

SURVEY

Global Labor History and “the Modern World-System”: Thoughts at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fernand Braudel Center*

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I regard the work of the past 20 years and of some years to come as the work of clearing the underbrush, so that we may build a more useful framework for social science.

Immanuel Wallerstein (1996)

In September 1976, the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations opened its doors at the State University of New York – Binghamton. The new institution made a flying start. After three months it presented its “Proposed Research Programs” in a substantial booklet. In the summer of 1977, the first issue of its journal, *Review*, came out. That same year, a section on the “Political Economy of World-Systems” (PEWS), inspired by the Braudel Center, was established within the American Sociological Association. The PEWS section has held annual conferences and published their proceedings ever since. Since 1979, the Center, together with the *Maison des sciences de l’homme* of Paris, has sponsored a book series called “Studies in Modern Capitalism”, published by Cambridge University Press.

All this frenzied activity was made possible by the fact that Immanuel Wallerstein, the director of the new institution, had been at work since 1967 on its most important theoretical foundations.¹ He had already

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1. The following works provide information about Immanuel Wallerstein’s intellectual career: Bogumil Jewsiewicki, “The African Prism of Immanuel Wallerstein”, *Radical History Review*, 39 (1987), pp. 50–68; Orlando Lentini, “Immanuel Wallerstein”, *International Sociology*, 13 (1998), pp. 1235–1239; and Walter L. Goldfrank, “Paradigm Regained? The Rules of Wallerstein’s World-System Method”, *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 6 (2000), pp. 150–195. (*The Journal of World-Systems Research* is an electronic periodical available through <http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr>.)

presented the key concepts of his “world-systems theory” in a number of scholarly articles.² His great book, *The Modern World-System* – published in 1974 as the first part of a projected four-volume work – was a learned and innovative study in which the new concepts were put to work.

Wallerstein was, and is, driven by his distaste for “the often-unquestioned a priori assumptions” that have reigned in the social sciences since the mid-nineteenth century. The work of Wallerstein and his Braudel Center is a “protest” against this old meta-paradigm.³ The world-systems approach combines four influences in particular: the historiography of the *Annales* school (above all Fernand Braudel); sociological thinking about systems that presupposes the coherence and functionality of all their elements; long wave theory in economics; and dependency theory, which postulates relations of structural dependency between the capitalist “core” and “periphery”.

The essence of the world-systems approach has been described many times, and by now has become part of common textbook knowledge: since the sixteenth century the European (capitalist) world system has spread over the entire globe. It is characterized by *one* international division of labor and *multiple* political units (states). The system is an interdependent whole consisting of a core, a periphery that is exploited by the core through unequal exchange, and a semiperiphery that is economically located halfway between the core and periphery. The system is dynamic; there is upward mobility through which a peripheral region can over time become a semiperipheral or core region, and there is also downward mobility. Inside the core there is fierce competition among states that are striving for global hegemony. There have been three occasions when a core state succeeded in becoming hegemonic for a short period of time: the

2. Immanuel Wallerstein, “Three Paths of National Development in Sixteenth-Century Europe”, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 7 (1972), pp. 95–101; *idem*, “Imperialism and Capitalism: Are the Workers the Most Oppressed Class?”, *Insurgent Sociologist*, 3:2 (1973), pp. 25–28; *idem*, “Dependence in an Interdependent World: The Limited Possibilities of Transformation Within the Capitalist World Economy”, *African Studies Review*, 17 (1974), pp. 1–27; *idem*, “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16 (1974), pp. 387–415; *idem*, “Class-Formation in the Capitalist World Economy”, *Politics and Society*, 5 (1975), pp. 367–375; *idem*, “Failed Transitions, or Inevitable Decline of the Leader? The Workings of the Capitalist World-Economy”, in Frederick Krantz and Paul M. Hohenberg (eds), *Failed Transitions to Modern Industrial Society: Renaissance Italy and Seventeenth Century Holland* (Montreal, 1975), pp. 75–80. The essays “Three Paths”, “Dependence in an Interdependent World”, “The Rise and Future Demise”, and “Class Formation” were re-published in Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge [etc.], 1979). Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Comparative Study of National Societies”, *Social Sciences Information*, 6:5 (October 1967), pp. 25–58, also provides some interesting background to these publications.

3. Immanuel Wallerstein, “World-Systems Analysis”, in Anthony Giddens and Jonathan H. Turner (eds), *Social Theory Today* (Stanford, CA, 1987), pp. 309–324.

Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, Britain in the nineteenth century, and the United States after 1945. The system develops in long cycles of rise and fall. It is capitalist; that is, the economy is based on production for profit in the market. Since the nineteenth century, virtually every corner of the world has been integrated into the system, even including apparently feudal or “socialist” regions.

This theory has become one of the most discussed contributions to the social sciences of the past century. The appearance of volume 1 of *The Modern World-System* called forth many reactions.⁴ In his later work, Wallerstein has often tried to incorporate criticisms that struck him as relevant. In the second volume of *The Modern World-System* (1980), for example, he tried to take into account a number of the objections Theda Skocpol and Robert Brenner had made to the first volume.⁵ Many of his colleagues and students have also made adjustments, or broadened or rethought the theory. Taken as a whole, the body of writing that has accumulated over the last quarter-century, that shares, in general terms, the mindset of world-system thought as I have described it, is extensive and in no sense homogenous.⁶

4. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System 1: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York [etc.], 1974). The most important reviews were probably, in chronological order: Theda Skocpol, “Wallerstein’s World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 82 (1976–1977), pp. 1075–1090; Alex Dupuy and Paul V. Fitzgerald, “A Contribution to the Critique of the World-System Perspective”, *The Insurgent Sociologist*, 7 (1977), pp. 113–124; Robert Brenner, “The Origins of Capitalist Development: a Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism”, *New Left Review*, 104 (July–August 1977), pp. 25–92, especially 53ff.; Martin Murray, “Recent Views on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism”, *Socialist Revolution*, 34 (July–August 1977), pp. 64–89, 73ff.; Peter Gourevitch, “The International System and Regime Formation: A Critical Review of Anderson and Wallerstein”, *Comparative Politics*, 10 (1977–1978), pp. 419–438; George Modelski, “The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20 (1978), pp. 214–238; Verl F. Hunt, “The Rise of Feudalism in Eastern Europe: A Critical Appraisal of the Wallerstein ‘World-System’ Thesis”, *Science and Society*, 42 (1978), pp. 43–61; Peter Worsley, “One World or Three: A Critique of the World System of Immanuel Wallerstein”, *The Socialist Register 1980*, pp. 298–338; Aristide R. Zolberg, “Origins of the Modern World System: A Missing Link”, *World Politics*, 33 (1980–1981), pp. 253–281; Stanley Aronowitz, “A Metatheoretical Critique of Immanuel Wallerstein’s *The Modern World-System*”, *Theory and Society*, 10 (1981), pp. 503–520.

5. For an extended account, see Daniel Garst, “Wallerstein and His Critics”, *Theory and Society*, 14 (1985), pp. 445–468. In general Wallerstein and his colleagues have always had an open-minded attitude, which is visible in the critical responses that they have published in their own journal. The editorial policy statement of the *Review* says: “We invite contributions of articles that fall within the general perspective, very loosely defined, of the journal, or articles that are specifically critical of the perspective.”

6. In this article I do not discuss the competing world-system theories that have been formulated since the late 1970s. On this topic see, e.g., William R. Thompson (ed.), *Contending Approaches to World-System Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.], 1983).

Although the world-systems approach is reasonably flexible, some of the objections to it that critics have put forward over the years seem to be fundamental ones. Perhaps the most important charge made against the theory is that it is anachronistic: it projects characteristics of nineteenth- and twentieth-century world capitalism back on the three preceding centuries. International trade with colonies was indeed one of the foundations of economic growth in Western Europe, but only from the late eighteenth century on. “Between 1450 and 1750, historians now generally agree, core-periphery trade was neither extensive nor unusually profitable, and as few industries relied upon imported raw materials, foreign trade exerted little pressure toward specialization in the domestic economies”.⁷ Partly for this reason, Wallerstein’s concept of “unequal exchange” is polyvalent.⁸ The theory’s anachronistic character also means that it relies on a much too broad, subjective definition of “capitalism”, namely production for profit on the market. On top of that, the whole construction is structuralist and functionalist in character and tends to reduce political processes to economic ones.⁹ But I do not want to spend more time on these objections here. As Steve Stern has rightly commented: “Wallerstein’s work raises provocative and weighty issues and contributes specific historical and theoretical insights whose value should not be overlooked even if one concludes that the general paradigm is fundamentally flawed”.¹⁰ In this sense, Wallerstein and his colleagues at the Fernand

7. Robert S. DuPlessis, “The Partial Transition to World-Systems Analysis in Early Modern European History”, *Radical History Review*, 39 (September 1978), pp. 11–27, 20. See also Patrick O’Brien, “European Economic Development: The Contribution of the Periphery”, *Economic History Review*, 35 (1982), pp. 1–18; Immanuel Wallerstein, “A Comment on O’Brien”, *Economic History Review*, 36 (1983), pp. 580–583; Patrick O’Brien and Leandro Prados de la Escosura, “The Costs and Benefits of European Imperialism from the Conquest of Ceuta, 1415 to the Treaty of Lusaka, 1974”, in *Debates and Controversies in Economic History* (Madrid, 1998), pp. 9–69.

