stresses the role of class, race and gender, my analysis of Colombia will note the role of class, race and ethnicity which has been less studied in the literature. The differentiation between race and ethnicity is crucial to analyze intersectionality in rural processes.

Social classes

In broad terms, social classes refer to relational socio-economic groups (Baquero 2015). Following Wright (1979), I argue that the social class categories are relational in the sense that classes are the “invisible, complex structural outcomes of social relations constructed in given social contexts that exist at ‘contradictory locations within class relations’” (Baquero 2015, 2). It is also noteworthy that the category social class can be ambiguous “because people can simultaneously embody characteristics of two or more social classes” (2015, 2).

Social classes in rural areas are structured upon static elements as well as dynamic processes. Rural classes are linked to the property patterns, economic activities and processes of land appropriation, and expropriation that produce class inequalities (Zamosc 1992; Reygadas 2008; Rosati 2012). Capitalist expansion can gradually produce an economic differentiation between agrarian capitalists (who appropriate land, technology and labor force) and (expropriated) rural workers (Dobb 1999). Criteria that differentiate agrarian structures include: The type and quantity of the labor force (Chayanov 1971); the degree of livelihood versus viability of production; and technology (Rosati 2012, 15-16). These production processes, relations and inequalities may translate into the social identification of individuals as members of a determined social class (e.g., workers as members of labor unions; peasants as members of peasant movements).

Social classes, as linked to socio-economic groups, have been re-defined in recent decades in Latin America due to changes in the national and global economy (Zamosc 1992). Important segments of the population were incorporated into the market, and servile labor almost disappeared. The peasant economy in Colombia includes several socio-economic groups (Zamosc 1992): A wealthier strata of “farmer” types; new communities arriving to areas of settlement; former regional economies that are reproduced, including rich and poor sectors; and populations that have been incorporated into wage relations. Different social groups have replaced traditional landowners (absentees, or those using backward production technologies), these include new modern landowners, owners that rent their lands, professionals, traders, and mafia (drug dealers). In rural areas we also find social groups such as institutional, gremial and political actors (e.g. state institutions, producer unions, local elites, political parties, guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups, social movements, etc.). On the global level, there is also a variety of socio-economic factors that are related to global social classes; they include multinational corporations, members of the financial sector, and governments producing land grabs (Borras et al. 2012). These global actors are related to local export/trader companies that directly or indirectly control lands and production farms, which have also affected local social class structures.

Race and ethnicity

Race and ethnicity have not been fixed categories nor are they homogeneous. The concept race includes the historical racism tied to European colonization of different world regions and biological approaches to race at the beginning of the twentieth century. After the end of World War II the category of ethnicity, which had less moral charge and connotation, gained more

attention. Ethnicity in the contemporary world has been related to cultural difference, and associated to populations such as migrants. Specifically, amid multiculturalism, ethnicity is related to this kind of celebration of difference.

The distinction between race and ethnicity is important in identifying historical moments and processes linked to the production of social hierarchies. On the one hand, race has a historical connotation that helps to explain the surge of social hierarchies since the sixteenth century, through the confluence of colonialism, dispossession of indigenous territories, slavery, and the expansion of capitalism. For Wade (2000, 22) “the concept of race is most likely related to European history of thinking about difference”. Race thus emerged from the historical processes of European colonization. Yet, race should not only be taken as an idea, but also as something used to form social categories involving power relations – as discrimination is also based upon racial classifications (Wade 2000, 21).

On the other hand, ethnicity is a category with a more recent history (Wade 2000, 23). After World War II and concomitant to the discredit of scientific racism, the category of ethnic groups was usually used to refer to social groups viewed as ‘minorities’ within nation-states. Ethnicity is further linked to the recognition of cultural difference. As Wade (2000) points out, race and ethnicity can overlap.

In several cases, social categories have been created by using racial identities linked to phenotypic characteristics (Wade 2000, 29-30). In the case of populations from Africa and those of African descent, it is important to note that “being identified as ‘black’ (*negro*) in much of the Western world is to invoke [...] a long history of colonial conflicts, slavery, discrimination, resistance, etc.” (Wade 2000, 29; translated by the author). Race can also manifest itself as a social practice (Wade 2000). Since the 1980s, the process of the “ethnicization of blackness” has been at work (Restrepo 2004), which was further enhanced and deepened through the enactment of multicultural laws that eventually expanded territorial rights. Nonetheless, racist practices could remain latent and hidden under the guise of new ethnic categories (Wade 2011). But it is also necessary to explore the intersection of ethnicity with other categories because it does not work alone to affect the situation of individuals.

An intersectional approach to rural inequalities: The case of Colombia

In this section, I will offer an analysis of the three dimensions of oppression proposed by Hill-Collins (1993) in order to analyze contemporary rural inequalities in Colombia. The attention here is confined to the contemporary land conflicts and land rights in the country with a focus on communal land rights based on ethno-adscriptions.

The institutional dimension of oppression

Two main characteristics can be identified in the rural structure of Colombia: Land concentration and the enclave development model for agribusiness. Both characteristics include elements of class and racial systems of oppression. The Colombian case has historically shown that land conflicts have been related to class and race adscriptions. For Urrea and Hurtado (2001), long-term hierarchical social structures have long existed in periphery countries such as Colombia. The Colombian nation-state has favored inter-racial *mestizaje*, in parallel with a geographical and spatial segregation and an intercity social stratum, whose colors of skins did not fit with the Hispanic white model. Society favored the loss or the invisibilization of phenotypic features associated with indigenous and black (Urrea and Hurtado 2001).

Inequalities can be perhaps best studied in terms of a population's geographical location (or place) and its combination with social categories. In rural areas, class conflicts negatively affect both blacks and mestizos that are in opposition to landlords. The analyses of the social classes in the 1920s points out that class conflicts were related to the expansion of plantations. In the case of Chocó, adjacent to the Urabá region, the main product for export is banana. The Urabá region is an enclave production area, established in the 1960s by the arrival of multinationals such as the United Fruit Company (Bucheli 2005). The establishment of this enclave was contested by labor strikes where the workers demanded better working conditions. At the same time, by the mid-twentieth century the country experienced peasant movements that eventually led to the peasant revolts. One of the main banners was a demand for land rights. The peasant movements such as the National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) were opposed to the land concentration, materialized in the *latifundios* (Zamosc 1983). In regions such as the Urabá enclave, the ANUC invaded the estates in order to recover and distribute lands for the landless peasants. The labor strikes overlapped with the land disputes, highlighting the multiple class conflicts that existed amid global capitalist expansion. Since the 1990s, in Colombia the government has deepened its neoliberal policies. In the Urabá enclave neoliberalization has manifested itself in increasing economic liberalization along with increased support of multinationals. Labor repression has increased via violence exerted by paramilitaries (Hough 2012). Peasants working in the banana farms were threatened when they demanded better labor conditions. Many of them in fact have been killed due to their demands. Some improvements in labor conditions have been achieved at a high cost against the backdrop of fierce global competition.

