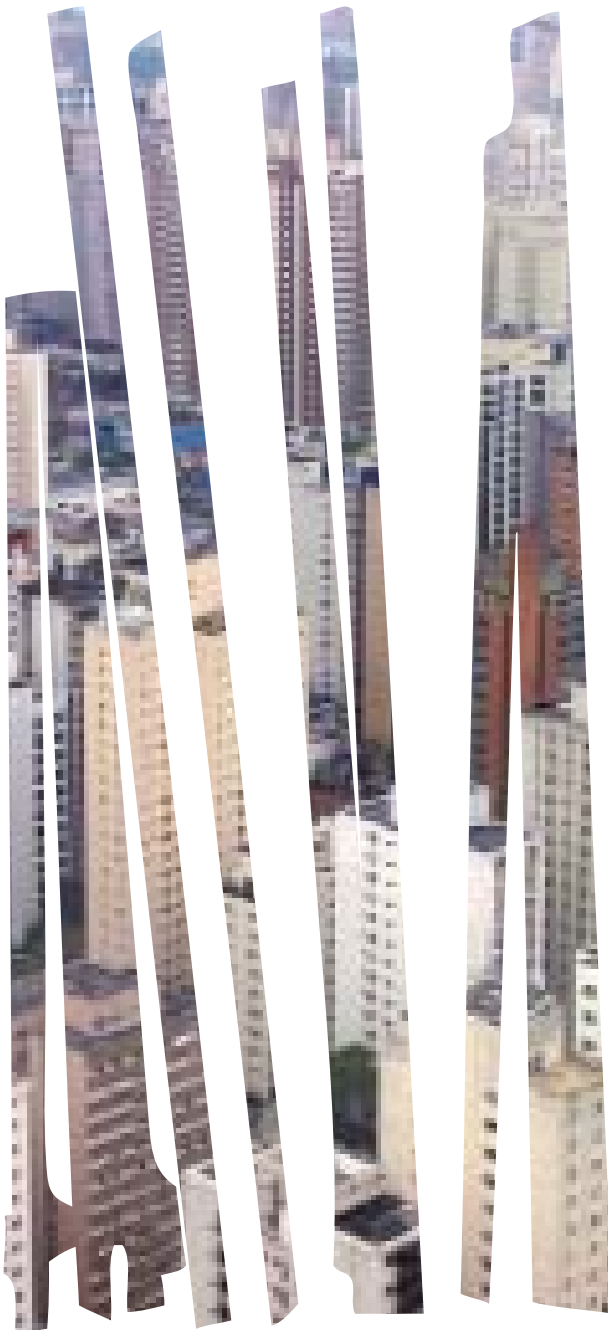


**Working Paper, No. 11, 2011**

**Global Inequalities**

Transnational Processes and Transregional  
Entanglements

Manuela Boatcă



**Working Paper Series**



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Research Network on Interdependent  
Inequalities in Latin America

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## Global Inequalities

### Transnational Processes and Transregional Entanglements

Manuela Boatcă

#### Abstract

Current sociological understandings tend to presuppose that the transformation of inequality patterns entails a series of “new” phenomena, which make the coining of new concepts such as the “Europeanization” and the “transnationalization” of social inequality necessary. In turn, the paper argues that, at least since the European expansion into the Americas, inequalities have been the result of transnational processes arising from transregional entanglements between shifting metropolitan and peripheral areas. To this end, the paper uses the example of the Caribbean as “Europe’s first colonial backyard” (S. Mintz) in order to show the historical continuities between “creolization” as a term originally coined to describe processes specific to the Caribbean and what is being analyzed today under the label of the “transnationalization” of (Western) Europe. In showing how the transregional flows of people, goods, and capital established transnational links between inequality patterns between Europe and its colonies in the Caribbean as early as the sixteenth century, the paper subsequently claims that theorizing the continuum of structures of power linking colonialism to (post) coloniality is an essential element in of the endeavor of creolizing Europe.

**Keywords:** Transnationalization | Transregional Entanglements | Caribbean

#### Biographical Notes

Manuela Boatcă studied English and German philology at the Universities of Bucharest, Bonn, and Cologne, and Sociology at the Catholic University of Eichstätt, Boston College, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Eichstätt in 2002, was Visiting Professor of Sociology at IUPERJ, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2007-2008 and is currently Visiting Professor of Sociology and Political Science at the Latin America Institute of the Freie Universität Berlin. She is Principal Investigator of the Research Dimension I, socio-economic inequalities, and was Research Fellow of *desiguALdades.net* from March-August 2011. Her research interests include world-systems analysis, sociology of development, gender and violence research, and postcolonial studies in historical-comparative perspective, with a regional focus on Eastern Europe and Latin America. She is author of “From Neoevolutionism to World-Systems Analysis. The Romanian Theory of ‘Forms without Substance’ in Light of Modern Debates on Social Change”, 2003, and co-editor of “Decolonizing European Sociology. Transdisciplinary Approaches” (with Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez and Sérgio Costa), Aldershot: Ashgate 2010, as well as of “Global, multiple and postcolonial modernities” (with Willfried Spohn), Munich 2010.

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## 1. The Transnationalization of Europe?

A casual traveler to the Caribbean region would notice [...] the variegated appearance of the people, and the rainbow spectrum of 'nonwhiteness' among them. European and American cities have now taken on some of that once startling variety and color. But in the Caribbean, it is the way people have looked for a very long time (Mintz 2010: 24).

For mainstream sociology, transnationalization represents a major way in which the larger process of globalization affects Europe. First formulated within migration research, the transnational paradigm was conceived as an explicit attempt at overcoming the methodological nationalism that characterized both migration scholarship and social theory more generally, and that conflated the nation-state with society, making the former the unit of analysis of processes of social mobility, social change, or labor migration (Glick Schiller/Wimmer 2002). Applying the critique of methodological nationalism to the growing field of European studies – particularly in, but not confined to, sociology – thus has tended to translate as viewing transnational flows of people, goods, and capital as a relatively new trend in the European context (Berger/Weiß 2008, Pries 2008). The result is described as “Europeanization” – of political institutions, social structures, or cultural patterns – and as the realization of old cosmopolitan aspirations towards overcoming nationalism, acknowledging difference, and achieving world citizenship (Delanty/Rumford 2005: 193).

