

Neoliberal Insecurity:

Distancing Inside the Fighter Class

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Abstract

Although very valuable research on inequality is done with quantitative methods, these approaches provide an incomplete picture of the growing socioeconomic separation inside societies in the global north as well as in the global south. This dissertation evaluates the contributions that the theory of social reproduction can give to understanding of the divide inside societies in relationship with economic transformations. Departing from the theoretical and experimental work of Jodhka, Souza and Rehbein, this research tests the hypothesis of a growing separation between the subgroups of the fighter class, aspiring and defensive, as a result of the neoliberal reforms of the late XX Century. Germany and Colombia being used as cases of study. This dissertation presents the similarities between the impact of reforms in both countries and their relation to the spread of neoliberalism across the globe. This research shows that there have been transformations as a result of the reforms inside each society and that they had an opposite effect for each subgroup of the fighter class. On one side favoring the traits and capitals that more closely associate with the members of the aspiring fighters while simultaneously negatively affecting the traits and capitals that are associated with the defensive fighters. This research also shows the interconnection of the internationalization of the production chain, precarization of work, the rising commodification of social life and the growing divide inside societies. Ultimately, the dissertation proves that social reproduction theory is a valid tool for understanding the impact of economic reforms and explaining the observed increasing inequality and segregation inside societies.

Zusammenfassung

Während mit quantitativen Methoden zwar einsichtsreicher Forschungsarbeiten zur Ungleichheit durchgeführt werden, vermitteln diese Ansätze ein unvollständiges Bild der zunehmenden sozioökonomische Trennung innerhalb der Gesellschaften im globalen Norden sowie auch im globalen Süden. Diese Dissertation untersucht, welchen Beitrag die Theorie der sozialen Reproduktion zum Verständnis der gesellschaftlichen Spaltung im Zusammenhang mit wirtschaftlicher Veränderung leisten kann. Ausgehend von den theoretischen und experimentellen Arbeiten von Jodhka, Souza und Rehbein geht diese Arbeit der Hypothese einer zunehmenden Trennung zwischen den aufstrebenden und den defensiven Untergruppen der Kämpferklasse als Folge der neoliberalen Reformen des späten XX Jahrhunderts nach. Deutschland und Kolumbien dienen dabei als Studienfälle. Diese Dissertation präsentiert die Gemeinsamkeiten der Folgen entsprechender Reformen in beiden Ländern wie auch ihre Verbindung mit der weltweiten Verbreitung des Neoliberalismus auf. Diese Recherche zeigt, dass die Reformen in den Gesellschaften beider Länder zu Veränderungen geführt haben und dass sie für jede Untergruppe der Kämpferklasse eine entgegengesetzte Wirkung hatten. Sie förderten die Eigenschaften und Kapitalien, die eher mit den Mitgliedern der aufstrebenden Kämpfer in Verbindung gebracht werden, während sie sich gleichzeitig negativ auf die Eigenschaften und Kapitalien auswirkten, die mit den defensiven Kämpfern in Verbindung gebracht werden. Diese Recherche zeigt auch den Zusammenhang zwischen der Internationalisierung der Produktionskette, der Prekarisierung der Arbeit, der zunehmenden Kommodifizierung des sozialen Lebens und der wachsenden Spaltung der Gesellschaften. Letztlich beweist die Dissertation, dass die Theorie der sozialen Reproduktion ein gültiges Instrument ist, um die Auswirkungen von Wirtschaftsreformen zu verstehen und die beobachtete zunehmende Ungleichheit und Segregation innerhalb der Gesellschaften zu erklären.

HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

NEOLIBERAL INSECURITY:
DISTANCING INSIDE THE FIGHTER CLASS

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*Para Boike,
Ayer, hoy y siempre*

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It is alleged that Isaac Newton once said: “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants”. This statement refers both to the miniscule scale of the contribution of a single person in face of the established body of knowledge and to the importance of those who were there before us and that enabled us to advance. I could not agree more with this statement in the closing hours of my writing my doctoral dissertation.

