

Definition of the Capitalist Mode of Production: A Re-examination (with Application to Non-capitalist Modes of Production)

George E. Economakis*

Abstract: In this paper I attempt to review the theoretical criteria for definition of the capitalist mode of production, and thus of the capitalist and working classes, through an investigation of the Marxian analysis in *Capital*. I discover that the conceptual instruments of the original Althusserian tradition are indispensable for the purposes of this study. Finally, I use my research as the point of departure for a short review of non-capitalist modes of production under conditions of capitalist predominance, thereby, so to speak, testing the explanatory power and coherence of my analysis.

1 Introductory Admissions

I take as my point of departure ‘that the mode of production refers exclusively to the *core* of class relations, not to the class relations as such’ (Milios 2000, p. 295). This implies that in my investigation I do not ‘classify modes of production according to the “dynamic” of the system as a whole’ (in Richards 1986, p. 9), as for example J. Banaji does (see 1976, 1977), but I classify modes of production according to their ‘*matrix*’.

In a given social formation that ‘has a specific history, culture, economy and political organization’ (Goodman and Redclift 1982, p. 59) there may exist more modes of production and therefore a complex class configuration. Thus ‘a class analysis of...[a] society...is based on analysis of the different modes of production’ (Milios 1999, p. 45). The articulation of different modes of production is always accomplished under the domination of one particular mode of production. This domination determines the structure of class dominance. Correspondingly the articulation (under dominance) of different modes of production is defined as economic structure of an historical social formation. The field of this articulation is the sphere of circulation (see Economakis 2000).

The capitalist mode of production (CMP) and capitalist development can (and as a rule do) go along with the coexistence of non-capitalist modes of production. The CMP and the system of capitalist dominance – capitalism – are not synonymous or identical. Thus the classes of the CMP are not the only classes of a capitalist social formation (see for example Gerstein 1989). However, since ‘the two *basic classes* of every social formation where the *principal contradiction* makes its appearance are the classes of the mode of production predominant in it, in capitalist social formations [they are] the capitalist class and the working class’ (Poulantzas 1974, p. 26).

The structure of the paper is as follows. In the second section the concept of the modes of production as well as the structural relation between modes of production and social classes are defined. In the third section a re-examination of the definition of the capitalist mode of production is introduced, while in the fourth

section this re-examination is extended to the re-definition of the working class. In the fifth section the basic inferences of the foregoing analysis are applied to the delimitation of non-capitalist modes of production in the system of capitalist dominance. Finally, I propose a scheme of class polarisation at the level of capitalist economic structure that is based on the localisation of different modes of production under capitalist predominance.

2 The Concept of 'Pure' Modes of Production: Basic Definitions

Following critically conceptual definitions of so-called 'French Marxism'¹ I argue that there are three relations, which together constitute the relations of production: *ownership*, *possession* and the *use* of the means of production. Use of the means of production is defined as the exclusive performance of the function of labour, where function of labour means participation – by an individual or a collective agent – in the labour process with a view to producing use values (see for example Carchedi 1977, p. 66). Ownership as an economic relationship consists in the control of the means, objects and results of the productive process. As distinct from formal-legal ownership, ownership as a (real) economic relation presupposes possession of the means of production, that is, the management (direction) of the production process and the power to put the means of production to use. That is to say, ownership as an economic relation exists in a relation of homology (coincidence-correspondence) with possession (management).² In the event of non-homology (non-coincidence and non-correspondence), ownership is not an economic relation but is (or may be) purely formal or legal.

A 'pure' mode of 'production'³ refers to the particular (and historically variable in its forms of manifestation) combination of these three relations. This particular combination (that is, the economic structure of a mode of production) comprises the 'matrix' of a mode of production and defines which of the three constituent structural elements of an historical mode of production (economic, juridico-political and ideological) is dominant, playing in all cases the role of the decisive-in-the-last-instance element.

In my analysis, these three relations are the 'small number of elements which are always the same' (Balibar 1986, p. 225). However, they are always the same only in their general definition and in the sense that they are the permanent components of the relations of production. This means that these three relations must not be considered as non-altering from one mode of production to the other, as if they were formed by 'elements' which would 'remain the same in all modes of production' (Poulantzas 1984, p. 83; see also Dedoussopoulos 1985, p. 161; Gerstein 1989, pp. 123, 125).

