Manufacturing Consent revisited
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Una nueva aproximación a Manufacturing Consent

Michael Burawoy
AUTHOR’S NOTE

In these self-critical reflections I have tried to acknowledge the contributions of the amazing graduate students I have worked with over the last 30 years at Berkeley and elsewhere.

1 On July 2, 1974 I began my 11-month stint as a machine operator at Allied Corporation, a pseudonym for the engine division of the multinational corporation, Allis Chalmers. By an extraordinary chance I had landed in the same factory studied by the great Chicago ethnographer, Donald Roy, in 1944-45.1 Manufacturing Consent (Burawoy 1979) examined the changes that had taken place in the intervening 30 years. In 2004, after another 30 years, I returned to my old stomping ground in Harvey, Illinois on the South Side of Chicago.

2 The physical plant was still there. Its grounds were overgrown with weeds, its buildings were dilapidated and it had a new owner. In 1974 Allis Chalmers was the biggest U.S. corporation producing agricultural equipment after Caterpillar and John Deere. Soon thereafter it entered dire financial straits and was eventually bought out by K-H-Deutz AG of Germany in 1985. The engine division in Harvey shut down and became a warehouse for a local manufacturer of steel tubes - Allied Tubes. Thus, in yet another quirk of sociological serendipity the alias that I gave Allis Chalmers turned out to be the actual name of the company that bought it up. In 1987, Allied Tubes was itself taken over by Tyco -- the scandal-fraught international conglomerate. Marking the times, in 2003 Tyco’s two top executives were charged with securities fraud, tax evasion and looting hundreds of millions of dollars from the conglomerate.
Warehousing, conglomeration and corporate looting effectively capture the fall out of the Reagan era that had begun in 1980, five years after I left Allis. South Chicago had been the home of thriving blue collar ethnic communities, famously around its steel mills, described by Bill Kornblum (1974) in his Blue Collar Community -- a book that appeared just as I was beginning to work at Allis. The whole South-side of Chicago became an industrial morgue as plant after plant closed down. Allied Tubes was one of the last hold outs. Instead of a working class suburb we now have a ghetto, largely populated by African Americans. Many were evacuated from the celebrated and controversial Robert Taylor Homes, located to the South of Chicago's inner city. When this “housing project” was completed in 1962 it was said to be the largest public housing development in the United States. The story of the rise and fall of the Robert Taylor Homes has been richly portrayed in Sudhir Venkatesh’s (2000) American Project. The homes have now been torn down and turned into “mixed-income” housing, while many of the erstwhile residents have been warehoused into the wastelands of South Chicago, to communities like Harvey.

The landscape of Harvey is not what it was but the suburban strip where I used to live was still recognizable in 2004 despite signs for the sale of real estate at “very cheap” prices, despite empty lots, gutted buildings, broken windows, currency exchanges for pay day loans, fast food outlets, auction signs, African American churches, and run down bars. What happened to Harvey took hold of much of the South Side. Indeed, it is a story that can be recounted time and again in America’s rust belt as industry shut down or traveled abroad to be partially replaced by a service economy and the dot.com revolution. The state denied any responsibility for social and economic dislocation, giving rise to deepening inequalities, escalating crime, and poverty. Now it’s hard to find a union office in this heartland of historic and heroic labor struggles. Such are the legacies of the Reagan era.

Riveted to the Past: Methodological Flaws of Manufacturing Consent

I anticipated none of this in Manufacturing Consent. I paid no attention to the surrounding community and instead focused on, what I called the hegemonic organization of work as though it were the end of history. For all my insistence on “the extended case method” and the contextualization of the ethnographic site, for all my critique of Donald Roy’s treatment of the workplace as an enclosed and unchanging community, I must confess my own study suffered from similar limitations. I was blind to the future that was already opening before me – not far away steel mills were shutting down one after the other. Why should manufacturing escape the same fate? I couldn’t see what was happening around me, because I was riveted to the past, to explaining the small transformations in work organization between the time Roy studied the plant in 1944-45 and the time I studied the same plant in 1974-75. I had my back to the future.