8. Some of Wallerstein’s colleagues admit this. See also the far-reaching criticisms in Klaus Busch, “Mythen über den Weltmarkt – Eine Kritik der theoretischen Grundlagen der Weltsystemtheorie Immanuel Wallersteins”, *Prokla*, 59 (1985), pp. 101–121.

9. These objections can be found in e.g. Brenner, “Origins of Capitalist Development”; Aronowitz, “A Metatheoretical Critique”; Aristide R. Zolberg, “‘World’ and ‘System’: A Misalliance”, in William R. Thompson (ed.), *Contending Approaches to World-System Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.], 1983), pp. 269–290; Jan P. Nederveen Pieterse, *Empire and Emancipation: Power and Liberation on a World Scale* (London, 1989), pp. 29–45; Maurice Zeitlin, *The Civil Wars in Chile (or the Bourgeois Revolutions That Never Were)* (Princeton, NJ, 1984), pp. 222–237.

10. Steve J. Stern, “Reply: ‘Ever More Solitary’”, *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), pp. 886–897, 889, note. Compare Skocpol’s hypothesis that “the true contribution of *The Modern World-System* will lie, not in the proliferation of empirical research based uncritically upon it, but in the theoretical controversies and advances it can spark among its friends”; Skocpol, “Wallerstein’s World Capitalist System”, p. 1076.



Figure 1. Immanuel Wallerstein, giving a lecture at the International Institute of Social History, as a part of the lecture series accompanying the conference “European Left Alternatives to Neo-Liberalism”, 6 February 1996.

International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

Braudel Center have had, in the past twenty-five years, an exceptionally stimulating impact on all sorts of fields of study.

In this contribution I would like to discuss whether, and, if so, in what respects, their contributions can be useful to the further development of “global labor history”, that is, a labor history that studies processes of working-class formation from a transnational and even transcontinental perspective. Since 1976, supporters of the world-systems approach have published a great number of studies on labor movements, workers, and other “objective” proletarians. Even for those who do not subscribe, or do not entirely subscribe, to the assumptions of the world-systems approach, these contributions can perhaps furnish new insights from which labor and working-class historians can benefit.

THE COHERENCE OF “MODES OF LABOR CONTROL”¹¹

With characteristic boldness, Wallerstein has put forward a new definition of the proletariat. In his eyes, proletarians are all “those who yield part of the value they have created to others”, and “In this sense there exists [sic] in the capitalist mode of production only bourgeois and proletarians. The polarity is structural.”¹² This approach “eliminates as a *defining* characteristic of the proletariat the payment of *wages* to the producer”.¹³ The key point is that labor products are *commodified*, and that this commodification can occur in many different ways. Diverse “modes of labor control” thus exist within the modern world system. Wallerstein distinguishes several, including slavery (a “kind of indefinitely lasting work obligation of one person to another from which the worker may not unilaterally withdraw”);¹⁴ “coerced cash-crop labor” (i.e. “a system of agricultural labor control wherein the peasants are required by some legal process enforced by the state to labor at least part of the time on a large domain producing some product for sale on the world market”),¹⁵ self-employment and sharecropping.

The many kinds of proletarians can be divided into two groups: those who must relinquish all the value that they produce, and those who must

11. As far as I know the concept “modes of labor control” appears only in Wallerstein’s “middle period”, from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. In later writings he no longer used this concept (it is not to be found in e.g. vol. 3 of *The Modern World-System*). See also William G. Martin, “A Global Social Structure? Evaluating the Advancement of the World-Systems Approach”, *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, Supplement 1 (1994), pp. 241–254, 244.

12. Immanuel Wallerstein, “Class Conflict in the Capitalist World-Economy”, in Wallerstein, *Capitalist World-Economy*, pp. 283–293, 289.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System 3: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World Economy, 1730–1840s* (San Diego, CA [etc.], 1989), p. 164.

15. Wallerstein, *Modern World-System 1*, p. 91.

Table 1. *Wallerstein’s eight proletarian types*

	Nothing in return	Goods in return	Money in return	Goods + money in return
Yield part of the value created				
Yield all of the value created			Classical worker	

Source: Immanuel Wallerstein, “Class Conflict in the Capitalist World-Economy”, in *idem*, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge [etc.], 1979), pp. 283–293, 289–290. Note: Wallerstein himself did not fill in the boxes.

relinquish part of that value. Both these groups can be further subdivided into those who, in return, receive either nothing, goods, money, or goods plus money. In this way a matrix can be formed with eight categories, only one of which consists of “typical” wage laborers (Table 1).

Because economic relations vary between the core, periphery and semiperiphery, the combinations of modes of labor control that prevail in each sphere also vary. The core areas have integrated economies with relatively capital-intensive production and high levels of productivity, in which wage labor and medium-sized yeomen predominate.¹⁶ The periphery has externally oriented economies with relatively weakly developed domestic markets and highly labor-intensive production, in which slavery and coerced cash-crop labor predominate. The semi-periphery, finally, trades with both core areas and the periphery, and has on average moderately capital-intensive and moderately labor-intensive production; sharecropping among other forms plays a major role.¹⁷ Varying predominant modes of labor control are thus an essential feature of the capitalist world system.

Free labor is indeed a defining feature of capitalism, but not free labor throughout the productive enterprises. Free labor is the form of labor control used for skilled work in core countries whereas coerced labor is used for less skilled work in peripheral areas. The combination thereof is the essence of capitalism. When labor is everywhere free, we shall have socialism.¹⁸

It is, above all, the market mechanism of supply and demand that determines the specific mix of modes of labor control in a given region. “It

16. Immanuel Wallerstein, “Three Paths of National Development in Sixteenth-Century Europe”, in *idem*, *Capitalist World-Economy*, pp. 37–48, 38.

17. *Idem*, *Modern World-System 1*; *idem*, “Three Paths of National Development”. See also Christopher Chase-Dunn and Richard Rubinson, “Toward a Structural Perspective on the World-System”, *Politics and Society*, 7 (1977), pp. 453–476, 456–457.

18. Wallerstein, *Modern World-System 1*, p. 127.

is always a choice [for the employer] about the optimal combination of machinery (dead labor) and living labor”.¹⁹ The employer considers which alternative is “optimal and politically possible *in the short run*”: (a) wage labor, (b) coerced cash-crop labor, (c) slavery, (d) sharecropping, (e) tenancy or (f) additional machinery.²⁰

Although Wallerstein has never *systematically* explained how employers select their favorite modes of labor control, various passages in his work give us indications. We read, for example, that tenancy is in principle more profitable than sharecropping (no supervision costs, no problem with the peasant’s work incentives). But tenants “have fixed contracts and gain at moments of inflation, at least to the extent that the contracts are relatively long-term. Of course, the reverse is true when the market declines.” Tenancy is thus riskier for the landowner than sharecropping. “It follows that sharecropping is most likely to be considered in areas of specialized agriculture where the risks of variance outweigh the transaction costs.”²¹

When labor supply is plentiful, “sharecropping is probably more profitable than coerced cash-cropping”. However,

Although sharecropping had the disadvantage, compared to coerced cash-cropping, of greater difficulty in supervision, it had the advantage of encouraging the peasant’s efforts to increase productivity, provided of course the peasant would continue to work for the seignior without legal compulsion. In short, when labor is plentiful, sharecropping is probably more profitable than coerced cash-cropping.²²

Coerced cash-crop labor is in turn cheaper than slavery. The employer must pay an “initial outlay” for slaves, *and* “the coerced cash-crop workers and their cousins produced part of their ‘wages’ in the form of food crops on land outside the control of the employer, which were thereupon deduced from the labor costs of the employer”. Therefore, “The total of the recurrent cost of labor was *higher* if one used slave labor than if one used coerced cash-crop labor.”²³ Slavery was for this reason a last resort, which was only introduced on a large scale when coerced cash-crop labor was not feasible for some reason or another.

Wage labor is proportionately even more expensive, because wages for free wage labor must cover the full costs of providing for proletarian families, whereas in other modes the proletarians themselves pay part of the costs of keeping themselves alive.

19. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System 2: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750* (New York [etc.], 1980), p. 174, note.

20. Compare *ibid.*

21. Wallerstein, *Modern World-System 1*, p. 105.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[If] the wage-income work is but a small proportion of total household income, the employer of the wage worker is able to pay a *subminimal* hourly wage, forcing the other “components” of total household income to “make up” the difference between the wage paid and the minimum needed for survival. Thus the work required to obtain supraminimal income from subsistence labour or petty commodity production in order to “average out” at a minimum level for the whole household serves in effect as a “subsidy” for the employer of the wage labourer.²⁴

Therefore capitalists resort to hiring wage labor only if they cannot mobilize labor power in any other way. That is “why wage labor has *never* been the exclusive, and until recently not even the principal, form of labor in the capitalist world-economy”.²⁵ One important reason why employers have made use of wage labor despite its high cost is skill. “[More] skilled labor can insist on less juridical coercion”.²⁶ This is why free wage labor is dominant in capital- and thus skill-intensive branches of the world economy. Slavery by contrast is convenient for unskilled labor processes with a “small *per capita* profit”, which is compensated by “the large quantity of production”.²⁷

The “overall world-wide *percentage* of wage labor as a form of labor has been steadily increasing throughout the history of the capitalist world-economy”.²⁸ Wallerstein explains this as a result of regularly occurring bottlenecks of “inadequate world demand”: through the transformation of nonwaged labor into waged labor “the portion of produced value the producer keeps” increases, resulting in an increase of world demand.²⁹ “[R]epeated stagnations of the world-economy lead to discontinuous but necessary (that is, step-like) increases of the purchasing power of some (each time new) sector of the (world) population.”³⁰ Workers themselves make a major contribution to this growing demand through their collective action: “Workers organize themselves in various ways and thereby achieve some of their demands, which in fact permits them to reach the threshold of a true wage-based minimum income. That is, by their own efforts, workers become proletarianized, and then shout victory!”³¹

24. Immanuel Wallerstein, “Marx and History: Fruitful and Unfruitful Emphases”, *Thesis Eleven*, 8 (1984), reprinted in Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, and Class: Ambiguous Identities*, pp. 125–134, 130.