From the consideration that the particular combination of ownership, possession and use comprises the 'matrix' of a mode of production, it follows that the (different) social classes are formed within (different) modes of production as the result of their 'matrix' and the 'carriers' of these relations. Social classes are thus characterised, according to Althusser (1986, p. 180), by the class positions of which the 'carriers' are 'the occupants'. Althusser here follows Marxian analysis that class members are 'embodiments' and 'personifications' of 'specific social characters' – since the relations of production of a mode of production determine the so-called 'social characters' – and as such they are the 'principal agents' of a mode of production (Marx 1991, pp. 1019-20).

The social classes in a mode of production determined as above are defined here as the *fundamental* social classes in a mode of production (the principal agents of a mode of production, to use the Marxian terminology). Correspondingly, I define as *non-fundamental* social classes those social groupings (if they exist) of a mode of production that are not ‘carriers’ of relations that constitute the relations of production, that is, classes that do not adequately embody a discernible or ‘specific social character’.⁴

The above means that, with reference to the structural determination of the classes (mode of production), classes appear as ‘pairs’ (Milios 2000, p. 295) or ‘as interaction’ (Richards 1986, p. 18) or as opposing (Poulantzas 1974, p. 16), depending on the historical combination of ownership, possession and use of the means of production (‘matrix’ of a mode of production). In short, I do not identify the concept of the mode of production with the notion of exploitation. ‘Marx’s concept of exploitation...is a historically specific concept’ (Carchedi 1986, p. 198).⁵

At this point I must introduce one restriction into my study. In my investigation I do not propose to take into account whether the classes are to be defined *exclusively* within the modes of production – which makes the role of economic relations in the process of class formation a determinative one (see Laclau 1983, pp. 128-9) – or whether the ‘classes are defined *principally (but not exclusively)* by their place in the relations of production’ (Jessop 1985, p. 165, also see p. 160; emphasis added). In keeping with the ‘Althusserian tradition’ (see Jessop 1985, p. 170) this means ‘that a complete definition of classes must be worked out in terms of economic, political and ideological [factors]’ (Carchedi 1977, p. 43).

3 The Capitalist Mode of Production: Genetic Condition, Elementary and Specific Features

The CMP emerges on the base of a double historical movement: emancipation of the immediate producers from feudal or Asiatic homage and their separation from the means of production and subsistence that they possessed under these historic conditions in favour of the new exploiting class (see Marx 1990). This double movement, which creates the free worker in the double sense (free individual and expropriated) massively transforms labour power into a commodity (Marx 1990, 1991) and forms what I shall call the *elementary feature* of the ‘matrix’ of the (‘pure’) CMP. This elementary feature can be described as homology of the relation of ownership and possession in the class ‘carrier’ of ownership (real ownership) by separation of free-immediate-producers from possession of the means of production. Real ownership connotes that the free workers work to the benefit of the class ‘carrier’ of ownership, without any extra-economic coercion being required for this (dominant economic element).

According to Marx, for the formation of this particular mode of production as ‘*formal subsumption* of labour under capital’, which represents the point of departure of the CMP, the ‘essential features’ are the ‘pure monetary relationship’ between the buyer and the seller of labour power and the (presupposed) expropriation from the worker of ‘*his objective conditions of labour* (means of production) and the *subjective conditions of labour* (means of subsistence)’ which ‘confront him as *capital*’ (Marx 1990, pp. 1025-6).

However, although these two features necessarily imply a relation of exploitation within the concrete historical mode of production without any extra-economic coercion, and therefore are a genetic condition of the CMP, neither the pure monetary relationship nor the expropriation necessarily imply that the objective and the subjective conditions of labour confront the worker as *capital*, in the precise sense of the term (capital), which is that the relation of exploitation is the capitalist one.

I maintain, in other words, that the elementary feature of the 'matrix' of the CMP (which corresponds to the essential features according to Marx) is not the specifically capitalistic feature and, therefore, it cannot by itself define the real proprietors of the means of production (the 'carrier' of real ownership) as the capitalist class. In short, I consider that it is not convincing to claim, as to the definition of the 'matrix' of the CMP, that 'capitalist property relations result when direct producers are separated from the means of production....and are free from extra-economic coercion' (Albritton 2000, p. 150).

To comprehend the specific feature of the CMP we must restore to the Marxian analysis of the West European economy in the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the medieval 'economy of....town or regional economy' of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, and its collapse. This economy was based on the combination of the rural feudal system with the craft guilds of the town (Rubin 1989, pp. 19-20). 'The guild system of the Middle Ages....tried forcibly to prevent the transformation of the master of a craft into a capitalist, by limiting the number of workers a single master could employ to a very low maximum' (Marx 1990, p. 423; see also Rubin 1989, p. 20). The dissolution of the medieval economy had as a condition the dissolution of the rural feudal system as well as the craft guilds of the town. The dissolution in the case of the craft guilds, that is, in the case of the genesis of industrial capital and the industrial capitalist, with the transformation of pre-existent forms (see Marx 1991, pp. 452-5), passed through the breakdown of the guild law, which 'deliberately hindered the transformation of the single master into a capitalist, by placing very strict limits on the number of apprentices and journeymen he could employ' (Marx 1990, p. 479).

