

# The Dialectical Unity of Capital and Non-Capital: The Role of Overpopulation in Popular Rebellion Today

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**Abstract**—Throughout its history, Capital has established a decisive form of discrimination that has effectively strengthened its power against Labor: discrimination between an *endogenous labor force* (integrated, with certain guarantees and rights in the capitalist nexus) and an *exogenous labor force* (yet to be incorporated or incorporated as ‘heterochthonous’, without such guarantees and rights). We refer to the historical incorporation of the exogenous population from the non-capitalist to the capitalist nexus (with the consequent replaceability of the endogenous labor force) as *absolute mobility*.

The more possibilities Capital has of accessing a population in the non-capitalist nexus and of being able to incorporate it through absolute mobility into the capitalist nexus, the greater its unilaterality or class domination. In contrast, when these possibilities run dry, Capital is more inclined towards reformism or negotiation.

However, this absolute mobility has historically been combined with *relative mobility* of the labor force, which includes various processes of which labor force migration is a fundamental component.

This paper holds that both types of mobility are at the core of class struggles.

**Keywords**—Absolute mobility, capital-labor antagonism, relative mobility, substitutability.

## I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**W**HILE the process of widespread, incessant reproduction of capital is what gives meaning to the capitalist mode of production, this dynamic entails other coincidental processes, all of which have a common starting point in the monopolization of the means of production—means of subsistence; these are:

- Turning the maximum possible period of time in each day of collective labor into surplus work time converted into accumulated surplus value.

which leads to:

- Exploitative control over the maximum possible proportion of living labor (namely, people).

which in turn results in:

- Maximum possible appropriation and control of their time.
- Maximum possible control over their mobility.

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A constant, relentless battle between Labor and Capital has been fought over these processes throughout history. In this chapter, however, we will focus exclusively on the last of these in an attempt to contribute to Marxist research in this field. Since the very beginnings of merchant capital, the following concerns have been constant:

1. How to obtain a labor force at minimum cost for main production activities.
2. How to retain or ‘anchor’ a labor force that had gradually been freed from the bonds of vassalage, slavery or serfdom.

1. With European colonial expansion across the rest of the globe, and the shaping of the international pan-European system [1] that would become a global system in the 20th century, a market—first international and then global—of raw materials and values in use, generally turned into goods, gradually spread and became consolidated; capital resources and assets would later be added. From the outset, these were accompanied by the development of an international—and later world—labor force market.

The role of intra- and inter-continental acquisition of living labor, initially to guarantee the original accumulation of capital and colonial production (slavery and other kinds of forced labor in local populations, mobility of enslaved Africans, mobility of coolie serfdom in the Asian population), and then to ensure specific capitalist exploitation (proletarian wage-dependent automobility), first gained importance in the colonies and then in the system’s peripheries. Only with the industrial revolution did the metropolises, or centers of the system, become directly involved in this international labor force market, with the export of millions of proletarians to the peripheries. A century later, in the middle of the 20th century, these metropolises began to import labor on a mass scale from the peripheries.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, the cheapest way of introducing living labor into the capitalist mode of production was to have access to and continuously incorporate into capitalist production, a labor force from outside itself, in other words neither produced nor

<sup>1</sup> The movement of living labour to strategic economic sectors (mining of precious minerals, cotton plantations for the textile industry and food production for European salaried workers; railway and transport infrastructures, mining and industrial production in the metropolises, etc.), was essential to the development of the system’s central formations, which controlled these dynamics and the mobility and use of living labour, in the above-mentioned ways that, far from occurring linearly, overlapped in time and were used in combination at the system’s discretion

reproduced under capitalist conditions<sup>2</sup>. The implications of this process were: a) the destruction of pre-capitalist economies, with the consequent 'liberation' of huge numbers of people predisposed to 'mobilization'; and b) the artificial conservation of non-capitalist forms of production at the peripheries (used for many years as huge 'Bantustans'), as places for the production and reproduction of the labor force under non-capitalist conditions, and disposed to re-absorb this labor force when it was no longer needed for capitalist exploitation (and which also generated constant focuses of frequently endemic, popular ethnic resistance).

The channeling of labor force mobility and the way it is incorporated are therefore equally, if not more important than the production and creation of surplus value in the dynamics of unequal capitalist accumulation and development, since they are an essential condition for these processes to occur.

In this accumulation, the incorporation of labor directly through its geographical or sectoral mobility is just as decisive as its occupational integration in the social and international division of labor, often used as 'raw material' in situ, to later be exploited or imported as 'objectified labor'.

2. The retention or anchoring of living labor is a less visible, or perhaps less perceived, process, whereas, paradoxically, one of the distinguishing features of capitalism is said to be the *mobility of the labor force*. Indeed, the proclaimed basic condition of the labor force in the capitalist mode of production is that it must be mobile, in other words, capable of occupying jobs and settling where capital requires it to do so. The logic of this condition, needless to say, lies in two circumstances that differentiate capitalism from any earlier mode of production: 1) the process of dispossession of people's means of production, which leaves them disposed ('free') to be mobile; and 2) the fact that the worker *owns* his or her labor force (i.e., he or she, as the *owner*, has the inalienable right to use it). These circumstances constitute the necessary conditions for labor force to be a *commodity* (a factor alien to individuals and the basis of their alienation). In turn, the *mobility* of this commodity is claimed to be one of the basic requirements for the origins of capitalism associated with its very *raison d'être*: that of producing producers separated from the means of production, without structural or economic connections to either the production processes or specific places of production. Their transformation into proletarians marked the origins of capitalist mobility (from owners of the means of production to individuals dispossessed of this control and therefore available for wage labor or, in general, dependent labor). This is what we call *absolute mobility* [3].

However, from the outset, this re nascent mobility had to be either curtailed to varying degrees, or channeled and, in all events, controlled, to prevent people from 'leaving' their

<sup>2</sup> For this reason, control of women's reproductive capacity has always been so important (loss of men through forced or 'free' migration also led to a significant increase in their productive role). Control of reproduction has historically been the subject of women's struggles, through 'womb strikes' to avoid giving birth to children in conditions of slavery, servitude or, in general, overexploitation. These issues are thoroughly covered in Potts' [2] excellent work.

condition of commodity-labor force; in other words, to guarantee and perpetuate their dependence. When this was not possible through waged work (inevitably with insufficient wages)<sup>3</sup>, two forms of subjection were historically used:

1. Absolute subjection (slavery or other forms of forced labor)
2. Relative or bridled subjection<sup>4</sup>, most commonly in the form of indenture or engagement, servitude, peonage, apprenticeships and migrations under contract or relegation to the employer.