The relative constancy in the organization of production between 1944 and 1974 was a methodological boon. But in leading me to focus on explaining small changes I overlooked the large scale and dramatic transformations of capitalism during this period, its creative destruction as Joseph Schumpeter put it. Still, all was not lost, since that same constancy of technology and piece rate system did stimulate a theoretical innovation. It allowed me to focus on the mode of regulating work, what I called the political and ideological
apparatuses of production, or the regime of production -- what others, working in a different theoretical framework, might simply call the pattern of industrial relations. I understood the 30 year transition as a movement along the continuum from a despotic to a hegemonic regime, from extracting effort through coercion and fear to extracting effort through the organization of consent backed up by force. There is always both coercion and consent but their relative proportions and their articulation changed over time as the importance of consent rose and coercion declined, and as indeed the application of coercion itself became the object of consent. This shift in production regime was expressed in the development of an internal labor market that privileged seniority and thus constituted workers with interests in the longevity of the firm, and in what I called the internal state whose grievance machine constituted workers with rights and obligations and whose apparatus of collective bargaining coordinated the interests of workers and managers. These two institutions framed the game of making out so as to make it even more seductive, even more effective in eliciting our spontaneous consent to managerial expectations of output.

I attributed the shift in production regime to two external factors. On the one hand, Geer Company -- as Roy had called the old Buda company -- had moved from the competitive sector of the economy to be incorporated into its corporate sector and with that came a more protected labor force, laying a foundation for a hegemonic regime based on class compromise. Simultaneous with Buda's mobility between sectors the years after WWII saw a secular change in industrial relations as the New Deal legislation was institutionalized, promoting internal labor markets, grievance machinery and collective bargaining across the unionized sector of industry.

However, I mistook the hegemonic regime of production for a natural and eternal form in large part because I froze the external forces that generated it. I did not see that those external forces -- markets and states -- are not fixed but themselves the product of social processes that have their own dynamics. First, I could not see that global markets were enveloping national markets and sending US manufacturing industry into a nose dive. Like so many companies Allis Chalmers could no longer compete on an international or domestic market. Second, I did not anticipate the political offensive against labor, marked by Reagan's election as President. In 1981 striking air-traffic controllers were dismissed by President Reagan and non-union employees were brought in to replace them. The attack on the air traffic controllers and their union -- PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization) -- coincided with Reagan appointees to the National Labor Relations Board, giving it a pro-management majority that legitimated employer offensives against unions.

The twin attack on labor -- first via markets and then via the state -- turned the hegemonic regime from what I had imagined to be an eternal form of domination into a fleeting moment in US labor relations history. Rather than a harbinger of the future, the hegemonic regime I discerned in 1974 was about to be replaced by what, in hindsight, I later called hegemonic despotism -- a despotism that was built on the foundation of hegemony that had rendered workers helpless against managerial assault. Ironically, 1974-75 proved to be a turning point in US labor history after which unions have only steadily declined in strength. The overall unionization rate dropped from 24% in 1974 to 13% of the labor force in 2004. In 1974 the unionization rates in the public and private sectors were the same, but since then they have steadily diverged until by 2004 they were 37% and 8% respectively!
Not only did I fail to anticipate the transformation of markets and states and thus the intensified pressure on labor but I also failed to discern how vulnerable labor had become by virtue of the hegemonic regime itself. I did not appreciate how the hegemonic regime sowed the seeds of its own destruction. In atomizing workers -- forging industrial citizens -- and in tying the interests of labor to those of capital, the hegemonic regime not only undermined labor’s opposition to management but also its capacity to resist employer offensives. The error here was the obverse of the one I had made with external forces. That is to say, just as I overlooked the social processes behind the external forces, I also overlooked how social processes can become social forces. Most usually, we think of social processes becoming social movements -- positive forces that exert pressure for change. Indeed, that was Rick Fantasia’s (1988) criticism of Manufacturing Consent. In Cultures of Solidarity he showed how movements develop on the shop floor from grievances, facilitated by emergent solidarities around race or gender or even class. While, of course, there have been many such spontaneous struggles, the overall historical record shows them to be declining and that my perspective on diminished struggle is more accurate. The atomization and coordination of interests wrought by the hegemonic regime was, therefore, a negative social force, but a force nonetheless, that made labor more vulnerable to employer offensives and diminished collective mobilization.

The New Labor Studies: Theoretical Shortcomings of Manufacturing Consent

Methodological flaws are intimately related to theoretical shortcomings. The extended case method calls for four extensions: the extension of the observer into the life of the participant, the extension of observations in time and space, the extension of micro processes to macro forces, and finally, underlying and informing each of these, the extension of theory. Instead of generating theory de novo from the ground up, we start with theory and reconstruct it in the light of anomalies we confront in the field. I started with Marxist theories of production and politics, theories founded in the separation of base and superstructure where the base is the source of class struggle and the superstructure contains that class struggle. In my experience, however, the notion of production as the source of class consciousness and the site of class struggle was everywhere challenged by workers who were devoted to fulfilling management’s output quotas. I myself, Marxist to the core, was no less active and enthusiastic (if less competent) in pursuit of “making out.”