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1. Chapter 1: Divided Societies

The Mayas perceived the universe as an unending repeating cycle that reoccurs throughout diverse cultures around the world. Although the idea of cyclical time has fallen out of favor in the face of today's science, the observations on which the Mayan concept rest remain valid until today. The re-occurrence of events that differ little from those observed in the past, be them events that reoccur daily or those that return throughout many years or decades, is a common fact of life. These events can be as mundane as the differences between night and day but also include more complex cycles like seasons, crop cycles or longer astronomical periods like the Lunar Saros. The cyclic nature is not only limited to the natural world but also include humans, from mundane necessities like eating and sleeping, to the innumerable social processes that are based on repetition, like playing, celebrating, or mourning. On a larger scale, even a human life has a predetermined cycle: being born, working, having children, in the case of many, and eventually dying.

In recent times the collective awareness of another apparent cycle is rising, although still in the process of figuring how and what it entails, as sort of a modern Maya, the synchronicity of socio-economic events that brings back memories from the past is becoming harder to ignore. Although the Covid-19 pandemic is currently the most notable event linked to this process, it is just one more event that is associated to a problematic that was already underway: the rising socio-economic inequality throughout developed and developing nations alike.

1.1 Studying inequality

The biggest problem of this dissertation is approaching the topic. Socioeconomic Inequality is a broadly studied topic throughout many academic fields and in varied academic lines. The diversity of research on socioeconomic inequality clearly moves researchers to choose a preferred approach, or school of thought on inequality, from where to approach the topic. Usually, this approach is closely related to the training of

the researcher, and this shapes the study in a certain academic direction, be it economics, sociology, anthropology or other.

The various relevant contributions made on socioeconomic inequality from different fields make choosing exclusively one approach over other not only a difficult task but, more importantly, also one that limits the potential of the study. Nevertheless, for practical reasons this is the most common path to take. This not only limits the reach of the research done but further increases the polarization of the debate by making studies fall in opposing camps with marked different takes on the subject.

Research on inequality is also so vast, old, and established, that proposing an entirely new theory of inequality would be extremely ambitious and unrealistic for a single study or author, let alone for the aim and possibilities of a doctoral dissertation.

This dissertation is nevertheless not limited to one field, nor it aims at creating a new general theory on socioeconomic inequality. This dissertation instead argues that the current state of research on inequality not only allows for a multidisciplinary approach, but that it is a necessity to implement such an approach due to a myriad of reasons that include: the broadness of socioeconomic inequality as a research topic, the high extent of the effects of inequality over a variety of fields, the multiple academic disciplines that are invested in it, the increasing public interest in the topic, and the rising politization and social unrest that surrounds it. Constructing from the different approaches to inequality is a necessity for understanding it and overcoming the limitations that the narrow approaches provide.

Although the consideration of the plurality of approaches is desired, the limited resources, scope and reach of a doctoral dissertation makes necessary the selection of an issue or subject of study on socioeconomic inequality. This choice does not follow the traditional constrictions of studying inequality from any single specific academic background. Instead, this dissertation addresses the issue from varied perspectives by presenting evidence from different academic fields.

A revision of available research however would not fulfill the objectives of the research project given that most relevant studies on the topic are very grounded and limited to a specific research field. Furthermore, a conclusion can be more meaningful if it includes empirical material. For this reason, this dissertation includes the recollection of empirical material to test a hypothesis that is derived from the theoretical part of the

thesis. Therefore, this dissertation aims at making two contributions: on one side, the inclusion and consideration of aspects from different academic fields; and, on the other side, the small contribution that its theoretical and empirical work can provide.

Being these the major considerations for structuring this research project, the issue also fits with the desired objectives and limitations of this study. In summary, the issue includes elements from the origins of research on inequality but is also relevant in today's research sphere; it is not monopolized by one single academic discipline but is specific enough to be narrowed down empirically and takes in consideration recent developments on the field of inequality. The political and public relevance, and the interest in the issue is also a very important selection criterion as diverse aspects of inequality have had varying degrees of relevance across time. Some have been relevant since the inception of the interest on inequality while others did not achieve academic relevance or have been limited to a niche audience until recently.