In turn, the present paper argues that inequalities have been the result of transnational processes for more than five centuries. At least since the European expansion into the Americas, transnational migration, the Atlantic slave trade, and the unequal economic exchange between shifting metropolitan and peripheral areas have provided transregional entanglements that decisively shaped the inequality structures of both the former colonizing as well as the former colonized regions. In order to show the historical continuities between “creolization” as a term originally coined to describe processes specific to the Caribbean and what is being analyzed today under the label of the “transnationalization” of (Western) Europe, the example of the Caribbean as “Europe’s first colonial backyard” (Mintz 1998) is used in the following as a paradigmatic case. In showing how the transregional flows of people, goods, and capital established transnational links among inequality patterns between Europe and its colonies in the Caribbean as early as the sixteenth century, the paper subsequently claims that theorizing the continuum of structures of power linking colonialism to (post)coloniality is an essential element in the endeavor of creolizing theory.

## 2. The Caribbean as a Transnational Space

As both scholars of and from the Caribbean have repeatedly pointed out, trans-border connections, culture flows, and the transnational movement of people and capital have characterized the region from the moment of its conquest and up to the present day. As the first region to be colonized by Europe in the sixteenth century and the last one to be decolonized in the twentieth, the Caribbean was shaped by the worldwide demand and supply of colonial labor throughout the entire history of the capitalist world-economy: despite its modest geographic size, it received between one-third and a half of all the enslaved Africans shipped to the New World between 1492 and the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see fig.1), significant numbers of indentured and contracted Europeans during much of the same period, as well as indentured Asians after the formal abolition of slavery at the end of the nineteenth century (Cervantes-Rodríguez/Grosfoguel/Mielants 2009, Mintz 2010, Rediker 2007). In turn, the first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a circuit of intra-regional migration of cheap labor force to the larger Caribbean islands where U.S.-led corporations operated; after World War II, when cheap labor from the non-independent territories of the Caribbean was explicitly and massively recruited to work in Western Europe and the United States, the entire region turned into a source of transcontinental emigration (Grosfoguel et al. 2009). The Caribbean has therefore been repeatedly theorized in terms of transculturation, creolization, and hybridity, while concepts such as remittance societies, circular migration, or diaspora, now widely used within the growing field of transnational studies, have first been coined in relation with the Caribbean region (Mintz 1998, Glick Schiller 2009). As long as methodological nationalism reigned supreme in both area studies and the social sciences more generally, however, such trans-border phenomena were conceived as anomalies and the Caribbean itself was treated as a deviant case, the reality of which was irrelevant for anthropological theory-building (Glick Schiller 2009: 22). For sociology and political economy, whose emphasis until very recently lay on modern industrial societies, the Caribbean served for a long time as a paradigmatic example of the contrast between slavery and free labor and the respective connotations of backwardness, inefficiency, underdevelopment, and non-White labor characterizing New World slavery as a particular form of agricultural organization. As such, they constituted the opposite of the freedom, the modern character, and the high productivity of the White European wage-workers – which supposedly lay at the root of the development of industrial capitalist “economies”.

Instead, as a continent of mass emigration, which, alongside nation-building processes, expulsions, and waves of ethnic cleansing, had produced exceptionally high levels of ethnic homogenization, Europe appeared to be, until mid-twentieth century, the

opposite of the racially and ethnically diverse Caribbean. Especially, but not only during the nineteenth century, all Western European states but France were countries of transcontinental emigration, mainly to the Americas, while intracontinental migration was negligible. In 1950, the non-White population in the UK was estimated at 0.4%, while the “foreign” population amounted to less than 5% throughout Western Europe except Switzerland<sup>1</sup>. It was only with the postwar recruitment of migrant labor and the aftermath of the administrative decolonization in the early 1960s that Europe as a continent became “more of an arrival hall than a departure lounge for intercontinental migration” (Therborn 1995: 41). All Western European states<sup>2</sup> became recipients of large migrant populations from the recently decolonized Africa and the dictatorships-ridden South America, several waves of unskilled labor migrants contracted by government policies of postwar economic reconstruction from adjacent or formerly colonized countries, and, after 1990, hundreds of thousands of Eastern European war refugees. If creolization – a geographically and historically specific process related to the mass movement of people and goods from Europe and Africa to the Americas – has acquired currency in the context of transnationalism and globalization studies, this is, according to Sidney Mintz, because “the world has now become a macrocosm of what the Caribbean region was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century” (Mintz 1998: 120). Far from being an instance of historical particularism concerning one specific world region and one unique socioeconomic context, the Caribbean merely encompassed many transnational processes and transregional entanglements at a “theoretically inconvenient time” (Mintz 1998: 124).

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<sup>1</sup> Therborn (1995: 49) rightly points out that the OECD data quoted here was not collected having the foreign-born population in mind (which would alter the estimate of ethnic heterogeneity in Europe), nor did the category “ethnic minorities” for the UK explicitly differentiate between White and non-White populations. A conceptualization based solely on citizenship of course fails to account, among other things, for the presence of (non-White) colonial subjects possessing metropolitan citizenship on European soil. However, as detailed in the following, their numbers can reasonably be assumed to have been very low before the 1960s.