25. Wallerstein, “Class Conflict in the Capitalist World-Economy”, p. 290.

26. *Idem*, *Modern World-System 1*, p. 101.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

28. *Idem*, “Class Conflict in the Capitalist World-Economy”, p. 291.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 290. Wallerstein frequently maintains that coerced laborers have little effective demand. For instance, “The tropical colonies were a weak market precisely because they tended to use coerced labor [...]”; *idem*, *Modern World-System 2*, p. 103.

30. *Idem*, “Marx and History”, pp. 130–131.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Wallerstein's opinions about modes of labor control have stimulated further research. In the past quarter-century, the Braudel Center's collaborators and friends have produced a large quantity of publications in which modes of labor control in various parts of the world are reconstructed. But in most cases the world-systemic *coherence* among different forms of exploitation goes unexamined, nor is there any attempt to give a systematic explanation of why a particular mix of modes of labor control arose. The writers are often content to demonstrate that the contours of the history of a particular part of the world have been shaped by the capitalist world-economy. Martin Murray, for example, has written an impressive book about colonial Indochina, in which much attention is devoted to labor control. He shows that, in the first decades of their rule, French colonists "found it impractical and even hopeless to rely upon market forces to generate adequate supplies of labor-power". They were therefore "compelled to apply outright coercion in order to initiate economic activities that could not have been accomplished by market pressures alone".³² But he gives no answer to the question why colonists resorted in this situation to *corvée* labor rather than to another unfree mode of labor control. Such gaps – the result of a lack of systematic historical comparisons – are often to be found in studies of this kind. In a number of cases, references to the world-system approach remain quite superficial; what they show is mainly that developments in a particular region cannot be understood without taking account of international linkages.³³ But there are also studies that go somewhat further. Here are some examples.

Dale Tomich studied the contradictions that arose from the decline of slavery in the western hemisphere during the first half of the nineteenth century: on the one hand Britain abolished slavery, but on the other hand slavery expanded massively in the Americas. Tomich sees a causal link between these two developments. It was, in fact, the destruction of slavery within the British Empire that led to the intensification of slavery elsewhere. The demand for coffee, sugar, and cotton mushroomed; and since British colonies were producing these goods at relatively high prices

32. Martin J. Murray, *The Development of Capitalism in Colonial Indochina (1870–1940)* (Berkeley, CA [etc.], 1980), pp. 84–85.

33. See, e.g. Timothy C. Weiskel, "Labor in the Emergent Periphery: From Slavery to Migrant Labor among the Baule Peoples, 1880–1925", in Walter L. Goldfrank (ed.), *The World-System of Capitalism: Past and Present* (Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.], 1979), pp. 207–233; Tomás Almaguer, "Interpreting Chicano History: The World-System Approach to Nineteenth-Century California", *Review*, 4 (1980–1981), pp. 459–507; William G. Martin, "Beyond the Peasant to Proletarian Debate: African Household Formation in South Africa", in Joan Smith, Immanuel Wallerstein and Hans-Dieter Evers (eds), *Households and the World-Economy* (Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.], 1984), pp. 151–167. In order to avoid misunderstandings: all these studies are useful contributions to the writing of labor history.

thanks to abolition, slave production flourished in Cuba, Brazil and the United States. This production was financed to a large extent by London-based financial institutions, because this "second slavery" (as Tomich calls it) provided outlets for surplus British capital. It also "consolidated a new international division of labor and provided important raw materials and foodstuffs for industrializing core powers".³⁴

Ann Forsythe and Roberto Korzeniewicz have shown how changes in the European core influenced labor relations in the Argentinean periphery. When England's woolen industry introduced innovations in the second half of the nineteenth century, continental entrepreneurs were forced to mechanize and adopt factory production methods. The technological changes and increased competition had two consequences. On the one hand the demand grew for Argentinean wool as a raw material, and on the other hand the supply of European woolen goods in Argentina became cheaper. This dual development threw out the old cohesion between wool production and wool processing in Argentina, and stimulated shepherding, while domestic, handicraft textile production virtually collapsed in the 1870s and 1880s. Parallel with these shifts, the gendered division of labor changed in both Europe and Argentina. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the call for a family wage resounded more and more loudly.³⁵

Arthur Alderson and Stephen Sanderson have drawn on secondary sources in order to examine household patterns in early modern Europe from Wallerstein's perspective. They come to the conclusion that the different modes of labor control correlate more or less closely with different household patterns. In somewhat schematic terms, the freer a mode of labor control is, the less complex household structure becomes. In core countries (the Netherlands and England) proletarian household structure was predominantly simple. This was quite rational, they explain, since it "makes no sense for farm laborers who are working for wages to have large families for the simple reason that, under conditions of landlessness, family members become economic liabilities rather than assets (or at least are more of a liability than an asset)".³⁶ In the Eastern European periphery with its large landholdings, by contrast, households were very complex, because this "meant more labor to work the land, which meant a better opportunity to meet subsistence needs and to

34. Dale Tomich, "The 'Second Slavery': Bonded Labor and the Transformation of the Nineteenth-Century World Economy", in Francisco O. Ramirez (ed.), *Rethinking the Nineteenth Century: Contradictions and Movements* (New York [etc.], 1988), pp. 103–117, 115.

35. Ann E. Forsythe and Roberto P. Korzeniewicz, "Gender Relations in the World Economy: Competition in the Textile Industry, 1850–1900", in Joan Smith *et al.* (eds), *Racism, Sexism, and the World-System* (New York [etc.], 1988), pp. 97–119.

36. Arthur S. Alderson and Stephen K. Sanderson, "Historic European Household Structures and the Capitalist World-Economy", *Journal of Family History*, 16 (1991), pp. 419–432, 425.

respond to the demands for surplus imposed by landlords".³⁷ In the sharecropping semiperiphery, finally (Austria, Germany, France, Italy), there was a combination of simple and complex households. Computing the ratio of simple to complex households in the three zones, Alderson and Sanderson find that "the ratio in the core is approximately 5.9:1, that in the periphery the ratio is roughly 1.1:1 (or 0.7:1 if the atypical cases are omitted); and that in the semiperiphery the ratio is about 1.6:1".³⁸

In a case study, Torry Dickinson has researched Wallerstein's thesis that the proportion of nonwage income depends on the location of working-class households in the different zones of the world system. She hypothesizes: that (i) working-class households in the core receive higher wage incomes than households in the periphery, and that (ii) these higher wage incomes cover a greater portion of the costs of their maintenance. Using sources including the archival records of Philadelphia's workhouse, the House of Industry, Dickinson has tested this hypothesis for the post-1830 period. During this period, the US climbed up the world hierarchy from the periphery to a hegemonic core position, and, according to Dickinson, this development was reflected in gender and age divisions in households. As the share of wages in household income grew, not only did the importance of informal work and self-employment decrease, but also more polarized work relations developed between men and women, and between children and adults. Dickinson concludes that new conceptions of gender and age evolved from the time that more than two-thirds of household income consisted of wages. At this "'two-thirds' wage-earning turning point", families sent their children to school, women began to define themselves through the domestic sphere and men began to consider themselves the main breadwinners.³⁹

WORKERS' COLLECTIVE ACTION

Strategies of resistance and survival of subaltern groups or classes have never had a central place in Wallerstein's world-system approach. There is

37. *Ibid.*, p. 426.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 427–428.

39. Torry D. Dickinson, *Common Wealth: Self-Sufficiency and Work in American Communities, 1830 to 1993* (Lanham, MD [etc.], 1995); *idem*, "Gender Division within the US Working Class: Households in the Philadelphia Area, 1870–1945", in Smith, Wallerstein and Evers, *Households and the World-Economy*, pp. 199–211. Joan Smith endorses Dickinson's thesis, but adds her own surmise that the intensity of unwaged domestic labor is much less affected by wage levels: "It is precisely this relative independence from wage levels that forces all but the most wealthy families into privatized household labor and extends the duration of this labor more or less to the same degree, whether or not there is the same amount of available time to accomplish it." She admits that empirical evidence for this hypothesis is still lacking; Joan Smith, "Nonwage Labor and Subsistence", in *ibid.*, pp. 64–89, 81.

little to be found in his work, for example, about the interaction between slave rebellions and modes of slave exploitation. His virtual neglect of social protest is sometimes even compounded by negative evaluations of it. This is particularly true of workers’ movements. Wallerstein was, from an early date, an admirer of Frantz Fanon, who was well-known for his lack of appreciation for the rising workers’ movements in colonial countries.⁴⁰ In his *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon wrote: “In the colonial countries the working class has everything to lose. [...] It is these elements [...] who because of the privileged place which they hold in the colonial system constitute also the ‘bourgeois’ fraction of the colonized people.”⁴¹ Fanon counterposed the working class to peasants and the lumpenproletariat, “that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan”, to which “the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and the petty criminals” belong. According to Fanon, the lumpenproletariat is the real vanguard: “This *lumpen-proletariat* is like a horde of rats; you may kick them and throw stones at them, but despite your efforts they’ll go on gnawing at the roots of the tree.”⁴² Generalizing from this conclusion, Wallerstein says:

Has it not been true [...] of the majority of workers’ movements that their strength and their cadres have been drawn from a segment of the working population which was somewhat “better off”, whether this segment were technically independent artisans or more highly paid skilled (and/or craft) wage workers? The search for those who truly had nothing to lose but their chains [...] leads us today to what is variously called the subproletariat, the lumpenproletariat, the unskilled (often immigrant) workers, the marginal, the chronically unemployed.⁴³

Alongside this argument based on social stratification, Wallerstein has a second reason for his low opinion of labor movements. Thanks to their form of organization, he maintains, they are powerless in face of the world system. The capitalist economy is a world economy and the working class *an sich* [in itself] is therefore by definition a world class. On the other hand, “classes *für sich* [for themselves] organize themselves (or perhaps one should say disorganize themselves) at the level of the territorial states”,⁴⁴

40. Immanuel Wallerstein, “Fanon, Frantz”, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 5 (New York, 1968), pp. 326–327; *idem*, “Fanon and the Revolutionary Class”, in *idem*, *Capitalist World-Economy*, pp. 250–268.

41. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 86.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

43. Wallerstein, *Modern World-System* 3, p. 108.

44. Immanuel Wallerstein, “How Do We Know Class Struggle When We See It? Reply to Ira Gerstein”, *The Insurgent Sociologist*, 7 (1977), pp. 104–106, 105. This is a reply to Ira Gerstein’s “Theories of the World Economy and Imperialism”, *The Insurgent Sociologist*, 7 (1977), pp. 9–22.

because political power is organized in the capitalist world system through states. The world working class is thus the victim of a fundamental, insoluble dilemma, which makes it impossible for its “movements” to operate effectively on a global scale.

Apparently not all of Wallerstein’s co-thinkers have, or had, exactly the same opinion on this point. Perhaps inspired by the work of James Cronin and Ernest Mandel (who suggested a causal relationship between Kondratiev waves and the periodic remaking of working classes),⁴⁵ a number of the Braudel Center’s collaborators formed a Research Working Group on World Labor in 1980, which incidentally seems to have had some initial difficulties in finding its feet. In 1985, the group drafted a research proposal. They observed that the two dominant paradigms in US labor history (Marxism on the one hand and the Wisconsin School of John Commons, Selig Perlman, and others on the other) were incapable of understanding either the trajectory of labor movements or the multi-faceted working-class cultures in advanced capitalist countries. A major part of the problem, the group posited, lay in the unit of analysis: both of the classical theories focused on national and local labor movements and usually covered “short periods of time and narrow areas of global space”.⁴⁶ The group pointed out that, in the aftermath of World Wars I and II, and in the late 1960s/early 1970s, huge transnational waves of conflict between labor and capital had broken out. This seemed to suggest “that a common set of social processes link together labor movements in various national locales”.⁴⁷ By studying these transnational waves of conflict, national labor histories could be put in a different perspective.

We are no by no means advocating that the investigation of the world labor movement somehow supersedes the analysis of national labor movements (just as no one would claim that studies of national labor movements supersede the study of local movements). Quite the contrary. We are suggesting that an analysis of the trajectory of labor-capital conflict at a world level can assist in reinterpreting the studies of labor movements at the national and local levels. If global processes of accumulation and of struggle have shaped the pattern of conflict in all locales (although most certainly not in a homogeneous fashion), then the insights from world-level analysis should be brought to bear on these conflicts.⁴⁸

These initial assumptions were later specified in the form of the following

45. James E. Cronin, “Stages, Cycles, and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest,” in Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds), *Processes of the World-System* (Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.], 1980), pp. 101–118; Ernest Mandel, *Long Waves of Capitalist Development: The Marxist Interpretation* (Cambridge [etc.], 1980), esp. ch. 2.

46. Research Working Group on World Labor, “Global Patterns of Labor Movements in Historical Perspective”, *Review*, 10 (1986), pp. 137–155, 138.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

48. *Ibid.*

two central research premises. (1) Social conflict (and particularly labor-capital conflict) is a central process driving the historical evolution of the world system. Major waves of labor unrest provoke periods of major worldwide social, political, and economic restructuring. The latter restructuring creates, over time, new working classes and new waves of struggle. (2) Workers' and workers' movements located in different states/regions are linked to each other by the world-scale division of labor and interstate system. A major wave of labor unrest in one location can set off a chain of processes (e.g. capital relocation) that has a profound impact on the lives of workers, both in the original site of unrest, and in distant locations throughout the world system.⁴⁹

In order to be able to analyze global patterns in labor militancy more carefully, the group set up a database, using the indexes of *The Times* (London) (from 1906 on) and *The New York Times* (from 1870 on).⁵⁰ Information on the year, type of action, country, city, and industry was recorded for every mention of labor unrest anywhere in the world. To begin with, all the numerical data assembled in this way for the period 1870–1985 was used in further analyses.⁵¹ Later, the *combined* series of data from both newspapers for the period 1906–1990 was used as the basis for a "maximum" series, that is, the maximum number of incidents of labor unrest mentioned in *both* of the two sources (83,964 cases).⁵² After regional reliability studies were done with positive results,⁵³ the group began identifying waves of labor unrest. The provisional results were remarkable. The group observed that there was no strong evidence of any close connection between labor unrest and so-called long waves (Kondratievs).⁵⁴ Table 2 gives growth rates (mean standardized slopes) and mean levels of intensity. Cronin, Mandel, and Screpanti's theories⁵⁵ would

49. Beverly J. Silver, "Labor Unrest and World-Systems Analysis: Premises, Concepts, and Measurement", *Review*, 18 (1995), pp. 7–34, 11.

50. The index to *The Times* of London begins in 1906. See also Jamie Faricellia Dangler, "The *Times* (London) and the *New York Times* as Sources of World Labor Unrest", *Review*, 18 (1995), pp. 35–47.

51. See Beverly J. Silver "Class Struggle and Kondratieff Waves, 1870 to the Present", in Alfred Kleinknecht, Ernest Mandel, and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds), *New Findings in Long Wave Research* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 279–296.

52. Silver, "Labor Unrest".

53. The reliability studies were published in *Review*, 18 (1995), issue 1. They concerned Italy (Giovanni Arrighi); China (Mark Selden); South Africa (Mark Beittel); Argentina (Roberto M. Korzeniewicz); Egypt (Donald Quataert); the United States (Melvyn Dubofsky); and Germany (John Casparis and Giovanni Arrighi).

54. Beverly J. Silver, "World-Scale Patterns of Labor-Capital Conflict: Labor Unrest, Long Waves, and Cycles of World Hegemony", *Review*, 18 (1995), pp. 155–187; *idem*, "Class Struggle and Kondratieff Waves".

55. Ernesto Screpanti, "Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies", *Review*, 7 (1984), pp. 509–548; *idem*, "Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation", *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 25 (1987), pp. 99–124.

Table 2. *The intensity of world-scale labor unrest according to the World Labor Research Working Group, Braudel Center*

		Mean levels			Growth rates (%)		
		World	Core	Noncore	World	Core	Noncore
1872–93	Down	2	10	0.2	8	7	12
1893–17	Up	9	18	5	9	8	9
1917–40	Down	105	106	107	–5	–6	–4
1940–68	Up	143	96	195	2	0	4
1968–85	Down	110	58	174	0	–5	4

Source: Beverly J. Silver, “Class Struggle and Kondratieff Waves”, in Kleinknecht, Mandel, and Wallerstein, *New Findings in Long Wave Research*, p. 285; *idem*, “World-Scale Patterns”, p. 157. The index of “intensity of labor unrest” is the multiplication of an index of acuteness (the number of reports of labor unrest per year) and an index of extension (the number of countries in which labor unrest is reported per year).

suggest that growth rates should rise in phases of economic expansion and decline in recessive phases. The figures do not confirm this. They tend rather to give the impression that, on a global scale, the late nineteenth century “reveals more of a straight upward trend than any Kondratieff-related alteration of phases”.⁵⁶

In an article published in 1992 (based on the old database for the whole period 1870–1985), the conclusion was drawn that four short periods stand out as “explosions” of labor unrest: the years 1889–1890, 1911–1912, 1919–1920 and 1946–1948. In all these sets of years

[...] class-struggle intensity had to be at least double the average of the preceding five years for two or more consecutive years. This criteria had to be met for the world-scale index *and* for the indices of the core and noncore countries taken separately for at least one year in each set.⁵⁷

In an analysis published three years later, using the maximum series for 1906–1990 and a somewhat different definition of “years of explosion”, only the years 1919–1920 and 1946–1947 were presented as explosions on a world scale, though other years were added separately for the core, semiperiphery and periphery (Table 3).⁵⁸

56. Silver, “Class Struggle and Kondratieff Waves”, p. 285.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

58. In this 1995 report “years of explosion” were defined as “years in which the number of mentions/waves was equal to twice the mean of the mentions/waves series”; Silver, “World-Scale Patterns”, p. 189.

Table 3. “Explosion” years of labor unrest, 1906–1990

World	Core	Semiperiphery	Periphery
1919–1920	1912	1913	
	1918–1920	1919–1920	1925 1927–1929
1946–1947	1932	1936	
	1937		
	1946–1947	1946	1946 1949
		1950–1951	1953–1956
		1959	1959 1962
		1965	
			1981

Source: Beverly J. Silver, “World-Scale Patterns”, p. 172.

