

**Critique of Growth and Degrowth Ideology:**

**From Developed to Undeveloped countries**

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### Abstract

In this paper, we discuss the paradigmatic relationship between developed and undeveloped nations within the notions of *growth/degrowth*. Economic Growth assimilated in the form of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expresses value bundle. Growth is demystified when the essence of value is grasped. Value ceases to be merely abstract economic category and is apprehended as social relation. Growth acquires a double reality under current social relations: Surplus value in particular form and in general form.

To attain the dialectics of such relation and its supranational relationship, we endeavour a historical analysis giving account of real relations to find the limits of our critique. Surplus labour enables, historically, societies to reach progress; only when societies produce over subsistence can they regard for different needs. On the other hand, appropriation of surplus labour appears in history in antagonist forms: *e.g.* ancient regime, capitalist, communist as modes of productions: or serf, noble, clerical, bourgeois, proletarian, women, etc. as classes of multiple interests; or France, England, Russia, United States, China, India, Brazil, etc. in form of territories, nations, government, etc.; all relating multi-dimensionally to another.

Such struggles reveals the difficulty to understand *growth/degrowth* dialectics as attainable through policy changes and individual wants and dos. Instead, political struggles within nations, as well as macro political antagonisms play major role determining, not only, how does world-society develop itself as a whole, but also the roles and possibilities of specific societies. Production and appropriation of surplus labour being its main drives. In this perspective, *growth/degrowth* attains major importance.

Keywords: Growth/Degrowth, Development/Underdevelopment, Surplus-Labour, Exploitation, Neo-Colonialism, Marxism

## **Critique of Growth and Degrowth Ideology: From Developed to Undeveloped countries**

### **Introduction**

In this paper, I discuss the paradigmatic relationship between developed and undeveloped-nations within the notions of *growth/degrowth*. This means, when appropriation of estranged surplus-labour is social nexus, then one cannot avoid a relationship of power-over, *i.e.* of domination. Such relationship must be accounted as historical; hence, one must understand its underlying foundation. Demystifying *growth* appears as a necessity in order to achieve such reasoning.

First, I challenge the mainstream notion of growth. Second, an investigation of growth as surplus-value is performed. Third, fourth and fifth, I perform a historical investigation of social relations encompassing growth as surplus-value, namely its appropriation forms in different historical moments, such as French Revolution, Bolshevik Revolution and Neoliberal raise.

Such historical undertaking grants the means for the last part, which is simultaneously an investigation and a conclusion – for it could not be different, since my investigative method is immanent critique. The relations between nations appear as relations of power. The claim for degrowth without tackling the foundation of capitalist society appears hence as its opposite, *i.e.* not emancipatory actualization, but as perpetuation of neo-colonial ties.

### **General and particular forms of Growth**

Defining *Growth* appears as a difficult task. The first thing it comes to mind, when one speaks of Growth is *Economic-Growth*: or *growth* in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP can

be defined, as IMF does, as the measurement of the monetary “value of final goods and services [...] produced in a country in a given period of time” (Callen, 2017). GDP then appears as blunt measurement, since it measures *value* (exchange-value) only and all its underlying constitutive fractions appears as equivalents. Two important aspects are renounced: first, non-marketable wealth disappears; second, the quality (use value), or rather specifics of what has been produced ceases to exist as market-value. Another problem of its definition, the notion of *value* and *price* becomes a unity, this makes impossible to grasp the essence of *Growth*, for price is merely the ideal form of value, which is actualized in the moment of alienation/appropriation. In order to grasp *Growth* I shall analyse its essence: *value*.

### Growth as Surplus-Labour

*Growth* as value (exchange-value) appears only under certain conditions. Considered in its general form, *growth* appears as surplus-labour. For value is merely a particular form of surplus-labour. Labour is the form in which man produces life. Marx clearly asserts: living man presupposes the production of living man (Marx, 1992a, p. 283); or: “Life itself appears only as a *means* of life” (Marx, 1992a, p. 328). Labour is the actualization of man’s teleological setting, but also of labour itself as activity. For labour is grasping of life in-and-for-itself. Man generality ceases to be mute; it gains social character (Lukács, 2010; Marx, 2015). The division of labour appears as historical necessity for man to create humanity (Marx, 2014, p. 479). Adam Smith also argues that “the great improvements in the productive powers of labour” appears to be the effect “of the division of labour” (Smith, 2012, p. 9). By Smith’s time capitalism wasn’t fully developed, hence his difficulty to grasp labour beyond natural determinations (*i.e.* human nature); yet, his example of production of a simple pin shows the vast division of labour comprised in its formation (Smith, 2012, p. 10). The social character of Labour enables labour-productivity to rise, labour, never purely individual, becomes collective-labour (Marx, 2014, p. 473). Natural needs become social needs. For Marx surplus-labour appears as a means of