So, according to Marx:

at a certain point merely quantitative differences pass over by a dialectical inversion into qualitative distinctions....Capitalist production only really begins....when each individual capital simultaneously employs a comparatively large number of workers, and then, as a result, the labour-process is carried on an extensive scale....A large number of workers working together, at the same time, in one place....in order to produce the same sort of commodity under the command of the same capitalist, constitutes the starting-point of capitalist production....This starting-point coincides with the birth of the capital itself. (Marx 1990, pp. 423, 439, 453)

In other words, according to Marx (or, better, according to my comprehension of his writings), in order for the relationship between real proprietor of the means of production and worker to exist as a relationship between capital and labour, a qualitative prerequisite must be present, which is nothing more than a quantitative scale of production: a certain number of workers who are under the command of the same capitalist. So the CMP has as its benchmark the augmentation of the number of workers labouring in order to jointly produce the same sort of commodity.

But, what is the number and what does it mean? In Marx's words:

differences appear...in the volume of the means of production invested, and in the number of workers under the command of a single employer....Only then will he [the owner] be relieved of the need to work directly himself and be able to content himself with acting as *capitalist*, i.e. as supervisor and director of the process....Only with a certain minimum capital does the capitalist cease to be a worker himself and [begin] to concern himself entirely with the directing work and organizing sales. (Marx 1990, pp. 1022, 1027)

Consequently, to appear

within the process of production...as its components personified: the capitalist as 'capital', the immediate producer as 'labour'....[t]he capitalist must be the owner or the proprietor of the means of production on a *social* scale and in quantities that beggar comparison with the possible production of the individual and his family. (*ibid.*, pp. 1020, 1035)

Thus for the real owner (or proprietor) of the means of production to appear as 'capital' (supervision and direction of the process) and the immediate producer as 'labour', the scale of production, and so the magnitude of capital employed by the individual entrepreneur (and therefore the number of wage earners employed by him at any one time), must be such that the capitalist is absolutely disengaged from the need to work directly himself and that the labour process is exclusively under the direct exploitation of agents other than those participating in the labour process. Only from this point of view are the capitalists 'non-labourers'⁶ and 'the means of production....are the property of non-labourers (capitalists)' (Hindess and Hirst 1979, p. 10). This full disengagement of the real owner from the need to work directly himself I call the necessary precondition of the CMP. This necessary precondition transubstantiates the elementary feature of the 'matrix' of the ('pure') CMP into the specific one.

As far as 'the formal subsumption of labour under capital...is the premise and precondition of its *real* subsumption', which constitutes the specifically capitalist unity of capitalist relations and forces of production⁷ (see also Milios 1988, p. 303), the necessary precondition is not only the prerequisite but also 'the constant result' of the real subsumption (Marx 1990, pp. 1026, 1035).

The formation of real capitalist ownership presupposes the full disengagement of the capitalist from the need to work himself, but does not presuppose that capitalists as individual subjects are simultaneously the legal owners of the means of production. The question (as is well known) has to do with the separation of (legal) ownership from possession of the means of production. Marx had already observed that '[i]n joint-stock companies the function is separated from capital ownership' (Marx 1991, p. 568). And of course the issue of the class position of top-level managers is also relevant. Poulantzas writes in relation to Marxian analysis: 'Marx's analyses are clear....The directive agents, which directly exercise the powers [of capital] and which perform the "functions of capital", occupy the place of capital and so belong to the bourgeois class, even though they do not exercise formal legal ownership. Managers, in any case, belong to the bourgeois class' (Poulantzas 1974, p. 194).

4 The Collective Worker and the Working Class

According to Marx, manufacture constitutes the ‘first period’ of ‘the modern [that is, capitalist] mode of production’ (Marx 1991, p. 450). ‘[T]he division of labour in...manufacture, is an entirely specific creation of the capitalist mode of production’ (Marx 1990, pp. 480, 486). It is in manufacture then (in formal subsumption of labour under capital) that the ‘collective worker formed out of the combination of a number of individual workers’ originates, as ‘the living mechanism of manufacture’ (*ibid.*, pp. 458, 468).

The collective worker obtains its *latent* characteristics in real subsumption of labour under capital.