<sup>2</sup> Except Ireland. France experienced a first wave of immigration in the 1830s, followed by an influx of colonial immigrants from North Africa, especially Algeria; Switzerland actively recruited foreign labour in the late nineteenth century, as did Belgium after World War I (Therborn 1995: 41, 51).





independently of each other (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 42). At best, the differential impact of colonialism on Latin America and the Caribbean is interpreted as a “reversal of fortune” (Acemoglu/Johnson/Robinson 2002) – of previously poor regions becoming rich after the Europeans introduced “good institutions” encouraging investment, and of previously rich regions becoming poor and more unequal as a result of slavery and economic exploitation by the colonizers.

Arguing against the similarly state-centered modernization paradigm in the early 1970's, dependency theorist André Gunder Frank (1972) had instead characterized the gradual impoverishment of previously rich colonies in the Americas as “the development of underdevelopment” in a global capitalist system: The richer a region had been at the time of its colonization in terms of exploitable resources, the more underdeveloped it was in Frank's time – as, for instance, Brazil; conversely, the poorer a colony had been upon its foundation, the more developed the area was in the present – e.g. New England (Frank 1972: 19). According to Frank, this dialectic of capitalist development had been contingent upon the emergence of an export economy in the richer colonies and of local manufacturing in the poorer ones, thus occasioning widely different class structures in the respective regions. More recently, Charles Bergquist (1996) had examined this very phenomenon under the heading of “the paradox of American development”, which, for him, hinged explicitly on the systems of labor control employed in each area: While the resource-richest American colonies initially thrived on the exports of primary commodities produced under slave or indentured labor, as did Upper Peru and Bolivia on silver mining until the end of the seventeenth century, Saint Domingue on sugar and South Carolina on rice until the end of the eighteenth, all are currently among the poorest and/or least industrialized; at the same time, Britain's New England colonies, which started out as the poorest in the Americas, had by the end of the colonial period become the richest and had set the standards against which the industrialization processes of other regions had subsequently been measured (Bergquist 1996: 15). While the explanation for these divergent developments had previously been sought in the character of British (or French) colonial institutions as against Spanish and Portuguese ones and the different cultural legacies they imprinted on their respective colonies, for both Frank and Bergquist, such a simplified cultural argument does not hold. In particular, as Bergquist points out, the influence of British culture and institutions, as well as the ethnic composition of the colonizers had been the same in the case of both southern and northern British colonies in the New World; therefore, the reasons for the widely differing developments rather lie in the natural resources, labor supplies, as well as the labor systems developed according to these conditions in each particular location. The organization of labor around wage-work and production for the domestic market in the New England and the mid-Atlantic British

colonies, as opposed to the slave-based economies of the US South and the British Caribbean, geared toward export of raw materials to Europe, had consequently been a matter of strategic location in the existing trade system as well as of natural and human resources (Bergquist 1996: 24).

The clearest proof of this argument lies in the economic and political evolution of the colonies of the southern mainland – or what would later become the South of the United States. During the colonial period, the “slave South” provided luxury commodities such as sugar, tobacco, and coffee to Europe. After independence, i.e., once industrial capitalism under British hegemony made commercial credit available for primary commodities such as cotton and the Atlantic slave trade was abolished, the South organized ever tighter around slave labor, encouraged local slave-breeding and the internal slave trade (McMichael 1991, Tomich 2004). Already in the eighteenth century, the industrialized North, much like Europe, had become a quasi-metropolis to the slaveholding South, a role that would be reinforced after the South’s defeat in the Civil War and the imposition of the North’s political institutions and legislation on the South. Among these political characteristics, the North’s relatively egalitarian distribution of land and the extension of suffrage to male proprietors that went with it, were, however, primarily derived from the family and wage-labor system on which the North had specialized, not from a higher regard for democratic values than in the South. In contrast to this internal division of labor between the U.S. North and its South, Bergquist pointed out that the different trajectory of the former British and Spanish American colonies in the post-independence era could best be grasped by remarking that, unlike the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean had “no North”, i.e., no region where a free labor system dating back to the colonial era had produced a relatively egalitarian, rapidly industrializing society as a basis for liberal political ideas” (Bergquist 1996: 36).

Although in both North and South America, independence from British and Iberian colonial rule had failed to give rise to (relatively) homogeneous nation-states, producing instead what Aníbal Quijano has called “independent states of colonial societies” (2000a: 565), their racial and ethnic inequality patterns were markedly different. In the United States and in most countries of the Southern Cone (except Brazil), Indian servants and Black slaves represented demographic minorities, while wage laborers and independent producers accounted for the bulk of the local economic production after decolonization; in turn, in most other Ibero-American societies, serfdom was the social condition of the majority of the *Indios*, who made up the largest segment of the population in Mexico, Central America, and the Andes, whereas Blacks predominated in Brazil and the Caribbean (Quijano 2006: 201, 203). The White bourgeoisie in Latin

America, whose profits derived from slave-holding and serfdom, consequently had no interest in organizing local production around wage labor (for which European and Asian workers were imported after the abolition of slavery), or in the democratization of the political process. Unlike in the European case, the homogenization of Latin American societies had thus entailed the extermination of Indians and the political exclusion of Blacks and mestizos, and as such could not have led to nationalization or democracy:

In no Latin American country today is it possible to find a fully nationalized society, or even a genuine nation-state. The national homogenization of the population could only have been achieved through a radical and global process of the democratization of society and the state. That democratization would have implied ... the process of decolonizing social, political, and cultural relations that maintain and reproduce racial social classification. The structure of power was and even continues to be organized on and around the colonial axis. Consequently, from the point of view of the dominant groups, the construction of the nation, and above all the central state, has been conceptualized and deployed against American Indians, blacks, and mestizos (Quijano 2000a: 567f.).