meeting social needs, of creating possibilities beyond the natural ones. Such socialization shows the social character of labour, which enables to push the barriers of nature; however, man is not only a social being, but a natural one; he cannot overcome nature, for man is part of nature (Lukács, 2010, p. 42; Marx, 1906, p. 514, 1992b, pp. 328, 349, 350).

The existence of societies presupposes the production of such societies. For ancient Greece, the production of philosophy presupposed the production of living philosophers. Since philosophy does not produce means of life, of producing and reproducing itself, ancient Greek philosophy presupposed appropriation of surplus-labour for its existence. Labour is the only source of surplus-labour; in ancient Greece, slavery appears as historical necessity. Aristotle recognizes as such: “The parts of household management correspond to the persons who compose the household, and a complete household consists of slaves and freemen” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 4270).

With wage-labour, Ricardo acknowledges salaries as means of the labour to reproduce itself as labour, however, he does not grasp as an internal determination, but rather an external. This means, for Ricardo labour does not produced value of the means of labour, but rather, the “prices of food and necessaries” determine the natural price of labour (Ricardo, 2001, p. 58). Yet, for Smith: “Labour is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities” (Smith, 2012, p. 34). Marx shows, exchange-value of a commodity is determined by “the labour-time socially necessary”, which is “required to produce an article under the normal conditions of productions, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time” (Marx, 1906, p. 46). Due to his misinterpretation, Ricardo is unable to grasp the exchange-value within international trade, only use-value (Marx, 2015, p. 245).

Wage-labour appears as a particular form of distribution and appropriation (Marx, 2015, p. 31). It is the basis of capital, since capital is appropriation of surplus-labour, gratis-labour, product of labour which exceeds the amount of *labour-time socially necessary* to

reproduce labour (Marx, 2014, pp. 215–216). When labour needs 6 hours-day to reproduce itself as labour, if it works 12 hours-day, it produces double the amount needed for its reproduction, yet it receives only the socially necessary amount to reproduce it, its value. Insofar,

“[h]alf the working day costs capital *nothing*; it thus obtains a value for which it has given no equivalent. And the multiplication of values can take place only if a value in excess of the equivalent has been obtained, hence *created*.” Insofar: “Surplus value in general is value in excess of the equivalent.” (Marx, 1993, p. 324)

Very briefly, I tried to attain the actualization of *growth* beyond its formal form GDP. *Growth* appears in general as a social necessity as means for meeting social demands. Yet, under capitalist form of production, *growth* appears as an end-in-itself, as exploitation, appropriation of estranged-labour, *gratis*-labour. In capitalism *growth* appears in an *economic* form, while it actualizes political content of domination, capital rules labour as it controls its labour-power.

One can now throw light into the paradigmatic relation between developed and undeveloped-countries within the realm of the particular form of *growth*, surplus-labour under capitalist relations.

### French Revolution and the Struggle for Surplus-labour

The analysis of examples of historical process tries to understand the struggles for appropriation of surplus values, attempting to throw light into a totality.

The modern world appears as product of two revolutions: British-Industrial-Revolution and French-Revolution. The former could not be fully felt until 1830s/40s (Hobsbawm, 1996b,

p. 27). While the latter shook the whole ancient-regime. Its slogan of “liberty, equality and (it followed) the fraternity of all men” (Hobsbawm, 1996b, p. 21) is still called out today to defend the triumph

“not of liberty and equality in general but of *middle class* or ‘*bourgeois*’ liberal society; not of ‘the modern economy’ or ‘modern state’, but of the economies and states in a particular geographical region of the world”; “[t]he great revolution of 1789-1848 was the triumph not of ‘industry’ as such, but of *capitalist* industry” (Hobsbawm, 1996b, p. 1).

