

UNDERSTANDING THE VEHICLES OF CAPITALIST HEGEMONY IN LATIN AMERICA



DANIEL FELIPE LÓPEZ PÉREZ

Understanding the Vehicles of Capitalist Hegemony in Latin America

EMERALD STUDIES IN CLASS AND INEQUALITY

Series Editor: Berch Berberoglu

During the course of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, there has been an enormous increase in wealth and income inequality. This series examines the nature, extent, and sources of class divisions and social inequality in the United States, Europe, and other societies around the world, focusing on the unequal distribution of wealth and income over the past several decades.

Providing an analysis of the widening gap in wealth and income arising from class, racial, and gender inequalities that are the outcome of exploitative social relations, this series examines the class basis of inequality, in particular the exploitation of wage-labour by capital, which prevails in contemporary capitalist society. Focusing on the polarisation of classes through the ever-widening gap in wealth and income, the series explores the class dynamics of social inequality stemming from the disparity in income and wealth, which has led to an uneven and unequal distribution that has reached unprecedented levels in recent history. In addressing these issues, the volumes in this series make an important contribution to an analysis and understanding of this urgent societal problem that we confront in the early 21st century.

Published title

Class and Inequality in the United States by Berch Berberoglu

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Larry T. Reynolds, Ph.D
*Professor of Sociology Emeritus,
Central Michigan University, Mt.
Pleasant, Michigan, USA*

Rhonda Levine, Ph.D
*Professor of Sociology Emerita,
Colgate University, Hamilton,
New York, USA*

Patrick Bond, Ph.D.
*Professor of Political Economy and
Sociology, University of Johannesburg,
Johannesburg, South Africa*

Ligaya Lindio-McGovern, Ph.D
*Professor of Sociology Emerita,
Indiana University Kokomo, Kokomo,
Indiana, USA*

Christopher Chase-Dunn, Ph.D
*Distinguished Professor of Sociology,
Director, Institute for Research
on World-Systems, University of
California, Riverside, Riverside,
California, USA*

Jaroslav Przeperski, Ph.D
*Assistant Professor, Center for Family
Research, Faculty of Philosophy and
Social Science, Nicolaus Copernicus
University, Torun, Poland*

Rose Brewer, Ph.D
*Professor of Sociology and African
American and African Studies,
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis,
Minnesota, USA*

Martin Orr, Ph.D
*Professor of Sociology, Boise State
University, Boise, Idaho, USA*

Walda Katz-Fishman, Ph.D
*Professor of Sociology Emerita,
Howard University, Washington, D.C.,
USA*

Henry Veltmeyer, Ph.D
*Research Professor of Development
Studies, Universidad Autónoma de
Zacatecas, Mexico Professor of
Development Studies, Emeritus,
Saint Mary's University, Halifax,
Nova Scotia, Canada*

Rajendra Baikady, Ph.D., FRSA
*Assistant Professor of Social Work,
Central University of Kerala,
Kasaragod, Kerala, India*

Ann Strahm, Ph.D
*Professor and Chair of Sociology,
California State University, Stanislaus,
Turlock, California, USA*

Adam Fabry, Ph.D
*Lecturer in Economics, Universidad
Nacional de Chilecito, Cordoba,
Argentina*

Alan Jay Spector, Ph.D
*Professor of Sociology Emeritus,
Purdue University Northwest,
Hammond, Indiana, USA*

This page intentionally left blank

Understanding the Vehicles of Capitalist Hegemony in Latin America: Capitalism in Context

BY

DANIEL FELIPE LÓPEZ PÉREZ

Independent Researcher, Belgium



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL.