According to Marx, then:

Some work better with their hands, other with their heads, one as a manager, engineer, technologist, etc., the other as overseer, the third as manual labourer or even drudge. An ever increasing number of types of labour are included in the immediate concept of *productive labour*, and those who perform it are classed as *productive workers*, workers directly exploited by capital and *subordinated* to its process of production and expansion. If we consider the aggregate worker...then we see that their *combined activity* results materially in an *aggregate product*...And here it is quite immaterial whether the job of a particular worker, who is merely a limb of this aggregate worker, is at a greater or smaller distance from the actual manual labour. (Marx 1990, p. 1040)

Thus this collective (or aggregate) worker is identified with productive labour. The manager (I suppose not the *top* manager), the engineer, the technologist, the overseer, the manual labourer constitute this collective worker. This collective worker, therefore, stands on the level of the technical division of labour in the capitalist production process as the bearer of overall-combined labour, which is identified with the total of wage earners (productive labour-productive workers).

I have noted that the fundamental classes of a mode of production are the ‘carriers’ of (diversified) relations that constitute the relations of production: ownership, possession and use of the means of production. The capitalist class is the ‘carrier’ of (capitalistically formed) real ownership. The other class of the CMP is the working class, understood as being the ‘carrier’ of the third component relation, the use relation. From this point of view, the fundamental classes of the CMP are the capitalist and the working classes, since they adequately embody a discernible or ‘specific social character’ and consequently the capitalists and the working class are the basic classes of a capitalist social formation.

The question then is the following: is (capitalistically) hired (that is, productive) labour including all these different kinds of labour – at a greater or smaller distance from actual manual labour – identical with the class ‘carrier’ of the use relation, that is the working class? Marx writes:

Just as at first the capitalist is relieved from actual labour as soon as his capital has reached that minimum amount with which capitalist production, properly speaking, first begins, so now he hands over the work of direct and constant supervision of the individual workers and groups of workers to a special kind of wage-labourer. An industrial army of workers under the command of a capitalist requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and NCOs (foremen, overseers), who

command during the labour process in the name of capital. The work of supervision becomes their established and exclusive function. (*ibid.*, p. 450)

So, from the starting-point of capitalist production – the complete disengagement of the real owner from the need to work himself or the exemption of the real owner from actual labour, that is, from the formal subordination of labour to capital – and as a consequence of this complete disengagement or exemption, within the collective worker there is formed an industrial army of a special kind of wage-labourer. For this special kind of wage-labourer (to which category belong lower-level managers, foremen and overseers) the work of management-supervision (as opposed to the performance of actual manual labour) becomes its established and exclusive function, a function that flows from the place of capital. Consequently, the wage earners belonging in this special category of wage-labour do not exclusively perform the function of labour but on the contrary exercise powers of capital. Thus, although part of the collective worker, that is, productive workers – workers directly exploited by capital and subordinated to its processes of production and expansion – they are not ‘embodiments’ and ‘personifications’ of a completely discernible or ‘specific social character’.⁸ That is, they are not *prima facie* elements either of the class ‘carrier’ of the use relation, that is, the working class or, evidently, of the class ‘carrier’ of real ownership, that is, the capitalist class (see also Poulantzas 1974, pp. 243-4). Thus they do not belong to either of the fundamental classes of the CMP and consequently are part of a non-fundamental social class of the CMP, which is situated between the capitalist and the working classes.

There is a special question concerning the class identity of another element in the collective worker: engineers and technicians (technologists). Following Poulantzas’s analysis (mainly 1974, pp. 249, 252, 255-6), I claim that the capitalist division between mental and manual labour, corresponding to the specifically capitalist division between science and experience, is merely a distinctive (capitalist) form of the management-supervision function. Its agents (engineers and technicians) are accordingly not part of the working class.⁹ Since engineers and technicians are also wage earners, like foremen, overseers and so on, they do not belong to either of the fundamental classes of the CMP, constituting together with the latter the non-fundamental social class of the CMP.¹⁰

The worker as direct producer in the CMP (that is, as performer of actual manual labour), as opposed to the worker as agent of a special kind of wage-labour involving supervision and management, corresponds to the splitting of the collective worker in the CMP into working class and non-fundamental class components. Therefore, following the analysis of Carchedi (1977, pp. 62-92), my definition of the working class embraces the element of the collective worker that is constituted ‘by all those performing [exclusively] the function of the collective worker’ (this exclusive performance corresponding to use relation), while my definition of the non-fundamental class of the CMP embraces the ‘new middle class’ that performs ‘both the...function of capital and the function of the collective worker’ (the function of capital being reduced to ‘control and surveillance’).

