

Changing Idioms of Resistance and Class Formation: A Perspective from the South

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The diffusion of production and increased fragmentation of labour defines the new regime of capitalist accumulation which not only involves changes in production process but also in the reproduction of labour power. Boundaries between spaces of production and consumption and that between working time and disposable time are increasingly fading out. Labour time approximates life time and individual capacities are largely subsumed to social labour. The expanding mass of proletariat who were equated to factory workers in the twentieth century given the predominant form of production now largely exists beyond the factory. Various layers of 'immaterial', 'material' and 'immiserated' labor are integrated in a global architecture of production that constitutes the emerging social or universal labor into which the realm of production and that of reproduction tend to converge. Despite the fact that the biggest political upheavals of recent time were hardly antithetical to capital and the working class protest is being replaced by plebeian uproar where the 'worker' is increasingly diffused into the nebulous space of citizen or a consumer. Nevertheless recent developments seem to be potent with the rise of new working class subjectivity. The paper argues that focus of the struggle of the working people has to be targeted towards expanding the allocation of social labour for 'necessity and need'. Capital acknowledges need as necessary when the employed labour power produces surplus value and so the expansion of necessary in this case means a struggle at the point of production, a struggle for wage increase. But the larger aspect of the struggle relates to what is being and not being recognized as necessary by capital, an ontological expansion of the notion of need, greater allocation of social labour in the form of 'social wage', essentially a struggle of de-commodification of labour. The mediation of class interests within various ranks of the proletariat would include a process of cooperation and self-valorization that is not only based on power of refusal but has to be supplemented by a power of constitution bridging interests through creating alternative spaces where solidarity and sharing of interests are driven by a different kind of rationality.