These impediments to mobility were imposed wherever the social relations of capitalist production did not mature sufficiently to develop the *social* field, with all the recognitions, public interventions and rights that ensure that dependent waged labor becomes an efficient way of retaining the labor force on its own.

With the development and maturity of such social relations of production, these impediments gradually ceded importance to dependent waged labor (although they did not disappear altogether and were brought in to complement dependent waged labor whenever and wherever necessary). Meanwhile, the so-called 'primitive forms of mobility' outside the reproduction of capital (that of people incorporated into the capital value process through their proletarianisation; see [5]), would give way to other increasingly significant forms of mobility within the capitalist accumulation process. Although, generally speaking, labor force mobility tends to refer only to migratory geographical mobility, Capital actually uses this mobility in at least four different ways:

- a. As an adaptation to the organization's labor process requirements (different work shifts, job swaps, or the increasing social and technical division of labor in general, in order to increase productivity or surplus value). In other words, to pursue technological-organizational shift of Capital.
- b. As a way of matching the labor force to the demands of various spheres or branches of activity, depending on expectations of the capital's profitability.
- c. As a form of displacement in and out of waged work (employment-unemployment; regulated-unregulated employment, etc.).<sup>5</sup>
- d. As a means of subordinating the labor force to the spatial movement of capital and, within that, to its dynamics of concentration and centralization.

As a whole, therefore, labor force mobility has tended to be

<sup>3</sup> Wage insufficiency was accompanied by increased property prices and taxes, in order to prevent workers from becoming independent or setting up as self-employed.

<sup>4</sup> *Bridled*: refers to the de jure and/or de facto obstructions to workers' mobility, whether geographical, sectoral, professional, social or political. The economist Moulrier-Boutang [4] implacably and comprehensively explains the process by which this labour force is *bridled*, i.e., how the formally 'free' work of the capitalist era (and extolled as such by liberal thinking) has actually been permanently subject to constrictions, in such a way that their 'freedom' is more the exception than the rule.

<sup>5</sup> The first two types of mobility have frequently involved dismissals, shift rotation, forced changes in job posts or activity, and, in general, numerous hardships deriving from the real subsumption of labour to capital. The third type of mobility, needless to say, inflicts untold misery on these workers.

channeled and subjected in order to ensure that its malleability, flexibility or subordination adapts to the demands of capital accumulation. We understand this condition as *relative mobility* [3], a condition that was gradually combined with absolute mobility as capitalism developed and Labor was truly subsumed to Capital in consequence<sup>6</sup>. *For this reason, the study of labor force mobility cannot be separated from the analysis of how ways of working were implemented and the changes in the organizational processes they involved, keeping in mind that spatial and functional mobility intersect and are permanently linked in the capitalist mode of production.* The precise study of how capital is valued and the resulting forms of Labor mobility at each moment in history are also therefore essential to any thorough understanding of migration analysis.

In addition, not only the movement of labor force or the different procedures by which it is procured (waged labor being only one way, historically combined with forced or semi-forced labor), but also specific incorporation of the labor force in the processes of capitalist accumulation are vitally important.

The 'free' international migration of proletarianised labor, as part of these migratory movements, is linked to all the aspects listed above and had in the following effects:

- a. Reduction in capital turnover time (due to shorter production time caused by increased intensity), and
- b. Continuation of sectors with a low organic capital structure due to the intensive exploitation of labor.

Both these processes counterbalance the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

In response to the tendency of profit to fall, Capital introduced several mechanisms including the rule of tendency to labor mobility perfection [6]. For this reason it is so important to take into account migration flows as elements of the production of the labor force commodity arising over time in different social formations, and not only as the essential components in the circulation of this commodity. The more efficient and the cheaper means of transport become, the greater the benefit to capitalist development through access to an increasing labor force in ever more distant markets. This is especially true if the costs of travelling and transport are borne by this peculiar *commodity*, the only commodity that can move by itself and finance its own mobility.

It is in this fourth way, however, capital mobility –which requires us to consider the global capitalist market– that international migrations of proletarianised labor (waged labor) become particularly relevant and visible.

Throughout the course of capitalism, dialectical materialism has understood international migration primarily as a global mechanism to supply the labor force and to provide the elements (ethnic, family, community, neighborhood, etc..) to support its reproduction. From this perspective, therefore, migrations cannot be separated from the socio-anthropological analysis of each social formation and its cultural-identity

<sup>6</sup> The terms Labour and Capital, in their capitalised forms, are understood as Marx's 'collective labour' and 'collective capitalist', and are therefore also opposing historical subjects.

markers; neither can we ignore the special significance of gender in the migration process, and of community ties (ethnic, national, local, etc.), which frequently become stronger.

The geographical mobility of the labor force has been exploited in many different ways, depending on the position of social formations in the international division of labor. Some of the most important historical manifestations are:

1. The expansion of capital into new geographical areas transformed local subsistence producers into waged workers. This was often accompanied by forced movements of populations between peripheral formations, and importing the labor force from areas with previous capitalist development (the latter as migration processes from the centers to the peripheries of the World System).
  2. The intense accumulation of capital in the central societies generated reverse processes of world migration, from the peripheries to the centers of the System.<sup>7</sup>
- It has been noted that when a labor force migrates from places with more developed forces of production, and therefore more developed Labor organization and consciousness, to areas where these aspects are less developed, historically class consciousness and organization at the destination tended to be fostered. When the labor force migrates in the opposite direction, the tendency is to weaken the labor force's social negotiating power as well as its political agency.
3. Further levels of capitalist accumulation in the peripheries led to inter-periphery migration and migration of a certain type of labor force (particularly highly skilled labor) from central societies to the peripheries.
  4. Finally, importing labor force has historically been linked to the strengthened or reproduced Capital domination over Labor in some of the System's social formations, with particular significance in central formations, through increased labor replaceability.

If the development of capitalism is associated with the arrival of a growing waged labor population, there is another subsequent condition, namely, the need to constantly replenish the reserve of labor disposed to become waged, *given that the relative power of Capital over Labor is moderated by the replacement rate of the commodity of labor force that Capital is capable of maintaining.* Indeed, some authors such as Marglin [7] have argued that "the differential between the average rate of growth of capital,  $g$ , and the average grade rate of growth of the labor force,  $n$ , determines whether or not the capitalist economy tends continuously to extend its boundaries. If  $(g-n)$  is greater than zero [...], the relative

<sup>7</sup> The first two of these dynamics were present in the controversial debate between Luxemburg and Bauer over which of the two was integral to the imperialism of the central societies. But labour power migrations from the colonies or peripheries to the metropole (feeding the process of relative overpopulation), and the reverse flow (in pursuit of external capital investment), are not simply phenomena that coincide with the spread of capitalism and its hegemonic link with other modes of production. One or the other of these complementary phenomena has greater impact at different times, depending on the prevailing dynamics of capital and specialisation in the capitalist world economy.

power of workers inside the previous boundaries of the capitalist economy is likely to increase; this pressure forces capitalists to expand beyond those boundaries”.