First edition 2026

Copyright © 2026 Daniel Felipe López Pérez.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: www.copyright.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83608-317-7 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-316-0 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-318-4 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Contents

About the Author	<i>ix</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>xi</i>
Chapter 1 Introduction: Hegemonic Vehicles in the Global Political Economy	<i>1</i>
Chapter 2 Neoliberal Capitalist Globalisation in Latin America	<i>21</i>
Chapter 3 Chile: Of Beloved Fatherland and Shadows	<i>43</i>
Chapter 4 Colombia: A History of Solitude in Macondo	<i>69</i>
Chapter 5 Mexico: A Star Next to the Moon	<i>97</i>
Chapter 6 Peru: The Time of the Crises	<i>125</i>
Chapter 7 Conclusion	<i>153</i>
References	<i>161</i>
Index	<i>181</i>

This page intentionally left blank

About the Author

Daniel Felipe López Pérez is an independent researcher and writer specialising in political economy, international relations, political science, and the sociology of work. His academic work is grounded in historical materialism and explores the dynamics of capitalist development, class conflict, and hegemonic formation in Latin America and Europe. He holds a BA in Political Science from the Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá), where he also pursued additional studies in political philosophy. He later completed an MSc in Sociology at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, an MA in International Political Economy, and a PhD in International Relations from the University of Kent. His past academic research has focused on the political economy of conflict, the formation of hegemony, and class struggle across Latin America and Europe. López Pérez continues to investigate the structures and contradictions of capitalism, with particular interest in working conditions, labour relations, and political transformations in a global perspective. Alongside his research, he has been actively involved in movements for peace and social justice in Colombia since his student years. Now based in Brussels, he remains engaged with Colombian grassroots organisations advocating for the implementation of the peace agreements and the defence of collective rights and memory. He views research, political commitment, and critical pedagogy as interconnected practices aimed at fostering collective understanding and emancipatory change in the face of global oppressions.

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgements

There is a moral imperative behind this book: an idea of the good life experienced by the many, rooted in social justice, welfare, equity, and emancipation. This work is written as a contribution to the transformation of the system of injustice that Latin America – and the world more broadly – endures under capitalism. First and foremost, it is dedicated to the working classes worldwide. It aspires to be part of a collective gesture that redirects attention to the enduring struggles of working people, whose political choices seek the betterment of their lives and those of their families, yet who are often trapped in a hostile society that weaponises fear and misinformation to divide them.

This book is also dedicated to all those who have devoted their lives to ending violence and building peace in Latin America. A special tribute goes to the signatories of the Colombian peace agreement, who continue to endure state violence while tirelessly working every day for a new Colombia.

I am deeply grateful for the support and guidance of my mentor, Professor Dr Albená Azmanova, who has always equipped me with the tools to critique and reimagine society. I would also like to thank Dr Nicolás Oviedo for his insights on the chapter on Chile; Dr Saúl Torres for his contributions to the chapter on Colombia; Dr Mats Lucia and Dr Jaime Aznar for their comments on the chapter on Latin America and neoliberalism; and Dr Rosario Rizzo for her steadfast support in my professional journey.

Finally, I acknowledge the people around me – my chosen family – whose steady presence sustains me far from my homeland. I want to dedicate this work to my families and to the people of Colombia, to the memory of my inspiration, my grandmother Matilde Yate, to my parents, Gonzalo and Nubia, for their unwavering support, and to the love of my life, my wife María – my happiness and my driving force.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

Introduction: Hegemonic Vehicles in the Global Political Economy

How has capitalism managed to endure despite its numerous crises, contradictions, and conflicts across the world? After each cycle of crisis, experts, journalists, and commentators inevitably speculate about the possible end of capitalism. Yet, as of 2025 – on the verge of environmental catastrophe, devastating wars, and the rise of authoritarianism – there remain few signs that capitalism is being seriously targeted as the root cause of these global threats. On the contrary, much of the resistance has focused not on dismantling the system, but on addressing its shortcomings and seeking to build a fairer society within the existing institutional framework. While people are not indifferent to injustice, critiques of capitalism – once central to leftist thought – appear to have fallen out of favour, as Ellen Meiksins Wood (1995) observed. She argued that the left had undergone a major retreat from socialist aspirations, with many leftist intellectuals, if not openly embracing capitalism, resigning themselves to operating within its margins and placing their hopes in localised, particular forms of resistance. In response to Wood's call – issued nearly 30 years ago – for a renewed critical understanding of capitalism and the development, enrichment, and refinement of the conceptual tools needed to transform it, I write this book to examine the resilience of capitalism in the face of crisis, contradiction, and conflict, with a particular focus on Latin America, specifically Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Chile.

