THE TYPOLOGIES OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND THEIR CONNECTION TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC MARGINALITY*

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Abstract: *I will analyse the concept of structural violence, as a cumulus of material privations and of means for actualizing normative rights by marginal social groups, and propose a series of contextual categories for a clearer outline of its character, as well as a functional distinction between them. This will be done as a method of explaining the conditioning factors of systemic changes that occur in the relation between hegemonic groups and the rest of society. By addressing the problems related to the reproduction of socio-economic marginality and poverty, I will also try to explain the self-contradictory character of structural violence, as a complex mechanism that affects social capital attainment by marginal groups and creates socio-economic disequilibria, and, in the same time, has the potential to contribute to the short and medium term security of hegemonic groups.*

Key words*: structural violence, marginality, poverty, hegemony, Gramsci.*

THE HISTORIC EVOLUTION OF THE ANALYSIS REGARDING THE PROBLEM OF MARGINALITY

The continually changing economic context of Western Europe in the 19th century vastly improved productivity, technology, infrastructure and the quality of life for a segment of the population, but also perpetuated the conditions for the unequal access to material goods and socio-political rights. The theorists belonging to the cultural and academic space influenced by Karl Marx considered that poverty and marginality represented the direct and objective result of certain structural characteristics of capitalism, whose profit driven capacity to exponentially

* This work was supported by the strategic grant POSDRU/159/1.5/S/140863, Project ID 140863, *Competitive Researchers in Europe in the Field of Humanities and Socio-Economic Sciences. A Multi-regional Research Network* (2014), co-financed by the European Social Fund within the Sectorial Operational Program "Human Resources Development 2007–20130148".

valorise some economic activities while giving others a redundant character (Marx, 1894/1991), and continually reducing the necessary number of workers, brought an unprecedented level of technological progress and material prosperity for a segment of society. Poverty had been, of course, an almost constant of human societies throughout history, but it's apparently perennial character was caused by the chronic economic underdevelopment inherent to the pre-modern, pre-industrial and pre-capitalist period; its justification resided in the supernatural explanations offered by a nobiliary-clerical minority to a majority of exploited peasants. The character of poverty only became contingent after the processes of unprecedented growth made possible by the cumulated effect of the capitalist, industrial, technological and scientific revolutions, which, while contributing to vast improvements in the quality of life for a part of the population, left behind pockets of poverty and marginalization, frequently characterized by pre-modern patterns of existence. This new comparative periphery became the object of socio-economic analysis that, under the theoretical spectrum of Marxism, gradually underlined the inherent distinction between the character of poverty and marginality in the past, and its present conditioning factors.

After the first wave of philosophical and political critique against the new social structure developed through the capitalist economic system, the Marxist direction, and generally speaking the Left, as the main disseminating factor in the process of contesting aspects related to injustice, inequality, poverty and marginalization, became more and more separated into different schools of thought. Thus, in the early 20th century, the political discourse in Europe became appropriated by reformist (in the Marxist framework) social democratic parties, with a contractual and trade union platform, on one side, and by the emergent Leninist view, concentrated on the idea of unavoidable class antagonisms, a politically avant-garde party and on the necessity of achieving a classless society through revolution. In both cases, poverty and marginality became increasingly related to what Marx had called the lumpenproletariat in the mid 19th century (Marx, 1852/2009), referring to heterogeneous social groups of economically non-integrated people living on the fringes of the clear social structure contextualized by capitalism. In the context in which this class did not possess the necessary practical means to bring technical progress, increase the surplus value, or organize itself as a positive revolutionary force, it started to be almost unilaterally viewed by the entire Left as a potentially counterrevolutionary element, owing to the indirect pressure maintained by it on the salaries of the proletariat, and to its supposed availability as a mercenary force used by the bourgeoisie against the legitimate demands of the working class.

In the period following the First World War, Marxist-Leninist predictions regarding the imminent collapse of capitalism, in its final, decadent form represented by imperialism, failed to become reality. Not only the European revolution proved to be illusory, but also the fragility of the capitalist economies and the desire and capability of the poor and exploited to bring about a change in the state of things. Rather, the political and economic systems in the developed world adapted themselves to new global conditions. This process was fairly long and complex and it is not the purpose of this article to describe it. It would suffice to propose two stages in its manifestation: the first took place in the inter-bellum period and was characterized by stabilization, the economic crisis of the 1930s paradoxically leading the major Western economies to a practical solution through the gradual imposition of Keynesian economic principles, and by the bureaucratization of the existing socialist system under the guise of Stalinism. Fascism and Nazism served themselves as a warning against the general assumption that deep socio-economic crises necessarily lead to a socialist revolution, in Marxian terms. The second stage took place after the Second World War and it only continued the process, capitalism becoming entrenched in a functional form that led to improvements in the quality of life of the working class and in establishing a status-quo between the corporations, the state and their employees. In the same time, communism, apparently ascendant until the early 1970s, maintained a similar pattern of development, a notable difference being that the state was the only employer and that it still advanced a utopian discourse related to revolutionary goals, in spite of the fact that the bureaucracy effectively became a new class, or a what I would call a "hybrid bourgeoisie".