However, a fifth point, frequently ignored in systemic analyses, must be added:

5. There is an element of autonomy in almost all migrations. Migration may also be regarded as a break with or escape from relations of labor, dependency or subordination, or, in general, as a ‘way out’ of social relations that are in principal less desirable the those hoped for through migration. This implies that migration also involves an element of sabotage of the Capital-Labor relations constructed at the point of departure. Migration may also inject ‘turbulence’ into labor relations at the point of arrival, and even into the flows linking the two points. This condition may also be expressed in the idea that there is always an uncontrollable part to the migration phenomenon that does not respond to more or less systemic interests (although this does not imply that it cannot be explained in systemic terms).

The weakening of Labor’s social negotiating power that tends to occur initially in case 2 may therefore be countered by the new migrants’ contrasting experience of past autonomy, both in their demands and organization. Their disruptive potential is linked to the fact that they are not integrated, and are kept on the edges of political and social loyalty mechanisms (social security, citizenship, rights, regulated employment relations, etc.) in the destination country, as we shall see below. But it is here that their greatest structural weakness lies [8].

Research dealing with this fifth point draws a conclusion that is frequently absent from other analyses: migrations, on their own, do not constitute a ‘reserve army’ if the additional condition of *bridling* is absent [4], designed to weaken the migrant labor force’s capacity to respond.

In order to better understand this, we must consider this labor force as a case of *exogenous labor*.

Throughout all histories of capitalist entities, we must consider the interrelationship between an *endogenous labor force*, with regular and stable exchange of labor, relative freedom of movement and linked to social integration mechanisms parallel to citizenship building, and an *exogenous labor force*, incorporated ‘from outside’ and forced to remain beyond the boundaries of citizenship and regulated labor conditions. This exogenous labor force has been incessantly subject to political restriction of movement or direct *bridling* in the absence of other mechanisms of ‘subjection’, including different forms of unwaged labor, demographic reserves awaiting incorporation into unwaged labor through previous proletarianisation or dispossession, or internal and inter-state migrations. Their presence has been vital in allowing these different types of regulation to appear.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, as this line of analysis upholds, slavery and the numerous forms of bridled dependent labour have been permanent structural companions of capitalist accumulation, not only pertaining to primitive accumulation. Robin Cohen [9] provides a good explanation of some of these forms and offers a detailed case analysis of them.

The State itself became the guarantor and regulator of the labor force supply, and the reproducer of the dependent and exogenous nature of a varying part of this labor force. Herein lies the *raison d’être* of migration policies.

In effect, because the international division of capitalist labor has historically been linked to the formation and consolidation of state frontiers, States have played a determining role in the differential accumulation of capital on a global scale.

One of the elements necessary to achieve this objective is the ingrained inequality of the labor force. To this end, States will ensure that the labor force is maintained and reproduces according to its origins through institutional differentiation, thus generating a sub-type of labor force that is particularly vulnerable or deprived of social negotiating power because of its assigned *foreigner* status.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, one of the notable features of the ‘capitalist world market’ is that total commodity mobility does not actually occur within it (and neither is capital distributed ‘freely’ in all parts of the world regardless of which state its owners are from), *which means that what is truly determinant in this peculiar market is the absence of any ‘free’ mobility of the labor force*. The implication is that whereas in a state economy all producers buy their supplies, including labor, at the same price, this does not happen in the world market because there is no free movement of labor, which together with other reasons and consequences, allows neither rates of surplus value nor rates of profit to be uniformly distributed worldwide, but rather fragmented by states.<sup>10</sup>

*The absence of free circulation of the labor force is essential to maintaining differentiated prices for labor, and therefore enabling gains to be made from the real relations of exchange between the social formations and business entities that dominate the international division of labor. This factor also explains the historical interest of Capital in controlling – at its own convenience– the import and export of this special ‘commodity’ in different local or regional labor markets.*

The capitalist law of value would bring about uniform commodity prices –including labor prices– across the world if there were a world leveling of the rate of profit, which would only be viable in a homogenized capitalist world economy, with only one capitalist State. The reality, however, is that there are different markets, assembled into what we have seen fit to attribute the tendential characteristics of a ‘system’, and that spawns coordinated capitalist, semi-capitalist and pre-

<sup>9</sup> In its most extreme manifestation, in the words of Sassen; “border enforcement is a mechanism facilitating the extraction of cheap labour by assigning criminal status to a segment of the working class – illegal immigrants” [10]. One of the implications this has is that the national/foreign condition becomes a class position that entails more or fewer life opportunities within Labour and, consequently, is a key factor in Labour’s internal differentiation.

<sup>10</sup> In effect, if producers in one country are less efficient (with lower productivity), their prices will not be competitive and they will quickly be sanctioned by the market. In contrast, in the world market these producers may have even higher average profit rates, since they can take advantage of lower labour costs because there is no global price for labour power, among other factors. (For an in-depth economic explanation of this process and its consequences for inequality and exploitation between countries, see [11].

capitalist relations of production linked to each other through capitalist relations of exchange and dominated by a capitalist world market.

In summary, the increasing restrictions on mobility are a substantial part of the limitation or curtailing of individual autonomy. The extent of these restrictions is largely conditioned by the Capital/Labor relation, manifest in the various forms of bridling and the renewed labor force substitution capacity by means of the geographical mobility of capital and the incorporation of vast swathes of reserve populations, which intensify and extend the possibilities of importing and exporting labor.

This reached its climax with the second universalisation of the capitalist system into a single World System, following the reintegration of the Second World (or "Socialist World") and the incorporation of the entire world population into the capitalist market, as a single world labor force. This process also involved the incorporation of periphery zones that had only been partially incorporated before, with the consequent absorption for the first time of the world's female and peasant labor force.

The declining influence of all these populations on the labor markets leads to the loss of social negotiating power of the rest of the world's labor force, and by extension, the strengthening of Capital's capacity to dominate it. These circumstances decisively contributed to a general increase in surplus value through the rise in all types of exploitation and overexploitation.

But ultimately, as we have seen, although relative mobility (specifically migration) has gradually gained importance, the labor force substitution process is inherent to the very transformation of the capitalist mode of production, and has historically been expressed through a fundamental nexus: that which determines the step between the capitalist and the non-capitalist link of the economy, namely, *absolute mobility*.