The Working Group’s further analyses seem to have focused above all on the years 1919–1920 and 1946–1947. These two explosions have in common the fact that they followed world wars and reached peak levels (2,085 mentions of labor unrest in 1919–1920; 1,469 in 1946–1947).⁵⁹ But inversely it was also the case that labor unrest declined at the beginning of the world wars. More specifically, the data seem to provide support for three apparently contradictory hypotheses.

First, it seems as if “involvement in war increases social cohesion at the national level and thus brings about internal peace”, because governments use “combinations of repression and cooptation” in order “to ensure the cooperation of workers in the war effort”.⁶⁰ This hypothesis is backed up by the work of Douglas Hibbs and Charles Tilly,⁶¹ but Hibbs and Tilly limited their analyses to Western Europe and North America, while the Working Group provides reasons to conclude that “the decline in militancy during the world wars was far more general”.⁶² “The roots of this decline may be the same for metropolitan and colonial countries. Indeed, by the time of World War II, colonial and semicolonial countries

59. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 162–164.

61. Douglas Hibbs, “On the Political Economy of Long-Run Trends in Strike Activity”, *British Journal of Political Science*, 8 (1978), pp. 153–175; Charles Tilly, “Introduction: The Effects of Short-Term Variation”, in Leopold Haimson and Charles Tilly (eds), *Strikes, Wars and Revolutions in International Perspective* (Cambridge [etc.], 1989), pp. 443–448.

62. Silver, “World-Scale Patterns”, p. 163.

had become tightly integrated into the resource supply lines of the imperial powers”.⁶³

Second, the Working Group suggests that “involvement in war increases social conflict at the national level and increases the chances of revolution”.⁶⁴ This hypothesis is, of course, already familiar from the work of Lev Trotsky, for example, but also such academic authors as Charles Tilly and others.⁶⁵ In both world wars, the “calming” effect of repression and cooptation wore off after a few years and social unrest grew. After the wars ended, rebelliousness increased enormously, above all because “the demands made by workers and other citizens on the state increase, at the same time as the states’ ability to satisfy and/or repress those demands decreases”.⁶⁶ Spurts of labor unrest also took place in (semi) peripheral regions. This fits with Walter Goldfrank’s hypothesis (see below) that war and instability in core countries open up space for social conflict in the periphery and semiperiphery.

Third, the Working Group concludes that “social conflict at the national level encourages governments to involve themselves in interstate wars”.⁶⁷ Evidence for this assertion can be found in the growing labor unrest *preceding* the world wars. According to the Working Group’s data, there were “explosions” in the world system’s core in 1912 and 1937, and in the semiperiphery in 1913 and 1936. Given that the world wars originated in the core and semiperiphery, and that explosions of unrest occurred “in the immediate *pre*-world war years in the core and semiperiphery”, this seems to suggest that “when multiple countries experience explosions of social conflict at the national level, governments and capitalists seek solutions to internal tensions through means that increase the likelihood of world war”.⁶⁸

Table 3 also shows that there were no more explosions *after* 1947 in the core, but there still were in the periphery and semiperiphery. The Working Group sees this as a reflection of the US’s rise to hegemonic power. While repression of radical workers’ groups was accompanied in core countries by cooptation via Fordist mass consumption, the growth of the working class in noncore countries led to very different developments.⁶⁹

The Working Group’s contributions are very stimulating and suggestive. But some methodological doubts remain. For example, how valid are data based on *The Times* (London) and *The New York Times*? Two critics have posited in the past that, as a result of their “ideological perception”,

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 164–169.

65. Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA [etc.], 1978), pp. 189–222.

66. Silver, “World-Scale Patterns”, p. 165.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 174–182.

these two newspapers only pay attention to some workers’ struggles and not others.⁷⁰ But one might also ask why only English-language newspapers were used. Why was the definition of “years of explosion” changed between the two publications, and why was this change not justified to their readers? Why were explosions in 1912–1913 (but not in 1914) and in 1936–1937 (but not in 1938–1939) treated as evidence that world wars are caused in part by social unrest? All sorts of substantive questions also arise. For example, what explains the worldwide fracture in the average levels of intensity of labor unrest after 1917 (Table 2)? Is the disappearance of explosions of labor unrest in the core after 1947 (Table 3) really the consequence of US hegemony, or are there also other causes?

Parallel with their activities in the Working Group, its members have also published other studies of workers’ collective action. Differences in emphasis have become visible between the historians’ work and the sociologists’. Melvyn Dubofsky, for example, a leading labor historian, hesitates to generalize quickly. While he occasionally mentions “persistent patterns or relationships”, he notes nonetheless that “in most areas [...] serendipity and inconsistency prevail”.⁷¹ Sociologists like Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly Silver, by contrast, are anything but afraid to sketch out broad outlines, and sum up developments of a century and a half in a few hypotheses. These differences do not prevent the various contributions from complementing each other, however, or from further emphasizing the importance of wars and Kondratiev waves.

The role of wars in the development of workers’ collective action is frequently stressed. In a study of labor movements in North America (1873–1970) Dubofsky distinguishes five major surges in union membership and strikes: 1885–1886, 1898–1903, 1916–1919, 1941–1945, and 1951–1953. A comparative analysis brings him to the conclusion that neither economic cycles, nor economic concentration (merger movements), nor cycles of proletarianization can explain these surges. He does point out that the last four of the five surges were associated with wars: “the impact of war and its aftermath – economic, social, and political – is the factor (perhaps even the independent variable) most closely related with rises in union membership, strike rates, and all forms of worker militancy”.⁷² In a comparative study of workers’ movements in China and Japan (1850–1950) Mark Selden reaches a similar conclusion, pointing to “the congruence of international cataclysm (the two World Wars) with the

70. Alain Meynen and Peter Scholliers, “Comment”, in Kleinknecht, Mandel and Wallerstein, *New Findings in Long Wave Research*, pp. 296–300, 299.

71. Melvyn Dubofsky, “Workers’ Movements in North America, 1873–1970”, in Immanuel Wallerstein (ed.), *Labor in the World Social Structure* (Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.], 1983), pp. 22–43, 38.

72. *Ibid.*

possibility for powerful working-class intervention in the historical process under very different historical conditions".⁷³

Arrighi and Silver in particular underscore the importance of Kondratiev waves. They base their periodization of labor movements in Western Europe and North America (1848–1896, 1896–1948 and 1948–present) on these waves and suggest all sorts of connections that could be investigated further. They point out, for example, that the labor movement emerged during the first long wave (when Britain was the world hegemon). During the recessive phase of that wave – the Great Depression (1873–1896) – through “intensifying competitive pressures” and “widened and deepened processes of proletarianization” with the corresponding multiplication of “occasions of conflict between labor and capital”, the conditions were created for “the labor movement in its modern form” with its national trade-union federations and working-class parties. In the period 1896–1948 the labor movement in the core “reached its apogee as the central anti-systemic force”. Thereafter a gradual weakening became apparent, and became clearly visible in the recessive Kondratiev from 1968 on, as European and Japanese firms, following the lead set by US capital, began to expand transnationally. This intensified competition and led to the “cost-cutting race of the 1970s and 1980s” as well as to increased financial speculation. The main impact of these changes was “a limited but very real spread of mass misery to the core zone”. Cost cutting took the forms of feminization of the waged labor force, plant relocation, automation and science-based technologies. The result was “a major reshuffling” of the world working class.⁷⁴

INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS

It seems obvious to me that supporters of the world-systems approach have assembled a number of interesting fragments of theory over the years that can definitely be useful in the construction of a global labor history. This conclusion is in no way undermined by the facts that these fragments are not always equally coherent and that sometimes in a historian’s eyes

73. Mark Selden “The Proletariat, Revolutionary Change, and the State in China and Japan, 1850–1950”, in Wallerstein, *Labor in the World Social Structure*, pp. 58–120, 111.

74. Giovanni Arrighi, “Marxist Century, American Century: The Making and Remaking of the World Labour Movement”, *New Left Review*, 179 (January–February 1990), pp. 29–63, 34, 36, 51. See also *idem*, “The Labor Movement in Twentieth Century Western Europe”, in Wallerstein, *Labor in the World Social Structure*, pp. 44–57. Arrighi and Silver have formulated other hypotheses as well about labor movements in core countries (e.g. about the link between the rise of continuous flow production and increased workplace bargaining power for workers), but these are not directly connected to the world-system approach. See e.g. Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver, “Labor Movements and Capital Migration: The United States and Western Europe in World Historical Perspective”, in Charles Bergquist (ed.), *Labor in the Capitalist World-Economy* (Thousand Oaks, CA [etc.], 1984), pp. 183–216.

they are rather crudely formulated. Moreover, besides the *direct* applications of the work of the Braudel Center and its sympathizers that are interesting to labor historians, there are also *indirect* applications that may be interesting. Without any claim to completeness I would like to mention a few.