Joseph Schumpeter (1994), a staunch defender of capitalism and its long-term benefits, predicted that capitalism was ultimately doomed to be replaced by socialism. He believed that capitalism's very success would lead to its internal demise. In his view, the process of 'creative destruction' – where entrepreneurial innovation renders old modes of production obsolete – would generate unprecedented productivity, producing such a surplus of goods that individuals could transition from labour-intensive roles to more leisurely pursuits, particularly within an emerging intellectual class. However, this class, increasingly detached from the entrepreneurial and productive foundations of capitalism, would fail to understand or appreciate the system that enabled their privileged lifestyles. As a result, they would come to criticise and eventually condemn capitalism. Furthermore,

**Understanding the Vehicles of Capitalist Hegemony in Latin America:
Capitalism in Context, 1–19**

Copyright © 2026 by Daniel Felipe López Pérez

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited

doi:[10.1108/978-1-83608-316-020251001](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83608-316-020251001)

2 *Understanding the Vehicles of Capitalist Hegemony*

the constant stream of product innovations – once driven by individual entrepreneurs – becomes routinised within large corporations. The visibility and societal prestige of the individual entrepreneur decline, as they are gradually replaced by emotionally detached employees, managers, and shareholders. In this account of capitalism's decline, political decisions – not consumer choices or market forces – come to determine how resources are allocated and which businesses succeed. Competition, therefore, centres not on attracting consumers but on securing the favour of the state.

Unlike Schumpeter, Karl Marx predicted the end of capitalism through a revolutionary overthrow led by the working class, driven by the system's inherent contradictions. Marx (1981) foresaw that the centralisation of capital, the commodification and exploitation of workers and land, and increasing global integration would give rise to human conflict, social and economic crises, environmental degradation, and extreme wealth inequality. These contradictions, he argued, would intensify and culminate in a revolutionary crisis, ultimately leading to the collapse of capitalism. The concentration of capital, far from enhancing production, would obstruct the productive forces, provoking systemic rupture and the eventual abolition of private property. Marx and Engels (1988) envisioned a revolutionary transition in which the working class would seize control of the state, centralise the means of production, and expand productive capacity for the benefit of all. Beginning in advanced capitalist countries, this revolution would establish a democratic constitution and implement measures promoting social welfare. It would mark a global transformation centred on human needs rather than capitalist profit, liberating production from the constraints imposed by the profit motive.

Both Schumpeter and Marx foresaw an eventual transition from capitalism to socialism, but their perspectives differed significantly. Marx favoured socialism as a superior economic system, rooted in his critique of capitalism's exploitative dynamics. Schumpeter, by contrast, valued the creative power of private innovation and entrepreneurship within capitalism. While he acknowledged that capitalism might give way to socialism, he did not advocate this transition; rather, he lamented it, believing that capitalism's outcomes – including its capacity for growth and innovation – were far superior. He feared that a shift to socialism would result in significant declines in living standards.

Despite their ideological differences, both theorists made predictions that resonate today. Marx identified several structural contradictions in capitalism, including its monopolistic tendencies, the commodification of land and labour, the increasing proletarianisation of workers, and the use of science for profit-driven production. He also foresaw economic phenomena such as inflation, depression, and recurrent cycles of boom and bust. Marx highlighted how the concentration of wealth and power enabled the ruling class to control the state and block meaningful reform, thereby exacerbating social and environmental crises – conflicts that stem, in his view, from capitalism's very nature.

From a conservative perspective, Schumpeter also offered prescient insights. He warned that intellectuals would increasingly reject capitalism as part of mainstream discourse – a prediction that many consider validated, particularly on

university campuses in Canada and the United States. Schumpeter also foresaw the rapid expansion of government regulations, state control over banking and labour markets, price controls, high taxation, and growing demands for nationalisation. He observed the growing political influence of large corporations, which sought state intervention to shield themselves from domestic and international competition. Schumpeter was particularly concerned about the erosion of personal and economic freedoms under the guise of democratic economic management. Some authors argue that these trends persist today, with many favouring increased government intervention to address short-term economic and social problems, often overlooking the long-term consequences of such policies. Yet despite these critiques and crises, capitalism remains resilient, and socialism has not replaced it.