On top of the theoretical considerations for the selection of the issue, practical considerations must also be made given the limited resources and scope of a doctoral research. Counting with research experience in Latin America and Europe, these regions present the most reasonable areas to study. As such, the selected issue should be relevant in both geographical regions. Another consideration is the scope of the empirical work. Although a full-scale country or state-wide study is often preferred, as it allows a higher robustness and testing or building a wider array of hypothesis, such a study is beyond the possibilities of a single doctoral researcher. Usually, these kinds of studies are done by large teams during extensive time periods and often collect enough empirical material to overwhelm even an entire team of researchers for years. Thereby the scope of the study is also limited for it to be performed by a single researcher, limiting the geographical reach as well as requiring focalizing on the empirical part.

The following section elaborates on the selection the research topic starting with the motivation. It is followed by a section on the research problem, the research question, the hypothesis, and a summary of the study.

1.2 Motivation

The ideal point to start this research is by venturing into the motivation behind the selection of the main research topic. Although this dissertation begins with several

considerations regarding the formal study of inequality, the motivation behind performing such a study is by no means less important and helps to understand the selection of the topic.

Inequality is not a new phenomenon, and it has been present in the academic and political debate with varying degrees of relevance during at least the last two centuries (Scheidel, 2017). The origins of the study surrounding inequality can be tracked down to the origins of disciplines like economics and sociology, playing a major role in the formation of theories of classical thinkers like Marx (Dorling, 2012). Inequality also has played a significant political role for centuries, and depending on the understanding of inequality, one can argue about it being part of movements like the French revolution or communism (Hutton, 1974).

Although inequality is a very present topic today, its popularity has fluctuated through time, and it was not until recent that it returned to a prominent place in the academical and political debates. The prominence of inequality exploded in the last decades as can be seen in the NGram in figure 1 which shows the prevalence of the term inequality in literature. Scholars like Mike Savage track the rise of prominence of inequality in recent years to the financial economic crisis of 2008, the increasing visibility of movements like Occupy Wall Street, the unexpected success of Piketty’s book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, and the inclusion of inequality among the sustainable development goals of the UN (Piketty, 2014; Savage, 2021). These are only three of the many relevant and popular elements during recent years that are related to inequality, and that clearly show the outreach of the topic in the political, economic, and social spheres and how they intertwine with each other.

Figure 1
NGram: Popularity of the term inequality in printed literature.



The inclusion of inequality as one of the sustainable development goals of the UN in 2015 is a further example of the rise in popularity of the topic and its establishment as one of the main issues among policy makers worldwide (U. N., 2015).

10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average

10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard

10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

10.5 Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations

10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions

10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

10.A Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements

10.B Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes

10.C By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent

The UN resolution helps to illustrate the variety of phenomena and the diversity of issues that relate to inequality. From its broad mission: “Reduce inequality within and among countries”, goal 10 encompasses a series of targets and indicators that include a variety of criteria from income to ethnic and gender inequality, international aid, equality under the rule of law, equality of outcome, the legality of institutions, and ensuring that the innerworkings of the global financial system do not harm those already marginalized.

Having returned from relatively obscurity and relating to many of the important social problems today, inequality is a subject worthy of study. Furthermore, a contribution that can link diverse parts of the debate surrounding inequality can help reconnect the diverging narratives surrounding this subject. This is the main motivation behind this dissertation.

1.3 Research Problem

Although analyzing the same issue and working with similar empirical data, economist and sociologist often draw very different pictures of socioeconomic inequality in societies. From publications that disregard inequality completely and frame it as a stage of development like Kuznets (1995) to works where the fairness of the outcomes in life can be described as a function of effort and fair institutions Ramos & Van de Gaer (2016), orthodox economic publications on inequality often present a rather optimistic picture of the issue.

Inequality today is absent from the core of mainstream economic theory. It is only until the recent rise in popularity of inequality that a serious debate reopened surrounding the motivation to study this subject and develop policies that address it. This is evidenced by economists working on the inequality with the purpose of identifying diverse issues and motivations to study it. For example, it has been shown that inequality leads to violence which has an economic impact (Rudqvist et al., 2003). Similarly, there is also an argument that inequality diminishes economic potential (Narayan et al., 2013). There are even studies that exploratively approach the possible reasons that justify studying inequality (Oxford Martin School and Citi, 2017).

