

## BRAZILIAN NEW MIDDLE CLASS STRATAGEM: DIALECTICS OF CONSUMPTION AND RENEWAL OF THE OVEREXPLOITATION OF LABOR

O estratagema da nova classe média brasileira: dialética do consumo e renovação da superexploração do trabalho

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### ABSTRACT

The argument of this essay is that the idea of emergence of a new Brazilian middle class was a stratagem adopted to create a positive agenda with transitory social consensus. In order to develop it, we return to the social class theory to discuss the stratification theory, which is the methodological and theoretical support of the so called new middle class. In addition to that, another possibility of analysis is presented, based on the theoretical propositions by Alvaro Vieira Pinto and Ruy Mauro Marini, two authors from the Brazilian social thought, articulating consumption, social classes, work and production as inseparable relationships, part of dependent capitalism contradictions. From these authors' perspective, it was possible to understand that the expansion of consumption, basis for the new middle class stratagem, temporarily improved the living conditions of people at the expense of deepening the overexploitation of labor, reproducing the development of dependency.

**Keywords:** New middle class. Dialectics of consumption. Non-consumers. Overexploitation of labor. Dependent capitalism.

### RESUMO

O argumento deste ensaio é que a ideia da emergência de uma Nova Classe Média (NCM) brasileira foi um estratagema para a organização de uma agenda positiva com consensos sociais transitórios. Para desenvolvê-lo, retornamos à teoria de classe social para discutir a teoria da estratificação, suporte teórico-metodológico da denominada NCM. Adicionalmente, oferecemos outra possibilidade de análise a partir de dois autores do Pensamento Social Brasileiro (PSB), com a apropriação das proposições teóricas de Álvaro Vieira Pinto e Ruy Mauro Marini para articular consumo, classes sociais, trabalho e produção como relações indissociáveis inseridas nas contradições do capitalismo dependente. A partir desses autores foi possível compreender que, contraditoriamente, a ampliação do consumo, base do estratagema da NCM, possibilitou a alteração temporária da condição de vida das pessoas à custa do aprofundamento da superexploração do trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** Nova classe média. Dialética do consumo. Não-consumidores. Superexploração do trabalho. Capitalismo dependente.

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## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of what is supposed to be a new middle class (NMC) in countries known as ‘emerging’, and particularly in Brazil, was an important topic in the early 2000s. During the rising phase of the economic pendulum, particularly from 2008 to 2012, many people associated consumption expansion to the insertion of subordinate classes, a new frontier of capitalism expansion (WHEARY, 2009), and to national development (NERI, 2011).

In the crisis scenario that followed, the topic was forgotten. Nevertheless, academic studies still discuss the phenomenon, through different approaches. Many agree in criticizing the idea that there is a NMC and defend the expansion of social classification criteria beyond economic aspects. Kerstenetzky, Uchôa and Silva (2015) analyzed a set of indicators (based on secondary data comprising the years 2008-2009) to explore intra-class differentiation resulting from the level of combinations of capitals and resources (economic, social and cultural). Silva and Freitas (2016), defended the rescue of this topic about work in Organizational Studies (OS) and, in this sense, proposed to complement the economic income criterion with qualitative insights that can re-build narrative biographies. Despite the merit, particularly of the last study, they do not discuss social classification as a problem in itself. Let us remind that variables can be manipulated in isolation or combined to create indices using statistical calculations, which are reflective of the researcher’s choices more than of the objective conditions of social relationships. Specifically regarding the social classes theme, Stavenhagen (1981, p. 140) warns:

These categories, though many times generically addressed as classes, are just statistical categories (that is, a series of people who have in common a certain number of measurable characteristics, that is, a common status), or groups of people characterized by similar conducts, or common attitudes and opinions, or certain degree of interaction and mutual associations. In almost all contemporary sociological literature, the concept of social classes means: discrete groupings, hierarchized in a stratification system.

In other words, it is necessary to question the concept of middle class itself. In this sense, we discuss this definition in order to, later on, argue that, in our context, the idea of a NMC was a stratagem adopted by the government to organize a positive agenda. The term ‘stratagem’ is used with the meaning suggested by Schopenhauer (1923) to refer to the ways people argue to win debates, even when they are not convinced of their position. The supposition that it was a stratagem was developed in the study that originated this paper, concluded in the first semester of 2014 (ABDALA, 2014), when the so called social-developmental project was still in full force. According to Carneiro (2012), there would be subordination of productive forces’ development to social development goal. This objective would be reached through expansion and generalization of mass consumption, a supposition that had already been formalized in the 2008-2011 Multi-Annual Plan, which indicated “progressive incorporation of families in the consumer market of modern companies” (BRASIL, 2007, p. 11).

The basis of the stratagem was constituted from two interfaces: academic/theoretical and governmental. In the latter, several actions were combined involving incentive to consumption, as will be presented along the article generating short term results. In theoretical terms, what stood out was the adoption of the stratification theory, with strata arbitrarily defined and posing obstacles to the discussion on social structure and the comprehensiveness of classificatory criteria.

In this context, the stratagem, disclosed as strategy, combined the alledged reduction of poverty with more consumption, market expansion and economy growth; which was enough to please both a significant portion of the population and corporate sectors. So, this hid the fact that for many families, particularly those in the lowest income strata, increase in consumption improved life conditions and also increased indebtedness, many times requiring increase in work load. In other words, the change in low income families' life standards that was disclosed did not result in the transformation of the country's social structures, as advocated, for example, by Souza (2010) and Neri (2011). The stratagem was possible due to the ephemeral moment of rise of the economic pendulum which, however, fell, afterwards, towards the core of the crisis, as synthesized in Vieira Pinto's (2008) metaphor to explain the transitory episodes of economic growth in underdeveloped countries.

The presidential election campaign of 2014 and later happenings justified alerts and criticisms we used to make since 2012 (ABDALA, 2012; ABDALA; MISOCZKY, 2012; ABDALA, 2013; ABDALA, 2014a; ABDALA, 2014b) based on the study of consumption incentive from its own material determination, considering that needs met by social programs can't replace analysis and denouncement of their limitations from the position of live work, and in the re-take of Brazilian Social Thought classics through references to Álvaro Vieira Pinto and Ruy Mauro Marini's formulations.