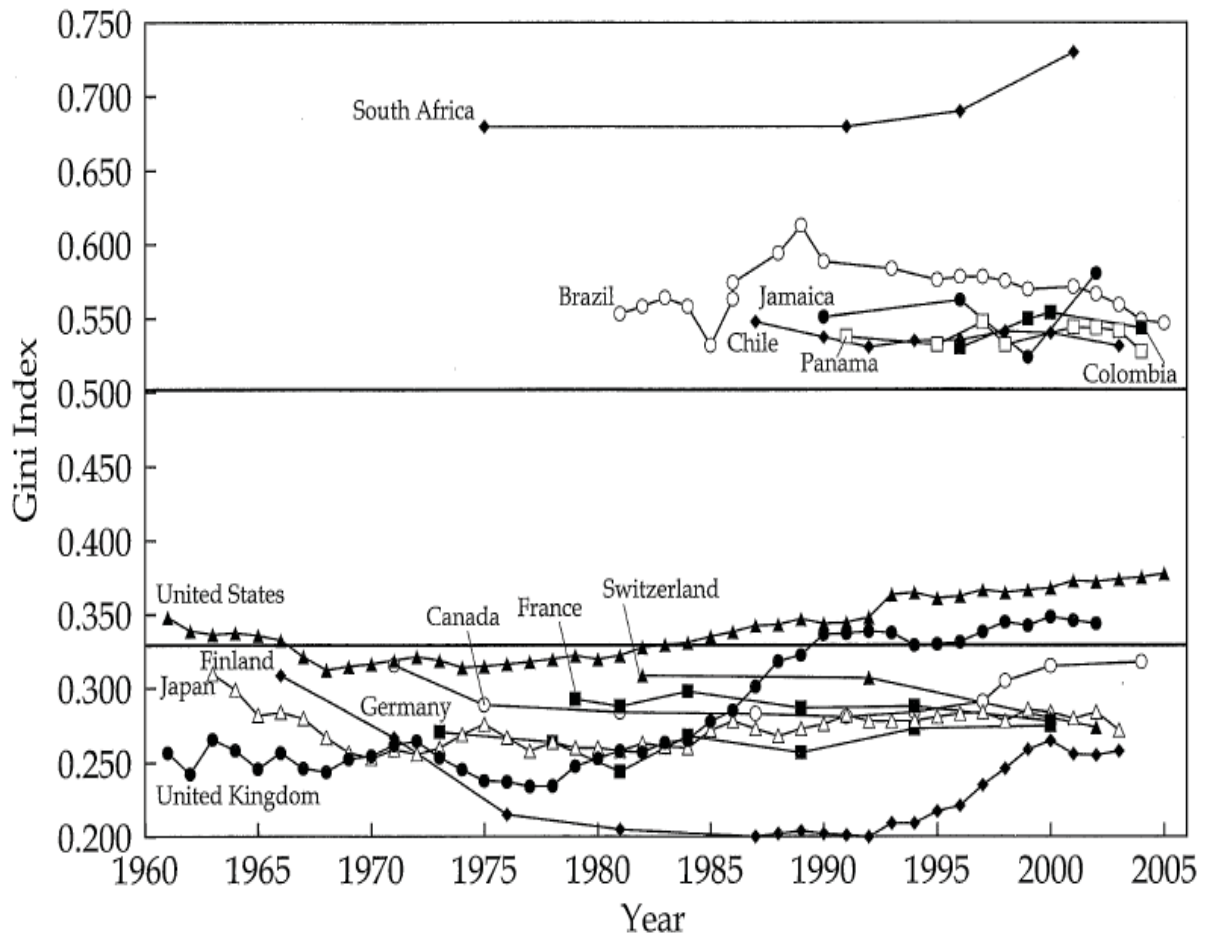
The notion that the process of decolonization undergone by Latin American societies had occurred only at a juridical and administrative level – leaving intact colonial structures of social and cultural domination as well as the economic and institutional bases on which colonial control depended – lies at the center of Quijano's concept of "coloniality of power" (2000b, 2007). As a set of political, economic, and socio-cultural hierarchies between colonizers and colonized dating back to the sixteenth century, coloniality is thus distinct from premodern forms of colonial rule in that it translates administrative hierarchies into a racial/ethnic division of labor; and it is more encompassing than modern European colonialism alone, in that it transfers both the racial/ethnic hierarchies – i.e., the "colonial difference" – and the international division of labor produced during the time of direct or indirect colonial rule into post-independence times (Mignolo 2000: 54ff.; Quijano 2000b: 381, note 1). What, in an Occidentalist perspective, is framed today as a "new" indigenous question of countries in the region hence merely represents the carry-over into the 21<sup>st</sup> century of this unresolved "disencounter between nation, identity, and democracy", i.e., the coloniality of power:

Why were the 'indios' a problem in the debate on the implementation of the modern nation-state in these new republics? ... the 'indios' were not simply serfs, as the 'Blacks' were slaves. They were, first of all, 'inferior races'... This,

exactly, was the indigenous question: it was not sufficient to remove the weight of non-wage forms of labor such as serfdom from the 'indios' in order to make them equal to the others, as had been possible in Europe during the liberal revolutions ... Who would then be working for the masters? (Quijano 2006: 196, my translation).

Moreover, among the region's promoters of economic liberalism on the model of Europe, it had been the owners of large estates who had made up the most powerful classes far into the post-independence period. Their high stakes in Latin America's expanding role as a supplier of agricultural exports to industrialized countries and their vested interest in the maintenance of labor systems favoring the unequal distribution of wealth had therefore stalled both the spread of free labor and industrialization in the region for a considerable period of time. The highly polarized, undemocratic system based on the exploitation of unfree labor thus created was therefore a response to this particular set of geographic and socioeconomic factors, rather than of any cultural or institutional legacy. Or, in Bergquist's cogent formulation: "These societies failed to develop in the post-independence era in the way their once-poor, predominantly White, northern neighbors did not because they had too many blacks, but because they had too many slaves" (1996: 33). To this day, the gap between rich and poor is smaller in those Caribbean countries where no large indigenous population survived the European invasion and no slave plantation economy was set up, such as Costa Rica. The same holds true for other parts of Latin America in which both middle and lower classes were primarily of European origin, with lower inequality levels in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and southern Brazil (Hein/Huhn 2009).