In this overall context, the analysis of poverty and marginalization became increasingly contested, owing to the fact that the idea of progress and development, somewhat similar on both sides of economic ideology, inferentially stated that marginality was either a problem caused by the deficiencies of the people in question, or a factor of contingency, determined by unequal development and by the backwardness characteristic in some cultures or societies. Thus, it was implied that the problem did not need special attention and that it would be quickly overcome through massive and unilateral economic, social and cultural development, in a process of "catching up" (Abramovitz, 1986, p. 385) with the advanced centres, by various peripheral groups and states.

The first serious attempt to explain the persistence of factors related to the maintaining and continual adaptation of an unjust socio-economic order that generates exploitation, poverty and marginalization, came into being through Antonio Gramsci's theoretical work. His approach was influenced by Marxism, but at the same time overcoming certain deterministic factors and the completely materialistic outlook. It can be argued that Gramsci's innovative concept of cultural hegemony announces, through the way it develops and gives new meaning to Engels' idea of false consciousness as a means of expressing the tacit acceptance of unjust systems by their own subjects of domination, certain aspects related to Johan Galtung's concept of structural violence, expressed four decades later. In Gramsci's view, there is an intrinsic relation between the consent obtained from the masses and the force utilized for this purpose by the ruling class (Forgacs, 2000).

As societies and economic systems became more complex after the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the advent of capitalism, the classic means of hegemony attainment suddenly became obsolete, as society went, in Max Weber's terms, through a process of "disenchantment" (Koshul, 2005, p. 11) that rationalized social relations. In this new context, it was not sufficient for ruling groups to legitimize their authority through spiritual, moral or status confirming symbols and physical appearance.

Given the increased social dynamic and the new level of information available, the ruling classes had to develop a new system of hegemony that could secure the approval of a majority of the population, even though, objectively, it would not have enough reasons to do so. This new type of rule, more discrete than the previous one, would be composed of an entire spectrum of values, norms, perceptions, beliefs, sentiments and even prejudices (Lears, 1985) disseminated by the ruling groups through the new means of communication made possible by the technological revolution. This varied set of factors and their complex interaction would convince ordinary people that the present distribution of power, means of production, property, goods, and access to education, medical care, and so forth, is the only rational one, and any form of contestation would give rise to a dangerous disequilibrium. This type of critical theory would be later developed by philosophers belonging to the Frankfurt School, especially Herbert Marcuse, whose concept of a "one-dimensional society" became very influential during the rise of the New Left in the late 1960s. His view, though, distanced itself from the discussion that would allow privation to be seen as systemic violence, placing the concept of violence in the area of aggressive actions that become an acceptable norm in political relations between states (Marcuse, 2007).

THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

The term "structural violence", inherent in unreasonable forms of social organization became related to the imperatives of power in a study written by the Norwegian sociologist and economist Johan Galtung (1969, p. 171). The correlation between Gramsci's view on the character of hegemony and Galtung's concept of uneven distribution of resources is possible through the underlining of the socio-economic injustice as a form of indirect violence, directed or tolerated with the purpose of maintaining a certain form of power concentration, be it on a global level, between states, or, in a more conclusive manner, inside societies.

Taking into account all these factors, I would add that structural violence is necessarily convergent and transferable. It is convergent because it can only be manifested on a macro systemic level, with its constitutive elements reuniting towards a systemic manifestation of barring the access of groups to services, goods, housing, capital, information, education, medical treatment, transportation. It is also transferable because its flexibility rests on the assumption that once a form of injustice is manifested in an area, for instance inadequate medical services, it can easily affect the outcomes in other areas, for example lack of employment because of the untreated medical problems. The flexible character of structural violence contributes to its difficult statistical measurement and to the application of efficient remedies on a political level.

The limitation of the practical access to material goods, services and sociopolitical rights has in itself two manifestations. It can be residual, meaning that the character of a social, economic, or cultural system, and the way the relational typologies are structured, reproduces injustice, without the existence of a planned outcome in this direction. This type of structural violence is usually intrinsic to societies that are suffering from a development gap, or characterized, in a term seldom used today, by backwardness, in the sense that their overall progress from simple to complex social forms was much slower than in other societies. The incapacity of their governments to address specific problems leads to the gradual accumulation of injustices that translate themselves in a form of general structural violence. The second manifestation, which can been called direct structural violence, is more related to the Gramscian view of an infrastructure constructed for the purpose of maintaining a specific form of concentration of political power and economic resources through systemic pressures and barriers finely tuned by the bureaucracy, mass media, educational system, and so forth, to achieve optimal control.