An intersection of forms of oppression can be observed in the banana enclave of Urabá. A great number of banana farmers are of African descent. Peasants from Chocó and from the Caribbean – mainly persons of African descent – arrived in Urabá seeking work opportunities in the banana farms. Those workers, many of them descendants of freed slaves, have poignantly experienced intersected forms of oppression by race and class. Many African descendents became at the same time peasants, plantation workers, and members of labor unions (Baquero 2015). In this example, the social classes emerged through several processes as a consequence of the rural policies molded by (globalized) ideologies, and by self-identification of members of labor unions, peasants, and agro-industrial farm workers.

In the 1990s, the law began to define the collective territories of black communities. Many peasants that worked in the Urabá plantations were granted land rights. Former identities and systems of oppression by race and class (the land concentration and the enclave development) were now shaped by ethnicity through the expansion of land rights predicated on ethno-adscriptions.

The ethno-adscriptions provided a collective identity to produce social mobilization in the collective identity of “Afro-descendants”. In this way the local peasants demanded their rights to the state. This collective identity has multiple complex roles. It may be seen as a positive outcome; the product of historic demands of oppressed populations affected by racism, whereby they have now gained land rights and have legal documents to prove their ownership. However, these rights also produced an essentialization of their identities as wardens of the forests. In terms of class positions, the Afro-descendants were positioned in a social class as peasants that were meant to look after nature and biodiversity. However, further analyses are necessary to study the existence of social classes and class inequalities inside the Community Councils, which are the authorities of those communal forms of land ownership. Inside the Councils inequalities and differences stemming from gender, age and class may affect the definition of land rights and land uses.

The symbolic dimension of oppression

In the structuration of the studied institutional systems of oppression symbolic elements have produced and reproduced inequalities. The Spanish conquerors brought the African people to work in mines due to the supposed physical strength of these populations in comparison to the weakness that the Spanish attributed to the local indigenous population. The descendants of the freed black workers, are now working in the banana plantations of Urabá, controlled by white owners of multinational companies and by local white agro-entrepreneurs. The companies use

the attributed physical characteristics of those workers to stimulate the agribusiness projects. Racism has been fashioned by the cultural difference that the white elites attributed to the peasants living in the territories, which they have identified as marginal (Roldán 1998). Urabá is one of these spaces and it is where the banana enclave was first introduced in the 1960s. This cultural difference is a powerful tool used by regional white elites to reproduce intersected class and racial inequalities.

Between 1996 and 1997 the paramilitary groups attacked the Afro-descendant and mestizo communities that inhabited the lower Atrato region at the north of Chocó. In 1993, Law 70 granted these communities land rights. However, the paramilitary of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) used symbolic elements to justify the violent land seizures. The paramilitary leaders who commanded the so-called Black September paramilitary operation told the local people the phrase “the progress has arrived” to justify the removal of the population in order to introduce oil palm plantations in the seized lands. Thus, from the discourse of the paramilitaries, the local, mainly black peasants were poor, and it was necessary to replace these populations by mestizo and white farmers in order to achieve progress. This form of violent racism has been used to facilitate the expansion of capitalism from the Urabá banana enclave toward the north of Chocó. Rural inequalities have been constantly produced and reproduced through racism, processes of primitive accumulation,⁸⁴ and agribusiness expansion in these enclaves. Since the 1960s the banana economy spread and the enclave model advanced in the 1990s through the expansion of neoliberalism into these regions.

The individual dimension of oppression

The intersections of class, race and ethnicity can be identified in the analysis of personal biographies of local peasants, forcibly displaced populations, and social leaders. The analysis of intersectionality can be made in the study of the situation of peasants both before and after the enactment of Law 70 of 1993, and before and after the impacts of violence and forced displacement that started in 1996 and 1997, drawing on interviews conducted with the displaced

⁸⁴ Primitive accumulation and dispossession have become “entangled” processes (Costa 2011), in particular junctures such as global capitalist over-accumulation and environmental crises, underpin the global land grab (Borras et al. 2012). The recent “global land grab” carried out by national and transnational actors has led to land dispossession on a massive scale, negatively affecting mainly peasants of the global South (Borras et al., 2012). In Colombia, as in other countries, such as those in Africa, the outcome of the land grabbing has been the “displacement” of peasants, or their “misplacement”, but not necessarily in each and every case their total dispossession. Key characteristics of contemporary land grabbing comprise of “control grabbing” of land and associated-resources, such as water. Land grabbing implies large-scale land transactions and responds to “food, energy/fuel, climate change, financial crisis”. In the case of Latin America, land grabbing has been conducive to the expansion of flex crops (soya, sugarcane and oil palm) (Borras et al. 2012, 850-852).

population from lower Atrato living in Quibdó (the capital of Chocó) and with the social leaders.

Before the expansion of land rights produced through Law 70, the local populations were categorized as peasants, cattle ranchers, and members of labor unions (Baquero 2015). Thus, they embodied multiple identities related to multiple systems of oppression by class, race and gender. I interviewed a 21-year-old man in Quibdó, whose family (father, mother and three children) was displaced from the Riosucio Municipality in 1996 (personal interview, Quibdó, 2011). His mother died and his father, at the time of the interview, was in jail due to a problem with a neighbor. In his words, they had formerly owned a big property in Riosucio covering lands in the two sides of the Truandó River, where they had cattle and also harvested and extracted timber. From time to time, the father hired workers to cut timber in the forests, which was sold to companies such as Maderas del Darién. The members of this family identified themselves as Afro-descendants. In terms of class, this family can be roughly classified as a middle class (or even an upper class) rural family. He stated that on their lands they had almost 200 cattle and that these animals were stolen by the paramilitaries that displaced them.

In their current situation, this family arrived to Quibdó to live in a lower-class neighborhood called Villa España, recently erected on the lands given by the Spanish Red Cross to build a temporary shelter. These temporary shelters became a permanent neighborhood for lower and middle-income families. The class differentiation in this neighborhood of displaced populations can be determined in terms of the construction materials used in building their houses. The house of the interviewed man was of bricks and concrete (a middle-class house), but several houses in the nearby blocks were built with timber and had a lack of basic services. My interviewee had witnessed oppression due to his location at this neighborhood, which is identified as a dangerous place. He had to go to remote places to work and study. And he has to cope with the stigma of being a displaced person (*desplazado*) in his everyday life interactions. He stated that they have been discriminated against by the local residents (also persons with black skin) for being a *desplazado*. This actually implies that the discrimination is structured upon class division, and is produced by the dispossession and forced eviction of those families that had to move to the marginal areas of the cities. He stated that he was discriminated against at school for being a *desplazado*. He further claimed that some of his *desplazado* classmates had even abandoned the school due to discrimination. The interviewee's brother worked as a timber extractor and his sister worked in family houses as a domestic worker, which reinforces intersected inequalities by class, race and gender. He stated that he does not have a stable job; sometimes he works in construction sites, sometimes in the extraction of timber and sometimes in mining in nearby areas. He has been a social organizer,

organizing youth activities and projects including sports and cultural activities. He finished his high school degree and has taken technical courses for example in broom production.

In terms of rural inequalities, the interviewee did not know what had actually happened to their former lands. He only stated that those lands were abandoned and that they will not return to Riosucio because they have been threatened. Reports have stated that the lands of peasants from lower Atrato including Riosucio, began to be controlled by armed groups including paramilitaries, guerrillas, but also peasants that had arrived to those lands sometimes brought in by regional elites (and paramilitaries) in order to gain control of large areas. This process has been conducive to land concentration. All these argument can be taken to conclude that the intersectional analysis of these processes reveals that class inequalities and racism were present in the dispossession that affected Chocó inhabitants, and in the current situation of the displaced populations.