From another point of view this split of the collective worker corresponds to the differentiation between technical and specific social division of labour within the labour process. The latter is the result of the division of functions of ownership, possession and use of the means of production within the labour process, as it

proceeds from the ‘matrix’ of a mode of production.¹¹ Thus the capitalist division of labour, which supports the ‘despotism’ and class ‘*hierarchy*’ (Poulantzas 1974, pp. 244, 264ff) of the capitalist production ‘model’, is nothing but the internal substance and the permanent result of the necessary precondition of the CMP.

Given the above, it can be inferred that the working class cannot be defined as the class of wage earners – as Becker (1973, 1973-4) and Cutler, Hindess, Hirst and Hussain (1977) maintain, among others – as long as the use relation cannot be reduced to the non-legal-proprietors¹² or to the subjects of surplus-value extraction (for a critique, see also Wright 1980). On the other hand, productive labour does not constitute an attributive factor of working class determination – as, for example, Poulantzas (1974) maintains –¹³ as long as productive labour is identical with hired labour (hired by – variable – capital). The basic schema of my argument is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Capitalist Mode of Production

	Ownership	Possession	Use
Capitalist class	yes	yes	no
Working class	no	no	yes
Non-fundamental class	no	no	no

5 The So-called Simple Commodity Mode of Production and the Hybrid Mode of Production

I have posited as a determining criterion (necessary precondition) for definition of the CMP the complete disengagement of the real owner from any necessity to perform personal labour. It follows that, in conditions of less than complete disengagement of the real owner from any such necessity or, indeed, in conditions of full engagement of the real owner with the needs of the labour process, there are (or can be) discernibly non-capitalist modes of production within the capitalist system. The latter is the case in the so-called simple commodity mode of production (SCMP). The former is the case in the mode of production I call hybrid (HMP).¹⁴

Given these definitions and conceptual qualifications, I shall endeavour to provide an outline of these modes of production. It is obviously not possible for me in this paper to extend my analysis to the deeper socio-economic characteristics of either the SCMP¹⁵ or the HMP (for a detailed analysis, see Economakis 2000).

Marx writes, regarding ‘independent handicraftsmen or peasants who employ no labourers and therefore do not produce as capitalists’, that:

they are *producers of commodities*....not....sellers of labour....their production does not fall under the capitalist mode of production....The independent peasant or craftsman is cut up into two persons. As owner of the means of production he is capitalist; as labourer he is own wage-labourer....But in the case referred to the producer – the labourer – is the possessor, the owner, of his means of production. They are therefore not capital....But that he is able to appropriate *for himself* the whole product of his own labour.... that he takes possession of his own surplus-labour....he owes not to his labour....but to his ownership of

the means of production....One person unites the separate function. Here emerges in a very striking way the fact that the capitalist as such is only a function of capital, the labourer a function of labour-power. (1975, pp. 407-9)

Interpreted in terms of the analytical definitions I have given, Marx's thesis refers to a particular historical combination of the three relations that constitute the relations of production (that is to a particular historical 'matrix'): homology of the relation of ownership and possession (real ownership) with use, that is coincidence of real ownership with use in one class 'carrier'. Consequently we find here, in the system of capitalist dominance, a historically peculiar non-capitalist mode of production (a mode of production which does not come under – is not subsumed by – the capitalist mode of production), although it is a mode of production producing commodities.¹⁶ Commodity production within conditions of generalised commodity production, that is, a capitalist economic structure (Murray 2000; Milios *et al.* 2002), implies that independent simple commodity producers *must* produce for the market in order to survive as such. This means that production on the basis of unpaid household labour is production for the market, without any form of extra-economic coercion being required for this (dominant economic element). In this ('pure') SCMP, one social class (a fundamental class that expresses adequately a completely discernible or 'specific social character'), the petite bourgeoisie, is constituted. The petite bourgeoisie is the historically peculiar class of the capitalist economic structure that merges in one person (in one class position) the function of capital (ownership plus possession of the means of production) with the function of labour (use of the means of production). However, these condensed functions cease to be functions of capital and labour. Thereby, the peculiar historical combination of homology of ownership, possession and use, as 'a schizophrenic coexistence....of the bourgeois and the proletarian "in one person"' (Harrison 1977, p. 328), sets a historical discreteness of the three relations that constitute the relations of production. Real ownership and use are therefore inseparable functions of 'a collective entity consisting of all family members involved directly or indirectly in the (technical) production process', which is organised 'on the basis of kinship relations within the elementary family unit' (Dedoussopoulos 1985, pp. 172-3). The formation of this collective entity, on the base of coincidence of real ownership with use in one class 'carrier', means that real ownership does not lead to relations of exploitation within this mode of production (see also Dedoussopoulos 1985, pp. 146, 171-2). If there is any relation of exploitation it must be sought in the sphere of circulation (see Marx 1975, p. 407). However, I shall not expand my analysis to this matter.¹⁷ Table 2 illustrates the basic schema of my argument.