Uninterrupted war in Europe follows the revolution. Surplus-labour produced by serfdom in Europe (*corvee*) appropriated by the ancient-regime was not abolished, simply changed form. According to Losurdo, Hegel explains dialectically: French Revolution as necessary and legitimate tyranny, and Thermidor tyranny of law.

“And thus, in the French Revolution, it was a fearful force that sustained the state [and] the totality- in general. This force is not despotism but tyranny, pure frightening domination. Yet it is necessary and just, insofar as it constitutes and sustains the state as this actual individual.” (Hegel, 1983, p. 155)

For Losurdo: “The antagonists in this struggle became the embodiment of two different moments ‘of necessity’” (Losurdo, 2016, p. 260). Hegel emphasizes, the French Revolution achieved the abolition of privileged classes, however, not of inequality of classes (Hegel, 1983, pp. 169–170 Footnote). The French Revolution represented four major struggles: bourgeoisie, ancient-regime, labour, (anti-)colonial.

Multiple revolutions shook exploitation from European societies. In 1776, United States declared independence; in 1789 the French Revolution; in 1791 the Black-slave revolt

in Santo Domingo, now Haiti, with its leader Toussaint L'Ouverture, was the first to abolish slavery, which was punished by the French (Napoleon reintroduced it); also in 1791 Olympe de Gouges elaborated her *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen*, in 1793 she was guillotined; in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish colonies in South-America declared independence; in 1822 Brazil proclaimed independence from Portugal; in 1830s different independence movements and insurrections in Europe; the Revolution of 1848 made whole Europe trembled, when proletarians overthrow monarchies with incredible speed: rise and fall. The competition between imperialist nations was essential. France assisted the US; England countries in South America; Europeans struggles as struggles between bourgeoisie and ancient-regime. However, Asia and Africa remained immune to major revolutions (Hobsbawm, 1996b). Imperialist maxim became: divide-and-rule, or divide-and-conquer. Revolution showed, social order required public opinion control, *e.g.* newspaper control (Hobsbawm, 1996a).

Recently acquiring political power, Bourgeois responded politically-economically and philosophically. Politically-economically Napoleon III represented the assimilation of different interests in France, where decadent aristocracy, bourgeois and *lumpen*-proletarians came to terms in the figure of Louis Bonaparte (Marx, 2011). The unification of Italy implied the expulsion of Habsburg Empire; the unification of Germany posed multiple difficulties, since it could represent different combinations and mixtures, thus war. However, in the following years an economic-boom made possible for smoothing revolutionary tensions (Hobsbawm, 1996a). To bury any liberal intension the Prussian government called the most conservative figure for prime-minister: Otto von Bismarck (Engelberg, 1990). Britain continued its imperialist ruling over India (Losurdo, 2012) and China (Losurdo, 2016) in brutal manner. In the US, the new form of surplus-labour entered in direct conflict with the older, between 1861-65, in what has

been the most lethal war for the US-history when Confederation and Union fought over slavery (Ireland-Kunze, 1989).

### 1917 October Revolution and the Struggle for Surplus-labour

For Lukács, legitimatization against emancipatory struggles appears as *Destruction of Reason*, negation of history by dissolving social-historical categories and replacing it by individuals detached-from-the-whole, coined by egoism as in-and-for-itself. Stirner reduces real relations to *Geist*, singular becomes totality, thought acquires double transcendental reality; it transcends leaving any trace of reality and comes back as pure *Geist*: “*ich bin Geist, nur Geist*” (Stirner, 2012, p. 82). Schelling sought restoration of ancient-regime (Lukács, 1973; Schelling, 1976). Trendelenburg, Kierkegaard’s major influenced, denies movement, which constitutes Hegel’s dialectic. For him *Being* and *Nothing* are both ease. Thus, no movement can be apprehended. From the standpoint of *Geist* his claim has fundament (Lukács, 1973, pp. 223–225). Kierkegaard tries to recover idealism by banishing from idealistic-dialectics any trace of non-idealism, namely history (Kierkegaard, 1987; Lukács, 1973, p. 226). Schopenhauer represents the beginning of bourgeois reaction to its crisis, the pessimism advocated by him characterizes the futility to act politically (Lukács, 1973, p. 182; Schopenhauer, 1958). And for Nietzsche’s egoism was expression of the power of will, of *Übermensch* (Nietzsche, 2007, 2008).