Commodity chains

The division of labor between periphery, semiperiphery and core, with their different “modes of labor control”, which is central to Wallerstein’s approach, can also be conceived in another way. It can be understood in relation to “commodity chains”, a concept that has been in vogue in various forms since the 1960s (as in the French *filière* approach) and has become internationally known since the 1990s, above all through the work of Gary Gereffi and Miguel Korzeniewicz.⁷⁵ In a 1986 essay, Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein described the concept “commodity chain” as “a network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity”.⁷⁶ Chase-Dunn is somewhat more precise, describing a commodity chain as: “a tree-like sequence of production processes and exchanges by which a product for final consumption is produced. These linkages of raw materials, labor, the sustenance of labor, intermediate processing, final processing, transport, and final consumption materially connect most of the people within the contemporary world-system.”⁷⁷

The core idea is very simple: every commodity has come into existence through a production process in which labor power and means of production have been “combined”. The means of production themselves are in turn a product of a combination of labor power and other means of production. The labor force also consumes goods like clothes and food, which in *their* turn have been produced through a combination of labor power and means of production. In short, the ultimate production process that results in a “finished product” is only the end point of a bundle of chains of production processes. This thought has until now mainly inspired contemporary economists, who have studied products, including

75. As early as the 1980s, Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein integrated this concept into their world-system theory. See their “Commodity Chains in the World Economy Prior to 1800”, *Review*, 10 (1986), pp. 157–170. Gereffi and Korzeniewicz then tested the concept in a contemporary study: “Commodity Chains and Footwear Exports in the Semiperiphery”, in William G. Martin (ed.), *Semiperipheral States in the World Economy* (Westport, CT, 1990). The breakthrough came with an anthology that Gereffi and Korzeniewicz edited, *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism* (Westport, CT, 1994).

76. Hopkins and Wallerstein, “Commodity Chains”, p. 159.

77. Christopher Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation: Structures of the World Economy* (Oxford [etc.], 1989), p. 346.

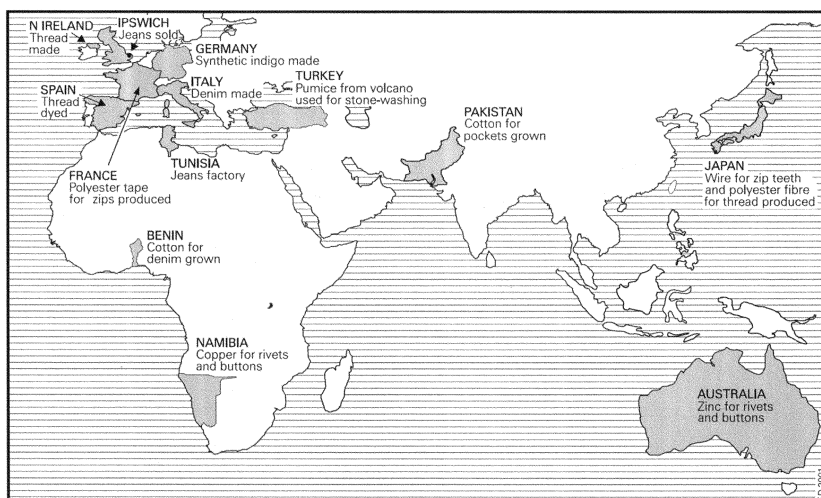


Figure 2. The Making of Lee Cooper LC10 Jeans.

An example of a commodity chain: the making of Lee Cooper LC10 jeans. The jeans consist of (a) denim, (b) pockets, (c) zips, (d) rivets, (e) buttons, and (f) thread.

(a) Denim: Cotton is grown by small farmers in Benin, West Africa; synthetic indigo is made in Frankfurt, Germany; cotton and indigo are transported to Milan, where workers of Italdenim spin, mill and dye the cotton into Kansas denim.

(b) Pockets: Cotton is grown in Pakistan or Korea. The cotton is milled and heat-treated in Pakistan.

(c) Zips: Brass wire for the teeth of the zips is made in Japan; polyester tape is produced in France by a Japanese company, YKK.

(d) and (e) Rivets and buttons: Zinc is dug up by miners in Australia; copper is mined in Tsumeb, Namibia; workers of Prym, a German-based firm produce brass for rivets and parts of the buttons using the zinc from Australia and the copper from Namibia.

(f) Thread: Polyester is manufactured from petroleum products by chemical workers in Japan. The thread is made in Ireland and dyed in Spain.

Assemblage: All parts are transported to Ras Jebel, Tunisia. Here the Kansas denim is stonewashed using pumice from an inactive volcano in Turkey. 500 women assemble the jeans. Sale: The finished product is offered for sale in Ipswich, UK.

Fran Abrams and James Astill, "Story of the Blues", The Guardian, Europe, 29 (May 2001)

tourism, the service sector, fresh fruit and vegetables, cocaine, footwear, electronics, cars, and semiconductors.⁷⁸ Historical case studies have hardly been done at all, however. I know of only two examples, and both of them (on shipbuilding and on grain flour, 1590–1790) are very much economically oriented.⁷⁹ Theoretical work in this area as well has very much focused

78. See e.g. Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism*. An extensive bibliography on commodity chains is available from Global Observatory's Resource Information (www.stile.lut.ac.uk/~gyobs/global).

79. Y. Eyüp Özveren, "Shipbuilding, 1590–1790", *Review*, 23 (2000), pp. 15–86; Sheila Pelizzon, "Grain Flour, 1590–1790", *Review*, 23 (2000), pp. 87–195.

on economic aspects, more particularly on current so-called globalization.⁸⁰

Colonialism

Albert Bergesen and Ronald Schoenberg have described the long-term development of colonialism. They based their work on a study by David Henige that gave the dates of colonial administrations for 412 colonies (including the years during which colonial governors held office) in the period 1415–1969.⁸¹ Bergesen and Schoenberg calculated from Henige’s work how many colonies were established, terminated, and existed each year. Their results show that colonialism clearly unfolded in two waves (see Figure 3).

The first wave began in 1415 (with the Portuguese colony in Ceuta, North Africa) and reached its peak in 1770 (147 colonies) and its low point in 1825 (81 colonies). The second wave began in 1826, reached its peak in 1921 (168 colonies) and then declined to 58 colonies in 1969.⁸² Bergesen and Schoenberg now see a clear correspondence between stability or instability in the core of the world system and the expansion or contraction of colonies. In the periods 1500–1815, 1870–1945 and 1973–present, the core was “multicentric” and unstable: there was no clear hegemonic power, and this led to protectionism and expanding colonialism. Colonialism is in this sense “an extra-economic mechanism for resetting the basic core-periphery division of labor in times of disorder and stress”.⁸³ By contrast, when there *has* been a hegemonic power in the core (“unicentricity”), then “the more explicit political regulation of core-periphery relations collapses, as seen in the waves of decolonization”.⁸⁴ This was the

80. For an overview see Philip Raikes, Michael Friis Jensen, and Stefano Ponte, “Global Commodity Chain Analysis and the French *filière* Approach: Comparison and Critique”, *Economy and Society*, 29 (2000), pp. 390–417.

81. David Henige, *Colonial Governors from the Fifteenth Century to the Present* (Madison, WI, 1970).

82. Albert Bergesen and Ronald Schoenberg, “Long Waves of Colonial Expansion and Contraction, 1415–1969”, in Albert Bergesen (ed.), *Studies of the Modern World-System* (New York, 1980), pp. 231–277. See also Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation*, pp. 279–282, and Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality*, 2nd edn (Harlow, 1989), pp. 100–110. Chase-Dunn is of course right in saying that “Bergesen and Schoenberg’s operationalization treats each newly established colony equally, but surely some were more important than others in terms of the amount of territory or number of people subjugated. Unfortunately, only rough estimates of the territorial or population size of the colonial empires are available for the earlier centuries. The use of the number of new colonies established is, however rough, the best continuous measure we have available at this time”; Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation*, p. 280.

83. Bergesen and Schoenberg, “Long Waves”, p. 239.

84. *Ibid.*

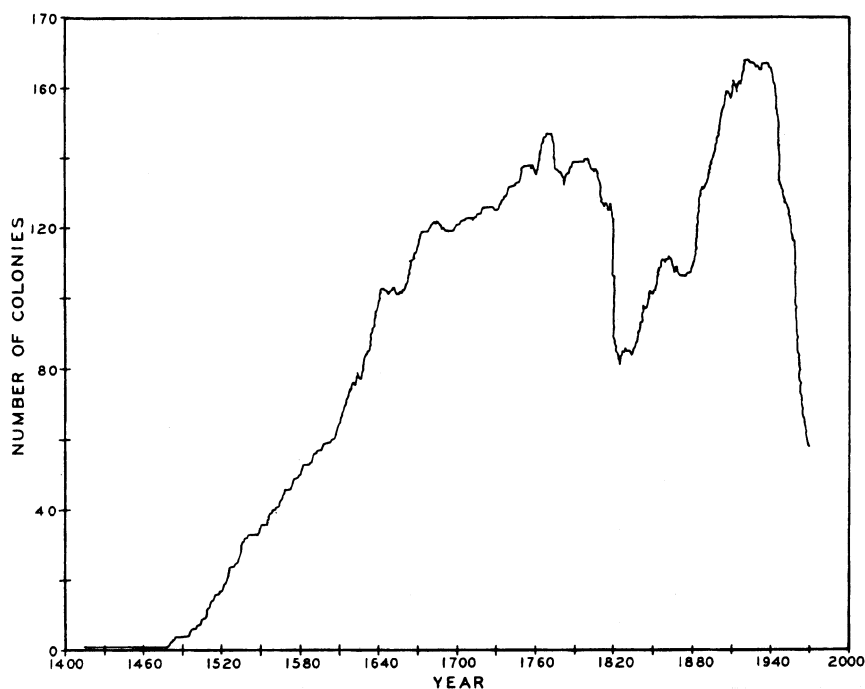


Figure 3. The cumulative net number of colonies, 1415–1969.