Table 2: Simple Commodity Mode of Production

	Ownership	Possession	Use
Petite bourgeoisie	yes	yes	Yes

I am now in a position to define the concept of HMP. The HMP is the mode of production of the capitalist economic structure in which unpaid (family) labour coexists with marginally existing but permanent hired (non-family) labour. On the base of this definition I infer that there is a specific singularity in this mode of

production. The use relation is identified in two 'carriers' of relations. First, in the 'carrier' of ownership plus possession, that is, in the 'carrier' of real ownership who is also involved immediately in the labour process. Here the concept of immediate producer comes under that of the collective entity of SCMP and, accordingly, the real ownership of this collective entity comes under that of SCMP. Second, in the exclusive 'carrier' of the use relation, that is, the immediate producer-wage earner.

Thereupon this mode of production is formed by the conjunction of elements originating from (or referring to) capitalist and simple commodity relations of production. Like the CMP, permanently hired labour exists and, like the SCMP, the 'carrier' of real ownership is also the 'carrier' of use. That is why this mode of production is hybrid. At the same time there is explicit diversification. In comparison with the CMP, the HMP is diversified by the fact that the 'carrier' of real ownership is also the 'carrier' of *partial* use. I say partial in order to underline the particularity of use in the case of the owner-user who employs wage earners. Partial use means that the owner (as a collective entity) has not the full capability to respond to the use needs of the means of production, as these (needs) are imposed by the dynamic of the process of production of this mode of production.

Given the above, we may conclude as a principle that the borderline between the hybrid and capitalist modes of production is determined by the change in the correspondence between 'carrier' and use relation. The cut-off point is where the 'carrier' of real ownership ceases to be 'carrier' of partial use too. If the CMP is the mode of full disengagement of the real owner from the need to work directly, the HMP is the mode of partial disengagement of the real owner from the need to work directly. So we may also conclude that the scale of HMP production, and so the volume of capital employed by the individual employer (the collective entity) and, therefore, the number of workers employed, must be such that the employer (the collective entity) is disengaged only partially from the use of the means of production, so as to be disconnected only partially from the class 'carrier' of use of the means of production. Therefore the labour process can be only in part a process of direct exploitation of the labour of others, and only a fraction of the surplus product (if it exists) is produced by the exploitation of the labour of others. In other words, in comparison with the CMP, in the case of the HMP the elementary feature (homology of the relation of ownership and possession) does not go with the necessary precondition (full disengagement of the real owner from the need to work directly himself).

In comparison with the SCMP, the HMP is diversified by the fact that the 'carrier' of use (hired labour) is neither 'carrier' of ownership nor 'carrier' of possession. Since there is non-coincidence of use with real ownership for the class 'carrier' of use, a relation of exploitation emerges within the HMP. As to the collective entity of this mode of production, if there is any relation of exploitation it must be sought (as with the SCMP) in the sphere of circulation. Consequently class division and an *odd* social division of labour emerge. On the one hand, this social division of labour comes under the dimension of the kinship relations, and, on the other, it comes under the dimension of exploited (by real ownership) hired labour.

Thus within the HMP two social classes are constituted. Both are fundamental in that both express adequately a completely discernible or 'specific social character'. The class that is the 'carrier' of real ownership and of partial use I shall call the *middle class* to distinguish it from the capitalist class and the petite bourgeoisie. The class that is 'carrier' of use I shall call *spurious working class* to distinguish it from the working class that is constituted within the CMP. The

spurious working class is subjected to exploitation (extraction of surplus value) within a non-capitalist mode of production of the system of capitalist dominance.

Just like simple commodity production, hybrid production is commodity production within conditions of generalised commodity production (a capitalist economic structure). Consequently, just like the independent simple commodity producers, independent hybrid producers *must* produce for the market in order to survive as a collective entity, which, moreover, employs hired labour. Hence production on the basis of unpaid household labour plus limited hired labour is production for the market without extra-economic coercion being required for this (dominant economic element *à la* SCMP). On the other hand, real ownership connotes that the spurious working class, just like the working class, works for the benefit of the class ‘carrier’ of ownership without extra-economic coercion being required for this (dominant economic element *à la* CMP).