The conclusion Bergquist reached pursuing this historical line of argument in turn constitutes the point of departure of a world-historical analysis of how the economic legacy of colonialism relates to the differences between today's inequality patterns. On the basis of the Gini coefficients of ninety-six countries, Korzeniewicz and Moran (2009) argue that national inequality patterns can be grouped into two distinct and relatively stable clusters, characterized by high or low levels of inequality, respectively. Not surprisingly, the high inequality cluster (above a Gini coefficient of 0.502) contains the prominent examples of inequality research, South Africa and Brazil, but also the bulk of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa, whereas Australia, Japan, Canada, the whole of Western Europe and parts of Eastern Europe fall into the low inequality cluster (below 0.329; see fig. 2).

**Figure 2: Trends in High and Low Inequality 1960-2005, Selected Countries**

Source: Korzeniewicz/Moran (2009: 20).

While the high-inequality pattern has been characterized by systematic exclusion on the basis of ascriptive criteria such as race, ethnicity, and gender in order to limit access to economic, social and political opportunity, the low-inequality pattern has involved widespread relative inclusion through the extension of property and political rights increasingly derived from achieved (rather than ascribed) characteristics, such as one's education level, and the development of welfare states – which, in turn, further buttressed patterns of democratic inclusion. Korzeniewicz and Moran (2009) find that membership in both clusters can be traced back in time to the eighteenth century, which prompts them to coin the term “inequality equilibria” for both cases. While there has been movement in and out of each cluster at several points in time, and countries such as Argentina, Venezuela, or Uruguay, but also the USA since about the year 2000 occupy an in-between position today, the most striking result is that virtually no country has been able to shift from the high to the low inequality cluster.

At the same time, the origins of the institutional arrangements typical of the low inequality equilibrium (LIE) are less apparent than those characterizing the high inequality equilibrium (HIE), which clearly go back to colonial slavery (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 31).

Against the state-centered view of most inequality studies as well as the modernization paradigm, both of which focused on national policies for reducing inequality, Korzeniewicz/Moran (2009) consequently advance a world-historical perspective, i.e., one considering the world-system in the long-term. This particular shift in the unit of analysis and in the temporal scope of prevailing inequality structures reveals that high-inequality equilibria historically constituted innovations in the world-economy, while low-inequality equilibria represented relative comparative advantages over these as well as over earlier arrangements. Far from the archaic and backward forms of labor and market organization for which they are usually held, the various forms of coerced labor in general and slavery in particular had instead been highly profitable ones. Their implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean, i.e., the areas with the highest income inequality today, had rapidly turned the region into the world epicenter for the creation and accumulation of wealth from the period following European colonization until well into the eighteenth century (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 44). During the same time, Europe and the North American colonies – today's low inequality havens – although relying on manufactures and a free-labor system, were marginal, unprofitable and largely dependent on imports for meeting their economic needs.

Instead of assuming a simple correlation between equity and economic growth, as postulated by modernization theory, Korzeniewicz/Moran (2007) therefore suggest that the relationship between the two has changed over time. From high inequality generating more wealth under innovative extractive institutions such as plantation slavery in the New World, the relationship shifted to low inequality contexts gaining a comparative advantage over the former by means of different institutional or political practices such as tax or wage-setting policies, extended access to education, or the regulation of international migration. Such a proposition however runs counter to more than just a modernizationist approach to economic development, as it undermines basic tenets of the sociological canon - above all, the sequence of tradition and modernity:

Rather than simple industrialization, or a universal transition from tradition to modernity, successful economic growth historically has involved meeting a moving target of innovative practices (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2007: 18).

What Frank had viewed as the characteristically capitalist dialectic of development and underdevelopment and Bergquist had treated as the paradox of American development *tout court*, Korzeniewicz and Moran thus analyze using Schumpeter's notion of creative destruction of innovation practices, which they interpret as a "constant drive toward inequality": True to Schumpeter's definition of capitalism as essentially a form of change involving the recurrent transformation of the economic and social structure against prevailing arrangements, they analyze the emergence of extractive institutions of high-inequality contexts such as plantation slavery and coerced cash-crop labor as significant innovations that provided competitive advantages to colonial and settler elites and allowed for an extraordinary accumulation of wealth and power in the area (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 55). In such contexts, it was social hierarchies based on ascribed characteristics – chiefly, race – which allowed for the high degree of polarization of the emerging labor structure along the lines of White supremacy vs. non-White subordination. Conversely, areas such as the New England colonies, in which the native labor force was scarce, but the amount of land available for cultivation abundant, encouraged the spread of private property across the adult male population. The latter areas thus maintained a pattern of relatively low inequality, which, in its turn, gained a comparative advantage over the high-inequality pattern after the onset of large-scale industrialization. Although the low levels of inequality in such regions gradually came to be perceived as structured around achieved characteristics such as one's level of education or professional position, their long-term stability had nevertheless been safeguarded by restricting physical access to these regions on the basis of ascribed categories, especially national identity and citizenship, through the control of immigration flows.