At this point, we introduce another interface of this essay<sup>1</sup>: the contribution to the debate on consumption topic in the field of organizational studies<sup>2</sup> (OSs). Gabriel, Korczyński and Rieder (2015) emphasize the need to include the consumer in theorizations on organizations, defending the idea that the frontiers between consumption and work, or between producers and consumers, have become less clear. What justifies this is the idea that consumers would assume tasks that are typical of producers, the *prosumers* (BAUER; GEGENHUBER, 2015), and because the commodification reaches previously unaffected social and economic sectors through the self with "self-commodification" of workers (CHERTKOVSKAYA; LOACKER, 2016).

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1. The essay is characterized by its reflexive and interpretative nature, different from the classificatory practice in science: "instead of general objective, specific objectives, justification, theoretical foundation, and methodology that defines data collection and analysis criteria and those of conclusion, in the essay the guidance is given not by the search for answers and true statements, but rather by questions that guide subjects to deeper reflections". Moreover, "procedures for collection and evidences of the empirical world are not the core of sustentation of their form". However, one can't deny the importance of evidence as part of the production of knowledge (MENEGETTI, 2011, p. 321 and 326). This was the logics used to build this text; using theoretical propositions combined with the objective evidences as support to the NMC stratagem problematization.

2. In the last years, three special editions were published by international journals in the area of OS, dedicated to consumption: consumption and politics in *Ephemera* (2013); organizations and their consumers in *Organiza-tion* (2015); and consumption and work in *Ephemera* (2016).

We agree about the relevance of including consumption in contemporary debates in the field of OS, however not for the same reasons pointed by Gabriel, Korczynski and Rieder (2015), which are similar to those of Fontenelle (2015), Chertkovskaya and Loacker (2016), and Bauer and Gegenhuber (2015). We understand that the debate on consumption has always been important, even though neglected, since consumption and consumers are produced (considering production in a wide sense) in the ambit of the essential and contradictory relationships involving production, consumption and work. A close perspective led Bradshaw, Campbell and Dunne (2013, p. 206) to defend the idea that the relationship between production and consumption is political, “since even a pinch of salt must be collected by someone somewhere”, even when the common consumer is not aware of this fact. This hiding is sustained by scholars, since most of those who study marketing, consumer behavior and anthropology of consumption, including those who consider themselves to be critical, ignore the politics involving consumption, which is based on the valorization of cultural and symbolic elements (BRADSHAW; CAMPBELL; DUNNE, 2013).

Within the study on consumption in OSs, we are particularly interested in the dialogue with studies that approach them from the point of view of historical materialism. In this sense, we want to avoid what Fine (2013) calls horizontal theories, that is, studies on consumption marked by disciplinary and methodological frontiers that address the theme based on variables of their own field, that are conceptually and theoretically incompatible with the other fields. The author advocates the need to reveal, in addition to partial theories, structures, processes and social relationships, where consumption and consumers are inserted. His solution is different from the one we present in this paper, although we start from the same point, that is - it is necessary to insert consumption in social relationships of production and avoid falling into thinking through commodity fetishism, thus avoiding a supposedly superior status of consumption as an autonomous sphere. As an illustration, Armstrong (2013, p. 290) demonstrates how taste, which is an explanation for many consumption choices, is commodified, finding its origins not in the consumer rationality, but rather in the production sphere, as in the case of interior design. This process, according to the author, alienates the consumer, “subtracting the possibilities of human expressivity and, therefore, adding to the potential of mutual isolation”. Undoubtedly, consumption matters, as suggests the title of Fine’s paper, but can only be effectively understood when analyzed in combination with production and work (FINE, 2013).

For that matter, we propose the expansion of politics of consumption in OSs, bringing elements which have not been discussed enough to the scenery, such as social classes and specific historic and economic contexts. At this point, the combination between the dialectics of consumption, as proposed by Álvaro Vieira Pinto, and the dialectics of dependency, as proposed by Ruy Mauro Marini, offers an appropriate theoretical basis to reflect on the politics of consumption present in the construction of the Brazilian NMC stratagem, thus contributing to the recent debate in OSs in fields with which we share interfaces in an interdisciplinary way.

Vieira Pinto (2008, p. 324) proposes the dialectics of consumption and the existence of a group of non-consumers, people to whom consumption is an ambition, not a right. When this ambition – to consume – is realized, its practice is limited to “moments of balance rise, which soon returns, due to the pendular movement, to the downturn, the one when the buyer sees himself overwhelmed by the difficulty to pay the installments”. So, when

these non-consumers consume, indebtedness and its costs place them in a position of more vulnerability that may lead to the overexploitation of their labor force. This category comes from Marini's (1991a) proposition and refers to the mechanism through which the capitalist of the dependent country compensates the loss of value for central economies by means of deepening the worker's exploitation. The articulation of the two theoretical purposes contribute to demonstrate the importance and relevance of the theory of classes to understand social processes, like those involved in politics of consumption, and also the relevance of retaking propositions of thinkers who were dedicated to reflect on the specificities of our economic and social formation.

The present article begins with clarifications on the conceptual differences between class and stratification; it goes on with the construction of the Brazilian NMC as object of study based on secondary data; later, the propositions of the two authors mentioned above are briefly systematized, so that we can explicit our argument with indication on the renewal of the overexploitation of labor in the dialectics of consumption of participants of the so called NMC, expanding the debate on the politics of consumption.

## CLASSES AND SOCIAL STRATA

The theory of social classes arises within the context of Marxist thought, although Marx did not explicitly formulate it. Even so, in his works, social classes are an analytical resource for different historical moments, providing the first hints for the development of the concept (DOS SANTOS, 1987).

In terms of general rules, antagonistic social classes express the essential contradiction of capitalism. Since it is an abstract theoretical category, social class will hardly be found in reality in its pure state, as Marx observed (2013). In the analysis of concrete social relationships, one must acknowledge that fractions of class are modified according to the development of each historical conjuncture and in each social formation. According to Marx (2013, p. 231), referring to his time and social background, not even in England, where capitalism was more advanced, pure classes could be found: "[...] there also, the medium and intermediate layers everywhere obscure the dividing lines [...]; this fact, however, has no importance to our analysis" because middle layers, though existing in different historical conjunctures, cannot be considered social classes in themselves; rather, they oscillate their position in the social relationships of production. For example, workers with high wages, low income owners of their production means, entrepreneurs who employ partially remunerated family work, and many other concrete situations share elements that confuse labor division. For that reason, these intermediary classes obscure the antagonism between fundamental classes. If the conflict among social classes is the motor of history, as stated by Marx and Engels (2006), the medium layers function, ultimately, as buffers that soften inequalities.