My Marxist reconstruction took theories of superstructure and applied them to the base. Thus, within the factory I discovered the analogue of Nicos Poulantzas’s “popular class state,” and Louis Althusser’s political and ideological apparatuses. Based on my observations and experiences at Allis, I claimed that it was on the shop floor that Gramsci’s political and civil hegemonies were born – irrespective of what happened in state and civil society. Consonant with feminism’s politicization of daily life and Foucault’s micro-physics of power I thematized the idea of a “politics of production.” Like so many theoretical innovations, its power but also its weakness came from its unrelenting and singular focus, its one-sidedness. In reconstructing theories of production and of politics, I left intact conventional theories of state, markets and civil society. Perhaps one can only problematize one thing at a time -- one has to keep one’s eye on the prize -- but in this case it meant that I lost sight of the dynamism of the
external forces engulfing production. To reify those external forces, just as to subjectify internal processes, was as much a theoretical as an empirical shortcoming.

So I failed to anticipate the demise of U.S. manufacturing, of the trade union movement (at least in the private sector), and, of course, of the hegemonic regime of production. Errors of prediction, however, are the lifeblood of science. Subsequent studies made up for my shortcomings by grappling with the transformations I failed to predict. The studying of manufacturing pointed to two tracks: the high road and the low road. On the one hand, there were optimistic arguments, such as Piore and Sabel's (1984) *The Second Industrial Divide*, that mass production was being replaced by specialized production, which in turn required flexible specialization and the reskilling of labor. On the other hand, the pessimistic view, as expounded in Bennett Harrison's (1994) *Lean and Mean*, saw only intensified despotism and polarization ahead.

While some U.S. commentators harped on the fate of the industrial heartlands and the consequences of reindustrialization others turned elsewhere to the study of the service sector. Arlie Hochschild's (1983) *The Managed Heart* – a study of airline attendants – broke new ground in examining the delivery of emotional labor and stimulated a whole new literature on care work. Equally important was Robin Leidner's (1993) *Fast Food, Fast Talk* which focused on the three way relation, characteristic of service work, between managers, workers and consumers in two very different sectors – insurance and fast food. Both studies examined new forms of workplace control and resistance, overlooking the always problematic organization of consent. This lacuna has been recently filled by Rachel Sherman's (2007) *Class Acts* that studies the power and credibility games that workers play against their clients in luxury hotels, and by Jeffrey Sallaz's (2009), *The Labor of Luck*, an extended ethnography of the casino industry in United States and South Africa.

One of the consequences of the feminist infusion has been the extension of the very meaning of work, from wage labor to unpaid domestic work. Here too Hochschild (1989) made a classic contribution with *The Second Shift* – an interrogation of the myths and realities of the domestic division of labor. From there it was a short step to the burgeoning literature on paid domestic work, studied as a relation between employer and employee, from Judith Rollins's (1985) *Between Women* to Pierrette Hondagneu Sotelo's (2001) *Domestica* and Raka Ray and Seemin Qayum's (2009) moving study of male and female domestic work in Kolkata. The study of domestic work becomes closely entangled with the study of patterns migration as in Pei-Chia Lan's (2006) study of Filipinas in Taiwan, Rhacel Parrenas's (2001) comparison of Filipina domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles, and Cinzia Solari's (2010) study of Ukrainian domestics that contrast the circulatory migration to Rome with their linear migration to San Francisco.

Feminism had much earlier invaded historical studies of manufacturing as with Ruth Milkman's (1987) *Gender at Work* that attributed the changing gender line in the U.S. electrical and auto industries before, during and after World War Two to logics of capital accumulation. Others studied plants of the Global South where women dominated the labor force. Ching Kwan Lee (1998), *Gender and the South China Miracle*, compared the gender regimes in two manufacturing plants -- one in South China and the other in Hong Kong while Leslie Salzinger (2003), *Genders in Production*, studied the very different gender regimes in Maquiladores factories on the US-Mexican border. Beyond manufacturing, in the public sector, there is also a gendered politics of production as Linda Blum (1991)
showed in her analysis of the interlocking logics and class bases of affirmative action and comparable worth.