Also today, the possibilities and limitations of absolute mobility have marked and conditioned the Capital/Labor relation, with all the implications it has for the social structure and the order of domination. In the following sections we will explore these issues, and also analyze the current Capital/Labor relation in terms of *relative mobility*.

## II. LABOR FORCE REPRODUCTION IN A PREDOMINANTLY NON-CAPITALIST ENVIRONMENT

Historically, capitalist production originated and developed in a non-capitalist environment, to the detriment of that environment. As a result, unwaged relations (indigenous communities, small farmers, artisans, traders) initially predominated over waged work in the active population. Today, there are few countries where the wage relation is still incipient (below 20%), although it is important to note that these are also the countries with the fewest statistical records. Countries with under 20% of their economically active population (EAP) in waged work are found mainly, though not exclusively, in sub-Saharan Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean the only case is Haiti, and in Asia, countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Laos fall into this group.

The markets in these economies are not highly developed. In a non-monetized, basically communitarian economy, unwaged work is not distinguished from waged work. Both men and women carry out unpaid work primarily. Domestic work is considered as another form of unwaged work and is not yet differentiated from waged work. The category of domestic work is, therefore, a recent development brought in with the monetization of social relations. The percentage of waged workers in Burkina Faso, Malawi, Ruanda and Cambodia is below 12% and as such, these are economies without a real market presence [12]. It is interesting to note that there is very little difference between male and female activity rates in these countries. In fact, rates are around 90% for both women and men between the ages of 15 and 60. Child labor in these countries, although very common, is more an issue of training and socialization into the local economy. Essentially these are communitarian economies where the wage relation has not really penetrated; monetized relations are barely present in incipient market economies.

In countries where wage relation penetration is at its lowest levels, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, neocolonialism is currently an issue under debate. These are fragile nations and relatively easy prey for neocolonial endeavors, as seen in the recent occupation of Haiti or the efforts to split Sudan into two. The current struggles in these countries, therefore, could occur once again within the framework of decolonization. Subsidies for the production of staple grains in the North lead to overproduction, which is exported to the periphery countries, albeit within the framework of cooperation. As long as these countries depend on these imports, any price increase in staple grains at an international level—due to speculation or the growing demand for biofuels—causes famine. Staple grain prices have again been increasing since the second half of 2010. New famines can be expected in 2012, accompanied by popular revolts in sub-Saharan countries, the above-mentioned Asian countries, Haiti, and some Central American countries.

## III. THE ORGIASTIC PHASE OF CAPITAL: LARGE LABOR FORCE REPLACEMENT CAPACITY

The case is different in peripheral countries whose economies are more deeply affected by the market relation and penetration of capital. The dismantling of the non-capitalist nexus has advanced, with the consequent freeing up of labor to be incorporated into the capitalist nexus. In countries with a percentage of the EAP in waged work between 20% and 50%, capital operations and domination are highly visibly and exchange relations are substantially monetized. In these countries, therefore, capital has penetrated and dominates even though wage relations are still secondary. Countries with a percentage of EAP in waged work between 20% and 39% for which statistical information is available are, in Africa: Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho and Zimbabwe; in Asia: Bhutan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam. In countries with a percentage of EAP in waged work of between 40% and 50%, capital is somewhat more developed. In Africa these countries are Ethiopia, Gabon and Morocco; in Asia, Syria, Yemen and Thailand; and in Latin

America, Bolivia, Paraguay and Honduras [12].

Where the non-capitalist nexus still predominates, capitalists can replace or substitute a worn-out labor force with another from the gradually dissolving non-capitalist nexus. The objective conditions in this case are such that capitalists can pay wages that are below subsistence levels for even one worker, let alone a family. This condemns workers to live in subhuman conditions, with no job stability or economic or social security. Consequently the average useful life of the labor force is greatly reduced due to, among other causes, unhealthy working conditions, malnutrition and appalling housing conditions, as revealed in a previous study [13].

When social relations are monetized, domestic work is increasingly regarded as unwaged work, as distinct from other remunerated activities. This leads to the social perception that home-based unwaged work is no longer seen as work; as this perception grows, women's participation in economic activity declines. Thus, in Pakistan where 37% of the EAP is in waged work, the economic activity of women between the ages of 20 and 60 is a mere 15% to 20%. In Paraguay, where 48% of the EAP is in waged work, women account for between 20% and 30%; and in Honduras, where 50% of the active population is in waged work, female employment rates vary between 30% and 45% [12].

The destruction of the non-capitalist nexus does not advance at the same rate in all countries. In Bolivia, where barely 33% of the EAP is in waged work, the employment rate of the most productive age range fluctuates between 45% and 55%; in Indonesia, where 34% of the EAP is in waged work, participation rates oscillate between 50% and 60%. Zambia's EAP includes 30% of waged workers and women's participation rates are between 50% and 75%. Although we cannot explore the details of each case, we can state that the dismantling of the communitarian economy in Zambia and Bolivia has met more obstacles than the dissolution of non-capitalist relations in, for example, Pakistan and Paraguay. Non-capitalist ties in Zambia and Bolivia are more resistant to the advance of capital due to the still active communitarian economy, and the distinction between waged and unwaged labor is therefore less marked. Female participation in the EAP also remains high because women are relatively integrated in communal relations.

When a minority of the EAP is in waged work, the labor force replacement capacity is very high, especially when relations in the non-capitalist nexus are disintegrating. This high replacement capacity translates in overexploitation of the labor force, manifested in long, exhausting working days, together with pitiful wages that force workers to live in insalubrious housing, or accept unstable work that prevents them from establishing sustainable family relationships, etc. Households frequently break up as a result of domestic and international migration in search of work. These households also tend to be made up of extended family members and other people. Struggle for survival is the order of the day, and child labor is a frequent form of exploitation by the system.

When labor force replacement capacity is very high, workers are often dismissed at a relatively young age;

therefore, their useful life expectancy for capital is relatively short. In the midst of this economic and social insecurity, *the working class reproduces as a class, even though workers are unable to reproduce themselves with the minimum living conditions* [14]. The constant destruction of the non-capitalist nexus also prevents them from achieving these conditions. Workers, living in extremely precarious conditions and conscious of their perennial economic and social instability, perceive that they are not paid for their work, nor even for their labor force, and tend to rebel. However, their demands fall on the deaf ears of the bourgeois class. The fact that the rebellious labor force can be substituted, with or without repression, acts to break up strike action and is an obstacle to effective organization. These countries are controlled by dictators, and the longer the objective situation of the labor force goes on, the more explosive it becomes.