Albert Bergesen and Ronald Schoenberg, “Long Waves of Colonial Expansion and Contraction, 1415–1969”, in Albert Bergesen (ed.), *Studies of the Modern World-System* (New York, 1980), p. 236.

case during the Pax Britannica (1815–1870) and Pax Americana (1945–1973). This theory has elicited much discussion.⁸⁵

Revolutions

Walter Goldfrank has pointed out the importance of “a tolerant or permissive world context” for revolutions. He distinguishes three different favorable scenarios:

85. Pat McGowan, “Pitfalls and Promise in the Quantitative Study of the World-System: A Reanalysis of Bergesen and Schoenberg’s ‘Long Waves’”, *Review*, 8 (1985), pp. 477–500; Albert Bergesen, “How to Model the Cyclical Dynamics of the World-System: A Reply to Pat McGowan”, *Review*, 8 (1985), pp. 501–512; Ronald Schoenberg, “Statistical Models Must Be Appropriate: A Reply to Pat McGowan”, *Review*, 8 (1985), pp. 513–515; Terry Boswell, “Colonial Empires and the Capitalist World-Economy: A Time Series Analysis of Colonization, 1640–1960”, *American Sociological Review*, 54 (1989), pp. 180–196; Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation*, pp. 280–282.

First, when the cat’s away, the mice will play: the preoccupation of major powers in war or serious internal difficulty increases the likelihood of revolution. This holds both in a general sense for the World-System as a whole, and in its specific application to instances of revolution in societies dominated by a single power. Second, when major powers balance one another, especially if that balance is antagonistic, the likelihood of revolution is increased. Third, if rebel movements receive greater outside support than their enemies do, the likelihood of revolution is increased.

At the same time Goldfrank observed “that ‘outside intervention’ in support of the old order may deepen and further the revolutionary process if it comes too little or too late; this is the lesson the US drew from Cuba and put to use in Guatemala, Venezuela, and Chile”.⁸⁶ David Kowalewski gathered and analyzed data on revolutions in the periphery and interventions from the core in 34 peripheral nations over a 165-year period (1821–1986). He concluded that “core intervention is significantly conditioned by revolutions in the periphery. Over the *longue durée*, the more revolution, the more intervention. The core-periphery structure, destabilized by revolution, is restabilized by intervention”.⁸⁷

Religion

Sociologist of religion, Robert Wuthnow, has argued that the rise and growth of religious movements in modern societies should be seen in conjunction with major changes in the transnational division of labor.

A population’s place in the larger world order strongly affects the manner in which it defines the major problems of its existence, and therefore, the nature of its religious orientations. These religious orientations, for their part, channel the kinds of actions that people take, and therefore, affect their influence upon the world order.⁸⁸

Wuthnow distinguishes three kinds of periods that provoke intense religious activity. First, *periods of expansion*, that is “periods in which the dominant world order has expanded rapidly to the point of producing strain in the basic institutions linking together core and periphery areas”.⁸⁹

86. Walter L. Goldfrank, “Theories of Revolution and Revolution Without Theory: The Case of Mexico”, *Theory and Society*, 7 (1979), pp. 135–165, 149.

87. David Kowalewski, “Core Intervention and Periphery Revolution, 1821–1985”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (1991–1992), pp. 70–95, 86. See also Kowalewski’s “Periphery Revolutions in World-System Perspective, 1821–1985”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 24 (1991–1992), pp. 76–99.

88. Robert Wuthnow, “World Order and Religious Movements”, in Bergesen, *Studies of the Modern World-System*, pp. 57–75, 60.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Second, *periods of polarization* between core and periphery. Third, *periods of reconstitution*, “periods in which newly stabilized patterns of world order are being reconstituted”.⁹⁰ The kinds of religious activity generated in each period also vary depending on whether group power is rising or declining. All together, therefore, six different types of religious movements can be distinguished.⁹¹

Utopias

Relying on L.T. Sargent’s annotated bibliography of British and American utopian literature,⁹² Kriss Drass and Edgar Kiser have tried to find connections between the production of “eutopian” and “dystopian” literature in the period 1883–1975. (“Eutopias” create positive and “dystopias” negative images of alternative societies.) Their results led them to the conclusion that “in periods of hegemony, a narrow, consensual ideological discourse dominates, while hegemonic decline brings dissensus (a widening scope of ideological discourse, in our terms) as the basic premises of the hegemonic period are openly questioned”.⁹³ Their explanation is relatively simple: “Periods of hegemony are periods of high consensus and relative stability in the world-system. Moreover, they are periods in which there is

90. *Ibid.*

91. Wuthnow later partially worked out and modified these thoughts in a big book, but the references to the world order became largely implicit in it. In the book he discusses three “relatively abrupt, episodic ideological innovations”: the Reformation, the Enlightenment and socialism. He concludes among other things that all of these broad changes in dominant ideologies were facilitated by “overall increases in the level of resources available in the social environment”. More concretely, “Demographic, commercial, and political expansion opened the way for new elites to gain power and for new mechanisms of ideological production to emerge without fundamentally undermining established institutions (until later in the process).” *How these effects of resource expansion worked out was closely related to intermediate factors such as “pre-existing patterns of social relations”, “the particular kinds of resources available”, and the “prevailing modes of appropriating and distributing resources”.* “In broad terms, the decisive effect of relatively rapid capitalist expansion in each period was to heighten the divisions between fractions of the ruling elite, and these divisions, in turn, supplied opportunities, resources, and motivation to the producers and disseminators of new ideologies.” Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism* (Cambridge, MA [etc.], 1989), pp. 546, 548, 573.

92. L.T. Sargent, *British and American Utopian Literature, 1516–1975: An Annotated Bibliography* (Boston, MA, 1979).

93. Kriss Drass and Edgar Kiser, “Structural Roots of Visions of the Future: World-System Crisis and Stability and the Production of Utopian Literature in the United States, 1883–1975”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 32 (1988), pp. 421–438, 433. See also Edgar Kiser and Kriss Drass, “Changes in the Core of the World-System and the Production of Utopian Literature in Great Britain and the United States, 1883–1975”, *American Sociological Review*, 52 (1987), pp. 286–293.

one clearly successful model in the system: the hegemonic nation. Other nations [...] will generally try to imitate the success of the hegemon.”⁹⁴ As a result, “The utopia is thought to exist already in the form of the hegemon”, and dystopias are superfluous. If the stability of the system declines, however, then thinking about alternative societies is fostered and production of literary eutopias increases.⁹⁵

These five examples are of course only *indirectly* of interest to labor historians. Further research will also probably make it necessary to revise or correct them. But they may have heuristic value; and they illustrate the wealth of ideas that the Braudel Center and its friends have produced in the last quarter-century.

CONCLUSION

It seems virtually incontestable that the world-systems approach can be an important source of inspiration for historians, since it so insistently tries to make connections visible among developments in different localities. But while Wallerstein and his co-thinkers have had fairly considerable influence among sociologists and political scientists in the last twenty-five years – though this influence seems to be declining now – historians only rarely feel drawn to them. Robert DuPlessis’ observation in the late 1980s is still valid:

[...] unlike, say, E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*, whose publication marked a fundamental rupture in labor history and indeed in social history as a whole, forcing reconceptualizations among all who followed, irrespective of ideological or scholarly allegiance, the continuing discussion of Wallerstein’s work is not indicative of its significant assimilation either by Marxists or by other historians.⁹⁶

This reluctance can probably be explained by three interrelated weaknesses of the world-systems approach.

94. Drass and Kiser, “Structural Roots”, p. 425.

95. Randy Blazak has noted a connection between Drass and Kiser’s “literary cycle” and the rise and fall of “Bohemias” (enclaves “where artists, writers, students, and others can lead expressive, as opposed to instrumental lives”). Dominant bohemiae “exist in core nations, but not in the hegemonic cities. When London dominated the economic world in the nineteenth century, Paris dominated the cultural world. Likewise, in the 1960s, while New York was the hegemonic city, San Francisco set the cultural trends.” The vanguard Bohemian subculture flourishes in the later half of long economic upswings, coinciding with Drass and Kiser’s dystopian phase. Blazak explains this as follows: “If the hegemonic cities represent the head of the core, cultural centers represent the heart. Bohemians are important cultural innovators creating new artistic trends and fashions”; Randy Blazak, “The Rise and Fall of Bohemian Enclaves: A World-System View”, in Reşat Kasabi (ed.), *Cities in the World-System* (New York [etc.], 1991), pp. 107–119, 118.

96. DuPlessis, “Partial Transition”, pp. 12–13.

In the first place the world-systems approach seems to have a strong tendency toward determinism, in the sense of a vision of history in which the ongoing division of labor completely determines other developments. In Brenner's words:

[...] as the world market expands, the eco-demographic characteristics of an area determine its specialization, what will be produced and the most appropriate method of coercion. This carries with it, in turn, a system of labour control and reward to labour. The result is maximal output everywhere, maximal growth for the system as a whole.⁹⁷

In reality the development of international capitalism is “more contingent – more constrained, buffeted, and driven by the force of independent causal ‘motors’ and by internal contradictions – than is suggested by Wallerstein’s theoretical framework”.⁹⁸ Sidney Mintz, for example, has pointed out that:

[...] the integration of varied forms of labor-exaction *within* any component region addresses the way that region, as a totality, fits within the so-called world-system. There was give-and-take between the demands and initiatives originating with the metropolitan centers of the world-system, and the ensemble of labor forms typical of the local zones with which they enmeshed.⁹⁹

Some of Wallerstein’s own collaborators have advanced similar criticisms. Giovanni Arrighi has recently argued that world-system analysts should no longer claim that class relations and class conflicts are reducible to core-periphery relations. “The sooner world-systemists stop seeking an explanation for almost everything in core-periphery relations and their temporal equivalent – A–B phases of Kondratieffs and suchlike cycles – the better for the credibility of their analyses to anybody who is not already a true believer.”¹⁰⁰

Second, the theory’s determinism is implicitly Eurocentric: it suggests that the requirements of the capitalist core entirely determine what happens in the periphery. Clearly these two weaknesses are linked to each other. Many authors have pointed out that reality is much more complicated than this. In his study of early modern viniculture, Tim Unwin stresses the need “to incorporate social, political and ideological factors alongside economic ones in any explanation of the emergence of a

97. Brenner, “Origins of Capitalist Development”, p. 58.

98. Steve J. Stern, “Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean”, *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), pp. 829–872, 864.