Such historical and comparative studies are not all informed by feminism. Richard Biernacki’s (1995), *The Fabrication of Labor*, traces the divergence of factory regimes in the textile industries of 19th century Germany and England to different conceptions of labor. Jeffrey Haydu’s (1988), *Between Craft and Class*, compares metal workers in England and the United States during World War I. Linda Fuller’s (1992) *Work and Democracy in Socialist Cuba* explores the transformation of production politics in Cuba during the 1970s when industrial decentralization was accompanied by greater democratic participation. Later she took the same framework of factory politics to examine the silence of the working class in East Germany’s transition to capitalism (Fuller, 1999). A very different story can be found in Karl Von Holt’s (2003) *Transition from Below*, which focuses on the micro-dynamics of shop floor politics in the South African metal industry. Here factory politics were at the center of the struggles against apartheid, but giving rise to a very fragile postapartheid workplace regime. Finally, Gwo-shyong Shieh’s (1992), “Boss” Island, takes the idea of production politics in a different direction by examining the networks of domestication of manufacturing in Taiwan.

Each of these studies -- and this is a very partial list drawn largely from books derived from Berkeley PhDs -- reflects some salient feature or trend in the world. Sometimes, however, sociology deliberately goes against the grain, or picks up some deviant tendency. Such, one might argue, is the resurgent interest in the link between production regime and labor movement. In this area we encounter the synthesis of social movement theory and labor process theory as in Fantasia’s (1988) aforementioned study of collective mobilization, *Cultures of Solidarity*, or in Kim Voss’s (1993) historical account of the rise and defeat of the Knights of Labor, *The Making of American Exceptionalism* or the book they wrote together (Fantasia and Voss, 2004) on the possible revival of the US labor movement.

More focused on contemporary labor organizing. Paul Johnston’s (1994), *Success While Others Fail*, explains how public service sector unionization achieved its greatest successes – by exploiting common interests between worker and client. More recently, Chris Rhomberg’s (2004), *No There There* and Steve Lopez’s (2004), *Reorganizing the Rust Belt* examine specific geographical areas (Oakland, California and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) to show the importance of city and state politics for the success of labor movements. Adam Reich’s (2012), *With God on Our Side*, shows just how intricate union movements can be, dissecting the struggles within unions as well as between unions and employers in his analysis of the cultural aspect of a campaign to organize one of California’s Catholic hospitals.

Capturing the redirection of the AFL-CIO toward organizing strategies and the innovative techniques of one or two unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE), Dan Clawson’s (2003) *The Next Upsurge* dares to predict the renaissance of what he calls social movement unionism – the fusing of labor with other social movements. Ruth Milkman (2000) put together a collection of studies that ask why so much of California’s dynamic expansion in union organizing has come from immigrant workers, hitherto thought to be unorganizable. She followed this up with *L.A. Story* (Milkman 2006), an analysis of the differential success of efforts to organize immigrant workers in Los Angeles. In turning away from home-bred industrial workers, the momentum of organizing has shifted to
marginal workers, centering on new strategies of symbolic politics. Jennifer Chun (2009) shows how this happens not just in the US but also in South Korea.

Despite these uplifting accounts, despite innovative tactics that circumvent the law, despite notable victories against recalcitrant employers, such as the United Parcel Service, despite unionization of new occupations, despite the redirection of central resources toward organizing campaigns, despite all this, drawing in new members is still not keeping up with the loss of old members. The overall decline in U.S. unionism is relentless.

Prospects for workers' organizations often look brighter in other parts of the world. Gay Seidman (1994) identifies new industrializing societies as the place for a new unionism. In *Manufacturing Militance* she shows an unexpected convergence in labor movements in Brazil and South Africa, rooted in close connections between labor and community on the side, and divided relations between state and capital on the other, relations that were themselves overdetermined by the rhythm of industrialization in the world system. In her recent book, *Forces of Labor*, Beverly Silver (2003) gives such a world systems perspective a longer historical and comparative reach, arguing that the global transplantation of industry brings new rounds of class struggles and class organization. She optimistically points to the next upsurge in labor struggles as taking place in China. Pun Ngai (2005) offers a more pessimistic picture of the despotic order of Chinese factory regimes.

Beverly Silver (2003) makes the important distinction between Marx-type struggles based on the leverage power of workers to resist exploitation and Polanyi-type struggles based on their associational power to resist commodification. She suggests a sea change from exploitation to commodification struggles that will inaugurate a new era of transnational mobilization. Ching Kwan Lee (2007), makes the same distinction, discovering Polanyi type struggles in China's Northern Rustbelt and Marxian type struggles in China's Southern Sunbelt. Hwa-Jen Liu (2006) has advanced these ideas to explain why environmental struggles have been more important in Taiwan whereas labor struggles have been more important in South Korea. Wherever they are stationed, students of labor are forever seeking out optimistic scenarios in a bleak world!