#### IV. THE STAGNATION OF HIGH REPLACEMENT CAPACITY: THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

The transition from a situation of high replacement capacity to one of low replacement capacity (where around 70% of the active population is waged) can be slow or become stagnated. The slower and more stagnated this transition, the more favorable will be the conditions for protest to ripen and potentially turn into a revolutionary force. This is certainly the case in countries where the market economy and capital have penetrated substantially, but not enough for the wage relation to be generalized. Specifically, these are societies with an advanced wage relation (between 40% and 66% of the EAP) that at the same time has remained stagnant for decades, as seen in many peripheral countries of Africa, Asia and particularly Latin America in the second half of the 20th century.

Today, the political situation in countries with an EAP in which the wage relation is between 50% and 66% will, in our view, demand great attention in the short-term. We cannot give a complete picture of the situation in these countries since statistics are not available for all of them. Figures for waged labor in some African countries are as follows: Algeria, 60%; Egypt, 62%; Namibia, 62% and Tunisia, 66%. Available statistics for Asian countries include Fiji (59%), Iran (51%), Philippines (51%), Sri Lanka (59%) and Turkey (59%). Figures for Latin America and the Caribbean are: Brazil (64%), Colombia (54%), Dominican Republic (54%), Ecuador (60%), Guatemala (50%), Guyana (52%), Jamaica 61%, Mexico (66%), Nicaragua (51%), Peru (54%) and Venezuela (59%); in other words, most of the continent can be considered as a time bomb [12].

In a country with a relatively large demographic (China), greater investment is needed to achieve generalized wage relations than in smaller countries (South Korea). This does not mean that the demographic factor will determine stagnation of the wage relation, but the role of a country's demographic size should not be underestimated. A rapid transition process is not to be expected in China or India, with populations of over a thousand million, even when economic growth is high and sustained. India's and especially China's

declining economic growth rates suggest that they can expect greater political instability, particularly if the world recession deepens.

Of the African and Asian cases, rapid transition is reflected in the data for two countries (Algeria and Turkey), whereas four countries show clear stagnation (Tunisia, Egypt, Iran and Sri Lanka). In 1964, 37% of Algeria's EAP was waged workers; in 1977 this figure had risen to 47% and in 2004, almost 60%. This is a rapid, but still incomplete transition. EAP figures for Turkey in 1965 reflected 22% of waged workers in 1975, 31%, in 1988, 40% and in 2008 almost 60%. The objective scenario in both these countries is that new work opportunities are appearing, although replacement capacity and the consequent economic and social instability remain high. Without an objective economic base for reformism, political stability in these countries will remain fragile, particularly in times of recession. The rebellion in Tunisia and Egypt in January 2011 lit the fuse in the whole region and beyond. The Great Depression of the 21st Century augurs a situation of prolonged and deepening stagnation. In 2012 we expect to see the beginning of a period of radicalization of the popular revolts in these countries, with a clearer political profile and corresponding organization.

#### V. THE ECONOMIC BASE OF BOURGEOIS REFORMISM AND THE LIMITS OF REPLACEMENT CAPACITY

The more deeply capital penetrates the sectors and regions of a country, the greater the erosion of non-capitalist forms of production. The consequence of this process is the gradual transformation of the working class into an army of waged workers. The tendency for non-waged relations to disappear reduces the possibilities of substituting or replacing the worn-out labor force in the capitalist nexus with a new labor force recruited from elsewhere. In order to reproduce their labor force, a growing proportion of workers depend on the sale of the only commodity they possess, their labor.

In many countries today, more than two thirds of the EAP is waged. All the European countries –including Russia and the eastern European countries– head this list, followed by the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, where 80% of the EAP is in waged work, and in some cases the figure rises to over 90%. A considerable number of peripheral countries also fall into this range. In Latin America, these include Surinam (80%), Argentina (75%), Costa Rica (73%), Chile (72%), Uruguay (70%) and Panama (69%). In many Caribbean islands with small populations, over 66% of the EAP is in waged work. These include Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Cayman Islands, Saint Kitts, Saint Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago, all of which are over 80%. Asian countries include Qatar (99%), United Arab Emirates (97%), Brunei (95%), Macau (China) (91%), Hong Kong (89%), Oman (88%), Israel (87%), Singapore (85%), Taiwan (75%), Malaysia (74%) and South Korea (68%). In Africa these countries include South Africa (82%), Seychelles (81%), Mauritius (79%), Swaziland (76%), Botswana and Namibia (73%), and São Tomé and Príncipe (71%) [12]. The general tendency at the periphery is for the wage relation to spread

more easily in countries with relatively small populations. Economic shrinkage during the present economic downturn may, for the same reason, lead to greater shrinkage of the labor market and consequent political instability.

The reduction of the non-capitalist nexus to below 30% of the EAP limits the labor force replacement capacity. As a class, capitalists are then obliged to extend the workers' average useful life. To maintain labor productivity throughout an increasingly extensive production period, the labor force must be conserved because only in this way can this source of profit be maintained. The first social security system was introduced in Germany in last quarter of the 19th century, and then spread to other European countries. In Latin America social security appeared first in Chile (1923) and soon after in Uruguay and Argentina [15]. Costa Rica introduced it in 1948, when more than two thirds of the country's EAP was in waged work. In 1985, Latin American countries with over 70% of their EAP covered by social security were Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica and the Caribbean islands like Trinidad and Tobago mentioned above. Cuba has universal coverage.

The extension of the average useful life of waged workers pushes up their average age. For example, the average age of waged workers in Costa Rica is shifting towards 45, compared with an average of below 30 in Honduras. To maintain levels of production, labor force preservation must improve; hence the social security system. Now, the reduced labor force replacement capacity in the capitalist nexus increasingly demands generational replacement. As labor force replacement capacity falls, in the absence of related social measures, intergenerational replacement capacity is more than ever guaranteed through labor force reproduction within the family. At that point, the preservation and reproduction of the labor force in the family context becomes a necessary condition for the reproduction of capital. Capital can only reproduce itself as capital as long as the labor force can reproduce itself, in other words, by guaranteeing its own intergenerational replacement. The importance of the nuclear family acquires historical dimensions from this point on. In this period, women's participation in the labor market is relatively limited.

As we cannot explore each individual case, some examples will have to suffice. In the 1980s and 90s, more than 60% of Costa Rican households were made up of couples either on their own or with unmarried children. The most extended households (the nuclear family with a married child or single relatives) represented 20% of the total, a legacy from previous times. Single-parent families in Costa Rica accounted for less than 10% and single person households, barely 5%; together, these two types of household represented less than 15% [16], [17]. Today, single-parent families and single person households together make up 60% of all households in Germany, and 67% in Sweden and Denmark. In these countries, as we shall see below, the labor force is no longer reproduced within the family.