Intersectionality, territorial rights and mobilization

After presenting the Colombian case, I analyze the effects of the expansion of communal territorial rights in terms of intersectionality, including the role of class, race and ethnicity. Since the 1990s, collective or communitarian modalities of property have existed in the territories of Afro-descendants. These areas have been inhabited by peasants carrying out livelihood activities while also producing surpluses for the market (Urrea and Hurtado 2001). Nevertheless, in several cases those groups are identified as sort of “wardens of nature” through the laws (Asher 2009). Yet, they keep producing in the form of a peasant economy even though their territories are identified as areas of environmental preservation. What seems to be ironic is that they are peasants, with collective land rights, although their lands have a pre-defined use, specified by governments, as well as national and multinational companies (Segato 1999). Thus conceived, the struggles over their lands also entail class conflicts, which are currently intertwined with the recent processes of identity transformation by ethno-adscriptions.

The debate revolving around the effects of the enactment of territorial rights or collective land rights in terms of inequality reduction deserves some space here. One position stresses their utility as a mechanism for providing inclusion, equality and citizenship (Ng’weno 2007). The enactment of collective rights has positive effects in terms of historical justice against racism (Canessa 2007). Laws for territorial rights are the outcome of social struggles (Arocha 1998) and, in return, the laws can also be transformed into resources for social mobilization (Escobar 2001; Oslender 2008). Notwithstanding, some critical views highlight the disadvantages associated with the enactment of collective land rights. A “communal fix”

(Li, 2010) scheme has existed both in colonial periods and is also produced in recent times in order to facilitate control over populations and resources (Li 2010; Cleary 1992). Local communities could fashion such a “communal fix”, but they can also be imposed from outside – by colonial powers or by states – comprising the participation of “experts” who define the identities (French 2009), and the use of the communities’ resources (Segato 1999; Li 2010).

Contrariwise, several populations, such as indigenous people and African slaves and their descendants, have lived in the areas that are considered by the political elites to be “remote” and “marginal” (Serje 2005). Local communities have appropriated territories, lands and resources. Also, many peasants (mainly mestizos) have settled, while “looking for lands without men, for men without land” (CAVIDA 2002). The situation of those social groups must be understood not only in terms of the intersection of class, race, and ethnicity, but also entailing a re-configuration of identities seeking rights and citizenship (Ng’weno 2007). Thus there has been a ‘strategic’ identity shift over territorial rights.

To sum up, the intersection of class, race and ethnicity helps to explain the overlapping historical inequalities, as well as the society’s response to unequal social structures (Urrea and Hurtado 2001). In some cases, such as Chocó, the new expansion of collective rights for Afro-descendants has fashioned an identity, billing Afro-descendants as “wardens of nature”, and mestizos as “Afro-descendants” in order to gain access to land rights. Intra-community conflicts over the definition of the beneficiaries of land rights can be observed in several cases, although the practices of local solidarity has prevailed to sustain the land rights of the mestizos (Ruiz-Serna 2006). These groups themselves have fought against the effects of violence, dispossession and land grabs (Ruiz-Serna 2006), within class conflicts. Consequently, class struggles are now entangled with ethnic and racial categories. The territorial rights of Afro-descendants facilitated the mobilization against the interests of big capital, the spread of agribusiness and the construction of megaprojects (roads, canals, etc.) on their lands. Social struggles have several dimensions (environmental, cultural, economic, political, etc.) and local, national and global actors have involved themselves in these struggles (Escobar 2001).

Conclusion

The intersectional analysis offers an important view to contemporary rural inequalities. The role of class, race and ethnicity in relation to land rights and land disputes comprise of different perspectives. Identity-based land rights have a positive effect of providing land titles and facilitating processes of social mobilization. But they may also produce social conflicts in multi-ethnic societies such as Colombia, in which social and familiar entanglements have historically

emerged. Multiculturalism tries to change previous social relations: The local populations may accommodate the new legal identities created through the laws or the people re-negotiate their identities with other social groups in order to gain recognition and social rights. Additionally, these multicultural policies focus on rural populations, outside the urban populations that are not tied to those state-managed social categories. The critical views on multiculturalism are not optimistic about the positive impacts of multiculturalism regarding land rights. The expansion of these land rights based on ethnicity is far from being successful to solve socio-economic issues.

This recognition does not neglect the importance of race and ethnicity in social mobilization. Here I recognize that both race and ethnicity co-exist. Racism has been sustained in Colombian society: Racist and discriminatory practices still exist both in urban and rural areas. The historical neglect of the indigenous and Afro-descendant populations can be seen as a result of racism and structural discrimination as well. But in parallel to this kind of national racism, an internal or regional process of structuration of social classes has also taken place – as in the case of Chocó – through the advancement of capitalist relations in rural and urban areas. Chocó is a good example of intersectionality of class and race: The *Chocoanos* are the poorest people in Colombia and at the same time most of them can be labelled as indigenous people or of African descent. In this case, neither inside nor outside Chocó, is there a way to read social classes or racism in isolation from one another.

The category of ‘ethnicity’ entered with the Law 70 of 1993, which expanded land rights to the Afro-descendants. It created collective territories of black communities. Ethnicity here is an experienced social category related to the governmental public policies designed to fashion the territories in question. Populations and social movements appropriated the categories enacted by the state such as “Afro-descendant” in order to utilize them in strategic ways to communicate with the state and to demand policies from it. But this does not mean that social classes have disappeared. My fieldwork suggests a manifest class segmentation: There are Afro-descendant cattle ranchers and Afro-descendant urban entrepreneurs as well as Afro-descendant and mestizo peasants. However, my findings clearly show that significant segments of the population have still appropriated an ethnic identification as a mechanism to demand goods and services from the state and to oppose violent dispossession amid processes of deep structuration of class inequalities.

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13. Social movements in times of New Extractivism: Reflections upon peasant-indigenous struggles in Mendoza, Argentina⁸⁵

Joaquín M. Bernáldez

Abstract

New extractivism refers to a model of development based on the increasing exploitation of nature, which has driven the growth of Latin American economies since the beginning of this century. Given its dramatic social and environmental effects on the territories of extraction, new extractivism has been contested by social movements claiming democratic access and control of nature. The present study addresses the making of social movements in times of new extractivism. In particular, it explores the conditions and factors enabling local ecological and territorial struggles, and their evolution into broad networks for social change. My qualitative field research with a peasant-indigenous organization in Argentina evidences two different sets of interconnections. On the one hand, they are a part of a highly bounded network crystallizing around peasant-indigenous identities and a collective project based on ecological and territorial demands. On the other hand, they form part of a loose network based on popular identities and a broad emancipatory project. Altogether, this research suggests that eco-territorial claims do not only – or necessarily – evolve as movements resisting the commodification of nature but can also link with broader networks including the urban working class and fight against the commodification of labor.