It is precisely the notion of conflict that disappears in the concept of class used in the social stratification perspective. Stavenhagen (1981, p. 133) remarks that, "[...] particularly in the North American sociology, and, as extension, in Latin American sociology, the concept of social class is identified with that of social stratification, leading to a total fusion of phenomena". In other words, the term "social class" receives new meaning, designating hierarchical groupings determined by criteria selected by the researcher.

Every stratification procedure, in its turn, faces the problem of choosing the base through which the hierarchy is defined. If the objective is to place people in a scale of importance, the factors used should be capable of objective differentiation. Thus, variables such as income and education can be manipulated in isolation or in combination to create indexes that are a result more of the choices of the researcher than objective conditions of social relationships. Therefore, a classificatory grouping, whatever is the complexity of variables used in the model, is a “statistical description that leads to stereotypes rather than to the understanding of social structures” (STAVENHAGEN, 1981, p. 143).

When stereotypes are taken as the reality of social distribution, the allocation of individuals in strata can imply a certain social mobility (STAVENHAGEN, 1981). One of the justifications is that by knowing the position in the hierarchy it would be possible to stimulate individuals from below to undertake an escalation towards the top, through the accumulation of individual merits (DAVIS; MOORE, 1981). This possibility of social mobility would also justify the disappearance of class antagonisms, strengthening equality of opportunities and meritocracy as values. “Consequently, stratification can also be considered as justifications or rationalizations of the current economic system” (STAVENHAGEN, 1981, p. 166).

The stratification theory, produced in the early 1960s, anticipated what is still observed in most studies on social classes, with the consequent elimination of the Marxist theory of classes, resulting in two interconnected processes: the rise of postmodern political theories and the so called cultural turn, occurred in the 1980s, from which studies on the individual and his identity gained prominence in face of collective concepts, as that of social class (STRANGLEMAN, 2008); and the transition to the model of flexible accumulation, “supported by the flexibility of work processes, work markets, products and consumption standards” (HARVEY, 2011, p.140). As a result, the social atomization is seen as something good and it is encouraged, while it is merged with the concept of alterity, that is, there are multiple individual realities and nobody is authorized to speak for another, since the “other” is something one can never reach.

Currently, the study of social classes is predominantly kept in this domain. Taking as an example the recent studies mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the discussions among those who criticize the concept of NMC are concerning the best criteria to define it, with no questioning of the choice for stratification theory based on a theoretical discussion on social classes. This logics is found in most studies dedicated to the middle class, mainly in those focused on social mobility, one of the favorite theme in contemporary Brazilian studies, as we will see next.

## ABOUT CONCEPTS OF MIDDLE CLASS AND NEW MIDDLE CLASS

Since the 1950s, studies on middle class use a subdivision between traditional middle class and the NMC. While the first comprises “peasants, artisans and small traders”; the second refers to salaried workers not directly involved in the productive process (SAES, 1984, p. 3). In other words, middle class is, in traditional terms, mirrored on the petite

bourgeoisie<sup>3</sup> historically bound to capitalism consolidation; while the NMC would be a modern phenomenon, associated to the rise of large corporations and the growth of directive and managerial structures.

The NMC is discussed since the publication of a seminal work by Wright Mills (1951) on white collars. Mills (1951, p. 65) identified, in North-American capitalism modernization, the growth of large bureaucratic organizations in the service sector and governmental organizations, verifying increase in the number of intermediary positions and the entry, in them, of previously self-employed professionals. For him, the distinction between the old and the new middle class corresponds to the difference between small capitalists that live off their estate and those non owner employess, “whose skills involve dealing with paper, money and people”. Thus, “one thing they don’t do is living of doing things [products]; instead, they live off the social machine that organizes and coordinates people who do things”.

In a historical leap, after five decades, the NMC received once again attention from media and scholars. The idea that there is a NMC being formed was widely echoed, based on chief transnational think tanks, which are important to establish a common sense on the theme. Authors like Bhalla and Kharas (2013, p. 6) (Kharas, 2010), associated to the World Bank, refer to the rise of the middle class in countries like Brazil, China and India, as “one of the most important happenings in the modern world”, leading the world income distribution to a “significantly more egalitarian” basis. This study joined other similar initiatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Cepal), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Secretariat for Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic (SAE)<sup>4</sup> (BRASIL, 2013a). The explanation is mostly economic, with the NMC as a new market for transnational companies (KAHARAS, 2010); source of “entrepreneurship, purchasing power and political and social stability” (SOLIMANO, 2009, p. 43); “a motor to the global economy, creating jobs, and a new consumer market” (WHEARY, 2009, p. 75).

In this retake, middle class and new middle class are terms ingeniously mixed. The use of the word ‘new’ is a time reference designating people who have recently risen, people previously considered poor who were included in the market as consumers.

When considering the importance of the middle class expansion in economic growth, it is interesting to review the debate from past decades. As indicated by Graciarena (1971, p. 134), what historically guided discussions on the role of the middle class in Latin America was to know whether it would assume or not the same protagonism it had in the economic development of the USA and Europe, since the thesis of development of capitalism through the rise of the middle class “is based on the idea that the middle classes have an irrevocable vocation to capitalism and liberal democracy, and that is why it is supposed

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3. The petite bourgeoisie as class layer is represented by high salaried or small owners of small businesses that are called middle classes. According to Marx (2011b), the petite bourgeoisie is a transition class that is supposed to be above class contradictions in general.

4. On the same date and event, held on September 25 in Rio de Janeiro, in addition to the special edition of *Poverty in Focus* that has already been mentioned, there was the launching of: Challenges in Middle Class Income: escaping from the trap of incentive to competitiveness – OECD; Structural Change for Equality: an integrated view on development – Eclac; and Determinants of Labor Productivity – SAE.

that, where middle classes are numerically and functionally important, the possibilities of capitalism in liberal democracy are higher. Then, what we have been studying, indirectly, was primarily the feasibility of capitalism and liberal democracy”.

Next, we bring to this discussion the theme of the NMC in Brazil. For such, however, some information is necessary to better understand the context and the definition adopted.