As the non-capitalist nexus disappears and worker replacement capacity diminishes, workers' capacity for protest grows stronger. With the spread of wage relations into more

sectors and large companies, workers organizational capacity also increases. As a result, wages tend to rise and the working day is reduced. For this reason, the same work in a country with low replacement capacity is better paid than in a country where replacement capacity is higher. Likewise, migration flows tend to go from countries with higher replacement capacities to those with greater economic and social stability. When the objective capacity for working class struggle rises, the bourgeoisie, as a class, becomes an interested party in the reproduction and preservation of the labor force. At this point, struggles over salaries and working conditions are less likely to take place on the battlefield and are increasingly resolved at the negotiation table. Trade unions are generally legally constituted. The picture of a peaceful relationship between two antagonistic classes begins to emerge. The State, essentially a repressive power in the past, now takes the form of a democracy. This is the era of the bourgeois democracy and the beginning of the so-called Welfare State.

Increased wages, restrictions on child and female labor, the need for social security and other factors limit the source of absolute surplus value and compromise the competitive position of the bourgeoisie relative to that of other countries where the wage relation is not widespread. To guarantee their competitive position, the bourgeoisie have no alternative but to increase labor productivity. This requires greater technological development, which in turn demands a widespread and more developed education process, producing a skilled labor force, as distinct from an unskilled labor force.

The more specialized the labor force, the fewer educational institutions there tend to be (re-production). And the fewer educational institutions there are to reproduce a certain skilled labor force (through professional associations), the more they will be able to influence supply in the labor market, the lower their replacement capacity, and therefore, the higher their wage in the market [18]. This leads to a situation where the higher the costs of reproducing the labor force, the more important it becomes to preserve it.

Increased technological development raises the demand for a skilled labor force. But because families that invest more in education tend to have fewer children than those with less education, demand exceeds supply. The fact is that the unskilled labor force receives a wage to reproduce itself as unskilled, regardless of the aspirations it might have for its children. Workers with smaller than average families, on the other hand, can use the resources and the energy that would otherwise be spent on bringing up more children, to ensure the upward social mobility of their (fewer) children. In effect, the costs of reproducing the labor force (in the family) are lower for smaller than average families, and this saving can be put towards upward social mobility. So long as capital expansion continues, the State has a role in building and managing state schools. In times of economic downturn, such as the present, education and health cuts are generally the order of the day.

The higher the level of education in a population, the higher its EAP participation rates will be. The low replacement capacity of the (male) skilled labor force means that skilled women need to be incorporated into the labor market. For this

reason, participation rates of skilled women are high and not noticeably different from male rates. This holds for all countries, both at the centre and on the periphery. As we demonstrated empirically in the study *Del neoliberalismo al poscapitalismo*, for upward social mobility to continue from one generation to another, fertility rates must decline. The average number of children per women falls, thus, until the extreme is finally reached in which generational replacement is not guaranteed, a situation faced now by all central countries and beyond.

Capitalism not only demands a skilled labor force; it must also have experience. Part of the training the skilled labor force receives, therefore, comes through experience. And an experienced labor force is generally less replaceable than one with no experience, and therefore better paid. Rapid technological innovation means previous experience quickly becomes obsolete, which in turn means that older adults become a hindrance to increasing or even maintaining labor productivity. Older generations (even highly skilled) therefore become more replaceable and are regarded as an inconvenience to capital. Capitalists, as a class, feel they must replace this labor force with a younger, more up-to-date labor force. Because the non-capitalist nexus has shrunk, the labor force can no longer be driven out in that direction. This situation created the need to retire this labor force on old-age pensions, first introduced for the more highly skilled labor force and later, when its replacement capacity also declined, extended to the less skilled. In times of recession when the non-capitalist nexus increases once again, there is mounting pressure to dismantle the pension system.

#### VI. DIFFERENTIAL REPLACEMENT CAPACITY IN MALE AND FEMALE LABOR FORCES

In the second post-war period –the Keynesian era– the central countries experienced sustained increase in capital and with it the accelerated spread of the wage relation. This widespread incorporation of the labor force initially absorbed the entire available male labor force. In 1970, over 87% of the male EAP in Sweden, Canada and the USA was in waged work; in Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the figure was over 85%; in Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark and France, it reached 80% and above. Countries like Spain (73%), Japan (70%) or Portugal (66%) came close behind [19].

At that point, the male labor force replacement capacity fell sharply, and in consequence wages tended to rise. It comes as no surprise that in this context, the 1970s saw the promotion of the massive incorporation of women into economic activity. In Sweden, for example, between 1970 and 1991, the participation of women between the ages of 30 and 60 increased by more than 75%. In 1991, female participation was slightly lower (5% on average) than for men of the same age. During the same period, Spain and Portugal still had a high male labor force replacement capacity, and consequently, the participation of women between the ages of 30 and 60 was relatively low in the 70s (below 15%). Between 1971 and 1992, female participation grew notably in Spain; despite that,



1992 female participation levels in Spain were still lower than those in Sweden twenty years earlier.

The widespread incorporation of women into the labor market had the effect of reducing the replacement capacity for the whole labor force. In 1991, more than 90% of Swedish men and women between the ages of 50 and 54 worked, as did over 80% of those between 55 and 59. This reflects a very limited replacement capacity for both genders with the result that wages tended to even out. In 1974, for example, 55.5% of US women earned less than 75% of the average wage; this figure had fallen to 42.5% twenty years later in 1994. Figures for the United Kingdom reflect a 17% drop from 64.3% to 53.3% between 1974 and 1986. As a consequence of the incorporation of women in the labor market the male replacement capacity rose, which in turn reduced pressure on wage increases. Thus, the percentage of men in the United States earning less than 75% of the average wage increased from 18.4% to 27.3% between 1974 and 1994. In the United Kingdom, this percentage increased from 11.2% in 1974 to 22.1% in 1986, a rise of 97% in twelve years. Although there are still clear differences in women's and men's earnings, the trend towards equilibrium shows two patterns: men's wages continue to fall while women's wages tend to rise [19].

However, the spread of paid labor among women does not mean that, as a group, they have left behind their subordinate position in society. Women are frequently hired for jobs serving other members of society and in subordinate roles. Executive and managerial positions have an overwhelmingly male bias. Therefore the subordination of unpaid labor to paid labor, previously used to ensure more efficient accumulation of capital, is now substituted by badly paid jobs for women and in subordinate roles to male executives and managers in society in general.

On the surface, this situation appears as the subordination of women to men. In effect, capital exploits different human resources depending on the productivity expected from different jobs. In other words, employers expect a better performance from women in subordinate roles than from men. This situation is changing as a result of women's campaigns and struggles, but it may take generations, in the same way as the division of labor in the home. As this situation is reproduced over time, labor markets become relatively segregated by gender, in the same way as racist practices influence division on racial grounds.