Key words: Extractivism, environmental conflicts, social movements, territorial struggles, Latin America

Introduction

Could there be any link between the conflicts around the environment and the struggles for laying the foundations of a new society? The answer is simple: Yes, but not necessarily. Yet, the extent and the ways in which environmental conflicts can lead to movements that strive to question the basis of capitalism and contribute to emancipatory struggles for radical social change is a matter of empirical research, and becomes extremely important within the context

⁸⁵ The paper is based on my master thesis: “Social Movements against Extractivism: Emergence, Development and Interconnections of Peasant-Indigenous Struggles in Mendoza, Argentina”, University of Kassel, March 2015. I am extremely thankful to the support and vote of confidence of the *Union de Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra de Cuyo*, without which my research would not have been possible.

of growing public concern for the environment. Indeed, the environmental crisis is a disputed realm and can be both “an ally in the struggle against the exploitative societies” (Marcuse 1972, 59) as well as an opportunity for readjusting capitalism through the reallocation of capital in a green economy (see, e.g., the recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP 2011]). In this sense, my research commits to the challenge that the environmental crisis represents for critical thinking and radical activism. It explores the ways in which the “environmentalism of the poor” – as Martínez Alier (2002) denominates the kind of environmentalism rooted in the global South – reveals emancipatory struggles for a new economy. Latin America has become a singular region for addressing this issue if we take into consideration the increasing exploitation of nature and resulting intensification of environmental conflicts in the last years. In fact, social struggles in the region are forging “eco-territorial movements” (Svampa 2013), meaning that to a great extent their struggles are driven by alternative forms of perceiving nature and understanding development.

This paper puts forward some reflections on the making of social movements in times of increasing exploitation of nature. The findings are grounded on my field research conducted at the end of 2014 in Argentina with a local peasant-indigenous organization holding eco-territorial claims; the UST, *Union de trabajadores rurales sin tierra de Cuyo* (Landless Rural Workers’ Union of Cuyo). The UST was founded in 2002 by a group of rural workers and peasants claiming access to land and water. Their struggles evolved through their involvement in a national movement, which includes peasants and indigenous people from all over the country. They have also established links with other popular organizations beyond the rural sphere. Focusing on the struggles of the UST, I address the following question: *What processes contribute to the emergence of local eco-territorial struggles and enable interconnections between them and other struggles*⁸⁶? In exploring this matter, I relied on ethnographic methods, following actors on the ground in an attempt to understand the experiences, motives and intentions of their struggles. Employing a broad understanding of the category of social movements, I argue that the struggles of the UST are not only part of a movement resisting the current wave of capitalist expansion over nature but also part of a broader popular movement, which includes the urban working classes.

In the following section, I briefly highlight some of the main ideas of the literature that addresses the increasing exploitation of nature, and the emergent social movements against it, in Latin America. After that, I explore the struggles of the UST and propose a conceptualization

⁸⁶ There is a comprehensive study on the “collective action” of the UST (Liceaga 2008) although it does not focus specifically on this aspect, which I intend to develop further.

of social movements divided into a strict and a broad sense. Finally, I underline that eco-territorial movements do not only reflect attempts to resist the commodification of nature but can also encompass more traditional attempts to fight against the commodification of labor.

New extractivism and eco-territorial movements in Latin America

The promotion of extractive activities such as large-scale mining, oil extraction and extensive agriculture, among others, has gained momentum in the last two decades in Latin America. In most countries in the region, the absolute production of primary commodities and its share in the Gross Domestic Product increased significantly between 2000 and 2011 (Burchardt 2014). To a great extent, the exploitation of nature has underpinned the region's last decade of economic growth. In this view, many authors argue that the re-primarization of Latin-American economies reveals the consolidation of a model of development rooted in the commodification of nature. This is known as “new extractivism” (Gudynas 2010), “extractivist model” (Giarraca and Teubal 2010) or “neo-extractivist style of development” (Svampa 2013), among other denominations.

Even though extractivism is an old trend in Latin America, it acquired significant particularities at the beginning of the 21st century. For some authors, one of the most important novelties of new extractivism has to do with the role of the state. Progressive governments in South America – especially in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador but also to a certain extent in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay – have been able to capture a larger amount of the rents obtained from the exploitation of nature and have channeled it to the population (Gudynas 2010). Increasing public expenditure in health and education, improving working opportunities and standards, and the expansion of state infrastructure are some of the developments associated with new extractivism. Further, progressive governments have introduced a series of social policies affecting the distribution of wealth. In spite of the little empirical evidence denoting the link between rents of nature and distribution, it is affirmed that progressive governments in South America finance cash transfers and other social programs with rents and taxes obtained from the exploitation of natural resources. While such policies have facilitated poverty reduction, the unequal structure of Latin American societies has not undergone significant transformations (Burchardt 2014). In any case, progressive governments have gained social and political legitimacy and produced a tacit agreement over the necessity of exporting natural resources. The so-called “Commodities Consensus” (Svampa 2013) has relied on the international demand of raw materials and the abundance of natural resources in Latin America.

However, the exploitation of nature does not only affect economic growth and the distribution of wealth in some countries. Many of the authors addressing new extractivism highlight the dramatic social and environmental effects it has in the territories of extraction. Increasing deforestation, land grabbing, and the contamination of water resources, are among the other consequences of the boom of extractive activities, forcing the reduction of small-scale farming and the displacement of indigenous communities putting local livelihoods at risk (e.g. Giarraca 2006). Against this background, there has been an increasing number and intensity of conflicts over the appropriation of nature (Svampa 2013). Considering that the literature addressing conflicts and struggles against new extractivism is very broad and it exceeds the aim of this paper to review it, what follows includes only some of the most relevant ideas for my study.

The protests for access to, and control of, nature in Latin America have occurred since the 1990s, but it has been only with the beginning of the new century that they became crucial for understanding the struggles against neoliberal capitalism in the region. The struggles for land, water, seeds, biodiversity, among others, are struggles for popular sovereignty and the right to reproduce life and culture in other ways. Thus, social movements against extractivism question the traditional model of development, which is based on natural resource extraction. These movements have become fundamental actors in the construction of democracies in the region (Giarraca 2006).

Svampa (2013) argues that the dynamics of the struggles over nature have led to what she calls the “eco-territorial turn” of popular struggles in Latin America. The shift reveals that social conflicts in the region are currently driven by an important clash between different forms of understanding development. Social movements defending nature and their territories from extractivism hold discourses based on indigenous beliefs such as good living. They further question the dominant understanding of natural goods either as commodities or strategic natural resources, instead pushing the idea of commons or unmarketable goods belonging to the whole community. In this way, “socio-environmental movements” (Svampa 2013) claim for the democratization of collective decisions and the right to decide whether they accept the extractivist projects that affect their communities.

Movements against extractivism are not homogenous. In the case of Argentina, some authors have divided them into three distinct actors. Firstly, there is the indigenous movement, which is consolidated as a political actor. Indigenous communities rest upon their identities as ancestral inhabitants and the recognition of their territories. Since the 1990s, there has been significant progress with regard to the inclusion of indigenous rights as legal rights. For instance,

in 2000 the country ratified the International Labor Organization's Convention 169, which obliges states to consult indigenous people concerning projects that affect their territories. However, there is still a long way to go in achieving concrete territorial recognition and consultation. Against the background of expanding extractivism indigenous organizations do not only claim for the recognition of land but also include cultural demands such as the recognition of alternative ways of relating to nature (GER-GEMSAL y Cátedra de Sociología Rural 2010).