This book seeks to explain the enduring resilience of capitalism despite its inherent contradictions, crises, and conflicts. I aim to understand why the anticipated working-class revolution has not yet successfully challenged capitalism or established a just socialist society. While the complexity of this question is acknowledged, I focus on why there is currently neither widespread radical scrutiny of capitalism nor a concerted effort to organise a socialist revolution. This inquiry is grounded in the enduring relevance of Marx's and Marxist critiques of capitalism, and in the persistent challenges to overthrowing the system despite working-class resistance. Rather than reinventing the wheel, I draw on the insights of predecessors – 'standing on the shoulders of giants' – and employ Antonio Gramsci's concept of *hegemony*, a powerful tool for addressing this very question. The book contributes to the critique of capitalism in two ways: first, by offering a contextualised answer to capitalism's endurance through case studies from Latin America; and second, by applying Gramsci's concept of hegemony to contemporary capitalist society, addressing its shortcomings and enhancing its critical and transformative power with insights from other disciplines and theories.

Before outlining the structure of the book and the specific cases examined, I ask the reader's patience as we first explore the theoretical foundations of the argument. My aim is to keep the discussion clear and illustrative, ensuring engagement with the core message throughout.

Hegemony and Its Vehicles

Hegemony is a concept developed by Antonio Gramsci as he undertook a series of historical and theoretical reflections on the conditions for revolution in modern states where degrees of popular consent had been achieved. He employed the concept of 'hegemony' to describe a process of 'intellectual and moral leadership' that embedded a ruling class across society (Gramsci, 1985). His concept has evolved to be influential to our days as it has enabled theorists to analyse regimes and social movements (Riley, 2010), develop the idea of radical democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 1992), analyse neo-liberalism in the discipline of international relations (Morton, 2007) and it has been central in attempts to elaborate a 'sociological Marxism' (Burawoy, 2003; Wright, 2010).

4 *Understanding the Vehicles of Capitalist Hegemony*

Gramsci's concept of hegemony has been subject to multiple interpretations, each emphasising different aspects of its complex and fragmented presentation. His writings are primarily found in the *Prison Notebooks*, composed between 1929 and 1935, comprising roughly 3,000 pages of organised essays, observations, and commentary. Although some notes were revised – indicating a degree of planning – the overall structure remains fragmentary, at times even contradictory, and lacks explicit guidance on how to read or order the material. Moreover, written under fascist imprisonment, some of Gramsci's terms have been interpreted as coded language designed to evade censorship. Others, however, see these terms as genuine theoretical innovations that often diverge from orthodox Marxism. As a result, we can speak of many 'Gramscis', with scholars choosing different focal points to develop distinct interpretations.

I adopt Perry Anderson's (2020) interpretation of hegemony, viewing Gramsci's work as a 'differential analysis of the structures of bourgeois power in the West'. While Anderson criticises Gramsci for limiting the concept's application to bourgeois power, and Gramsci himself conceives hegemony as a political value (Riley, 2011), their contrasting perspectives help define the scope of my argument in this book. I do not seek to explain why working-class resistance has failed to overthrow capitalism in Latin America, nor to offer prescriptions for building a counter-hegemonic movement. Rather, my goal is to understand the 'virtues' of the bourgeoisie in maintaining hegemony despite capitalism's contradictions and its harmful effects on people and the environment. I also recognise hegemony as a political value and argue that the endurance of bourgeois rule stems from its ability to continually restructure social relations to its advantage.

A notable aspect of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which I wish to underscore, is the interplay between coercion and consent. Consent operates in two complementary forms: through material compromise, which addresses people's tangible needs, and through ideology. To understand the role of ideology in the resilience of capitalism, it is first necessary to grasp the general concept of ideology.