Sociology presents an opposite and rather dire picture of socioeconomic inequality and social segregation. While economist must be convinced of the importance of studying inequality, sociologist often start from observed inequalities to work out theories from the ground. It can even be argued that inequalities are one of the major motors of research in sociology.

Although many sociological theories relate to inequality as seen from an economic viewpoint, not all find a common ground that allows for a connection with economics, or in the case they do, they end up being incorporated into already established economic theories without a real reevaluation of the prevailing assumptions (d'Hombres et al., 2012).

Given the previously mentioned scope, this dissertation aims at linking the approach on socioeconomic inequality from an economic perspective with the sociologic theories of social replication. The study subject that connects these two issues is the increasing precariousness of the labor market and its connection to the rise of neoliberalism since the 1980s.

1.4 Research Question and Hypothesis

The resulting research question articulates the issues and the subject of study with the theoretical foundation of this dissertation:

Can the theory of social reproduction be used to complement the economic study of inequality in the context of the increasing division inside the working class?

The main hypothesis derives from the research question, connects it with the empirical material and reflects on the expected findings:

The adoption of neoliberal practices and their effects on the job market increases the socio-economic division inside societies and makes inequality progressively harder to overcome. This divide is based on social and economic characteristics and is not entirely quantifiable.

The significance of testing this hypothesis rests in establishing a mechanism by which a neoliberal system generates and reproduces inequality, and identifying which conditions accelerate this process and which, if any, can reverse it.

The debate on socioeconomic inequality is usually centered around criteria that relate with an established definition of inequality such as income distribution or equality of opportunity, to name the most popular ones. In opposition, this approach allows for focusing on the fundamentals that are behind inequality and proposing an alternative way of understanding inequality.

Concretely, this dissertation connects the established economic framework on inequality of authors like Piketty (2014) and Sen (1999) with the academic tradition on social reproduction of Bourdieu (1984), Vester et al. (2001), Rehbein (2015) and Jodhka et al. (2018), among others. The hypothesis was tested departing from empirical material collected using the Habitus Hermeneutics methodology. To control for national bounded processes, this methodology was implemented in two different countries: Germany and Colombia. A diametrically opposite change in traits and capital of individuals in the same social class due the changing nature of work in neoliberalism was observed under the approach of Rehbein (2018).

1.5 Summary

Rising social and economic tensions worldwide have brought the issue of inequality to regain importance as one of the major modern problematics in developing as well as in developed economies. Inequality involves a diversity of phenomena that have been studied from a variety of fields, each constituting a corpus of its own and often disconnected political and academic debates. Nevertheless, its rising importance and its relationship with so many pressing issues justifies doing a study that links the observed rise in inequality with socioeconomic transformations.

The aim of this thesis is to shed light on the relationship between inequality and neoliberal capitalism as a return to basic forms of capitalism and test the hypothesis that uncontrolled capitalism encourages social reproduction and inequality.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework to test the hypothesis, being devoted to a summary of thought on inequality. Chapter 3 presents the social reproduction framework that allows for testing the hypothesis. Chapter 4 presents the methodology and experiment designed used to test the hypothesis as well as the details of the empirical part.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal begin with a summary of the relevant historical elements in each country necessary for contextualizing the observations as well as a stylized presentation of the relevant findings for testing the hypothesis. Chapter 7 presents a comparison between the findings in both countries, allowing not only to establish the similarities and differences but also to identify the key elements of the neo liberal transformation. Chapter 8 presents the major conclusions of the study and elaborates on discussion.

2. Chapter 2: Inequality, Growth and Capital

2.1 Segregation Inside Societies

Departing from the different roles in the early sedentary societies thousands of years ago up until the world of stagnant wages and skyrocketing profits of the global financial capitalism today, stratification has been the norm on most civilizations. The idea that the different roles in a society come associated with different privileges; better access to resources and everything from economic to political power, is well established as one of the underpinnings of current and historical societies.

Academic interest on the phenomena surrounding the stratification of societies and inequality started around the XVII Century; this movement is among the precursors of modern sciences like sociology and economics. Already for early liberal thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a wide array of criteria led to multiple forms of social stratification that established clear roles for different actors in society depending on their established position (Rousseau, 1755).