Secondly, peasant movements have also become important actors in contemporary struggles against extractivism, even though in many cases peasants' identities are intertwined with indigenous ones (GER-GEMSAL y Cátedra de Sociología Rural 2010). Domínguez (2009) argues that peasants have recently made themselves visible in the recreation of their identities and political organization. Even though land has always been at the center of their claims, nowadays it has acquired new meanings. Land claims are immersed within the context of the more general struggles for the democratic control of nature and recognition of alternatives to development. Thus, the struggles for access to land have acquired an ecological dimension, which refers to both the concrete access to the physical space and the recognition of specific social relations within this space. Broadening the scope of the struggles for land has led to the interconnection between peasant and indigenous people, but also between these two groups and the urban-based environmental movement (Domínguez 2009).

Thirdly, citizens' environmental assemblies have become important actors in the struggles against extractivism. The establishment of a legal framework for large-scale mining in the mid-1990s led to the proliferation of a series of projects in the Andean region. Citizens and activists from small towns and middle range cities affected by these projects began to protest against the development of large-scale mining projects arguing that multinational companies plunder natural resources and, at the same time, leave behind contaminated territories (GER-GEMSAL y Cátedra de Sociología Rural 2010).

Overall, the literature highlights the contemporary significance of the extractivist model of development and the struggles of eco-territorial movements in Latin America. However, there are still scant explanations about the links between extractive activities and the economy as a whole in terms of the logic of accumulation. Recently some authors have pointed out this problem offering a critique of the concept of extractivism (see Gago and Mezzadra 2015). Further, there has been little interest in exploring popular struggles as a whole or, in particular, the interconnections between eco-territorial movements and other non-ecological popular

struggles. In the following section the paper explores the latter gap inquiring on why and how specific peasant-indigenous struggles form different kinds of networks.

The struggles and networks of the Landless Rural Workers' Union of Cuyo in Argentina

My research intends to make sense of what compels people to organize locally around eco-territorial claims and associate with others in an attempt to achieve their aims. In other words, it inquires about the processes that contribute to the emergence of specific eco-territorial struggles and the conditions that enable them to evolve into broad networks. In order to address these issues, I conducted field research with a local peasant-indigenous organization at the end of 2014 in Argentina, namely, the *Union de trabajadores rurales sin tierra de Cuyo* (Landless Rural Workers' Union of Cuyo) or UST. I relied on ethnographic methods such as non-directive interviews and participant observation in an attempt to follow the actors on the ground and understand the motives, intentions and experiences of their struggles.

At the end of 1990s, a group of rural workers, students and other activists started to give shape to a series of autonomous productive initiatives in the north of the province of Mendoza. Their aim was to cope with rural poverty and unemployment. In 2002 they organized a demonstration in the village of Villa Tulumaya denouncing working conditions and claiming access to land and water. This demonstration was the first public appearance and the fundamental milestone of the UST. Since then, the UST has expanded all over the province of Mendoza and is now a grassroots organization bringing together almost 1000 families of rural workers, peasants, indigenous people, men, women, and young people. Two socio-productive profiles characterize the organization. On the one hand, there are the landless agricultural workers, who either lease land through paying rent, or sell their labor. On the other hand, there are the so-called *puesteros* – peasants who breed animals on a seasonal migration-basis – living on non-irrigated lands. These peasants possess land in effect, but do not own title deeds. Moreover, the UST has strong ties with other peasant-indigenous organizations in the country, with which it forms the *Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena* (National Peasant and Indigenous Movement) or MNCI. The struggles of the UST have been placed within territorial disputes over access to, and control of, nature in Latin America as an attempt to build an alternative to the dominant rural development models (Liceaga 2012).

For the analysis, I have employed heuristic tools of critical realism concerning causation. According to critical realism, causation refers to the conditions that enable social phenomena (Sayer 2000). Social events occur as a consequence of the action of underlying structures, which are “the conditions of possibility for actual events” (Patomaki and Wight 2000, 223).

Underlying structures are capacities, which are not always realized. Thus, events are not pre-determined, but either constrained or enabled by structural tendencies. Besides, social phenomena also emerge due to the actions of contingent circumstances or mechanisms, which are neither necessary nor impossible (Sayer 2000). In particular, the property of emergence refers then to “situations in which the conjunction of two or more features or aspects gives rise to new phenomena, which have properties which are irreducible to those of their constituents, even though the latter are necessary for their existence” (12). Thus, revealing causation has less to do with discovering regularities or the succession of events, than with explaining what underlying structures make possible certain phenomenon and what other circumstances also take part. Following these considerations, I have divided the analysis of the struggles of the UST into necessary conditions and contingent circumstances. The analysis focused on the collective struggles only from the perspective of the UST.

Drawing from the empirical analysis, I propose that the *deprivation/dispossession of the means of production and reproduction* comprises a necessary condition for enabling the struggles of rural workers and peasants in Mendoza. This condition takes shape in different ways depending on the socio-productive profile. On the one hand, the rural workers experience an extremely difficult situation due to the lack of jobs available and low salaries. They understand this situation is unfair and could only be solved by gaining access to land and water, which are the immediate aims of their struggles. In fact, the privation of access to land and water makes them dependent on others in order to make a living, and bears conflictive relations of production in which rural workers have entered involuntarily. In other words, rural workers, as wage laborers deprived of the means of production and reproduction, are compelled to sell their labor power (Marx [1887] 1976). On the other hand, the *puesteros* have experienced evictions and the enclosure of communitarian lands due to increasing land grabbing. The evictions have often taken place through theft and/or the use of force. Furthermore, state institutions such as the police and justice authorities have been complicit with businessmen every time they have not recognized the possession rights of the peasants. This goes in the direction of the intensification of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2003), which refers to the logic of capital accumulation based on the mechanism of dispossession different from that of expanded reproduction. The concept is inspired by the idea of “primitive accumulation” described by Marx ([1867] 1976) with regards to the process through which direct producers were divorced from their means of production becoming proletarians in Great Britain from the XVI century onwards. The concept is appropriate to conceptualize contemporary land grabs in Argentina (Galafassi 2012). In this way, the forms of oppression of rural workers and *puesteros*

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in Mendoza are two sides of the same coin. While rural workers have attempted to recuperate their access to land and water, the *puesteros* have resisted the attempts of businessmen, landowners, and/or the state authorities to dispossess them from their lands.

However, the *presence* of such conditions neither determines the actualization of the capacity to struggle nor the form it takes. In the case of the rural workers and peasants in Mendoza the intervention of a variety of factors brought about struggles for recovering/defending their access to nature, which developed into peasant-indigenous identities (see Liceaga [2012] for details concerning the construction of peasant-indigenous identities in the UST). Based on my empirical analysis I identify four main contingent circumstances that contributed to the realization of the struggles of the UST.