## ABOUT THE SO CALLED BRAZILIAN NMC

From 2004 to 2012, the index of families' consumption grew above 3.9% a year, reducing to 2.9% in 2013 and to 0.9% in 2014 (GOMES; CRUZ, 2014). The period with positive performance can be largely explained by growth of the market and international price of commodities, a fact responsible for generating surplus in the Brazilian trade balance, which made possible the financing of consumption incentive and the investment in infrastructure (MARTINS, 2013).

Ignoring extreme determinations, analysts stated that the consumption by lower income groups was directly responsible for sustaining economic growth in years following the 2008 crisis (NERI, 2011). Such posture disseminated a partial truth, ignoring determinations of capitalism as a global mode of production in which internal decision centers of national economies have only subsidiary responsibility over capital movements seeking for valorization (HARVEY, 2011). In fact, if it is true that the consumption expansion policy was co-responsible for sustaining economic growth indices, it is also true that incomes from trade balance surplus financed this policy. Since the crisis resurgence in 2014, it was clear that internal consumption only delayed the harmful effect of the international conjuncture on the economy.

To clarify it, we analyze, next, the components for mass consumption incentive policy, based on Dweck, Chaves and Chernavsky (2013):

- a) Growth of minimum wage purchasing power – From January 2003 to 2014, there was real gain of 72.31% in minimum wage purchasing power, discounting inflation. Even so, according to the Inter-Union Department for Statistics and Socio-economic Studies (DIEESE, 2013), for a family with two children and two adults to have a decent life (including housing, food, education, transport, leisure, clothing, hygiene and minimum social expenses), in December 2013, the wage should be close to twice the R\$ 678 at the time. Despite that, the impact on the economy was direct, since around 25% of Brazilians have their incomes indexed by the minimum wage (DIEESE, 2013).
- b) Bolsa Família Program (Child benefit program) – The Ministry for Social Development and Struggle Against Hunger (MDS) itself presented Bolsa Família Program (BFP) as the main strategy for inclusion of families in the consumption market (BRASIL, 2013b). A survey by the Secretariat for Strategic Affairs (SAE) demonstrated that 30% of the growth of the so called NMC could be explained by BFP (BRASIL, 2012).



- c) Credit expansion – During the first Lula mandate, credit for individuals rose 169%; in the second mandate, 73%; and in the two first years of Dilma’s first mandate, 53%. In terms of relationship to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in 2006, credit for natural persons represented 7%, going to 13% in 2010 and reaching 16% in 2012 (IPEADATA, 2014).
- d) Tax simplification and exemption in two acts: the national ‘simples’ and the individual micro entrepreneur (MEI) – ‘Simples’ is a unified tax collection regime directed to micro and small companies, created in 1996 and expanded in 2006, year when it became known as ‘Simples Nacional’ (BRASIL, 2008). This method of collection, unified among federal, state and municipal spheres, provides differentiated treatment for companies that adhere to the regime, such as facilitated access to credit and simplified processes to sell to the government and to export. MEI, on the other hand, was created in 2008, during the second mandate of Lula, and intended to increase formalization in labor market, transforming small service renderers into legal persons. It is undeniable that these programs represent social advances for those who live in informality; however they are not sufficient in terms of worthy work conditions. The opening of a business can be the only option for individuals without access to formal education who, therefore can’t compete for a good position in the work market. A survey by Sebrae (2012) on the profile of MEI users informs that only 16% completed higher education, 48% completed secondary school or technical school, and 36% had completed elementary school or incomplete elementary school. Also, regarding previous occupation, 25% were employees without formal contract and 23% were unemployed. In this context, Pereira (2012) considers that public incentive to entrepreneurship is a compensatory policy for the incapacity to include in the formal work market, so it actually serves to reduce the pressure for work social protections.
- e) Consumption exemption – This measure was used for the first time in 2008, as emergency measure in face of the international crisis. It was temporary, reaching durable products like white good appliances, cars and civil construction, forcing prices downwards by means of public financing. From 2008 to 2009, this incentive resulted in tax waiver of R\$ 3.74 billion (PIRES, 2009).
- f) Expansion of access to public services – By the way it is practiced, it also contributed to economic growth based on consumption logics. For example, if new roads or funds to keep them are lacking, concessions are made in exchange for tolls; if prisons are lacking, public and private partnerships are celebrated; to improve access to higher education, subsidized scholarships and financing programs are offered for students in private colleges (Pruni and FIES). Not to mention “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” Program, a large scale public housing program, accomplished through consumption and indebtedness mechanisms.

This set of actions had significant effect on economic activities until 2013, however, not without consequences. As we observed, the fall in commodities price resulted in reduced capacity to finance mass consumption incentives. The commercial balance, which,

from 2003 to 2012 presented a positive average annual result of US\$ 30.93 billion, was only US\$ 2.6 billion in 2013. In parallel, consumption incentives reached exhaustion because indebted families could no longer consume, particularly in a context of a deepening crisis. Moreover, 2014 presented the worst performance in terms of creation of formal jobs positions since 1999 (GOMES; CRUZ, 2014), a trend that continued in 2015, causing a negative consumer confidence index in March 2015, the first time since its creation in March 2011 (CONFEDERAÇÃO NACIONAL DO COMÉRCIO, 2015).

Regarding indebtedness, 59.6% of the families stated they had some type of debt in March 2014, while 10.6% were very indebted and 21.7% partially indebted. Among the latter, 73.4% were indebted to credit card administrators that practice monthly average rates of 11.22% and annual rates of 258.26%. Finally, 34.6% stated not to know how to pay due bills (CONFEDERAÇÃO NACIONAL DO COMÉRCIO, 2015).

Data shows the inconsistency of the NMC idea in face of facts. However, to support this argument, one must question the NMC idea from the theoretical point of view as well.

In Brazil, researches on middle class had a first important moment in 1960 and 1970 decades, having, as background, the discussion on its political role, while analyzing on which side of the social cleavage this stratum would be placed: along with the proletariat or along the bourgeoisie (ALBUQUERQUE, 1977; ARAÚJO, 1977; EVERS, 2003). Methodologically, the division between middle class and the proletariat class still was considered according to Mills (1951), based on the nature of their occupation: intellectual or manual. After this first phase of investigations, directly linked to the transplant of theoretical models, a gap occurred during the 1980s and the 1990s, with the exception of Quadros (1985; 1991), who insisted on reproducing Mills' theoretical model. In the 2000s, the interest in the theme reappeared, however emphasizing the NMC and stratification.