Being these characteristics settled at birth, there was little room for change, making social segregation stiff and social mobility usually hard or outright impossible. In this kind of society marriage played the task of replicating social structure one generation to the next saved by a few extremely rare exceptions where it allowed for some social mobility (Rousseau, 1755). Among other contributions, the analytical work of Max Weber more than a century later provides a not entirely deterministic view of stratification of societies by proposing a classification based on the economic, social, and political structures as well as on the kind of society (Waters & Waters, 2015).

The classical picture contrasts with the prevailing assumption today of relatively feasible social mobility and the inherent fairness in inequality that concepts like the effort approach imply (Ramos & Van de gaer, 2016). "If you can dream it, you can do it" seems to be the mantra when it comes to social mobility as well as when the inequalities of the capitalist system need to be justified.

A link between personal effort and social position has been established as a the guiding principle of personal success and social stratification (Ramos & Van de gaer, 2016). It is no coincidence that this mentality has progressively gained popularity with the rise

of neoliberal capitalism in recent decades, as this movement is a development on an extreme interpretation of classical liberal thinking like Smith (1790). To understand how the association between neoliberal capitalism and increasingly feasible social mobility was established, this chapters starts with a description of the origins of capitalism and how it shape societies.

2.2 Incipient Capitalism and Inequality

The process that led to the development of capitalism differs from country to country and it is possible to identify different forms of capitalism in different societies at different points in history. The origins of capitalism are therefore not a settled issue for academics. It can however be said that the precursor of modern financial capitalism has its roots in the northern European countries around the XVI and XVIII Century (Fukuyama 1992, p. 79).

The system that started there expanded fast through the world, thanks in part to European colonialism. The subsequent development of this system rose to be the one to articulate economic relationships among and inside most current states (Bruland & Mowery, 2014). This role was not uncontested, and it indeed coexisted with other productive systems like planned economies or systems with socialized capital for many years. Even today there are still a few countries that operate under a system significantly different to financial capitalism, like Cuba or the Democratic Republic of North Korea.

Mainstream economists have a stronger narrative about Capitalism. According to them capitalism came to fruition due to a conjunction of diverse circumstances on different fields such as: higher demands on taxation, the rush towards the specialization of labor aimed at increasing the production and quality of manufactured goods, the increasing concentration of land and means of production by some individuals and the change to a profit-based mentality of entrepreneurial ventures (Fukuyama, 1992).

This logic portrays capitalism as the result of diverse independent processes from actors without a clear agency and suggests that capitalism is an unavoidable stage in human development. Fukuyama's famous "end of history" is based on this assumption, one where the development of human societies follows a linearity like time, being capitalist the later and final stage of this process.

Contrary to this narrative, Marx presents a very different picture of industrial capitalism by including agency in the chapter 24 when he describes the primitive accumulation of the Capital (Marx, 1867). In comparison to the pre-industrial times, the early industrial capitalist period meant that those with capital could accumulate wealth rapidly while those devoid of capital had to live of their work and could hardly ever amass their own capital.

As is also described by Marx, the rise in popularity of capitalistic practices almost universally respected the privileges of the established dominant classes at the time but brought tremendous changes for the rest of the population. Marx described the unfairness of process of land and capital adjudication as it favored those who belonged to the highest social classes at the time, making royalty and nobility the de-facto early capitalist (Marx, 1867).

This transition originated from the re-definition of work relationships to better serve the needs of the rising industrialization and to speed up the dynamic of accumulating capital (Marx, 1867). Owning no land and needing money to cover their living expenses, now given in monetary terms, most individuals were forced to migrate to find jobs paid in money. As cities concentrated the nascent industries with a crescent demand for workers, they were usually the receivers of migrants from the countryside who freed from servitude now had to sell their work force to survive. The changes were not limited to their occupations but also had consequences in other fields like the increasing role of economics and money in the daily life and social relations.

The increase in production and in quality of goods due to the new productive dynamic started a race towards industrialization that led to rapid accumulation of capital simultaneously abandoning the old productive ways. The owners of capital amassed wealth which allowed a further expansion of capitalism, either by re-investing the profits in expanding their business or by funding new ventures. The increased industrialization had an implicit effect on social division, as the rising capital intensity through capital accumulation lowers the share of labor from the value of the goods, thus maximizing the return of the capital owner for the same unit of labor. This is also the turning point from the previous social structures like serfdom, into capitalism and starts shaping the modern social classes of modern nations under the dynamic of capital (Marx, 1867).