The socio-economic transformation that took place on a global level during the 1970s led to the return of a series of problems that had been presented in the context of the post bellum stability as being the contingent elements resulted from an unfavourable structural legacy, whose solving was only a matter of time. The violence and magnitude, surprising for certain observers, of the urban disorders of the late ’70s and ’80s that manifested themselves in three representative Western countries, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, have highlighted the weakness of some predictions related to the unstoppable progress of the liberal democracies. In fact, views about the transience of poverty under the guise of continuous economic growth had almost become a norm in the first two decades after the Second World War. Far from being utopian or overly optimistic, views like the ones expressed by economists like John Kenneth Galbraith[1], were based on a Keynesian understanding of economics, on the unlimited potential of economic growth, on the already high existing rates of growth, but also on a somewhat limited understanding of resource depletion, environmental impact and demographic pressures. The first important examination of the possible objective

[1] An example in this sense would be Galbraith’s book *The Affluent Society*, published at the height of Keynesianism, in 1958.

limitations to a continuous high growth appeared only in 1972[2], and its implications also extended beyond the technical discussion around environment, resources, and population.

As the capitalist and state-socialist formulae reached unexpected bottlenecks in the early seventies, the conditions inherent in the ever present problems of hegemony and structural violence resurfaced, and the academic interest in their formation, character and result increased. Gramsci's theory resurfaced in this context and became utilized as means of the political left of expressing socio-economic outcomes that contradicted classic Marxist projections regarding the unavoidable dissolution of the capitalist world view. It was also the period in which the constants of social injustice started to be viewed, in a non-Marxist sense, as structural violence. As the new conditions allowed, the main idea related to the concept is based, as Tord Høivik pointed, on the chasm between actual and potential conditions (Høivik, 1977). The potentiality of progress implies a different view on structural problems and injustice becomes more evident.

After the retreat of Keynesianism in the late seventies, these problems became more pronounced as the massive privatization of the social services and economic resources under the spectrum of the neoliberal policies, increased internal cleavages that, as I have pointed, where infrequently approached in mainstream academic studies. As the societies in question were already highly urbanised, the increase of structural violence became more apparent through a process of dualization of the social and physical structure of the urban landscape.[3] The phenomenon can be described as the re-emergence of a dualism that was masked by the temporary post-bellum economic expansion, mainly determined by the acceptance of Keynesian policies regarding nationalization of key industries, the financing of social services, unemployment benefits, all with the tacit acceptance of budget deficits and higher taxes on corporations.

In this context, Gramsci's acknowledgement of the structural stability of the capitalist economies, far greater than the one allowed in classical Marxism, was, in essence, a response to the three mutually opposed spectrums that dominated leftist discourse. The first is characteristic of the Leninist view and it theorizes the unavoidable decadence of capitalism in its last stage, that of imperialism. The second is the Trotskyist interpretation, with its exponential growth of class conflicts and the necessity for a permanent world revolution. The third approach

[2] The book in question is *The Limits to Growth*, by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III. It was published at the beginning of the first serious economic crisis of the Western world, when the unprecedented three decade economic growth that took place after the Second World War came to an end.

[3] Some of the most relevant books that examine this problem are: *Dual City: Restructuring New York*, by John H. Mollenkopf and Manuel Castells, published in 1991, and *Divided Cities: New York and London in the Contemporary World*, by Susan S. Fainstein and Norman I. Fainstein, published a year later.

leads to an autarchic bureaucratic structure, hermetically sealed from outside influences through a rigid ideology, imposed by Stalinism, which is, in itself, a classic manifestation of structural violence in a totalitarian form.

The implications of this transcending of the theoretical operational limitations inherent in a typology of dominant economism, characteristic of all the three views, reside in the underlining of the relevance of human agency. Its importance in understanding the more complex forms of structural violence is also connected to the understanding of the fact that once infrastructural, technological and practical material limitations have been overcome, capitalism, as an innovative and adaptable economic system, can develop functional means to secure its own perpetuation. In this context, the role of a specific way of resource allocation, as well as the character of the positional placement, information availability, cultural constructs, belief systems, discourse imperatives, and of the functioning of the legal system can all become indispensable elements that form structural violence. This form of domination has the function to eliminate potential contingencies within the systemic order of a complex society dominated by a small group of people.