**From Capitalism to Capitalism via Socialism: Beyond *Manufacturing Consent***

I too have sought out optimistic scenarios, only to have them dashed on the rocks of renascent capitalism. Let me sketch out my own trajectory these last 30 years. One of the criticisms of *Manufacturing Consent* that I took very seriously was the charge that I had described the logic of industrialism, not capitalism. To meet this challenge would require comparing capitalist with non-capitalist production. But what non-capitalist production? I deemed it necessary to study work in Soviet societies. For a long time I had thought the Achilles heel of Marxism was “actually existing socialism” and that Marxists ignore its peculiarity at their peril. It was dishonest to simply dismiss the Soviet Union as a form of state capitalism (or a degenerate workers’ state) and then project “real” socialism as some unexamined and idealized utopia that departed from the ugly realities of capitalism. This was no more acceptable than launching attacks on the Soviet Union by comparing its brutality and inefficiency with the idealizations of capitalism put about by
its apologists and ideologists. These false comparisons of the idealization of one society and the reality of the other had to be replaced with comparisons of ideal type with ideal type, reality with reality. Best of all would be a comparison of the relations between idealization and reality in the two worlds.

I began to explore what I could find in the literature on Soviet factories. The material was thin to say the least – Soviet production was off limits to serious sociological analysis. Fate, however, decreed (once again) that I discover Miklos Haraszti’s (1977) *A Worker in a Worker’s State* – an autobiographical account of his experiences in a piece work machine shop, very similar to the engine division of Allis! Indeed, Red Star Tractor Factory was the direct Hungarian analogue of Allis Chalmers in the United States. Both produced agricultural equipment, both were in financial crisis. Moreover, the shop floor that Haraszti described had the same array of drills, mills, and lathes, etc. and, as at Allis, operators were paid on individual piece rates.

But there were, of course, differences. For one, Haraszti was doing the impossible – running two machines at once! I couldn’t believe it. And this was to be found in a country where it was said that the one right a worker had retained was the right not to work hard. Of course, the Hungarian regime of production was also completely different with party, management and union collaborating in organizing what I called bureaucratic despotism. This regime had more in common with the market despotisms of early capitalism or the colonial despotisms that I had studied in Zambia and South Africa than with the hegemonic regimes of advanced capitalism. I elaborated these different regimes in *The Politics of Production* (Burawoy, 1985), making rather strong claims about the way production regime shaped the form of class struggle. If state, market and civil society were important for class struggle, I argued, then those effects were mediated through the regime of production they determined.

After reading *A Worker in a Worker’s State* I wrote my first piece on state socialism in 1979, comparing bureaucratic despotism with market hegemony, arguing that the former fueled class hostility to the party state -- as in the East German revolt of 1953, the Hungarian and Polish Revolts of 1956, and the somewhat muted worker opposition in the Prague Spring of 1968 (Burawoy, 1980). This hypothesis was unexpectedly confirmed by the Polish Solidarity movement of, 1980-1981. Inspired by this working class movement of societal dimensions, self-consciously aiming toward a self-limiting revolution, I began preparing to do research in Poland. But I was too late. Jaruzelski organized his military coup before I could even pack my bags. So instead, with the help of Ivan Szelenyi, I turned to Hungary that was undergoing its own surreptitious revolution. Then, over a period of 7 years, from 1982 to 1989, I worked in a variety of Hungarian plants – a champagne factory, textile cooperative, a machine shop and, my ultimate dream, Miskolc’s famous Lenin Steel Works.

From the standpoint of the politics of production I asked why the first genuine working class revolt in history had been against state socialism and not capitalism, and why in Poland and not Hungary. I argued that the socialist rather than the capitalist labor process was the archetype of flexible specialization giving considerable autonomy to workers, while the regime of production brought the party-state directly and oppressively on to the shop floor. I used painting socialism as a metaphor to describe the working class experience of socialism. It derived from an amusing incident with my adopted work group – the October Revolution Socialist Brigade. The Prime Minister was coming and we were required to do an extra unpaid shift painting our filthy plant in a
bright yellow. I could only find a black paint brush and so began painting our shovels black. The supervisor came storming over, demanding to know what the hell I was doing. With all the innocence I could muster I meekly replied: “I’m building socialism.” There was an anxious silence in the brigade until my witty workmate, ET, said, “Misi, Misi you are not building socialism, you are painting socialism! And black at that!” The whole brigade disintegrated into uncontrollable laughter.

So I extended ET’s idea: the rituals of socialism organized by the party state called on us to paint socialism in the colors of efficiency, equality, and justice and in so doing they drew attention to just how inefficient, unequal and unjust it was. State socialism was a game of pretense in which pretense became reality, manufacturing dissent. Thus, I concluded that socialist class consciousness did arise from production – an immanent critique of state socialism for failing to live up to its own ideology as a workers’ state. The party state sowed the seeds of its own transformation. The only question was the direction of the transformation – democratic socialism or market capitalism? Hoping against hope that the insurgence of worker councils – a replay of 1956 – and employee ownership would win the day, even as late as 1989, I opted for democratic socialism.