Marx's observations of the nascent industrial capitalism and the different roles in this system led him to outline class relationships in his major work *The Capital* (Marx, 1867). The main dynamic in Marx's theory is the relation of domination by the individuals that own capital of those that must sell their labor to survive, the capitalist and the workers.

The system described by Marx closes any economic possibility for a worker to become members of the capitalist class and protects the latter ones from having to depend on their labor if they are clever enough in managing their own capital. In a way, Marx's understanding of the economic system portrays a perpetuation of the established social order and foresees its endless replication (Portes, 2010).

The main economic argument supporting Marx statement is the absolute power that the capitalists have on the establishment of wages and profits (Marx, 1867). Following Marx, the criteria for establish wages was paying the necessary monetary compensation to allow an individual to survive and sustain his family. A wage higher would negatively affect the surplus value of the capitalist which is his main concern. Population was therefore also regulated through wages, an increase in the demand for workers required higher wages and lower wages led to a decrease in the population. Accordingly, the economic cycle played a central role in the population, a long-lasting expansion or contraction of the economic production would lead to an increase or decrease in the population. A third segment of the population lives outside the economic circle and is maintained by others. This group is made up of home workers, caretakers and those unemployed. Their role is fulfilling non-productive tasks that are necessary for the reproduction of the population and serve as a reserve population for cases economic need or war. The existence of the pool of unemployed people also keeps wages low.

Marx setting leaves three clearly defined groups that reproduce their role through generations, capitalist, labor and marginalized. Although this was derived from the experience of early capitalism in the England, it followed a similar path in other European states. The continuous process of accumulation of capital passed down through generations ultimately led a handful of powerful families of the past families to concentrate a significant share of land and capital. This trend continues until this day, although not all historically powerful and influential families survived until today, many

families in the current elites can be tracked to their privileged origins centuries ago (Barone & Mocetti, 2018).

Mainstream economics see capitalism as a stage in human development that occurs due to a conjunction of progressive developments in diverse human areas. Marx's perspective tells a very different story, showing that the incipient capitalism perpetuated the traditional system of segregation, being those who benefited the most out of it a very small number of historically established individuals. The transformation to this system also undermined those without capital more by forcing them to work without a realistic chance of accumulating. In comparison with a non-capitalistic system, the progressive enrichment of the capital owners increased the socio-economic divergence due to the increasing accumulation of capital.

2.3 Inequality and Revolutions

Increasing divides inside societies, such as the one described by Marx, are not new and have often led to unrest that could derive in popular uprisings, conflicts, and regime changes. In many cases this incentive were the same that gave way to revolutions and changes in power through history. These are transformative events when at the peak of popular discomfort, a large group of individuals rebel against the privileged as the ultimate sign of their dissatisfaction with their precarious conditions (Dorling, 2012).

The French revolution provides a good example of the social and economic dynamic revolving around inequality during the early stages of capitalism and the beginnings of the association between capitalism, equality, and liberal thought. Privilege in prerevolutionary France was aristocratic in nature, which made it not only arbitrary, being a system based on tradition, but it also created an uncrossable breach that was a source of dissatisfaction for a substantial part of the population, including those who had to work for a living as well as the incipient capitalist and other traditionally bourgeoisie groups grouped under the Third Estate order (Taylor, 1967). The discomfort with this situation played a major role in establishing the conditions that would lead to the French revolution, to the point that equality would become part of the motto that the revolution and that now represents the French nation: "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité".

It has been argued that the spirit of equality that the revolution entailed englobed the shift from the established replicating social order of the *Ancien Régime* to a social order

centered around economic relations, hence its bourgeoisie character (Taylor, 1967). However, according to Taylor, the evidence contradicts the idea of a Bourgeois revolution and makes hard to argue for the role of economics in the face of the political and social crisis of the French Monarchy. This undermines the economic claim to mediating equality and portrays the consequences of the general discomfort with failing institutions.