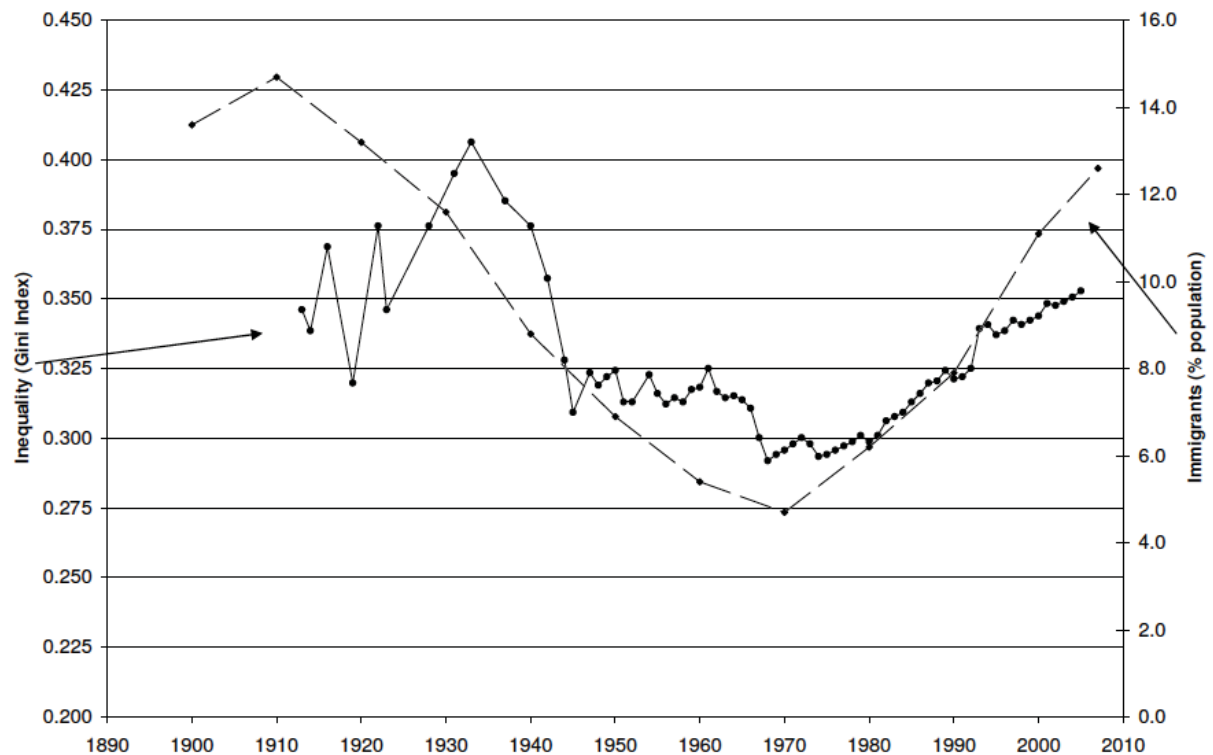
What appears as a pattern of relative inclusion of the population through redistributive state policies, democratic participation, and widespread access to education in low inequality contexts when taking the nation-state as a unit of analysis is thus revealed to entail the selective exclusion from the same rights of large sectors of the population located outside national borders, once the analytical frame shifts to the world-economy (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 78). The maintenance of national low inequality patterns of relative inclusion consequently requires the enforcement of selective exclusion on the state border, and thus the (re-)production of high inequality patterns between nations. According to Korzeniewicz and Moran (2009), this has especially been the case for the borders of nation-states since the nineteenth century, making the nation-state itself the main criterion for social stratification on a global scale ever since. Thus, late nineteenth-century mass migration across national borders led to significant convergence of wage rates between core and semiperipheral countries – mainly Europe and the so-called settler colonies of North America, Australia and New Zealand – but also tended to raise



the competition for resources and employment opportunities within receiving countries, often located in the New World. The result was an increase in inequality in some national contexts, in which the large inflow of unskilled labor caused rising wage differentials relative to skilled labor, and a decrease of inequality in others – i.e., in the sending countries, where the income differential between skilled and unskilled workers declined and overall wages rose<sup>3</sup>. In the case of Europe, migration to the New World provided a poverty outlet to some 50 million Europeans or 12% of the continent's population between 1850 and 1930 (Therborn 1995: 40). While almost all European states during this period were primarily sending countries, some experienced out-migration flows as high as 50% of the national population (in the case of the British Isles) or one-third of it (in the case of Italy), to the point of causing debates as to the rights of states to restrict emigration. Large-scale emigration and the high level of ethnic homogeneity attained by the 1950s had ensured that processes of collective identification as well as collective organization within Europe occurred in terms of class interests and class conflict rather than ethnic or racial allegiance. Labor unrest, the rise of scientific racism by the end of World War I, and social and economic protectionist measures in the wake of the Great Depression gradually made restrictions on immigration across countries of the core necessary, while strengthening notions of citizenship as a basis for entitlement to social and political rights (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 84). With the decisive reversal of the European migration trend in the 1960s, the ethnic and racial conflicts that accompanied the rise in immigration came to the fore as a largely extra-European problem that increasingly posed a threat to Western Europe in the form of ex-colonial subjects, guest workers (turned permanent), and incessant flows of labor migrants and refugees. As such, they appeared to be – and were often discussed as – forms of (ethnic and/or racial) stratification foreign to the class structure otherwise characterizing Western Europe. For the United States, Korzeniewicz and Moran (2008: 10) show a parallel first trend toward declining income inequality as restrictions on immigration increased in the beginning of the 20th century. In turn, the 1965 reform of the US immigration policy, itself tailored to the active recruitment of labor migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean in response to the rising demand for unskilled labor throughout the world-economy, resulted in a sharp rise in income inequality (see fig. 3). As in the case of Europe, the increase in inequality seemed to be a foreign-induced phenomenon directly linked to the inflow of (mostly uneducated) immigrants, thus prompting anti-immigrant sentiment and policies in response.

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<sup>3</sup> Since the constitution of formal labor markets tended to exclude the participation of women, the overwhelming majority of the population accounting for the mass labor migration of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was male (Korzeniewicz/Moran/Stach 2003: 24).

**Figure 3: Inequality and Immigration: The United States over the 20th Century**

Source: Korzeniewicz/Moran (2008: 24) after WIID (2005) and Camarota (2007).

Against this background, the ascribed characteristics of nationhood and citizenship are considered to be as important for global stratification as class, usually considered to depend on levels of achievement. Yet, while class membership has regulated the differential access to resources at the level of national populations, citizenship – i.e., nation-state membership – has restricted or undercut both the mobility and the access to resources of the poorest segments of the world population for much of the twentieth century. Shifting the unit of analysis to the world-system thus reveals that ascriptive criteria remain the fundamental basis of stratification and inequality and that national identity has been the most salient among them (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 88).