The Radiant Past, written with János Lukács, summarizes our decade of industrial research in Hungary. The book appeared in 1992, three years after the demise of state socialism. We argued that if communism was to have been “the radiant future,” it was now “the radiant past.” Piling irony upon irony, we further claimed that, for my fellow workers, the past would indeed appear radiant as capitalist markets would destroy the industrial heartland of Hungary as they had done before in Chicago, and elsewhere. János and I returned in 1999, ten years after the fall of communism, to interview my fellow workers of the October Revolution Socialist Brigade. Even though the number of employees had fallen from 15,000 to some 3,000, they were among the lucky few to still have jobs. They were no longer the proud workers I knew, however, but the demoralized refuse of an unforgiving capitalism.

I had come to Hungary to study the possibilities of democratic socialism but then found myself embroiled in a market transition to capitalism. So I took off for the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1991, as soon as glasnost and perestroika made ethnographic research feasible. Those were exciting and expectant times! In that freezing Moscow winter of 1991, Kathy Hendley, then a Berkeley graduate student in political science, and I studied a famous rubber plant, Kauchuk, in the heart of the city (Burawoy and Hendley, 1992). What a dungeon! What atrocious working conditions! More unexpected, however, we stumbled into a veritable civil war, not between workers and managers but among the managers themselves. We witnessed there, in intensified form, a war that was taking place in much of the Soviet Union between the marketeers and the planners, the young Turks and the old guard, those who wanted to free themselves from the party state and those who sought to uphold its collapsing structures.

After two months at Kauchuk I went north to Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic, where I obtained a job as a machine operator in a furniture factory. Out there in the periphery the political waves from the center were more gentle, though their effects were nonetheless discernible. Already then in the Spring of 1991, Pavel Krotov, my collaborator, and I could trace the lineages of the market order that was emerging from within the disintegrating Soviet order (Burawoy and Krotov, 1992). I was there from March to June, 1991. In August there was the failed Moscow insurrection from the old guard and by December the Soviet Union was history.
With nowhere else to go I continued my research in Russia, in the Komi Republic, watched planning transmogrify into markets with Soviet characteristics – a bizarre combination of money and barter. Those who controlled the sphere of exchange be they oligarchs or financiers, mafia or merchants, became the new class that arose from the swamp into which the rest of society sank. I described the situation as one of economic involution in which resources were being pumped out of the sphere of industrial production and into a sphere of unproductive exchange, consumption and personal wealth. For the working class their fate was governed by their access to the rapidly diminishing jobs that paid real wages, and, failing that, access to subsistence. In this world of rampant deindustrialization men became superfluous, a burden on the household rather than its vital bread winner. Women took up the defense of society.

How different one wonders are the ghettos of South Chicago from the industrial ruins of post-Soviet Russia? How different are the Russian oligarchs, who plundered the post-Soviet economy, from the corporate scoundrels of Tyco and Enron? Only scale separates Khodorkovsky, on trial for absconding with billions of dollars of public money through the oil privatization scams of the 1990s, from Kozlowski, the chief executive of Tyco -- the conglomerate that owned the old premises of my Chicago machine shop -- on trial for defrauding shareholders and employees of only hundreds of millions of dollars.

From Marx to Polanyi: Abandoning Manufacturing Consent

Wherever my ethnographic journey took me, I left behind a line of destruction. No sooner had I departed the Zambian Copperbelt – the site of my first industrial research 1968-1972 -- than the price of copper plummeted and with it the Zambian economy and Zambian society (Ferguson 1999). Following my departure from Allis Chalmers in 1975, as I have already described, South Chicago turned from an industrial heartland to an industrial wasteland. In 1989, after my final stint of fieldwork in Hungary, only 7 years after it had begun, state socialism disintegrated and Hungary’s industrial economy followed Chicago’s path of rapid decay. My turn to factory work in the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1991 was quickly followed by a hard line communist coup failed, and by the end of the year the Soviet order had collapsed. What followed was an economic decline never before seen in peace time. While some held me responsible for all these catastrophes, in reality it was a market tsunami beginning in the 1970s that had caused world-wide economic devastation.