Firstly, I argue that a generalized sense of *economic and social crisis*, which is linked to the dynamics of capitalism in the neoliberal period, opened up a “window of opportunity” for social action and the emergence of eco-territorial disputes in Mendoza. At the end of the 1990s rural workers faced an extremely difficult situation characterized by high unemployment and the deterioration of working conditions, which triggered initiatives such as communitarian gardens and food production, leading to struggles for the appropriation of nature. Unemployment in the rural areas can be linked to the break down of regional economies. In fact, during the last quarter of last century, the productive capacity of the regional economies was reoriented to external markets enabling the expansion of agribusiness at the expense of rural workers, peasants and small-scale farmers (Giarraca and Teubal 2008). However, the economic and social crisis of the end of the 1990s also affected the urban working classes and is the result of the dynamics of neoliberalism in general. The dictatorship of the 1970s paved the way to neoliberal structural reforms including privatizations, increasing external debt, de-industrialization, and financial valuation, which affected the income distribution in favor of capital (Basualdo 2010).

Secondly, I argue that a *contradictory relation with the state* was significant for the organizing process. I observed that rural workers and peasants expected the state to provide solutions to their problems. State action on favor of businessmen has triggered protests and organizing. However, state action was not unidirectional considering that to a certain extent it yielded to the pressures of the UST, satisfying some of their demands. Moreover, organizing has led to changes in state policies, which from a Poulantzian perspective indicates they are changing the social relations of forces (Brand and Heigl 2011, 4).

Thirdly, I argue that the *participation of activists from a variety of backgrounds* such as students, trade unionists, and members of political parties with previous communitarian ties

contributed to the emergence and development of the UST. Activists contributed their own experiences. The strong communitarian ties facilitated the dissemination of the debates and organization strategies. The fact that the convergence of activists with different backgrounds crystallized around peasant-indigenous identities supports the thesis sustaining that shifts in the dynamics of capitalism can produce a reorganization of collective struggles and identities (Hetland and Goodwin 2013).

Fourthly, I argue that the *interactions with other organizations* contributed to the emergence and development of the struggles of the UST. In my view there are two different sets of interconnections. On the one hand, there are links between the UST and other groups holding eco-territorial claims, which led to the formation of a national movement (MNCI) and the consolidation of peasant-indigenous identities. On the other hand, the empirical analysis shows links between the UST/MNCI and the urban working classes, which led to the configuration of peasant-worker alliances crystallized around popular identities. I conceptualize the former as a “social movement in the strict sense” and the latter as a “social movement in the broad sense”.

Social movement in the strict sense

Scholars and activists use the category of a social movement both analytically and empirically. I intend to grasp social movements in an analytical way by contrasting Barker’s (2013) definition of social movements with my empirical findings. According to this author, social movements are collective achievements sharing a common project and identity. I propose that the UST forms part of a collective achievement, i.e. the MNCI, sharing a peasant-indigenous identity based on communitarian values of solidarity that depict an alternative “way of life” connected to land and nature. This is also a collective project sharing aims such as food sovereignty and integral agrarian reform, which suppose a horizon of radical social change. Further, Barker (2013) argues that social movements are network-like entities, thus divided into autonomous cells with multiple links. Even though in the national level the UST is highly integrated into the MNCI – to the extent that its members refer to “we” indistinctly for either organization – in the local sphere the UST is a single actor with its own voice. Hence, the UST is an autonomous organization with its own structure and forms part of a solid reticular structure through multiple links with other organizations. The national network displays a similar organizational structure to the one of the UST. Moreover, according to the author’s definition, social movements are fields of argument, meaning that their aims, strategies, and positions are under permanent debate and can be influenced by external actors. I argue that the UST is itself

a field of argument, considering that although there are basic lines of action, political decisions are debated within working areas or grassroots groups. Among participants, there exist divisions and different positions concerning particular issues. The field of argument of the MNCI appears to be even more complex as more groups come together. This was illustrated by the intense debates within the network concerning their position towards the state. To sum up, the MNCI is an organization different from an NGO, a political party or a trade union and corresponds to the definition of a social movement in analytical terms. Further, the participants of the UST use the term social movement to define the network. I propose to refer to this network as a social movement in the strict sense.

I now turn to the question concerning the conditions and contingencies enabling the crystallization of a collective achievement such as the MNCI. I argue that the *deprivation/dispossession of the means of production and reproduction* is also a necessary condition for the emergence of solidarities at the national level. The UST shares the same problems, such as the dispossession of land and the lack of access to nature, with the other organizations that take part in the MNCI. There are also contingent factors that contributed to the creation of strong links and the subsequent development of a network with a common identity and project.

Firstly, sharing experiences and *collective learning* gave shape to the links between the UST and other organizations. In fact, collective learning is a means of a “movement process” from local and everyday struggles towards broader campaigns (Nielsen and Cox 2013). Even before the UST was founded in 2002, the participants of the first initiatives in Mendoza had links with consolidated peasant organizations elsewhere in the country. This suggests that collective learning favored the emergence of the UST in Mendoza. Further, the process that led to the emergence of the UST went hand in hand with the process behind the emergence of the national movement. The UST had transcended the local sphere even before entering the public arena in Mendoza, which indicates that the process of movement formation does not necessarily follow the path from everyday struggles to broad campaigns. On the contrary, it can be a joint process.

Secondly, there was a *deliberate political intention* to join forces and establish a voice at the national level in an attempt to gain strength. The sharing of experiences evolved into regular gatherings from which the deliberate intention to organize a national movement arose.

Finally, the national movement was forged through *ideological tensions* and conflicts with organizations holding opposing interests to that of the UST. Peasant organizations confronted other rural organizations, which represented the interests of small-scale and middle

size farmers dependent on agribusiness. Considering that agribusiness threatens the livelihoods of peasants, I argue that the tensions between peasants and other rural groups reinforced peasant-indigenous identities and solidarities. The outcome was the formation of the MNCI in 2005.

Social movement in the broad sense

The empirical analysis shows significant links between the UST/MNCI and other urban working classes' organizations within the framework of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular* (Popular Economy Workers' Confederation), shortly CTEP. These links have unfolded both in the local and national level. I interpret them as the making of a social movement in a broad sense or, in other words, a "movement of movements" (Barker et al. 2013). Even though this collective achievement is closer to a political alliance and has not yet comprised of a network with as strong ties and organizational structures as the MNCI, I argue that it still bears a common identity and a common project. For the members of the UST the urban groups with which they have interconnections face problems such as work, housing or education, which are perceived as grounded on a similar experience of oppression. Ultimately, what they share is the struggle for decent life conditions. These struggles have merged under a common "popular" identity, which has made reference to the exploited classes. Their common project is expressed in the desire to change their situation through emancipation, even if this term may acquire different meanings and practices among the different groups. Hence, both the popular identity and the emancipatory project are broad and vague in their meaning when compared to the peasant-indigenous identity and project crystallized in the MNCI. Further, the links between the UST/MNCI and other urban workers' groups form a network-like entity, where the UST/MNCI is autonomous. Accordingly, the peasant-workers' collective achievement is also a field of argument. For instance, the members of the UST do not hide their differences concerning organizational forms and styles of their allies.