Intellectual crisis of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries represented the dismantling of self-educated left, *intelligentsia* “now tended to move sharply to the political right” (Hobsbawm, 1989, p. 262). Emphasis in egoism, disregard from social binding, total competition, now pushed towards generalized mass scale competition over labour. The Great World War marks a shift in imperialism. Total war became normality, or as Hobbes puts it: “so

the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary” (Malmesbury, 1651, pp. 77–78).

From onwards, wars gained new dimensions. “Local, regional or global, the wars of the twentieth century were to be on an altogether vaster scale than anything previously experienced.” “In short, 1914 opens the age of massacre” (Hobsbawm, 1995, pp. 23–24). In 1914, Europe “had gained control of 84 percent of the globe” (Hoffman, 2015, p. 2). The racial questions, which was broadly scientifically regarded as truth, was the bourgeois answer to emancipatory movements and commitments (Hobsbawm, 1989, p. 70) and it represented social legitimization of worldwide ruling (Losurdo, 2010, p. 256); social Darwinism was at full pace (Hobsbawm, 1989, p. 264). Imperialism was a business method and should not be put into halt (Hobsbawm, 1989, p. 45). Such ideology was so widespread that rulers and intellectuals in Latin America “dreamed of biological transformation of their population which would make them amenable to progress” (Hobsbawm, 1989, p. 289, 1996a, Chapter 14). In the US the abolishment-of-slavery formally liberate the black-slaves, however, under the white-supremacy-ideology the oppression merely changed form, segregation became the new form-of-ruling (Losurdo, 2016, p. 291).

Revolution as response to increment of exploitation appears as historical necessity. The 1917 October Revolution renders the possibility of anti-colonial revolution worldwide. Struggles for liberation reverberated until the 1970s (Losurdo, 2016, pp. 167, 258). China’s case is remarkable:

“Far from being synonymous with ‘universal levelling’, the bourgeois revolution involved the accentuation of inequalities at many levels. Internationally, what has been called the ‘great divergence’ between the prosperous West and the rest of the planet derived from it. In 1820 China, for centuries or millennia eminently placed in the development of human civilization, still boasted a GDP amounting to 32.4 % of the world GDP, while ‘Chinese life

expectancy (and thus nutrition) was at roughly English levels (and so above Continental ones) even in the late 1700s. At the time of its foundation, the People's Republic of China was the poorest country in the world or among the poorest. The history of India is not very different.” (Losurdo, 2016, p. 57)

However, Western Nations were not ready to give their colonies away. Instead, France and England, still during the war, divided the Ottoman-Empire and rearranged it in the secret Sykes-Picot-Agreement (Bandeira, 2016, p. 391). Moreover, Western Nations attacked *en bloc* the Soviet Union trying to revert the Bolshevik-Revolution:

“The Allies saw no reason to be more generous to the centre of world subversion. Various counter-revolutionary (‘White’) armies and regimes rose against the Soviets, financed by the Allies, who sent British, French, American, Japanese, Polish, Serb, Greek and Rumanian troops on the Russian soil.” (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 63)

For, when comparing French Revolution and Bolshevik revolution of October 1917,

“the October revolution had far more profound and global repercussions than its ancestor. For, if the ideas of the French revolution have, as is now evident, outlasted Bolshevism, the practical consequences of 1917 were far greater and more lasting than those of 1789. The October revolution produced by far the most formidable organized revolutionary movement in modern history” (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 55).

### Neoliberal raise and the struggle for Surplus-labour

The fall of liberalism gave way to new forms of social discipline, control over surplus-labour. The insipient answer that would only gain actualization on the third-quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century was the Keynesianism. The imminent answer for the second-quarter appeared in the form of fascism, specifically Hitler's (Hicks, 1974).