With this generalization of female labor in the labor market, the family unit becomes increasingly superfluous as the unit of labor force reproduction. Women no longer need to marry in order to reproduce their own labor force, since they can do so on their own. Hence, women's 'emancipation' during capitalism is, in effect, 'emancipation' of the individual. This 'emancipation' process is presented as though each individual lives and achieves for him or herself, when essentially, s/he lives and works for capital. Having children at an early age is incompatible with a career; it is very difficult to have more children on only one salary. For this reason, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands have twice as many single-person households as single-parent households. Single-person

and single-parent households together represent more than two thirds of all households in Sweden and Denmark, 60% in Germany and more than 50% in the Netherlands and Canada. The total fertility rate for each of these countries, therefore, is well below generational replacement capacity. In 2010 the total fertility rate for Germany was 1.42 children per woman, in Canada 1.58, in the Netherlands 1.66, in Sweden 1.67 and in Denmark 1.74 [20].

#### VII. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: THE LAST RESORT FOR GENERATIONAL REPLACEMENT

With widespread female employment, mass immigration to central countries once again becomes commonplace. This increases the non-migrant labor force replacement capacity, at least in the short term, and takes the pressure off rising wages for both men and women. Migration tends to occur from peripheral to central countries. The analysis that follows does not take into account migration between former Soviet bloc countries. The main migration corridors identified from the periphery to the centre are: Mexico-USA, 11.6 million migrants; Turkey-Germany, 2.7 million; China-USA, 1.7 million; and the Philippines-USA, also 1.7 million [21].

The main destination countries are the USA, which receives 42.8 million migrants, Germany (10.8 million), Canada (7.2 million), the United Kingdom (7.0 million), Spain (6.9 million), France (6.7 million) and Australia (5.5 million). The main migrant departure countries are Mexico and India, with 11.9 and 11.4 million, respectively. However, although Mexico is ranked first in absolute terms, international migration in relative terms reveals a veritable exodus from some peripheral countries: 56.8% of the total Guyanese population have now emigrated, 45.4% from Albania, 39% from Surinam, 36.1% from Jamaica, 26.7% from Trinidad and Tobago, 20.8% from Portugal and 20.5% from El Salvador [22].

The question now is how long international migration will act as a resort to sustain labor force replacement capacity in the central countries. In the medium term, immigration does not guarantee generational replacement capacity, and the gradual ageing of the population is therefore inevitable. Women migrants tend to have very similar reproduction patterns to those of the destination country; large waves of migration can therefore cushion population ageing in central countries, but not stop it. The process will continue if the total fertility rate does not guarantee generational replacement. Furthermore, if immigration is slowed down, as in the downturn of the second decade of the 21st century, population ageing will become more pronounced.

One of the ways current neoliberal policies aim to cut expenditure on older adults is by raising the age of pension entitlement. Around the turn of the millennium, the average age of pension entitlement in countries with more advanced ageing populations like Japan was 68.5 for men and 64.7 for women, and participation rates for those between the ages of 60 and 64 were 76% for men and 37% for women. In the USA, pensionable age was 64.6 for men and 63.4 for women and the participation rate between the ages of 60 and 65 was

55% for men and 35% for women. In the United Kingdom and Canada, pensionable age was 62.5 for men and 60.5 for women. Participation rates between the ages of 60 and 65 in Canada were 48% for men and 25% for women, and in the United Kingdom, 57% for men and 22% for women. In the Netherlands and Germany pensionable age was 60.4 for men and 60 for women; participation rates between the ages of 60 and 64 in Germany were 31% for men and 10% for women, and in the Netherlands 22% for men and 8% for women. This latter figure corresponds approximately to a quarter of that for Japan [12].

These data clearly show that raising the retirement age implies postponing the only possible decision: to improve the lives and increase the numbers of the generations to come. If this dilemma is not resolved under the present rationale, which is not likely, the central countries will soon be considered unviable since they will be left with no upcoming population base. Capital usually seeks out countries with fewer social burdens, and by doing so not only is higher labor force replacement capacity globalised, but at the same time the potential for international revolution increases.

#### VIII. THE REVERSE PATH: TOWARDS GREATER REPLACEMENT CAPACITY ON A WORLD SCALE

There are two ways of achieving a situation of high replacement capacity today. A society can fight for change from a situation in which objective conditions for reformism have never existed. Or, as in the central formations, societies can follow the 'reverse path' through a backward shift in socio-economic and political stability. This occurs when, in countries where reformism is established, a considerable and relatively long-lasting growth in the labor force replacement capacity takes place. The first of these ways is examined above; we now turn to the reverse path.

The world in the 21st century is different from that of the 19th and 20th centuries. In the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, only the first of these ways was possible, since reformism was just beginning to emerge. In the second half of the 20th century there is only one specific example of a shift from reformism in retreat to pursuing socialism through elections, namely, the case of Chile. However, 21st century capitalism is completely different. Many countries now have a long record of reformism, and unlike in the 20th century, we no longer have real existing socialism as a reference, as Chile still did. Consequently, in light of the present crisis of capitalism the key question is: Is it possible to shift from reformism towards a radical change in economic rationale? This 'reverse path' process typically starts off from a more or less consolidated phase of reformism, but which is inclined to deteriorate significantly due to the prolonged downturn. The authors explored this issue in [13] to analyze revolutionary potential in the 1980s. In the present world recession, it is pertinent to bring the diagnosis up to date.

Since the end of the 20th century, the labor force replacement capacity has continued to grow on a permanent basis. Employment flexibility in the central countries began with a process of simultaneous outsourcing and immigration

policies, a process that has extended with the current economic depression. Until 1980 national economies were relatively autonomous in terms of the world products and services market, and consequently the labor market operated primarily within national boundaries. Between 1980 and 2010 the population of the globalised world economy, in other words the population available to the interests of big capital, more than doubled. The globalization of the world labor market was reflected in the migration flows from the periphery to the centre and in capital flows from the centre to the periphery.

Since the mid-80s the population of the globalised world economy has risen from 2.5 thousand million to 6 thousand million people. According to an ILO study, the working-class potentially available for transnational capital exploitation doubled from an EAP of 1.46 thousand million in 1985 to almost 2.93 thousand million in the year 2000 [23]. In essence, then, the globalization of the world labor market meant a greater labor force replacement capacity across the world. This led to a worldwide trend—both in the centre and the periphery—in falling wages, increased working hours and deteriorating working conditions.