In contemporary studies, two approaches on stratification that are not mutually exclusive are outstanding: one associated to purchasing power and income; the other associated to social, cultural and psychological belongingness aspects (MACLENNAN, 2013). Income is the most frequent criterion, following the work by Lopez-Calva (2013), from World Bank, which places the vulnerability, that is, the risk to return to poverty, as defining criterion for an individual to belong to the middle class (FERREIRA *et al.*, 2012).

In Brazil, the most frequent concept was defined by a commission formed by SAE in 2012, a secretariat that respond directly to the president. Though also based on the level of vulnerability, the stratum limits were defined in a relative way. Brazilian population was classified into 100 levels, according to *per capita* family income, and the middle class was defined as residents in households with income classified between the 34<sup>th</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> percentiles, that is, between R\$ 291 and R\$ 1,019 per month as *per capita* family income (BRASIL, 2012). That represented 53% of the population, below the richer 20% richer and above the poorer 27%.

In order to better understand how the theoretical dimension of the Brazilian NMC stratagem was formed, one must consider the works by Marcelo Neri, researcher at Fundação Getúlio Vargas' Center for Social Policies (CPS-FGV), who participated in the Federal

Government from 2012 to 2015, first as Ipea<sup>5</sup> president and later as Minister of SAE. While Neri was in charge, CPS/FGV published, from 2008 to 2012, ten studies on the NMC. Since the first study, Neri (2008) matched the NMC to class C – “the central class, below A and B and above D and E” – in other words, indicated that the term NMC was a new label for class C, defined as a “stratum characterized as the new economic protagonist in Brazil, being the result of labor market recovery and the programs for income transfers”. The simplification is evident: income structure is the foundation which places the middle class in the center of income distribution, and the middle class is middle because it is in the middle of the income structure. This tautology is a demonstration of the artifice to support the NMC stratagem. Accepting it implies, in fact, rejecting the name itself by which this social stratum became known, since it is logically impossible to use the prefix “new” to define what was just the “old” class C.

In opposition, we will present a heterogeneous set of researchers who share the problematization of the idea that a NMC exists.

In a book published months before the diffusion of the official concept by SAE, Pochmann (2012, p. 8) stated: “[...] what there is, in fact, is an alienating endless orientation, orchestrated for the sequestration of the debate on the nature and dynamics of economic and social changes, unable to allow the classist politicization of the phenomenon of transformation of the social structure and the comparison with other dynamic periods in Brazil”.

Souza (2010, p. 10) addressed a social grouping located between the traditional middle class and poverty, called by him as hard-workers: people who “[...] actively struggle, with energy and ingenuity, to escape from the mob and enter into the group of the entrepreneur and emerging petite bourgeoisie”. For him, disputes around the idea of NMC occur, particularly, in the political arena. The problem of this book, well characterized by Braga (2012), is the abandonment of the possibility of active resistance of the workers against the capital, as if people were willing to submit to any situation to increase their consumption.

Braga (2012, p. 15), in his turn, characterized the movement of rise of a contingent of poor people to the work market as the formation of a precarious proletarian class, proposing the “precariat” category. However, the work precarization category has the problem of covering up the overexploitation of work as a foundation of dependent capitalism, leading to the mistake of considering that there was a time when work was not precarious, a problem resulting from the adoption, without mediation, of a concept created for the reality of the European social-democratic state.

In order to advance the reflection on the NMC stratagem, we resort to Vieira Pinto’s (2008) proposition on dialectics of consumption and to the Marxist dependency theory (MDT), represented by Marini’s (1991a) work.

## DIALECTICS OF CONSUMPTION OF NON-CONSUMERS

Álvaro Vieira Pinto is considered by some as the greatest Brazilian philosopher (OURIQUES, 2014), even though he is not an intellectual with wide acknowledgement. For

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5. The Institute of Applied Economic Research is a public foundation linked to Planning Minister.

Gadotti (1990, p. 2-3), he “was, among the greatest Brazilian philosophers, the one who most researched our national reality in order to understand it and seek a meaning for the future”; besides, or maybe due to that, his thinking “cannot be considered dated work, a past reference”. According to Freitas (2015, p. 10), “Vieira Pinto wrote intending to announce the morphology of our inequalities. Plunged into oblivion, his rich and forgotten work has been object of new studies, from which we always learn that the work and the author deserve high consideration”. The present study is part of the current rescue of his work, retaking a classic of the Brazilian Social Thought with the necessary mediations to avoid anachronisms. Even recognizing the persistence of the structures that define our economic and social formation and the inequalities resulting from them.

Vieira Pinto builds the argument of “Sociologia dos Países Subdesenvolvidos” (Sociology of Underdeveloped Countries), published for the first time in 2008 and written in 1975 as notebooks, around the concealment of the “valley of tears”, figure of speech to define insurmountable social inequalities in the context of the underdeveloped country and the ways “science” acts to conceal the “valley”. Without considering the underdevelopment reality, defined by Vieira Pinto (2008) as generalized absence of sovereignty, the intellectual work helps to empty the fight to transform unworthy life conditions of a large portion of the population: the inhabitants of the “valley of tears”. Development would function, then, as a concealing narrative kept and reinforced by the work of ideologists – social scientists and other interpreters.

Among the ways used to conceal social differences is consumption, a term easily understood in common sense that, apparently, needs no definition. However, to understand its implicit logic contents, one must recognize that the current understanding is expressed by statistics and other mathematic and economic terms. For Vieira Pinto (2008), these descriptive operations are a problem *a priori* because they assume the adoption of some not explicit theoretical definition.

In this sense, to expand the concept of consumption, one must consider its material essence, composed of dialectic moments represented by two verbs: *consummate* – human action involving fabricate, make the object, the good, the consumable good; and *consume* – action that “[...] represents the annihilation, the denial of the consummated by the use man does of it, destroying it, obliging him to manufacture another object, equal or better than the previous one” (VIEIRA PINTO, 2008, p. 307-8). It is not possible to consume without consummating, neither are there reasons to consummate without consuming. Therefore, work is central. The positive work activity is to produce goods; while its negative activity is to make possible, with the salary, the consumption that makes the good disappear. Hence: “the purchase-consumption-disappearance-fabrication-of-other-item-sale-purchase cycle is sustained by work and reveals another important aspect that the analysis of the process makes explicit, namely, the human character, both positive, the ‘doing’ and the negative, the “undoing”, the “consuming”. This relationship also includes the “spending” and “wearing out”. Consuming is wearing out the object while using it; for such, it is necessary to spend economic values. In order to obtain money, it is necessary to wear oneself out, consuming one’s own existence working. This act of denial of oneself is positively remunerated with money in the form of salary (VIEIRA PINTO, 2008, p. 309).