Marx and Engels (1998, p. 35) criticised 19th-century German philosophy because it hid social relations by explaining them as religious connections. This critique led to the idea that human history is shaped by conscious individuals who create their ideas based on their material conditions. In simpler terms, our way of thinking is influenced by how we live and produce things. They argued that life shapes our thoughts, not the other way around. So, ideology develops as history unfolds.

Considering Latin America's history of conflict and crisis, it is crucial to understand how ideology functions within this context. In the region, the dominant ideology reflects the capitalist system and profoundly shapes everyday life. This ideology is largely crafted by the bourgeoisie – the leading class in capitalist societies – and significantly influences the beliefs and behaviours of the working class. The bourgeoisie tailors ideology to serve its own interests, shaping how people think and live. According to Marx, every class produces its own worldview, with intellectuals constructing theoretical justifications over time (Drucker, 1972). Even when these justifications are flawed or misleading, they are accepted as truth

if they reinforce the interests of the ruling class. Similarly, [Marx \(1969\)](#) criticised the theories of rising bourgeois thinkers such as Smith, Malthus, and Bentham, arguing that their ideas often masked economic interests and distorted concepts like utility to defend the status quo and legitimise existing social structures.

In Latin America, where the bourgeoisie retains power, ideology frequently serves to justify persistent social conflicts, including inequality and exploitation. This ideological framework, combined with material compromises, not only legitimises repression but also fosters consent and shapes how people relate to one another within society.

Understanding ideology is essential to grasping Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Gramsci developed this concept based on Lenin's political theories and actions. Lenin's idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat involved organising the spontaneous sentiments of the masses, fostering worker consciousness, and integrating it into governing structures through the seizure of state power. During the Russian Revolution, Lenin's strategy was not solely based on force; he also emphasised the role of consent and cultural ties, particularly within a worker-peasant alliance. In contrast, Gramsci's view of hegemony – shaped by the rise of fascism in Italy – differed from Lenin's due to distinct historical conditions. Gramsci argued that establishing hegemony through democratic means was better suited to addressing the political challenges of his time.

Drawing on Lenin's ideas, I understand hegemony as a strategic means of leadership that secures consent from various segments of society. This interpretation rejects both the notion of hegemony as a static apparatus of social control ([Althusser, 2001](#)) and the idea of radically transforming liberal democracy ([Laclau & Mouffe, 1992](#)). As [Anderson \(2020, p. 51\)](#) notes, Gramsci employed the concept of hegemony to analyse power structures within democratic societies. Accordingly, I employ hegemony specifically within the context of capitalism, without incorporating counter-hegemony into my analysis.

[Hyug Baeg \(1991\)](#) argues that hegemony relies on the bourgeoisie's leadership in capitalism. Their key role in production lays the groundwork for hegemonic practices (Thompson, 1978). However, consciousness is not just a reflection of production; dominating production relations alone is not enough for hegemony. It's crucial to organise institutions that shape people's thoughts to match capitalism's needs in politics, society, and culture. Thus, hegemony mainly operates as a political governance strategy.

The ruling class must forge alliances with subordinate groups, using pluralism and democracy to serve its interests. Hegemony is its political strategy, blending consent and coercion to shape subordinate interests in ways that preserve capitalism – occasionally conceding secondary interests, but never core ones. Gramsci explains that a social group asserts supremacy through both domination and intellectual/moral leadership: domination subdues opponents, potentially by force, while leadership guides allied groups. Crucially, he emphasises that leadership is essential both before and after gaining state power.

Under capitalism, the bourgeoisie maintains power through both force and consent. Hegemony involves securing the consent of the lower classes by presenting the interests of the ruling class as those of society as a whole. This requires

6 Understanding the Vehicles of Capitalist Hegemony

addressing people's real needs, turning abstract ideas into tangible realities (Gramsci, 1985, p. 182). Hegemony is not just about ideas, as Hyug Baeg (1991) explains; the dominant economy sets the stage for ideological leadership; it's tied to how society works materially.