Since 2008, signs of a new World Depression have been evident with dramatic rises in unemployment rates, and the consequent worsening of economic and social instability, particularly in the central countries. In Spain and the USA, real unemployment rates of 20% are seen among the general population, rising to 50% among the young unemployed (between the ages of 16 and 24). In this context, it is pertinent to raise the issue of a possible popular challenge to the prevailing economic rationale in the central countries. A prolonged downturn erodes many past victories, the result of which will be a crisis of legitimacy of the existing social relations. This will reopen a political space in the central countries for left-wing parties that question the very essence of the current economic rationale.

However, under reformism faith in the peaceful path towards greater well-being was established and consolidated, and this faith will not be destroyed overnight. For this reason, initially the popular masses continue to firmly believe in the previous situation based on existing social relations. Defense of the old at all costs and at any price, even at the cost of others, falls on fertile ground and spawns ultra conservatism. When faced with an exclusive system, the first challenge is not to the excluding system, but to exclusion itself. The more economic and social rights previously gained, the greater the sense of a right to inclusion. By defending the inclusion of some on the basis of constructed historical rights, anyone who did not participate in their construction is condemned to exclusion.

It is this thinking that gives rise to the greater 'right' to inclusion demanded by full citizens over immigrants; by men over women; by State formations with an older, more developed citizenship (Germany) over those with a more recent, less consolidated reformism (Greece, Portugal, Spain, etc); by one culture (western) over all others, etc. This situation leads to an 'every man for himself' ideology, which

become stronger, the closer the 'economic ship' comes to sinking. The first class passengers –the central countries– appropriate the entitlement to be 'chosen' when the world economy ship (the Titanic?) goes down. This involves an ultra right-wing ideology inclined towards (neo)-fascism, or at any rate, authoritarian regimes.

Might the reverse path not only lead to a resurgence of neo-fascism, but also bring about a widespread challenge to the present social relations of production? Two trends can be seen with regard to the Great Depression of the 21st century. In the Nordic countries, where reformism developed most profoundly and over the longest period, replacement capacity has been low for many years. Drastic labor flexibility policies were required to achieve international competitiveness. In other words, the socio-economic conditions of the working population were heavily curtailed in these countries so that capital could be competitive in labor costs. Countries such as Sweden, Denmark or the Netherlands, cultivated this faith in bourgeois democracy –the peaceful, socially inclusive and tolerant society– more than anywhere else. At the beginning of the downturn, the popular masses reaffirmed their faith in the sacred existing relations of production and reminisced over times gone by. Since then, they have constantly demanded a return to the good times, no matter how or at what cost.

The uncompromising defense of the status quo come what may, at the cost of tolerance and solidarity of any kind, has led to the xenophobia and the right to save one's own skin at the expense of everyone else now being witnessed in Europe in the widespread attitude towards the Mediterranean countries. It is precisely in the coalition governments of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands that clear traits of neo-fascism are seen.

Obviously, this tenacious defense, using all available means –including military– is to be expected from the country that is now conclusively losing its hegemony: the USA. As the *Observatorio Internacional de la Crisis* [24] reports, the threat of a new large-scale war is not beyond the bounds of possibility. Indeed, it is a real possibility, given that the first two World Wars followed global depressions, although it is also true that historically, the break with the prevailing rationale grew more radical in the inter-war period.

We are not claiming that the neo-fascist trend is absent from southern European countries, nor in the peripheries where reformism is more recent, nor in those countries where democracy exists in form but not in substance. It is true that reformism in many countries has been neither deep-seated nor lasting, and in other cases it has had only a token presence. In Latin America, for instance, during the neoliberal era many dictatorships were replaced by democracies in form but not in substance. Nonetheless, in more than one of these formal, content-less democracies, the electoral route has opened up scenarios of disconnection, processes that under a dictatorship might have only been achieved through revolution. The electoral route to an alternative has therefore gained political topicality.

1) In this context it is also unsurprising that social discontent arose first in the south of Europe. In 2012, as the

downturn deepens, a radicalization of this indignation may become apparent in more political approaches. In central European countries in the short term, the trend towards conservatism seems to be stronger than the emergence of a revitalized left to challenge the core of the system's rationale. However, the longer the crisis lasts, and the deeper it grows, the more radical the political landscape will become.

#### IX. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

For the moment, in sum, the factors outlined above have led to the proletarianisation of most of the world's population, and to keeping the labor force in an objective condition of widespread competition within its own ranks, due particularly to its increasing substitutability or replacement capacity offered by the vast global *reserve army*, ready and waiting to enter the capitalist nexus (absolute mobility), and also to the constant and growing *willingness* to migrate, among other forms of relative mobility. All the trends of declining late capitalism (with the predictable death rattles of transnational capitalism) indicate that, in the absence of an rejoinder from Labor as a historical subject, the difficulties people face in planning their own movements, enjoying freely assumed mobility (automobility), or even choosing immobility [3],[25] far from diminishing, may substantially increase. It is for this reason, precisely, that autonomy of movement is increasingly becoming a distinctive class factor [26], [27], in a world with increasingly restricted freedom, in which people have been universally transformed into this special commodity known as the *labor force*, with different prices and therefore available to facilitate unequal accumulation in the various social-state formations that humanity is now divided into.

All of this would be impossible without the growing proletarianisation and incorporation of increasing sectors of humanity, or without the highly regulated restrictions on their free cross-border geographical mobility, or without State intervention to ensure their unequal status and socio-political condition.

Hence, for the moment the unequal value of the world labor force is maintained, together with its debilitated social negotiating power, and its weakened possibilities to arise as a force of opposition.

But this reconstitution of Labor as a historical subject, expressed in collective autonomy, is precisely the only one that can reverse the growing restrictions on individual autonomy. Similarly, this means that class struggles must also necessarily lock into the network of living labor exogenization mechanisms, in pursuit of the permanence or elimination of the differential class position grounded in (or in the different life opportunities outside) the 'national' division (autochthonous-heterochthonous) of Labor. And, why not?, they could turn around the process of *absolute mobility* from inside to outside the capitalist nexus.

The present universalisation of the capitalist market and its consequent formation of a single world labor force entail new challenges and possibilities, taking the Capital /Labor class relation to a world scale, opening up possibilities for the

reconstitution or redefinition of Labor agency also on a worldwide scale.

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**Wim Dierckxsens** (the Netherlands, 1946), holds a Ph.D. in Social Sciences from Nijmegen University, the Netherlands and has a postgraduate degree in demography from the University of Paris-Sorbonne. As a civil servant at the United Nations, he worked in the area of demography. He has undertaken research at the Institute for Development Studies at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. He has directed the Postgraduate Programme in Economics and Development Planning in Honduras and founded the Postgraduate Programme in Political Economy in Costa Rica. Since 1996 undertook research at the *Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones* (DEI) in Costa Rica. Since 1999 he has been a permanent member at the alternative world affairs forum known