The HMP thus appears as a distinct particular historical combination of the three relations that constitute the relations of production (‘matrix’), that is, as a different (‘pure’) historical mode of production: coincidence of ownership plus possession and (partial) use in the class ‘carrier’ of ownership, that is, real ownership for the middle class; non-coincidence of use with real ownership for the class ‘carrier’ of use, the spurious working class; and partial disconnection-disengagement of the real ownership relation and its ‘carrier’ from use relation and its ‘carrier’. This particular combination is the hybrid mode of production. In Table 3 the basic schema of my argument is illustrated.

Table 3: Hybrid Mode of Production

	Ownership	Possession	Use
Middle class	yes	yes	Partial
Spurious working class	no	no	Yes

My view about the hybrid mode of production is similar to Wright’s approach regarding the distinction between the SCMP and the HMP¹⁸ or between the CMP and the HMP but in a different theoretical framework (see Economakis 2000, pp. 135-6, 396-8).

I refer especially to Wright’s notion of the ‘contradictory location’ of ‘small employers’ or ‘non-pure petty-bourgeois producers’, which corresponds to what I called the middle class in my analysis. According to Wright,

small employers occupy a contradictory location between the petty bourgeoisie and the capitalist class proper. Unlike the petty bourgeoisie, they do employ some labour power and thus are in a relation of exploitation with workers. But unlike the capitalist class, they are themselves directly engaged in production alongside their workers, and they do not employ sufficient quantities of labour power to accumulate large masses of capital (Wright 1980, p. 330).

This contradictory location combines ‘bourgeois and petty-bourgeois classes’, that is, ‘positions within which the owner of the means of production’ is ‘simultaneously a self-employed direct producer (and thus in the petty bourgeoisie) and an employer of wage-labour (and thus in the capitalist class)’ (Wright 1997, p. 47).

Wright makes two crucial affirmations that are similar to mine. The first is that, unlike the petite bourgeoisie, the small employers are involved in a relation of exploitation of workers (the spurious working class). The second is that, unlike the capitalist class, the small employers are themselves directly engaged in production alongside their workers (who are limited in number). That is, as ‘carriers’ of real ownership, they are only partially disconnected from the use relation and its ‘carrier’, on the one hand, and on the other only a fraction of the surplus product (if it exists) is produced by hired labour.¹⁹ The second affirmation is directly related to the realisation that only a limited volume of capital is employed by the individual employer (the collective entity). Both affirmations raise the question of ‘the portion of the total surplus product’ (if it exists) that is produced by unpaid family labour and the portion that is produced by the exploited non-family labour. Equivalently these affirmations raise the question of the absolute number of wage-earners employed by an individual middle-class employer (Wright 1983, p. 127). What number is the cut-off point between the CMP and the HMP,²⁰ is a question that I am not intending to examine here (see Economakis 2000).

6 Conclusions

Apart from the two basic and also fundamental social classes of the capitalist economic structure (the capitalist class and the working class), other fundamental classes may be also identified in a capitalist social formation. Posing the criterion of exploitation in terms of extraction of surplus value as a criterion of class polarisation (that is, structural coherence of class positions), the five fundamental social classes that I have attempted to define, on the level of the three modes of production discussed, form two basic poles and one intermediate class pole at the level of the capitalist economic structure. These are the following:

Basic pole 1: The pole of exploiting (real-economic) owners; capitalist class and middle class.

Basic pole 2: The pole of exploited users of the means of production; working class and spurious working class.

Intermediate pole: The pole of non-exploiting (real-economic) owners; petite bourgeoisie.

Is this polar division sensible? From the point of view of Marxism, as a theory of class struggle, perhaps it is an indication of (potential) structural class alliances.

* Department of Business Administration, Business School – University of the Aegean, 8 Michalon Str., GR-821 00 Chios Island, Greece. Email: geconomakis@aegean.gr.

Notes

1 See mainly Althusser (1977, 1978, 1986), Althusser and Balibar 1986, Balibar 1986, Bettelheim (1968, 1970, 1973), Harnecker (no publication date), Poulantzas (1973, 1974, 1984), Rey (no publication date, 1973).

2 For the distinction between real (economic) ownership and possession see Jessop (1985, p. 161).

3 'Productive labour' from the standpoint of the capitalist production process is the labour paid from variable capital (Marx 1975, 1990; Kotzias *et al.* 1981; Stamatidis 1992; Economakis 2000). Correspondingly, 'production' from the standpoint of the capitalist production process is any process in which labour power is exchanged immediately for capital. For a review of the contradictions within Marxian theory and among Marxists in relation to the concept of productive labour see, among other works, Resnick and Wolff (1982, pp. 6-10).