My belated recognition of the power of markets led to a shift in orientation from production to exchange, and from exploitation to commodification. Through the 1990s I watched the Russian industrial workplace -- with a few exceptions such as construction – vanish under the spell of exchange, from petty trade to barter, mafia protection, banking and finance. At this point I turned to Karl Polanyi’s The Great Transformation (1944) to understand the devastation wrought by the market transition.

Many have drawn on Polanyi to argue that there can be no market road to market capitalism, that markets require political and social institutions to deliver economic development. This explains why the market transition was so much more successful in China where the party-state maintained its hegemony than in Russia where wanton destruction of the state system of planning led to economic involution. Others have
drawn on Polanyi to speculate about the inevitability of a counter-movement to rapid market expansion. This second dynamic reading replaces the first static, functionalist appropriation of Polanyi’s ideas. I have chosen a more radical reconstruction of Polanyi’s history of capitalism that focuses on his underdeveloped notion of “fictitious commodity” (Burawoy 2010).

In this third reading, the underlying problem is Polanyi’s failure to anticipate another wave of market fundamentalism. He assumed that humanity would never again allow such a disastrous experiment, but he was wrong. Beginning in 1973 with the oil crisis the world has been overrun by a third wave of market fundamentalism. Polanyi’s refusal to entertain another wave of market fundamentalism is built into his view of a singular market expansion followed by a singular countermovement. Careful examination of his analysis, points to two waves. The first was the one he described for the English industrial revolution beginning at the end of the 18th century with the assault on the Speenhamland system of regulated labor, ending with the New Poor Law of 1834 whereupon labor countered through the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries with the factory movement, cooperatives, combinations, voluntary organization and political parties. Following WWI market fundamentalism took off again this time focusing on world trade and rigid currency exchange. If the reaction in the 19th century took the form of local responses moving to a national level, in the twentieth century the reaction took on national forms of regulation – fascism, Stalinism, social democracy, New Deal and so forth – rising to the global level with Bretton Woods, GATT, World Trade Organization, IMF and the World Bank. During the last quarter of the 20th century and into the 21st century market forces have again been on the ascendency, breaking down the protective regulation of labor and money, leading to their recommodification but also the commodification of nature (land, water and air), and something Polanyi did not anticipate, the commodification of knowledge.

Today, we witness counter-movements at local and national levels, but to be effective in regulating finance capital and containing environmental destruction they will have to assume a global scale. But how might such a counter-movement be constructed? There are those who pin their hopes on the labor movement, transcending national boundaries, but the signs of this are few and far between. More likely is a coalition of forces that are based not so much on production and exploitation (which is becoming a privilege in the modern world), but on the experience of the market and commodification. Labor studies, therefore, will have to venture out of production and link itself to the commodification of nature through dispossession, of money through debt, and of knowledge through credentialism.

As I write, the “occupy” movements seem to have grasped such a vision. Based on an ever-increasing precariat, itself the product of the commodification of knowledge, especially in the university, aided and abetted by the increasingly (dis)organized working class (commodification of labor), and whipped up by the spontaneous outbursts of the dispossessed (commodification of land), the occupy movement challenges the despotism of finance capital. The insistence on direct democracy is a symbolic refutation of representative democracy, incapable of regulating capital in the public interest, however defined. The reconstruction of The Great Transformation allows us to locate the importance of labor alongside money, nature and knowledge in the expansion and contestation of 21st century capitalism.
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NOTES

1. The Chicago School is more celebrated in France than in the United States, and accordingly Jean Pierre Brian and Jean-Michel Chapoulie (2006), brought out a French collection of Donald Roy’s writings. Sad to say there is no such collection in English.

2. Since the publication of Manufacturing Consent (1979) I have elaborated this ethnographic method in a number of publications brought together in Burawoy (2009). See also the collective projects (Burawoy et al. 1991 and 2000)

3. James Zetka’s (1994) advances my analysis of hegemonic regimes by analyzing not only the transformation of state intervention but also the transformation of the markets within which large corporations operated. He points up another lacuna in my extension from the shop floor, namely the need for a deeper analysis of the changing relation of the engine division to the central office of Allis Chalmers, the sort of analysis that Robert Freeland (2001) does so effectively for General Motors. It was necessary to extend the idea of production politics to the managerial labor process as Vicki Smith (1990) does in her analysis of the way managers managed themselves and others out of jobs. All these studies opened up the social processes behind the forces that I had reified.