The issue of citizenship, which became part and parcel of the Occidental discourse of the civilizing mission in the wake of the French Revolution, is thereby revealed to have been relevant not only for the relative social and political inclusion of the populations of Western European nation-states, but just as much for the selective exclusion of the colonized and/or non-European populations from the same social and political rights throughout recent history. Thus, if the gradual extension of citizenship rights from propertied White males to all White males and to White women accounted for the development of the low inequality equilibrium within France as of the eighteenth century, the categorical exclusion of St. Domingue's Black and Mulatto population from

French citizenship, irrespective of their property status, ensured the maintenance of a high inequality equilibrium between France and St. Domingue/Haiti. As has been documented for the postcolonial migration flows between several Western European countries and their former colonies, as well as for the U.S. and its “protectorates”, the possession of the citizenship of the former metropole remains to this day a crucial factor deciding the timing and the destination of ex-colonial subjects’ emigration as well as the strive for independence in the remaining colonial possessions: Fear of losing Dutch citizenship and the privileges it incurs has led to a dramatic increase in Surinamese emigration to the Netherlands in the years preceding Surinam’s independence from the “motherland” (1974/75) and remains the main reason behind the lack of political pressure for independence in the Dutch Antilles and Aruba today (Amersfoort/Niekerk 2003). Analogously, the extension of United States citizenship rights to the populations of all Caribbean colonies after World War II triggered a massive transfer of labor migrants from the Caribbean to the U.S. Migrants from non-independent territories such as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands could thus enjoy both the welfare and the social rights that went with U.S. citizenship, which constituted a strong incentive for migration across the lower social strata in their home countries. In turn, only the more educated, middle sectors of the working class from formally independent Caribbean states like Jamaica, Barbados, and St. Vincent, who therefore did not possess metropolitan citizenship, chose to migrate to the U.S. (Cervantes-Rodríguez/Grosfoguel/Mielants 2009).

Comparing the advantages that different citizenship regimes such as the U.S.-American and various Western European states offered citizenship holders at distinct moments in time is not to gloss over the differences between *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* principles of allocating political membership in a state. Rather, the analogies serve to show the extent to which the ascribed characteristic of citizenship as a principle of global stratification straddles national political traditions while functioning in all as a kind of inherited property usually associated with the stratification order of feudal societies, not liberal democratic ones:

By legally identifying birth, either in a certain territory, or to certain parents, as the decisive factor in the distribution of the precious property of membership, current citizenship principles render memberships in well-off polities beyond the reach of the vast majority of the world’s population. It is in this way that citizenship may be thought of as the quintessential inherited entitlement of our time (Schachar 2009: 11).

#### 4. Global Stratification by Citizenship

If national identity, institutionalized as birthright citizenship, has been the main mechanism ensuring the maintenance of the high inequality equilibrium between the core and the periphery, then migration to wealthy regions becomes the “single most immediate and effective means of global social mobility for populations in most countries of the world“ (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 107). Thus, international migration, which entails gaining access to at least the average income of the poorer country deciles of a much richer nation-state, not only represents a strategy of upward mobility for populations of ex-colonial countries possessing metropolitan citizenship, but also a means of eluding the ascribed position derived from the national citizenship of a poor state for populations able and willing to risk illegal, undocumented or non-citizen status in a rich state. Using the inequality data for six countries interlinked through considerable migration flows, Korzeniewicz and Moran show how anyone in the poorest seven to eight deciles of Bolivia or Guatemala can move up several global income deciles<sup>4</sup> by migrating to Argentina or Mexico, respectively, and gaining access to the average income of the second-poorest decile there. Even more strikingly, anyone but people in the wealthiest decile in both Argentina and Mexico is able to “jump“ several global income deciles by entering Spain or the United States’ second-poorest decile through migration (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 108f.). In all these cases, the upward mobility of transnational migrants is considerably higher than either an individual’s educational attainment at home or the economic growth of one’s country of origin would have allowed during a lifetime (judging by the most successful examples, such as South Korea in the 1980s or China today). However, Korzeniewicz and Moran (2009) claim, the systematic naturalization of categorical inequality through which the idea of national citizenship was constructed upholds nationally bounded measures, such as educational attainment and economic growth, as appropriate strategies for upward mobility, thus further reproducing the patterns that had structured global inequality according to religious, ethnic or racial criteria in previous centuries<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Using a sample of 85 states, Korzeniewicz and Moran (2009) combine country income deciles (as an indicator of within-country inequality) with estimates of per capita gross national income (as an indicator of between-country inequality), eventually ranking the distribution of income for 850 country deciles into 10 global income deciles. The rearrangement reveals that the two wealthiest global income deciles – those with an average per capita income of \$7,898 or higher – encompass the entire population of Western European countries, the United States, Canada, and Australia. By contrast, between 70% and 80% of the population of Gambia, Ethiopia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are located within the bottom global decile, having an average of \$266 or lower (2009: 92).

<sup>5</sup> “Categorical inequality and ascription are perhaps more fundamental than ever to the workings of global inequality: nevertheless (but this is not coincidental), such inequality coexists with a system of beliefs that asserts the primacy of individual achievement and opportunity, as pursued within nations, as the engine of everything“ (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009: 100).