As it is the most visible portion of the economic phenomenon, consumption can be used as a statement of abundance of a society that presents itself as plentiful. For the author, the advocates of this idea omit that the concept of consumer is not universal, and, while doing it, they cover up differences among social classes and economic and social formations. While considering them, Vieira Pinto (2008, p. 321-2) elaborates the distinction between consumer and non-consumer:

The consumer for whom consumption is a social habit exercised continuously in relation to everything he feels like, considers himself naturally installed in this condition due to a right that is inherent to him, and that he practices freely, without questioning whether all men equally have it. [...] The non-consumer, for whom consumption is an exceptional act, for whom the purchase of an object, sometimes for a banal or imperceptible use for the ruling class, assumes a psychological state of hope, anxiety and often of doubt about the reasonability of the decision, has to be, mandatorily, the individual who is not calmly conscious of the right to consume such thing.

Such proposition is still up-to-date as objective, material and historical conditions associated to underdevelopment, like poverty and the “valley of tears”, persist in our time. In an international study on social and economic inequality, data from 2001 to 2015 demonstrate the persistent and structuring stability of the Brazilian social abyss: in 2001 the 10% richer held 54.3% of the income, while the 50% poorer held 11.1%. In 2015, the 10% richer held 55.3% of the income, while the 50% poorer held 12.3%. These data evidence that social policies aimed to popular insertion via consumption failed in their stated objective of eradicating poverty (WID WORLD, 2017). In fact, Dornelas Camara (2014, p. 199), while studying *Bolsa Família Program*, had already alerted for the “expansion of precarious work positions, characterized by sub-employment” and their contribution “to maintain a reserve army of labor”.

However, even if poverty and inequality reproduction is similar to that of other historical moments, its mechanisms are changed and adapted. In the case of the NMC, the access to personal credit arises as a new element for non-consumers, making even sharper the problems observed by Vieira Pinto (2008). According to him, in order to consume and wear out goods, one must spend money. To have it, the human being increasingly wears himself out and does it to assure the accelerated flow of consumption that drives the feeling of incorporation of the value of the goods he owns. Such fact becomes more aggravated in the context of abundance and easiness to obtain personal credit, one of the faces of contemporary capitalism’s financialization. In an attempt to anticipate the pleasure produced by consumption, the individual borrows money, paying interests rates. As in a roller coaster that accumulates energy, the debt interests, understood as a form of wearing out that continuously reproduces itself without any additional type of consumption. This assures the expanded reproduction of self-denial, since this consumption of oneself does not have the compensation of replenishing the psychic or physical energy of consuming the goods. Debt is, in this sense, a wearing out of the being through work, acting in inertial conditions until it is interrupted by payment, which means postponing the possibility of immediate consumption.

This theoretical perspective contributes to overcome consumption analysis from the point of view individual and his or her personal accountability, addint to a previous warning by Bradshaw, Campbell and Dunne (2013, p. 211) from the context of central countries.

Contemporary consumption, therefore, has been built as a political sin that needs to be paid. Even when a powerful economy has come as promise of a high tide that would raise all, those previously placed at the margin of the consumption society, who suddenly experienced a growth in purchasing power, are now judged for having made choices in a state of inconsequent excess.

In order to contribute in this same direction, but taking into account the specificities of our context, and for a better understanding of the phenomenon under study, we turned to the theoretical complement of the dialectics of dependency as discussed by Ruy Mauro Marini (1991a).

## **DIALECTICS OF DEPENDENCY AND OVEREXPLOITATION OF LABOR**

For Marini (1991a), capitalism is a worldwide hierarchic mode of production in which centers of accumulation and dependent regions are found in a global process of transfers of value to the first. Bound to this dynamics, Latin American countries were kept unable to seek balance of exchange terms, as this is a movement that would require technological and productivity leaps unattainable in a world marked by the international division of labor and reinforced by financial and technological monopolies. This configuration led capitalists from dependent countries to seek partial compensation for losses of value in international exchanges in the production sphere, directing efforts to more exploitation of labor.

The particular configuration of these processes in dependent economies was called by Marini (1991a) overexploitation of labor, a mechanism by which the capitalist increases surplus value production at the expense of more physical exploitation of the worker, remunerating him below the necessary to replenish his wearing out in production. The overexploitation is the foundation of dependent capitalism, and is a particular way of exploitation that has as the transgression of the work force value as a specificity, “reducing the worker life fund in favor of the fund of capitalist accumulation” (OSÓRIO, 2013, p. 49).

The main mechanisms of overexploitation presented in “Dialética da Dependência” (Dialectics of Dependency) were increase in work hours without increase in remuneration, increase in work intensity, and remuneration below the work force value (MARINI, 1991a). Later in his career, Marini (2000) added another mechanism: increase in work force value without increase in remuneration. Even though he does not discuss this as a main topic, this last procedure gains importance today.

The first mechanism, increase in work hours without increase in remuneration, extensively grows the absolute surplus value, expanding the time in which the worker pro-

duces beyond what is socially necessary for reproduction of the labor forces, increasing the exhaustion of the individual<sup>6</sup> (MARINI, 1991a).

The increase in work intensity, on the other hand, is a strategy that presupposes the suppression of downtimes in the production process, without incorporation of technology, that is, at the expense of more physical wearing out of the worker. Marini (1979) warns that it is only possible to understand how the extraordinary surplus value is converted into relative surplus value by the increase in work intensity, when the whole economic cycle is analyzed, including the dialectic relationships of production and circulation. The increase in work intensity in sectors that produce wage-goods generates a contradiction. On the one hand, it expands the amount of values in use in circulation; while on the other hand, it reduces the proportion of work force value against the total value produced, especially in cases where the increase in intensity is not compensated by the increase in salary, which is typical in dependent countries. The combined effect of these two movements causes problems for extraordinary surplus value realization, since more value is produced and taken into circulation without increase in demand. This process forces the conversion of extraordinary surplus value into relative surplus value based on the reduction in goods prices (which is part of wage-goods), lowering the work force value.