4. For the definitive account of the air-traffic controllers strike of 1981 and the forces leading up to it, see McCartin (2011)

5. For an analysis of these trends see, Freeman (1988), and Farber and Western (2001, 2002).

6. An overlapping series of shortcomings were also laid out in a series of critical revisits in Gottfried et al (2001)

ABSTRACTS

The article briefly presents Manufacturing Consent, a 1979 publication directed by Allis Chalmers that deals with the way in which work discipline for manual labourers is organised through coercion and consent, based in particular on the establishment of production quota creating a kind of "game of making out" between works. The author reviews the ethnographic method that had been used at the time. He criticises this approach and suggests a replacement based on an "extended case method" that incorporates the work context and includes actors' trajectories as well as transformations in markets and the role of the state - without forgetting spatial-temporal factors of change. This becomes an opportunity for the author to review recent publications that have expanded the object of research to include gender, domestic labour, migrant workers, services, trade unions, etc. The article suggests that issues pertaining to the battles witnessed in these domains range from exploitation to commodification and include consumerism. All of these bones of contention have inaugurated a new era of transnational mobilisation extending from Eastern Europe to Asia and inspiring the author to reproduce Polanyi's Great Transformation thesis, after updating it to include the recent advent of a third, ultra-liberal wave that broadens commodification to include nature (earth, water and air) and knowledge. The first manifestation of this change is the Occupy movement.
Cet article présente rapidement *Manufacturing Consent* publié en 1979 dans lequel la direction d’Allis Chalmer organisait la discipline du travail ouvrier par la coercition et par le consentement, en particulier à travers l’établissement des quotas de production qui fondait une sorte de jeu social entre ouvriers (the game of making out). L’auteur revient sur la méthode ethnographique utilisée alors pour la critiquer et il propose de la remplacer par « l’étude de cas élargie » (the extended case method) qui prend en compte le contexte du travail dont les trajectoires des acteurs, les transformations des marchés et du rôle de l’État, sans négliger les éléments spatio-temporels facteurs de changement. C’est l’occasion pour l’auteur de passer en revue les publications récentes qui ont élargi les objets de recherches à la question du genre, au travail domestique, aux travailleurs migrants, aux services, au syndicalisme, etc. L’article suggère que l’enjeu des luttes passerait de l’exploitation à la marchandisation (commodification) avec les luttes consuméristes qui l’accompagneraient ; lesquelles inaugureraient une nouvelle ère de mobilisations transnationales étendues à l’Europe de l’Est et à l’Asie. Ce qui conduit l’auteur à reprendre les thèses de Polanyi sur La Grande Transformation en les actualisant avec l’avènement présent d’une troisième vague ultra-libérale qui étend la marchandisation à la nature (terre, eau et air) et aux connaissances : les mouvements « d’occupation » ("occupy" movements) seraient les premières ripostes.

Este artículo presenta rápidamente la obra *Manufacturing Consent*... publicada en 1979; en ella, el autor describe la manera en que la dirección de Allis Chalmers organizaba la disciplina del trabajo obrero mediante la coerción y el consentimiento, en particular a través del establecimiento de cuotas de producción, lo que suscitaba una especie de juego social entre obreros (the game of making out). El autor realiza una revisión del método etnográfico utilizado en aquel momento, lo critica y propone sustituirlo por “el estudio de caso ampliado” (the extended case method) teniendo en cuenta el contexto del trabajo, que incluye las trayectorias de los actores, las transformaciones de los mercados y del papel del Estado, sin olvidar los elementos espacio-temporales como factores de cambio. El autor aprovecha esta ocasión para pasar en revista las publicaciones recientes que han abarcado entre los objetos de investigación los temas de género, trabajo doméstico, trabajadores migrantes, los servicios, el sindicalismo, etc. En su artículo sugiere que las luchas se estarían reorientando de la explotación a la mercantilización (commodification), acompañada de las luchas relacionadas con el consumismo; éstas indicarían el inicio de una nueva era de movilizaciones transnacionales que han alcanzado a Europa del Este y a Asia. A partir de ahí, el autor retoma las tesis de Polanyi sobre La Gran transformación, actualizándolas con el advenimiento actual de una tercera ola ultraliberal que extiende la mercantilización a la naturaleza (tierra, agua y aire) y a los conocimientos, frente a la cual los movimientos “de ocupación” ("occupy" movements) serían las primeras respuestas.

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**Mots-clés:** consentement, coercition, making out, mouvement ouvrier, étude de cas élargie, régime hégémonique, despotisme hégémonique, État, marchandisation.

**Palabras claves:** consentimiento, coerción, making out, movimiento obrero, estudio de caso ampliado, régimen hegemónico, despotismo hegemónico, Estado, mercantilización

**Keywords:** Consent, coercion, making out, workers’ movement, extended case study, hegemonic regime, hegemonic despotism, State, commodification
AUTHOR

MICHAEL BURAWOY

University of Berkeley (Californie), Department of Sociology