White-supremacy appeared in the US as legitimation for Native Americans' genocide and for black segregation (*cf.* Josiah Strong's *Our Country*). In Europe, Ludwig Gumplowicz advocated in his *Der Rassenkampf* against non-Aryan races (Losurdo, 2010, p. 255). In Asia 1937, Dalai Lama acknowledges that his claim for a Great Tibet (regions of China) wasn't based in historical groundings, but racial (Losurdo, 2012, pp. 246–247). Even, Gandhi claimed Indians to be Aryans; hence, colonizing Indian was wrong, since they were part of the pure race (Losurdo, 2012, pp. 52–53). Germany's plans, led by Hitler, was, hence, expression of such context. Social discipline and expansion of colonialism by enslavement of Slavs (Mazower, 2008) for slavery was “a condition of every higher culture” (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 129), the annihilation of Communism and Jews appeared as fundamental tasks (Hitler, 1927).

The economic policies of expansionism adopted in the 1930s were not consciously implemented in a Keynesian sense (Hicks, 1974, p. 2). After the Second World War, reconstruction of Europe and Japan appeared as necessity in order to save capitalism; since USSR came politically out of the war in a very strong position. With voluptuous investments (*cf.* Marshall Plan), capital base being severely destroyed by war, significant decrease of labour-time socially necessary for reproducing labour, and US-American capital export; all enabled the emergence of the golden age (Castro, 1979). Which is essential to understand *growth* from a Western historical-perspective. During the wars, the US opened economic and technological gaps with their peers. Throughout the Golden Age, Japan and Europe “were fast catching up and continued to do so in the 1970s and 1980s” (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 258) due to the increase in productivity, accumulation of surplus-labour. It represented a significant progress in the developed-capitalist countries; in third-world, it represented a drastic increase in the population, insofar it produced wealth (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 259). If wealth created was

product of human-labour, the natural drive was fossil fuel as energy source (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 262). Occidental wealth was measure by the numbers of cars; third world wealth by the numbers of trucks (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 263). Tourism, in former times a luxury, became expected standard of comfort (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 264).

To contain the “danger” of revolution and counter balance the loss of political control, which Europe had over the world, Western-Democracies polarized the dichotomy between first world (developed) and third world (undeveloped-nations). Truman Doctrine attempted to secure it (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 229). West became the haven of labour, Welfare State its shield against red danger. Political annexation gave place to economic. The form to command surplus-labour changed from colonialism to neo-colonialism (Losurdo, 2017). Italy; Greece ; Portugal; Chile; Argentina; Panama; Brazil; Iran; Korea; China; Vietnam; Syria; Laos; Guatemala; Indonesia; Lebanon; Cuba; Georgia; Domenic Republic; Bolivia; Afghanistan; Nicaragua; etc, were all subjugated to Western’s will. China’s revolution was never accepted, it has suffered attacks from start, which persists today (Losurdo, 2016, p. 194). Vietnam was destroyed for choosing the “wrong side” (Hobsbawm, 1995). Wars, sanctions, embargo, regime change, dictatorship, all account for measures to sustain power-over, for guaranteeing appropriation of surplus-value. Regime change and *coup d’etat* became diplomatic missions, they have been perfected into a method (Sharp, 2010), which enabled for instance the colour revolutions (Bandeira, 2014).

With the collapsed of Bretton Woods, the US-economy move away from Eurodollars to Petrodollars. Massive debts have been possible, since dollar has artificially become the Exchange-Standard, because, after the Yon Kippur war, the deal previously established with Saudi Arabia granted US-dollar exchange-clearing monopole of oil (Bandeira, 2016, p. 459).

The 20<sup>th</sup> century can be understood as “secular struggle by the forces of the old order against social revolution” (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 3), communism and anti-colonialism. The fall

of USSR shifts this further, fight against anti-colonialism and (western-)labour. In this scenario, neoliberalism emerged in the fourth-quarter by moving away from social arrangements, focusing in the individual atomism, which becomes a firm. All human-instances become market moments (Foucault, 2008). Capitalist government policies start abandoning social locus and adhere to market form only.

In this context, when Saddam Hussein tried to move away from dollar to euro, the US invaded and destroyed it, securing monopoly over oil reserves to secure their currency (Bandeira, 2016, p. 459). Putin's Russia created a new SWIFT, *i.e.* system for Exchange-Clearing, eliminating dollar from transactions within the Eurasian Economic Union (Bandeira, 2016, p. 451). In 2012, China developed a paying system called CIPS (China International Payment System), which started operating in 2015 (Bandeira, 2016, p. 454). Since then, Russia and China have been attacked with more economic sanctions; military threats; media war; always on the account of diverged allegations. Example, Ukraine's fascist *coup d'état* supported by US and EU putted immediate pressure on Russia (Bandeira, 2016, pp. 203–372). Conversely, North Korea becomes scapegoat to legitimize the relocation of US-military from Middle-East to the Coast of China: "The United States has a first-strike capability against China today and should be able to maintain it for a decade or more" (Keir A. Lieber & Daryl G. Press, 2006).