Finally, the last mechanism mentioned by Marini (1991a) is the worker's remuneration below the value of reproduction of his work force, obliging him to deliver part of his consumption fund to the capitalist accumulation fund. For Osório (2013, p. 61), this is the predominant form of overexploitation, in addition to being the "grosser and less concealed way of violating the work force value".

One of the main criticisms to MDT involves the supposed inexistence of important advances in the analysis of dependent capitalism with regard to the analysis of Marx's capitalist mode of production. This criticism is based both on the lack of understanding of the particularities of the accumulation pattern based on labor overexploitation, and on the lack of knowledge about Marx's value law. What characterizes labor overexploitation in dependent countries is the fact that it "is better defined by more exploitation of the worker's physical force" (MARINI, 1991b, p. 5). Marx (2011a, p. 201) observed that "the work force only becomes a reality with its exercise. Through its action, the work, a certain amount of muscles, nerves and brain, etc., is spent, which requires renewal. While increasing expenditure, it becomes necessary to increase remuneration", therefore, increase in labor exploitation without proportional increase in salary is a form of transgressing the law of value, with constant setting of good price below its value, imposing to the worker a remuneration inferior to what would be socially necessary (MARINI, 1991a).

Osório (2013), even while admitting that Marx (2011a) knew that the transgression of the law of value was a contradiction typical of capitalism in certain historical moments, states that the particularity of Marini's thought is the understanding that work overexploitation in dependent capitalism acquires regularity, becoming a foundation, and not an exception. Moreover, understanding that labor overexploitation is the basis of the dependent accumulation pattern does not mean denying the increase in productivity, but rather to know

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6. The extended work hours, even with increase in wages, finds its limit at the point in which the consumption provided by the salary is no longer capable of replenishing the energies spent in the production process, that is, finds its limit in the human nature itself (MARX, 2011a).

that “once in progress, the economic process based on overexploitation is transformed into a monstrous mechanism whose perversity, far from mitigating itself, is emphasized when the dependent economy resorts to increase in productivity upon technological development” (MARINI, 2000, p. 11).

For the argument of this essay, it is important to bear in mind that, in Brazil, non-consumers had, temporarily, important participation in the domestic market - those for whom consumption is an activity exercised mainly during the rising movement of the economic pendulum. However, the reproduction of the accumulation regime with overexploitation of labor makes impossible the occurrence of effective changes in the unequal social and economic structure. Hence, the expansion of non-consumers’ consumption is marked by uncertainties, a fact aggravated by indebtedness that may lead to the renewal of overexploitation of labor, as we are going to evidence next.

One of the criticisms of the NMC idea is the cut-off point defined by SAE – monthly R\$ 291 *per capita*. According to Dieese’s (2013) calculations, in order to buy a basic-needs grocery package, with nutrients necessary for an adult to live one month, R\$ 329.16 would be necessary – taking as a reference Porto Alegre city in June 2013<sup>7</sup>. A family from the so called NMC, with two adults and two children, placed in the minimum range of the stratum defined by SAE, would have R\$ 1,164 of income. Considering one minimum essential feed for each adult and a half for each child, the cost would reach R\$ 986.16; leaving R\$ 177.84 for all the other expenses in the month, including necessary expenses like clothing and housing. The mechanism of overexploitation by remuneration below the work force value is then clear, compromising the social reproduction in minimally acceptable conditions. By means of this dynamics, the capitalist appropriates part of the worker’s consumption fund.

With regard to the extension of work hours without increase in remuneration, data show increase in absolute surplus value.

Working hours in Brazil are regulated as maximum of 8 daily hours or 44 weekly hours. According to Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE (2015), 28.2% of the Brazilian people work more than the weekly hours set by law. Considering that the supposed NMC is placed in the interval between the group of up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  minimum wage and the group between one and five minimum wages, one can conclude that this stratum corresponds to 92% of the workers that work between 45 and 48 hours a week, and 82.3% of those who work 49 hours or more. In other words, non-consumers form the stratum that work more time, demonstrating the expansion of surplus value rate through the extension of work hours.

The last of the three classical mechanisms through which overexploitation of labor occurs is the increase in work intensity without the corresponding wage increase, the most difficult to demonstrate. In this sense, Luce (2013) uses statistics of diseases and accidents related to work as indicators of work intensity. In 2011, for example, “around one death event occurred in average every three hours, motivated by the risk resulting from work environment factors and also around 81 work accidents and diseases for each hour in

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7. We decided to leave 2013 as a reference year, since it is closer to the diffusion of SAE’s definitions of NMC (BRASIL, 2012), making comparisons easier.



the daily work hours. In 2011, an average of 49 workers/day did not return to work due to disability or death” (BRASIL, 2011).

In addition to the three classical mechanisms of overexploitation, current discussions on MDT point towards another procedure: increase in work force value without the corresponding increase in salary. This can occur in two ways: through the increase in necessary goods in the worker consumption agenda, based on the historical transformation of the structure of needs, or through the education and qualification of the work force (MARTINS, 2013; OSÓRIO, 2013). The dynamics of transformations of needs result, over time, in the increase in work force value. This mechanism is important because it makes possible to understand the contradictions of mass market expansion from non-consumers’ consumption, who are still submitted to a labor overexploitation regime.

Marx (2011a, p. 201) advocates that there is a moral-historical element in the constitution of needs that form the work force value: “The extension of indispensable needs and the way to satisfy them are historical products and depend, due to that, on several factors, largely on the degree of civilization of the country and, particularly, on the conditions under which the free workers class was formed with their peculiar habits and demands”. Osório (2013, p. 52) follows Marx, observing that it is essential to think needs, in terms of time and space, considering “issues related to education, culture and habits under which the workers were educated, implying that basic needs can be provided in different ways.”

As the costs and financing of several goods previously considered luxurious sumptuary, such as television, cell phone, car, etc., they become part of the material needs and sociability needs of the worker, changing the social structure of needs. The popular consumption of these items, on the other hand, instead of representing change in accumulation patterns, creates a debate on the nature of social transformations that made possible its realization. For an individual with income in the low or intermediary group of the stratum of the so called NMC, the non-consumer, to acquire a cell phone for R\$ 600 in 10 installments, there is effort and risk. Since it is not a consumption that became possible through effective changes in social conditions, it ends up consuming the consumer. Data on the magnitude of indebtedness of families indicate that in the annual average for 2014, the percentage of indebted families was 61.9%, with 31.4% of them with some overdue bills, while 32.3% had no conditions to pay (CONFEDERAÇÃO NACIONAL DO COMÉRCIO, 2015).