The construction of citizenship since the nineteenth century therefore constitutes an instance of the coloniality of power through which the racial/ethnic hierarchies established as early as the sixteenth century are being recreated in novel forms in postcolonial contexts. While the world political and economic elite, i.e., a tiny percentage of the world population, enjoys “global citizenship” and unlimited access across borders, the citizenship rights of the majority of the world population more closely resemble the status accruing from Black citizenship in the US South before the civil rights movement – i.e., rights severely curtailed by institutional as well as non-institutional frontiers and restrictions to mobility – than rights deriving from global, flexible citizenship (Mignolo 2006). Both the various types of frontiers and citizen mobility are thus closely related to the world-economic structures that the colonial and imperial differences contributed to creating and maintaining:

What is important [...] is the directionality of migrations for which the very idea of citizenship is today at stake. It is obvious that there are more Nigerians, Bolivians, Indians, Ukrainians, or Caribbeans who want to migrate to Europe or the US than people in the US desiring to migrate to any of those places. We do not know of any stories of Anglo Americans dying in the Arizona desert when marching to cross the Mexican border. [...] there are more Bolivians crossing the border and migrating to Argentina and Chile than there are Chileans migrating in mass to Bolivia. [...] You are not stopped at the gates (of frontiers or embassies) because you are poor, but because of your religion, your language, your nationality, your skin: whatever is taken as indicator of the colonial and imperial differences (Mignolo 2006: 316f.).

The logic behind the processes by which racial hierarchies are re-created in postcolonial contexts becomes especially clear in the case of the racialization of those Caribbean migrants, who, despite enjoying legal status as metropolitan citizens in France, the United States, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, experience “second-class citizenship” (Cervantes-Rodríguez/Grosfoguel/Mielants 2009: 7) upon arrival in the metropole, where they become the main targets of racial discrimination, social exclusion and criminalization on the part of the dominant (White) population. Grosfoguel (2003) therefore identifies three different types of migrant populations according to the colonial and/or imperial history that links the sending and the receiving countries, and thereby distinguishes between: immigrants, incorporated or perceived as part of the “White majority” by the host population and able to experience upward social mobility in the first or second generation; colonial immigrants, whose countries of origin have not been colonized by the country to which they migrated, but who nevertheless are racially stereotyped by analogy with the receiving country’s colonial subjects, like Dominicans

and Haitians in the United States, Moroccans in the Netherlands, or Kurds in France; and, finally, colonial/racial subjects of empire, who have a long, direct colonial history with the host country, where racist discourses as well as the prevalent racial/ethnic hierarchy are frequently constructed in opposition to these (post)colonial populations. This is the case of Puerto Ricans, African Americans and Chicanos/as in the United States, Dutch Antilleans and Surinamese in the Netherlands, Algerians, Antilleans and Senegalese in France, Congolese in Belgium or West Indians and South Asians in the United Kingdom. The typology could easily be expanded to include what could be called racial/ethnic labor migrants in Western Europe, with no colonial ties to the receiving country and initially recruited as part of the larger imports of foreign labor, but racialized on account of lesser or lacking Europeanness, such as be Turks and Poles (but not Greeks or Italians) in Germany. Thus, the non-Western, often non-European and non-White origin of both colonial immigrants and colonial/racial subjects of empire plays a central part in the naturalization of categorical inequality as well as in the regulation of social mobility available through transnational migration. With the growing trend towards ex-colonial immigration into Europe and the United States, it is therefore processes of racialization and ethnicization of colonial subjects, rather than the mainstream model of the successful assimilation of migrants, that accounts for the majority of migrants' experiences today.

## 5. Creolizing Europe as Creolizing Theory

The shift of perspective towards a relational concept of space, viewed as capable of accounting for transnational inequality structures, has featured prominently among the solutions for overcoming methodological nationalism that various authors have advanced in recent years. Quite often, the plea for replacing nation-state centered "container concepts" with transnational or cosmopolitan "relational concepts" of space entails the explicit shift in the unit of analysis from individual societies to the world-economy proposed within the world-systems approach (Weiß 2005, Beck 2007). However, the shift from methodological nationalism to methodological cosmopolitanism is viewed as a necessary adjustment to the qualitative change that twentieth century globalization has operated in structures of inequality, but as irrelevant for the assessment of earlier or "classical" inequality contexts – for which the nation-state framework is still considered appropriate.

Instead, this paper has used the example of the transnational processes and transregional entanglements characterizing Latin America and the Caribbean since the sixteenth century in order to reveal the extent to which the mainstream analysis of social inequality relies on an overgeneralization of the Western European experience

as well as on the erasure of non-Western, non-White experiences from sociological theory-building. The twin fallacies of overgeneralization and erasure were made possible by two interrelated tendencies of Eurocentric sociological production: First, the historical indebtedness of core categories of the sociology of social inequality, especially class, to the socioeconomic context of Western European industrial society and to the rise of the nation-state, rendered class conflict, proletarianization, and social mobility within industrial nations more visible than colonialism, the slave trade, and European emigration into the New World. Second, this differential visibility made for the disproportionate representation of the former processes in mainstream sociological theory as opposed to the latter. Disregarding the massive dislocation of people triggered by the European expansion into the Americas since the sixteenth century, as well as the consequences which subsequent migration processes have had for the ethnic homogenization of core areas on the one hand and for processes of racialization and ethnicization in peripheral and semiperipheral ones on the other were therefore essential conditions for establishing a sociology of migration devoid of colonizers as well as of colonial subjects and a sociology of inequality and stratification devoid of race and ethnicity until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Boatcă 2010).

Instead of heralding transnationalization as a new phenomenon, it would therefore be both analytically and politically helpful to adopt creolization as a shift of perspective. In order to account for the present of Europe as not racially exclusively White, not ethnically or culturally homogeneous, and not socially stratified according to achieved characteristics in enclosed national containers, what is needed is an adequate un-erasure of the history of the non-White, non-European or non-Western regions with which Europe was militarily, economically and culturally entangled for centuries – and which would not have become hybrid, creole, or transcultural without it – from social scientific theory-building. This would not only reveal a far more creolized history of Europe than the one we are accustomed to reading, but would also result in creolized theory – one that does not overgeneralize from the particular history of its own geopolitical location, but that accounts for the continuum of structures of power linking geopolitical locations from colonial through postcolonial times.

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