4 This distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental social classes is irrelevant to the distinction (posed by Resnick and Wolff) between 'fundamental and subsumed classes', which pertains to 'the distinction between the production and the distribution of surplus value' (1982, pp. 2ff).

5 Wright (1980, p. 326) correctly points out the disagreement among theorists on the concept of relations of production, which leads to 'very little general consensus on the theoretical criteria for specific classes within the class structure of capitalist societies'.

6 'He [the capitalist] obtains surplus-value not because he works as a *capitalist* but rather because...he *also* works' (Marx 1991, p. 506).

7 On the base of formal subsumption, 'there arises a technologically and otherwise *specific mode of production – capitalist production –...* [which] now establishes itself as a mode of production *sui generis* and brings into being a new mode of material production' (Marx 1990, pp. 1034-5).

8 For the 'double nature of the work of supervision and management' see Marx (1991, pp. 507-8) and Poulantzas (1974, pp. 241ff).

9 'It is of course possible for there to be some differentiations among the engineers and technicians...depending on whether they are situated in branches of industry as supervisors...of the manual workers or in branches where they constitute the principal labour force' (Poulantzas 1974, p. 258). In the latter case they become the class 'carrier' of the use relation. This may appear an intriguing conclusion. I note only that the distinctions between mental and manual labour, and science and experience, are relative. These terms are comprehensible only in their contrariety, comparativity and historicity. (See Gramsci 1972; Poulantzas 1974; Balibar 1986).

10 This non-fundamental social class of the CMP has affinities with Poulantzas's 'industrial' 'new petite-bourgeoisie' (see in particular 1974).

11 However, Marx's analysis of the division of labour is in no way lacking in inconsistencies. As Poulantzas put it: 'I say at once that these analyses are...ambiguous, in that ...Marx examines "separately" the aspects of the technical division of labour and the social division of labour, without always demonstrating how the former is compatible with the predominance of the latter.... [T]his ambiguity [quite apart from any other consideration]...is also attributable to extraneous "economistic-technicist" scores [rusts] present in his work' (Poulantzas 1974, pp. 240-1).

12 The utilisation of 'ownership and non-ownership of the means of production as the primary determinant of class membership...encourages a passive, formalistic definition of class' (Carter 1985, p. 50).

13 I agree with Resnick's and Wolff's statement: 'do not *derive* a notion of the working class from the categories of productive and unproductive labor' (1982, p. 9). For an analysis and critique of Poulantzas's apprehension of the concept of productive labour and its use as a criterion of class determination, see Wright (1980, pp. 348-9), Dedoussopoulos (1985, pp. 42, 79), Harnecker (no publication date, pp. 175-6) and Economakis (2000, pp. 164ff).

14 I do not intend to examine whether the SCMP and the HMP are the only modes of production present under the rule of the CMP.

15 Simple commodity production is well-known in sociological and economic (specifically Marxist) literature (developed in connection primarily with the question of

embedding agriculture in capitalism). It is also a theoretical field where there is great disagreement among researchers. The crucial point of this disagreement might be whether to foreshorten the type of incorporation of simple commodity production in capitalism (the question of exploitation and class identity of simple commodity producers). Here we find different theoretical versions, like those of Banaji (1976, 1977), Vergopoulos and Amin (Vergopoulos 1975; Vergopoulos and Amin, no publication date), and Chevalier (1982, 1983), who share the view of simple commodity producers as proletarians 'salaried by piece'. For a critique of these approaches see, among other works, Martin (1977), Wolpe (1980), Goodman and Redclift (1982), Dedoussopoulos (1985), and Economakis (2000). I do not propose to review these approaches but shall confine myself to a summary presentation of my main argument.

16 For the commodity character of the SCMP see also Dedoussopoulos (1985, pp. 170-1, 178); Bernstein (1977, p. 63; 1979, p. 422; 1988, p. 262), Friedmann (1980, pp. 166, 162).

17 The absence of exploitation within this mode of production is one reason why some Marxists define simple commodity production as a *form* (and not a *mode*) of production (see Poulantzas 1973; Milios 2000). The case concerns the question of identity between the historical conditions of exploitation and the concept of the mode of production (see above).

18 For such a confusion, see, for example, Mouzelis (1978) and Poulantzas (1974).

19 Carchedi's analysis of the 'old middle class' comes close to the above argumentation. As he sees it, this class 'includes aspects of both classes', capitalist and working class (Carchedi 1977, p. 87).

20 Such a question does not exist as to the borderline between the SCMP and the HMP. The number is obviously 1.

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