99. Sidney W. Mintz, “The So-Called World System: Local Initiative and Local Response”, *Dialectical Anthropology*, 2 (1977), pp. 253–267, 254.

100. Giovanni Arrighi, “Capitalism and the Modern World-System: Rethinking the Nondebates of the 1970s”, *Review*, 21 (1998), pp. 113–129, 121. See also Dale Tomich’s critical remarks in his “Worlds of Capital, Worlds of Labor: Reworking Class in Global Perspective”, in John R. Hall (ed.), *Reworking Class* (Ithaca, NY [etc.], 1997), pp. 287–311.

modern world-system”.¹⁰¹ Many other authors have put forward comparable arguments.¹⁰²

Steve Stern has used labor relations in Spanish-American silver mines as a critical test of Wallerstein’s theory. Wallerstein’s approach would suggest that the world system’s cycles and trends could explain the broad outlines of colonial Latin American labor relations. But Stern concludes that this would be an impermissible oversimplification: “historical explanation that reduces patterns of labor and economy in the periphery to a reflection of the capitalist world-system is one-dimensional and misleading – even for silver, the early world-system’s most valued American treasure”.¹⁰³ Stern proffered an alternative model, in which “three great motors” *together* explain the development of peripheral labor relations: “the world-system, popular strategies of resistance and survival within the periphery, and the mercantile and elite interests joined to an American ‘center of gravity’”.¹⁰⁴ He added that “Western Europe’s own internal divisions and competitions affected the political coherence and will of the ‘world-system’, and that, within Spanish America, colonial elites and authorities pursued multiple goals and interests that sometimes divided them against themselves despite their shared interest in silver production.”¹⁰⁵

This criticism has been adopted to some extent in recent years by collaborators of the Braudel Center too. William Martin, for example, one of the Center’s prominent second-generation collaborators, wrote recently: “What we have not achieved, I think we must frankly admit, is a conceptual rendering of this world-wide, historical process of class formation – we remain still prisoners of an outward movement from Europe and the United States.”¹⁰⁶

Third, the definition of capitalism used by Wallerstein and his fellow thinkers, as “a system of production for sale in a market for profit and appropriation of this profit on the basis of individual or collective

101. Tim Unwin, “Wine in the Early Modern World-System: Profit, Production and Exchange”, in Hans-Jürgen Nitz (ed.), *The Early Modern World-System in Geographical Perspective* (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 248–264, 262.

102. Besides the contributions mentioned elsewhere in this article, see also David Washbrook, “South Asia, the World System and World Capitalism”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 49 (1990), pp. 479–508.

103. Stern, “Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World System”, p. 858.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 857–858. As this quotation shows, Stern does not oppose the idea of a world system as such, but is only against treating it as an absolute. In his own words: “An explanation that ignores the world-system is as limited and reductionist as one derived from the world-system”; *ibid.*, p. 863.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 858.

106. William G. Martin, “Still Partners and Still Dissident After All These Years? Wallerstein, World Revolutions and the World-Systems Perspective,” *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 6 (2000), pp. 234–263, 244.

ownership”,¹⁰⁷ leads to analytical confusion. The exact meaning of “production for sale in a market for profit” remains unclear. Gerald Cohen has pointed out in another connection that some distinctions are necessary here.

Within production for exchange-value, we can contrast the case where the producer or his exploiting superior seeks as high a return as he can obtain, which will be called production for *maximum* exchange-value, with the case where a limited exchange-value is sought, any more than which would be superfluous.

And further,

[...] production for maximum exchange-value divides into that which does and that which does not subserve the accumulation of capital. A self-employed commodity producer who aims only to sustain himself as such may seek maximum exchange-value for his wares, yet devote to personal consumption whatever he receives in excess of what is needed to service and replace his means of production.¹⁰⁸

The absence of these differentiations is related to another point. Defining capitalism exclusively on the basis of sale for profit and appropriation of profit obscures the fact that capitalism is based on competition among commodity owners. Competition is, in Marx’s words, “the basic law” of capitalism that “governs the general rate of profit”.¹⁰⁹ The combined effect of these two points is not only that Wallerstein and his co-thinkers can have an extremely broad conception of capitalism, which includes for example the former Soviet Union. It is also that a fundamental aspect of the dynamics of capitalism (the quest for a higher and higher profit rate forced on capital by constant competition) disappears from view.

These failings suggest that the world-systems approach would be much more attractive if, (1) it considered history as a relatively open process, in which social formations are “shaped by a multitude of forces, in which no single force dominates, but shaped nonetheless in patterned, explicable ways”,¹¹⁰ and (2) it treated capitalism less as a closed system and more as a

107. Wallerstein, “Dependence in an Interdependent World”, in *idem*, *Capitalist World Economy*, p. 66.

108. G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford, 1978), p. 81.

109. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, trans. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth, 1981), pp. 127–128. See also *idem*, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 650: “Free competition is the real development of capital”.

110. Carol A. Smith, “Labor and International Capital in the Making of a Peripheral Social Formation: Economic Transformations in Guatemala, 1850–1980”, in Bergquist, *Labor in the Capitalist World-Economy*, pp. 135–156, 152. Smith added: “Labor and labor processes are given form by local class interests that are shaped by the *totality* of social life in a particular historical context; they are also given form by external economic and social processes, which impinge upon local interests in significant ways. If we are to account for variation as for similarity in the world-system periphery, we cannot neglect either side of the picture.”

dynamic, contradictory process. Several authors, including Eric Wolf and Kay Trimberger, have maintained that a good alternative exists to Wallerstein’s conceptualization of the “Modern World-System”: Ernest Mandel’s theory of the capitalist world economy as “an articulated system of capitalist, semi-capitalist and pre-capitalist relations of production, linked to each other by capitalist relations of exchange and domination by the capitalist world market”.¹¹¹ Mandel gives considerable weight to the historical importance of social struggles and considers the growth of the capitalist mode of production since the late eighteenth century as,

[...] a dialectical unity of three moments: (a) Ongoing capital accumulation in the domain of already capitalist processes of production; (b) Ongoing primitive accumulation of capital outside the domain of already capitalist processes of production; (c) Determination and limitation of the second moment by the first, i.e. struggle and competition between the second and the first moment.¹¹²

This type of approach diverges in three essential ways from world-system theory. First, it identifies the driving force of capitalism not as trade but as competition.¹¹³ Second, a related point, it distinguishes the rise of the world market from the rise of global capitalism. A world market (as it has developed since the fifteenth century) can connect diverse modes of production with each other through trade without all those modes of production necessarily becoming capitalist.¹¹⁴ Third, an approach of this kind recognizes that crucial differences exist within global capitalism.¹¹⁵ Mandel’s theory too – which has not been subject to much *historical* elaboration – requires serious modifications, however. His periodization of capitalist development (freely competitive, imperialism, late capitalism)

111. Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, trans. Joris de Bres (London [etc.], 1978), pp. 48–49. Eric Wolf endorses this description and concludes: “Mandel’s definition points in a direction different from the models of the capitalist system developed by A.G. Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein. [...] These models collapse the concept of the capitalist mode of production into the concept of the capitalist world market”; Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, CA [etc.], 1982), p. 297. See also Ellen Kay Trimberger, “World Systems Analysis: The Problem of Unequal Development”, *Theory and Society*, 8 (1979–1980), pp. 127–137.

112. Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, p. 47.

113. *Idem*, “The Laws of Uneven Development”, *New Left Review*, 59 (January–February 1970), pp. 19–38, 27.

114. On this point see a thinker whose approach resembles Mandel’s, George Novack, “The Problem of Transitional Formations”, *International Socialist Review*, 189 (November–December 1968), pp. 17–34; and *idem*, “Hybrid Formations,” in *idem*, *Understanding History: Marxist Essays* (New York, 1972), pp. 147–175.

115. “But to draw from this the conclusion that the differences in form and degree of this exploitation have become secondary and insignificant or to argue that because exploitation is universal, it is also homogeneous, is to have a completely lopsided view of world reality under imperialism”; Mandel, “Laws of Uneven Development,” p. 22.

is inadequately grounded,¹¹⁶ and assumes that “free wage labor” is the only form of labor-power commodification possible in a developed capitalist economy.

In any event, it is high time for “nonbelievers” to engage in a *constructive* dialogue with the Braudel Center’s co-workers and sympathizers. It is almost twenty years now since Daniel Chirot and Thomas Hall remarked, “Those who dislike [world-system theory] more or less ignore it, and those who practice it tend to take its fundamental assertions as received truths”.¹¹⁷ This mutual lack of interest still predominates. The overview that we have given here should lead us to the conclusion that this is unfortunate for all those who seek to free labor history from its national limitations.

Translation: Peter Drucker

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116. Mohsen Massarat, *Hauptentwicklungsstadien der kapitalistischen Weltwirtschaft* (Lollar, 1976), pp. 147–156. Massarat’s book, virtually unknown in the English-speaking world, is a brilliant contribution to the theory of the capitalist world economy.

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