With the 2008 crisis, wealth was widely destroyed (Losurdo, 2016, p. 340), according to GAO (United States Government Accountability Office) maybe over 10 trillion dollars; yet, financial system received, alone in the US, over 16 trillion dollars as buyout, according to Forbes (Mike Collins, 2015; Office, 2013; Tracey Greenstein, 2011). The crisis represented pronounced transfer of wealth. Social surplus-labour was private re-appropriated by financial sector, government its mediator. Meanwhile, US tries to impose to NATO-members that each contribute with the 2014 agreed 2% of GDP, *i.e.* an increase in war spending while the crisis

is plunging ('International: Erreicht Deutschland das Zwei-Prozent-Ziel der Nato? | ZEIT ONLINE', 2017, 'Military spending by NATO members: Does America contribute more than its fair share?', 2017).

The consequences of monopoly-capitalism were already grasped in 1917, when Lenin wrote *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Lenine, 1996). Lenin shows corollaries of capitalist relations, which are being rediscovered almost one hundred years later (e.g. Piketty's research (Piketty, 2015)). Concentration of production and competition leads to monopoly. Huge players concentrate and control capital, hence social wealth (cf. The Network of Global Corporate Control (Vitali, Glattfelder, & Battiston, 2011)). OXFAM has been urging against inequality (cf. OXFAM 2018 publication (Pimentel, Aymar, & Lawson, 2018)) and even Credit Suisse acknowledges: "Accordingly, the top wealth holders benefited in particular, and, across all regions, wealth inequality rose from 2007 to 2016. In every region of the world except for China, median wealth declined" (Anthony Shorrocks, Jim Davies, & Rodrigo Lluberas, 2017, p. 4). Yet, the number of millionaires and billionaires is increasing. Concentration continues to urge. It, then, becomes impossible to separate national from international question, when regarding to political economy. Nonetheless, discussing inequality and GDP, as moral or immoral acts, hides the essential: the underlying exploitation, namely appropriation of surplus-labour.

Already in 1992, "[t]he historical memory [of 1914] was no longer alive" (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 3). Neoliberalism sanctioned the perpetual present (Debord, 1997). "The destruction of the past, or rather of the social mechanisms that link one's contemporary experience to that of earlier generations, is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomena of the late twentieth century" (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 3). Insofar, Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man* appears as expression, not as nature of our time.

## From abstract to real Growth/Degrowth relations among and within Developed/Undeveloped Countries

*Growth* in general appears as social-relation based on surplus-labour; its appropriation appears as a constant struggle, which defines its very particular forms. While in capitalist societies *growth* appears as an end-in-itself, *growth* as mere economic measure hides its true praxis, surplus-labour. Furthermore, it hides not only that surplus-labour is a social relation of economic determinants, production and reproduction; also, the form, in which social relation is employed, appropriated, *i.e.* social relations in political sense. How to account for capitalist exclusion as unjust as Bonaiuti does (Mauro Bonaiuti, Introduzione, in: Georgescu-Roegen, 2003, p. 47)? Speaking of social justice, without questioning the very foundations of what is being contested, becomes vulgar moralism. Capitalism is in fact just. The political foundation of capitalism is egoism, appropriation of estranged surplus-labour, its formal basis: competition. These are not only economic fostered; but also political, legal/judicial, social institutions legitimize such framing. Winning competition is as just as losing competition.