It is in this sense that the new type of urban violence has started to be viewed by various theorists, in the past twenty years, as being directly conditioned by the structural violence to which the marginal groups, that produce direct violence, have been subjected to in the past decades after the stabilization of the present economic system. This view is shared by sociologists like Loïc Wacquant, who reduces the results of the structural violence, derived from the imposition of neoliberal policies, to three main categories: mass unemployment, relegation to decaying neighbourhoods, and heightened stigmatization (Wacquant, 2008). All three are interconnected, and their common characteristic is that they lead to the risk of decreased lifespan, aggression and chronic poverty. The constant of precarity is strengthened through the lack of access to medical care, education, and political rights. The non-integration and non-participation in society reifies the subjects of structural violence in the general view of society, transforming them into virtually allogenic groups, separated from normal, functional socio-economic relations.

PROPOSITIONS IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

It can be said that the social contract between ruling groups and the rest of society that was attempted or at least promised in the past through various progressive or reformist means is thus gradually reduced to more selective forms, and the pauperization and increased marginality of some groups can be allowed as long as they do not become a serious threat to the functioning of the system. This view lends itself to the theory that the non-residual structural violence implies specific utilitarian forms of control, and its manifestation is the result of certain policies that limit access to goods or to structural contexts that can allow the acquisition of such goods, be they political, cultural, or simply economic ones.

Another point of analysis regarding the problem of structural violence would be the idea that there could be a relation between the limiting of social capital and its manifestation. In this sense, if we equate the access to information, knowledge, and education to the acquiring of social capital, it derives from this the fact that, objectively, the typologies of structural violence that cause a limiting of access to these goods, automatically produce an isolation of individuals and groups from the long term benefits of social capital attainment. I consider this problem very relevant, its implications residing in the assumption that the process of social capital attainment is in itself a serious guarantee for socio-economic mobility, and for the avoidance of marginality inducing behaviours and factors, determined, as I have argued, by the nature of structural violence.

It is also important to note that there are certain implications concerning the relation between the limitations imposed on socio-economic progress itself by the existence of typologies of structural violence. Taking this into account, the category of residual structural violence can, inferentially, be connected to various forms of socio-economic and cultural stagnation, or even regression. Some points have been made about counterproductive policies that can, with some caution, be associated with the functional attributes of structural violence. Such a case would be the Soviet Union during the rule of Leonid Brezhnev, when the virtual stagnation ensued as a result of indirect restrictions on the practical ability of the state apparatus and of the civil society to efficiently respond to crisis (Crump, 2014). This second type of structural violence, as I have described previously, fits into a gramscian outlook, because it is connected to political factors, being determined by a clear agenda and having a specific purpose.

It is possible to make an analogy between political systems that, while promoting a form of structural violence, involuntarily develop conditions for their own fragility, by limiting the possible responses to potential economic and social problems, and some present developed societies that exhibit forms of structural violence. On this level, the general assumption is that structural violence, in the form related to the priorities of hegemony, contributes to a level of power stabilization in the short and medium term, as long as it is not exhibited in a more residual and contingent form, as it is characteristic of its manifestation in developing countries. To back this claim, empirical studies have proven a correlation between the structural violence present in some countries, and their gross national product (Alcock & Köhler, 1979), with all the determinants that occur form this situation, like the general quality of life, and, not least, the overall level of what I would call the "counter-violence" exhibited by marginal groups, as a condition of their long term subjection to structural violence. In these cases, it is intuitive to suppose that structural violence can have a detrimental effect in the long term, because it tends to erode the economic potential of a society, its social capital, and, correspondingly, the power base of the ruling groups that impose it. In such cases, upheavals and even revolutions can occur, removing, at least temporarily, the issuers of structural violence. It is interesting to note, though, that in a society that had been already subjected to a form of structural violence, the complete substitution of a hegemonic group does not translate itself into the dissolution of the violence that manifests itself on different social layers. Examples in this sense would be the imposition of various forms of structural violence in the Russian Empire and, after the October Revolution, in the Soviet Union, or, in recent times, the situation in Iran, before and after its 1979 revolution.

The debate is by no means over, as structural violence can have a double effect, depending on the context in which it is manifested, and on the levels to which it is applied. Thus, it can increase the security of a hegemonic group, as it has been shown, against challenges that come from alternative political views like Marxism and the various forms of socialist propositions. In the same time, it can also lead to variable systemic pressures that have the capacity to alienate an increasing number of individuals and groups, and it can also undermine the efficient functioning of the economic system itself. Taking all these factors into account, the study of structural violence, its character, manifestation and results, have the potential of contributing to a better understanding of the political, social, economic and cultural relations in areas of research belonging to political philosophy, anthropology, sociology and political economy.

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