Hegemony evolves over time as societies and modes of production change. According to Riley, it becomes broader and more integrated as history progresses (Riley, 2011, p. 4). This evolution is reflected in the concept of *common sense* – the taken-for-granted ways of thinking embedded in language and daily life, linked to the philosophy of praxis. Gramsci believed Marxism should interpret the world in accessible terms and employ practical philosophy to transform common sense.

Gramsci argued that common sense plays a crucial role in the working-class struggle but also serves as a tool for the bourgeoisie to maintain control. This 'good sense' aligns with the needs of capitalism and shapes how people perceive the world. For subordinate classes, common sense often appears as a focus on immediate group interests – what Gramsci calls corporate consciousness (Gramsci, 1985, p. 77). In contrast, the ruling class must move beyond this narrow view, exercising leadership in civil society while asserting dominance within the state (Gramsci, 1985, p. 160). Common sense is historically and socio-economically constructed, shaping both material conditions and ideological frameworks. While working-class consciousness emerges from lived experience, the bourgeoisie often co-opts certain demands to protect its own interests. Ultimately, common sense reflects the dominant conception of life and morality, guiding behaviour and distinguishing good from evil according to socially accepted norms. In this book, I analyse common sense as the specific ways in which economic, political, and cultural spheres are structured to secure working-class consent to capitalism.

Hegemony begins with a real compromise between the ruling and subordinate classes. The dominant group must find common ground without endangering its core interests, partially meeting subordinate demands by conceding less essential material concerns. Without being the primary force in production, the dominant class cannot address these needs or sustain the material foundation of the compromise (Hyug Baeg, 1991, p. 128). Thus, to preserve hegemony, the dominant group must actively maintain the existing mode of production – a process I refer to as *creating situational logics*.

Achieving hegemony is not just about dominating production; it's when production relations shape the broader society. This means politics and ideology must work together to support the economic compromise. However, Gramsci believes that politics and ideology are battlegrounds for class struggle, not predetermined outcomes. Full hegemony happens when a core class unites economic, political, and ideological power, forming what Gramsci calls the 'historical bloc', showing how society's different parts interact (Gramsci, 1985, p. 366).

Finally, Riley argues that hegemony often begins in revolutionary moments when one class represents society's interests. This leads to alliances forming around common goals to establish new norms. Gramsci's idea of unified ruling class hegemony suggests it can involve both intra-class and inter-class dynamics. This shows that within the capitalist class, different groups may have different goals despite sharing production-related interests (Riley, 2011, p. 15).

I have outlined Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Which in Latin America helps to explain the formation of republican states, conflicts among capitalist factions, inter-class struggles, and the continued support for the ruling class despite deep tensions. Now, I turn to the question of how bourgeois hegemony endures. To address this, I introduce a reworked concept: *hegemonic vehicles*. These are crucial for understanding capitalism's resilience and the ruling class's ability to maintain control. By focusing on human actions that shape hegemony, *hegemonic vehicles* offer insights into how hegemony evolves and retains its power.

First, Gramsci's concept of hegemony builds on Marx's base-superstructure theory but introduces important differences. While Marx addressed the idea only briefly, Gramsci developed it further, arguing that politics and culture operate within a structure shaped by relations of production. Rejecting deterministic interpretations, he focused on how production conditions are reflected in culture and politics, asserting that true hegemony arises when these conditions are accurately represented. Unlike some interpretations, I do not situate *hegemonic vehicles* strictly within this framework. Instead, I place them within the broader context of capitalism as a system of social relations. Hegemony does not rely solely on economic factors but emerges from complex social dynamics. Therefore, *hegemonic vehicles* – as institutionalised practices – should not be understood merely as products of structural determinism or individual agency.

Second, my understanding of hegemonic vehicles within capitalism is grounded in class dynamics. I examine how individuals' pursuit of personal needs – shaped by capitalism – influences class formation and consciousness, revealing how ruling classes secure working-class consent to capitalist goals. I view class as a fluid social relationship rather than a fixed structure. Hegemony, then, involves actions shaped by the interplay of institutions and systems, which sustain capitalism despite its contradictions. Hegemonic vehicles operate within these dynamics, tied to foundational yet adaptable systems that structure capitalism over time. While institutions like private property define class, these definitions evolve as the systems themselves shift. For instance, the working class is not limited to factory workers but also includes landless farmers. Classes do not merely react to history – they actively shape it (Hall, 2017, p. 383).