*Growth* cannot be criticized as mere economic category; its specificity, namely social character, must be grasped for a correct critique. Accepting egoistic freedom is denying real relations; the reality of freedom becomes consume only (max. of utility). Instead of questioning the political form of surplus-labour, which determines the whole production, not only of products, but also of life, of society; production becomes ideally a moment of consumption, one's egoistic will. Critique of production becomes critique of consumption (*cf.* Lorek & Fuchs, 2013); critique of social relations becomes critique of individual consumption (wSC/sSC [weak sustainable consumption/strong sustainable consumption]). A contradiction. The foundation of such liberty means doing whatever one pleases insofar it does not harm the other. Whatever one pleases is egoism *per se*; not harming the other, means this liberty relates to itself. The foundation of such liberty is not the relation between human-beings; the relation

appears not as actualization of human-beings, but as barrier, the relation appears thus as denial of the self (Marx, 1992c). Insofar, egoistic relations can neither account for future generations (question posed by Georgescu-Roegen (Georgescu-Roegen, 1994)), nor for present relations in terms of recognition – *e.g.* surplus of food production is reality since the 1970s (Wee, 1987); yet, today, 25,000 people die daily from starvation and approximately 800 million suffer bad nourishment (Ulrike Mast-Kirschning, 2011; UN - United Nations, 2018).

Can “economic degrowth in the North provides a path for approximating the goal of a globally equitable SSE [steady-state economy], by allowing some more economic growth in the South”(Kerschner, 2010, p. 549)? Under real capitalist relations, this formal arrangement seems, in practice, to be impossible. What does it mean that *rich North* aims for *degrowth*? For less appropriation of surplus-labour, corporations would have to compensate *degrowth* elsewhere to be on pair with profit margins of their corresponded production sectors. For profit considers capital as a whole, it has two components: constant- and variable-capital. The quantity of constant-capital, objectified-labour, is relative smaller in undeveloped-countries; the labour-time socially necessary to reproduce variable-capital, meaning the needs of the working class is absolute smaller in undeveloped-countries. This relation makes it possible for what is know as neo-colonialism, meaning not (direct) political, but economic domination.

The recognition of *degrowth* in developed-nations cannot appear as recognition of undeveloped-nations as sovereign nations. Instead, it establishes the necessity to push neo-colonialism further. After China broke free from colonialism, Western Democracies never ceased to attack it. It is impossible to grasp the failure of the Great Leap Forward without acknowledging the sanctions perpetrated against China (Losurdo, 2016, p. 194). Walt W. Rostow – Kennedy administration – observed that such sanctions had set back China by decades at least. Finally, Edward Lutwak acknowledges, “a ban on Chinese imports is the nuclear weapon that America keeps pointed at China” (in: Losurdo, 2016, p. 288).

China's economic opening could only free over 600 million people from necessity-of-want, because market-economy is subordinated to People's will by the State. Yet, struggle of appropriation of surplus-labour did not end in China, both internally or externally. Internally, however, the communist government counterbalances the market. Externally, China is attacked with economic sanctions and it is tolerated based on the appropriation of surplus-labour in low-aggregated-value goods. As it begins to move away from this neo-colonial relationship China becomes a higher target of foreign government sanctions, economic restrictions, media attacks, military drills, intellectual condemnations, etc. (Bandeira, 2016; Losurdo, 2016, 2017) "Representatives of the Truman administration were explicit at times: China must be 'plagued' with 'a general standard of life around and below the subsistence level', 'economic backwardness', and a 'cultural lag'" (Losurdo, 2016, p. 288).

Insofar, *degrowth* as recognition for undeveloped-nations appears as a contradiction. Social determination of surplus-labour appears as impossible – when thought in the spheres of economic capitalist-production, its governance and policies of legitimation of appropriation of estranged surplus-labour.

Another problem appears when regarding *degrowth* as subsistence (Lorek & Fuchs, 2013, p. 38). Devolution appears as romanticization of freedom in social relations, when in reality the increase of labour-time socially necessary for reproduction of labour appears as the decrease of social relations (division of labour) and the increase in direct dependence of nature/necessity; it also appears as the accentuation of exploitation of nature, instead of its recognition and path to sustainability, due to productivity decrease. Insofar, it appears not as political determination of how to produce life (ethically speaking, good life), but rather its negation, its dehumanization. Irrationalism, which accounts for social disintegration appears as its opposite. The question of *Growth/Degrowth* should be made from a different perspective. How to social-politically determine *growth*? To enable social needs, but simultaneously to be

sustainable, it presupposes not producing surplus as an end-in-itself, but as means of life, example, non-programmed-obsolence. Abolishing capitalism-egoistic-relations appears as pre-condition for enabling different/new-(*growth*)-relations.

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