With regard to the conditions that enabled the formation of a broad social movement, the *deprivation/dispossession of the means of production and reproduction* was the common ground for the interconnections between eco-territorial and working class struggles. A contingent factor that helped to activate the links from the side of the UST/MNCI was the *broad scope of their aims*. Peasants acknowledged that their problems are structural and rooted in the relations of production and hence, their aims such as agrarian reform and food sovereignty can only be fully achieved by tackling these foundations. That is the reason why peasants aim to build an alternative or new economy, which they see possible only in association with the urban

working classes. However, they acknowledge that building a counter-hegemonic movement through a broad “social-movement project” (Nielsen and Cox 2013) capable of undermining capitalism is a long-term horizon taking into account the unfavorable relation of forces.

Further, I identified that the *position towards the national government*⁸⁷ contributed to the consolidation of some links at the expense of others. For instance, the links between the UST and the urban-based environmental movement in Mendoza (Citizens’ Assembly for Water) were not as strong as one would have expected. There were disagreements grounded on different political positions toward the national government. While the Assembly openly confronted the government the UST/MNCI had a closer relationship and even participated in some state institutions. Furthermore, the UST members understood that the political difference reflected a class difference. However, considering that the movement is an in-process achievement, it does not mean that the links between the UST and the Assembly will not strengthen in the future.

I contend that the links between peasant-indigenous struggles and the urban working classes’ groups result in a collective achievement that illustrates the making of an overarching movement or “the social movement” (Barker 2013; Cox 2013). The nineteenth century usage of “the social movement” described all types of popular organization such as “revolutions, trade unionism, suffrage movements, nascent feminism, emerging socialist and utopian ideas, demands for national independence and unification, and peasant pressure for land” (Barker 2013, 49). This way of understanding the social movement as a relation and a process has been developed further in the Thompsonian approach to English social history (Cox 2013). In fact, Thompson (1966) portrays the making of a class movement as transcending times and places. While embracing different themes and topics this movement confronts the same forces of oppression; it usually has interconnections but it may also appear fragmented (Cox 2013). Through the lens of this perspective, I argue that struggles against new extractivism do not only crystallize in distinct collective achievements, embracing eco-territorial claims and alternative ways of relating to nature. But they could also become part of broader attempts by popular classes to organize against capitalism in different ways. In other words, instead of assuming the peasant-indigenous movement as a single movement, I consider it as a part of a whole, where the whole is less restricted to struggles against new extractivism than to the struggles against capitalism.

⁸⁷ When I conducted my field research the *Frente para la Victoria* (Front for Victory) led by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was in office.

Concluding remarks

This paper has explored the conditions and factors that enable people to organize locally around eco-territorial claims and further evolve into broader networks. I have argued that the struggles of the UST and thus, its capacity to establish links with other struggles are rooted in the deprivation/dispossession of the means of production and reproduction. Further, the research identified the factors that contributed to the emergence of the struggles of the UST in the local level and enabled its involvement in two distinct kinds of networks. On the one hand, I have proposed the concept of *social movement in the strict sense* to make sense of a highly bounded network, which has crystallized in a collective project based on ecological and territorial demands, and a peasant-indigenous identity. On the other hand, I have proposed the concept of *social movement in the broad sense*, which derives from the nineteenth century usage of “the social movement” and makes sense of a looser boundary based on an emancipatory project and popular identities. Thus, my research suggests that eco-territorial struggles are not only part of a social movement resisting the commodification of nature but are also part of a broader social movement, which includes the urban working classes and struggles against the commodification of labor.

In this sense, this research contributes to the larger debate on new extractivism and eco-territorial movements by shining light on the processes that have led to the emergence and the making of social movements in times of increasing exploitation of nature. In doing so, it calls our attention to a set of interconnections between peasant-indigenous and urban working classes’ struggles, revealing an attempt of subaltern classes to organize against capitalism. Considering that these links have scantily been addressed empirically, further research could examine them in greater depth and address the meanings of popular identities and the emancipatory project for different actors involved in the social movement. Moreover, there is a need to investigate how the commodification of nature and labor are intertwined, and what are the links between new extractivism and global capitalism.

I have started this paper by stressing the importance of making sense of the extent and the ways in which environmental conflicts can lead to struggles that attempt to undermine the basis of capitalism. As this research suggests, the broad scope of eco-territorial claims could not only lead to the conflation of peasant and indigenous identities but also to the formation of peasant-worker networks with common popular identities. Hence, what the struggles of the UST reveal is the enormous potential grassroots environmental movements have in questioning the basis of capitalism and contributing to emancipatory struggles for radical social change.

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Conclusion: The classes are there. But where are we?

Oksana Balashova, Ismail Doga Karatepe and Aishah Namukasa

With the growing number of protests erupting all over the world, more and more research has been dedicated to the study of social movements, uprisings, and resistance. For quite a long time most scholars confined their attention to searching for theoretical tools and analytical frameworks to explain the origins, dynamics and possible outcomes of these struggles. However, the often heterogeneous composition of the struggles was puzzling, and led to questions being raised about the relevance of the concept of class, and whether we can at all characterize the struggles in question as possessing a class character. The answer given in this book is straightforward: Yes, we can. Classes haven't gone anywhere. However, the notion of class can be approached from different angles: From the Marxist-informed perspective that understands the means of production as a cause of class differentiation, to Olin Wright's "integral analytical model" for the analysis of social classes, and Pierre Bourdieu's notions of economic, social, and cultural capital as crucial for the making of a social class. In this volume, the authors demonstrate the variety of approaches, while all agreeing that despite analytical difference class analysis is still relevant.

Some contributions take a stance of examining the movements as an antagonistic relationship with the representatives of the dominant classes aiming to radically transform the established social order. They employ class analysis with its original Marxist or post-Marxist flavor. Others while exploring struggles around specific issues, e.g. ecological and territorial demands, see these struggles as a part of a wider popular movement encompassing the working class. As demonstrated by some authors, focusing on the concept of class also allows us to avoid confusion while drawing a larger picture of social forces in particular contexts, e.g. in the case of Islamists in Turkey. Significant is also the attempt to look for points of convergence between the new social movements and the "traditional" left, whose participants seem to possess very heterogeneous class profiles, but nevertheless put forward seemingly unified political and social demands. Evaluated in a national and temporal context, the analyses draw a clear picture of the disastrous effects of neoliberal policies that have equally provided "new" and "old" movements with a "reason to revolt".

In fact, in the previous decades many scholars of various disciplines have already pointed out the subsequent drastic changes stemming from these policies, such as the composition of the labor force globally. Commonly spread practices of privatization, flexibility, and labor

deregulation characteristic of the system of global capitalism have led to the expansion of irregular and insecure employment forms. The future is likely to relegate even more unprivileged informal workers to the most precarious sectors. Among them migrant workers are one of the most vulnerable groups, often compelled to perform the least protected, low-skilled, and worst paid jobs. Their growing percentage of the working population continues to be a vast reservoir made use of by capital, a “reserve army of labor” having strategic importance for capital accumulation. At the same time, the newly “rediscovered” phenomenon of migration is being used by the right-wing as a scapegoat to incite racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. The goal here, however, is not to illustrate the discriminatory practices and often scandalous working conditions of migrant workers, or to invoke the feelings of sympathy towards them, but to examine their role and experience in class struggles. In spite of their precarious and vulnerable status migrants are not voiceless as is often claimed. The articles in this book provide eloquent examples of their engagement in individual and collective resistance practices, both with and outside the labor movement, as well as their participation in the collective struggle together with indigenous workers against widely spread neoliberal ideas. At the very last instance, in Antonio Gramsci’s words, “in every country the process is different, although the content is the same” (Gramsci 2000, 218).