Thirdly, it is important to distinguish *hegemonic vehicles* from Gramsci's concept of the *hegemonic apparatus*. As described by Buci-Glucksmann, the apparatus includes various institutions and practices that express a class's dominance and underpin state power (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, p. 48). While related, *hegemonic vehicles* refer to specific institutionalised practices aimed at securing consent for the ruling class. They are not confined to state structures and can take different forms across contexts. Gramsci viewed society as made up of multiple associations, with one typically dominant, forming the foundation of state power. In my view, *hegemonic vehicles* are rooted in capitalism: they are institutionalised practices that uphold its structures and dynamics rather than challenge them. This interpretation is based on empirical evidence of their current role in society; any analysis beyond capitalism would require detailed study of distinct historical contexts.

Finally, the concept of *hegemonic vehicles* challenges the notion that hegemony represents absolute dominance, with subordination ingrained from birth. Gramsci

8 Understanding the Vehicles of Capitalist Hegemony

argues that hegemony involves ongoing class struggle and always leaves room for resistance by subordinate classes. It is not fixed but a dynamic, incomplete process that requires constant maintenance and renewal – *hegemonic vehicles* serve as key mechanisms in this process.

Gramsci's concept of *passive revolution* helps explain moments of hegemonic crisis, when the economic, political, and ideological ensemble begins to collapse. He notes that not all economic crises lead to the collapse of capitalism, as capitalists often adapt to survive. A hegemonic crisis occurs when the ruling class can no longer ensure the smooth functioning of the economy and loses the consent of the subordinate classes – indicating a crisis of authority. However, economic crises do not automatically produce hegemonic crises; consent is not always withdrawn.

Even in a hegemonic crisis, capitalists may sustain the system, creating a scenario where 'the old is dying, and the new cannot be born'. In such moments, when opposing forces are evenly matched and further conflict risks mutual destruction, the *passive revolution* becomes a strategy for the ruling class to politically and economically reorganise. They seek to neutralise opposition while reforming their own structures. This is where *hegemonic vehicles* play a vital role: they are institutionalised practices that help manage crises in favour of the ruling class, ensuring continued consent. These vehicles shape how people interact and understand the world, reinforcing ruling-class control even during periods of instability.

I characterise *hegemonic vehicles* as historical practices institutionalised within society that serve to shape *situational logics* – frameworks that facilitate and reinforce the consent of subordinate classes to capitalist hegemony.

These vehicles are rooted in history and shaped by the specific conditions and social relations of their time. Designed to meet the needs of particular societies, they operate within existing rules and norms to protect and advance capitalist control. While distinct from the broader web of social relations, *hegemonic vehicles* are essential to specific capitalist contexts. They influence how subordinate classes think and act through *structural conditioning* – not merely by disseminating ideas, but by reshaping lived realities in ways that offer material benefits, reducing class tensions and preserving consent.

At its core, capitalism relies on extracting profit from labour, creating a fundamental divide between workers and owners. To survive, it must reproduce both the material and ideological conditions that sustain this divide. *Hegemonic vehicles* play a central role in this process, operating through both practical and ideological means to uphold capitalism's core structures. Yet, these vehicles are neither fixed nor universal – they shift in form depending on historical context and capitalism's evolving needs. They are complex and provisional, adapting to changing conditions within the ongoing social order.

In short, *hegemonic vehicles* are historical practices that help secure consent and sustain societal structures. While they shape behaviour, they do not solely determine the organisation of society. Rather, they are one element within a broader constellation of forces that together uphold the existing order. With this understanding in place, we can now turn to examples of these institutions.

We can view liberal democracy in the Western world as a hegemonic vehicle – a societal institution that grants rights and responsibilities to citizens. Its legitimacy