The debt that is converted into interest payment is a form of transfer of value from non-consumers to the high classes via financial system, the same role played by inflation in previous stages of the Brazilian capitalist development, as Marini (2012) observed. Ironically, this process re-appropriates part of the value delivered to workers by means of increase in salaries and social programs. The result is a renewal of income concentration and capital remuneration at rates never witnessed before in the country. In 2013, the profit of the four largest Brazilian banks, Itaú Unibanco, Santander, Bradesco and Banco do Brasil, amounted to US\$ 20.5 billion, a figure higher than the Gross Domestic Product of 83 countries that same year (CURY, 2014).

Therefore, one can conclude that the overexploitation of labor not only persists, but is renewed under the apparent income and consumption expansion, reinforcing an accumulation pattern that works as an obstacle for transformations in the social structure.

So, the encounter of Marxist Analysis of Latin American Capitalism by Ruy Mauro Marini and Álvaro Vieira Pinto's philosophy with existentialist and materialist aspects provides a new way to understand the rise and fall of the NMC. From this perspective, one can verify the contradictions in the apparently simple act of consumption by popular layers, which can't be considered as the banal act of buying because it contains in itself the dialectics of dependent capitalism. What is revealed, then, is that the so called NMC can be better understood as a group of non-consumers who deny their own existence, while consuming and falling into debt, consuming themselves in the labor process.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We advocate that, in our context, the idea of existence of a NMC was a stratagem adopted by the Brazilian government to organize a positive agenda. This stratagem was produced by the articulation of a set of governmental measures aimed at encouraging mass consumption and an arbitrary theoretical construction supported by the stratification theory. Amid a certain precarious consensus, we denounced the perversity inherent in its central contradiction. While consumption increase provides better living conditions to non-consumers (even though limited), indebtedness and overexploitation of labor consume the one who consumes.

It is clear today that governmental action concealed the inter-dependency of policies for consumption incentive and the favorable macroeconomic moment, overestimating internal decisions. From the theoretical point of view, the stratagem was supported by stratification theory, making possible for the NMC advocates to reach doubtful conclusions, such as the fact that more than half of the Brazilian population could be considered middle class (BRASIL, 2012; NERI, 2011). The penetration of the stratification theory as *modus operandis* of the structure of social differentiation in Brazil made even some critics of the concept of NMC remain stuck to it, limiting the discussion just around the relevance of classification criteria, just slightly touching the surface of the issue.

Such attitude is described by Álvaro Vieira Pinto as science of concealment, the way science acts in the sense of concealing the "valley of tears"; or by Bradshaw, Campbell and Dunne (2013) as concealment of the politics of consumption, the one that naturalizes social inequalities, turning away to cultural aspects. Without a concrete context in which the reality of our social formation is considered, the intellectual work helps emptying the struggle for the transformation of unworthy life conditions for large portions of the population. In this sense, the existence of the NMC works as a concealment narrative, reinforced by the progressive and evolutionary corollary of development (VIEIRA PINTO, 2008).

Following Vieira Pinto's warning (2008), we seek to understand the phenomenon in its context, indicating a possible path to expand the possibilities for criticizing the idea of a NMC. For such, we used two main resources: the first was the rescue of the theory of classes in Marxist view; the second was the valorization of classic studies of the Brazilian Social Thought, through the work of Álvaro Vieira Pinto and Ruy Mauro Marini.

The theory of classes brought back the category of work, avoiding the trap of the primacy of consumption sphere over production. With this perspective, contradictions

emerge as part of the dynamics of capitalism itself, rejecting the myth that effective and long lasting social transformation can occur without structural changes. Moreover, the theme of social classes is still practically absent in debates on consumption in the OSs field, while acknowledged authors like Fine (2013) state that this category is as important as the others, since financial disposition and not class position would prevail nowadays. Let's not forget that this author lives in England and, maybe, he is not familiar with indebtedness and overexploitation of labor in dependent countries, a context in which poverty is real and persistent. So, the present essay is a gateway for a debate that should be deeply addressed.

We consider that the dialectics of consumption re-establishes the ties of interdependence between consumption, social classes, production and work. From this analysis emerges the non-consumers category, those for whom consumption is not a right, but rather an activity practiced in a painful and uncertain way during the favorable moments of the economy. So we defend that those belonging to the supposed NMC would be better characterized as non-consumers, which is a situation that is aggravated by indebtedness and the need to pay debts.

While rescuing part of Vieira Pinto's intellectual work, we argue that his proposition of dialectics of consumption has great potential to be introduced in international debates on politics of consumption, as it makes a synthesis between critical political economy and consumption studies. The introduction of social classes in a debate that has already been established already established, on the need to approximate consumption, work and production in academic research seems to us particularly fruitful. We understand that such elements must be better developed.

The dialectics of dependency, on the other hand, as developed by Ruy Mauro Marini, brings other complementary elements to analyze the theme, also valuing the importance of the theory of social classes, but emphasizing the specificities of the dependent character of our economic and social formation. The transfer of value to central countries enlarges the difference between social classes in dependent countries. For Marini (1991a), the specific accumulation pattern based on overexploitation of labor engenders a particular mode of circulation, an adaptation in face of the fact that overexploited workers play a more important role as producers of value than as consumers (OSÓRIO, 2013). So, from the point of view of dependent countries, the fundamental moments of the capital cycle are split - production and circulation of goods. -(The)"effect is to make it appear specific in Latin American economy, the contradiction inherent to capitalist production in general, that is, the one that opposes capitalists and workers as sellers and buyers of goods" (MARINI, 1991a, p. 12).

The NMC stratagem defended precisely the idea that production and circulation spheres would come closer, while worker consumption played the role of protagonist in capital realization in a strengthened internal market. The increase in workers consumption as a result of a government policy of temporary incentives, created the idea that the accumulation axis was moving from overexploitation of labor to relative surplus value, an illusion justified by the diversification of the consumption agenda of low income families. So, we come to the conclusion that the NMC was a stratagem that reinforced the overexploitation of the non-consumers labor, inebriating them with promises of a new social condition from which they are becoming even more distant.

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