The transformation of the global labor force requires going beyond the traditional approaches to class analysis – an intersectional approach that contains a multilayered analysis comprising, *inter alia*, class (fractions), gender, race, ethnicity, and migration status. In particular, the importance of using a gender lens while analyzing social phenomena should not be neglected. Recognizing the omissions in the traditional versions of the Marxist approach, it is important to uncover the deeply rooted patriarchal and capitalist structures that act as constraints not only in women’s everyday lives, but also in their labor struggles. Furthermore, complementing the class analysis with such categories as gender and race allows for a more nuanced look at entrenched inequalities and exploitation practices, and various modes used in today’s capitalism to sustain and reproduce itself.

The intersectional approach in itself is not novel. Yet, the category of class often gets disregarded or shifted to the very margins of the analysis. While we do not argue that class should be the central category or the entry point to each and every study on social movements, we nevertheless contend that for a comprehensive picture of social phenomena class analysis cannot be dismissed. However, how we conceptualize class, which approach to class analysis we adopt, and how much weight we attribute to it, can only be evaluated in a scientific inquiry, within context, on a case-by-case basis.

Furthermore, as suggested by the contributions in this book, there is a need to take a critical stance while examining social movements, uprisings, and resistances, and look beyond the exclusive consideration of the (often heterogeneous) movement's class composition. The struggles in general need to be contextualized: While highlighting the contradictions of the capitalist social order, the critical analysis should embrace political structures, institutions, discourses and the historical background from where the respective movement emerges.

Perhaps, we should also take this opportunity to reflect on the position of scholars themselves. While one of the major problematiques raised in this volume was the observed decreasing significance of the concept of class in contemporary academic research, maybe another crucial question to be asked here should be: When and how did we, social scholars, become so blind to class? On the one hand, class remains an important concept to understand the world. On the other hand, we, scholars, are not outside the class relations in classic Marxist terms. We are not independent of, and aloof from, the wage relation: We receive our means of subsistence in exchange for our labor-power. The story of precarious work is also our story. In academia, as in many other employment sectors, precarity has become the norm: Flexibility, labor deregulation, and piecework contracts, for example, have become widespread in the age of neoliberalism.

Another relevant issue to consider concerns the goals that we, scholars, pursue while examining social and political struggles. Most of the articles in this book deftly consider strategic implications of their research and the potential for emancipatory transformations it could bring to society. In line with the standpoint of critical scholarship, they suggest that moving beyond exclusive attempts to understand and accept the social reality might offer possible strategies for promoting important emancipatory projects.

In the introductory part of this book, we reserved some lines for the observation that the political landscape has changed; shifting towards right-wing politics continues to grow within neoliberal settings. However, as demonstrated by the eruption of numerous uprisings, individual resistances and the mushrooming of social movements all over the world, neoliberalism, ornamented with the discourse of right-wing politics, has been seriously contested. Struggles of various scales and in different national contexts all aim to disrupt their political landscapes in order to achieve greater social justice (Cox and Nilsen 2014). Thus conceived, this book is a humble contribution to voice these struggles in a comparative context.

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Labor and Globalization

Edited by Christoph Scherrer

Volume 1

Donna McGuire:

Re-Framing Trade. Union Mobilisation against the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)

ISBN 978-3-86618-392-6, Rainer Hampp Verlag, München, Mering, 2013, 237 S., € 27.80

Given the substantial and increasing encroachment of trade agreements into almost every aspect of economic and social life, there is a pressing need for research that provides a more coherent framework for understanding the source and effectiveness of organised labour's power and capacity to influence international trade policy.

Taking the union protests against the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) as a case study, this research uses core concepts derived from social movement theory to analyse the opportunities that existed for unions to influence these trade negotiations and their capacity to identify and take advantage of such opportunities. Importantly, it adds a power analysis designed to reveal the sources of power that unions draw on to take action.

The research demonstrates that even where unions faced considerable constraints they were able to re-frame trade issues in a way that built broad support for their position and to utilise opportunities in the trade negotiation process to mobilise resistance against the GATS and further liberalisation of services.

The theoretical framework developed for the research provides conceptual tools that can be developed for improving strategic campaign planning and for analytical assessment of past campaigns.

The theoretical framework developed for this research has potential for further application as an analytical and strategic planning tool for unions.

Volume 2

Christoph Scherrer, Debdulal Saha (Eds.):

The Food Crisis. Implications for Labor

ISBN 978-3-86618-393-3, Rainer Hampp Verlag, München, Mering 2013, 225 S., € 19.80

Food prices have gone up to prohibitive levels for many of the world's poor. The vast majority of those who are hungry in the world today are working in agriculture, either as small landholders or as waged agricultural workers. The majority of the food producers have not benefited from rising prices. Apparently, the bargaining power of many producers, just as that of the end consumers, has been weakened vis-à-vis the buyers and retailers of agricultural produce. This powerlessness is also in the face of governments that fail to provide an appropriate infrastructure for smallholders and social protection.

The first part of the book provides an introduction to the immediate and structural causes of the food crisis. The second part contains contributions that not only highlight the plight of rural labour but also develop tools for measuring the decent work deficit. The last part emphasizes income security as a major precondition for food security. It looks at the experiences of Brazil and India with the extension of social protection for the poor.

Volume 3

Sarah Elisabeth Schmelzer-Roldán:

The Impact of Electricity Sector Privatisation on Employees in Argentina and Brazil. A Comparative Institutional Analysis

ISBN 978-3-86618-394-0, Rainer Hampp Verlag, München, Mering 2014, 249 S., € 27.80

This book investigates country-specific responses to privatisation by examining two of the most important Latin American examples of the 1990s, the Argentine and the Brazilian programmes, and one essential public service sector, electricity. In doing so, it aims to: identify the impact of privatisation on electricity sector employees in Argentina and Brazil during the 1990s; explore how the impact came about; and analyse the reasons for this impact. A multi-dimensional perspective provides a comparative analysis of privatisation processes, regulatory contexts, and results, striving to capture the phenomenon by combining insights from political and economic analysis.

Where have all the classes gone? A critical perspective on struggles and collective action

Labor and Globalization | Volume 8

Oksana Balashova, Ismail Doga Karatepe,
Aishah Namukasa (Eds.)

Numerous uprisings and social movements in recent decades sprawled in seemingly disconnected political landscapes, from Turkey to Brazil, from South Africa to China, from Argentina to Portugal. These social protests centered on issues as varied as the right to affordable transportation, land dispossession or minority rights. The place of the working class in them seemed increasingly insignificant, and the framework of class analysis outdated. But did the concept of class really become obsolete? Are these social protests as disconnected as they seem?

“Where have all the classes gone? A critical perspective on struggles and collective action” is a book that aims to demonstrate the continuing relevance of class analysis in the study of social movements. Grounded in rich empirical data, it captures class-relevant aspects of multiple case studies of social movements, uprisings and resistances across different spatial contexts.

Key words: Class analysis, collective action, resistances in urban and rural spaces, critical approach

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