Ultimately, the reluctance of French nobility to acknowledge the varied demands of the French people and their refusal to abide to the few checks and balances that had been built on to the French state brought up a new form of government that at least on paper aimed at equalizing all citizens and put the individual at its center. Today the influence of the egalitarian principles included in the Declaration of Human rights are a part of the legal backbone of many countries as well as of international organizations like the UN.

Despite their short-term success, revolutions usually only present a small window for change. In many cases this will be limited to the relegation of an established elite and the consolidation of a new one. In his works, Marx acknowledged this as a major hindrance for a proletarian revolution. An argument that is further elaborated from the perspective of historical materialism, an approach developed by Marxist theorist that establishes that historical events are shaped by economic system throughout the progression of history (Reichelt, 2000).

History shows the complexities that equality as an ideal entail and the difficulty of its implementation, even in countries with enough of a political movement in favor of equality. Centuries of discrimination on religious, gender, racial, ethnic, political, and economic grounds in even the most self-proclaimed liberal and progressive nations are an example of the difficulties of implementing equality as a concept by failing at even the most basic interpretation of the proposition: “all man are born equal”.

Instead, revolutions on the name of equality not only often fail at their goal but open ways for further repression, following Dorling (2012):

There is a constant repetition in human history of tyrants emerging and people then banding together to oppose their tyranny. New beliefs and theories are created, new constitutions and creeds constructed, and, then, often that which was created to oppose tyranny and inequality

itself becomes corrupted and establishes a new tyranny. In medieval Europe, the Christian Pope became an all-powerful despot. All too often, institutions originally established along egalitarian or emancipatory lines later become purveyors of inequalities and injustice.

The tyranny within Saudi Arabia today, where a tiny royal family controls a huge country; the tyranny of the new Chinese empire that produces mobile flat- screen phones for the social-networkers of the world, using armies of virtual industrial slaves; the tyranny of the terror the US exerts on many smaller states (despite itself having arisen from complaints of such behavior by the British): these are just three of many examples of how the fight for greater equality can be usurped. (p.93)

The next section presents a summary of diverse economic policies that have been implemented following an egalitarian principle and how these approaches took over the debate on socio-economic inequality.

2.4 Equality from an Economic Perspective

Despite originally aiming at an economic recovery and combating poverty after the big crash of 1929, Keynesian economic policies are today perceived at having helped fighting inequality (Smith & Langman, 2018). Keynesian economics experienced a popularity period during the XX century from the 1930's to the 1970's and opposed the liberal economics with their preference for the market and focused on consumption. Keynesianism served as the basis for interventionist policies from the state to maintain full employment and provided with basic utilities to the population. These policies benefited those who were worse off in the economic system and came to the expense of those who were better off, be it through regulation or taxation. On face value, Keynesianism presented an alternative to the extremes of pure uncontained liberalism and a fully non-market economy (Bortz, 2017).

While the policies implemented under Keynesianism were successful and popular in the post war years, they fell out of favor due to the monetary and inflationary crises of the 1970's and were subsequently replaced by neoliberal policies in the latter half of

the century (Bielschowsky & Torres, 2018). By the end of the 1980's the Washington consensus emerged as a compendium of policies that would serve as the guiding economic principles under the then increasingly popular neoliberal doctrine.

These policies also centered the world economy around institutions explicitly or tacitly controlled by the USA. In most cases the guidelines of the Washington Consensus promoted down-scaling many institutions that the Keynesian policies have brought up, favoring fiscal responsibility as well as regulation and encouraged the adoption of a for profit mentality throughout all aspects of society (Ebrahim, 2007). The fall of the communist bloc further pushed this agenda and lead to its widespread adoption by the end of the XX century.

The wave of privatizations and structural reforms in the name of efficiency and free market in fields such as health care, transportation and communications seriously undermined the equalizing efforts of previous redistributive and economic policies in developed and developing countries, although having an especially strong impact in the later. As such, the decade of the 1990's is known in many regions of the world as the lost decade (Ortiz et al., 2012).

Putting growth as the basic guiding principle for overall wellbeing, neoliberalism disregarded the question of inequality by considering it irrelevant and by arguing that equality of outcome was worse for all than uncontained economic growth. This was eloquently articulated by one of the most fervent defenders of free market Milton Friedman. He argued that a free market provided more freedom and more equality than a nonmarket economy (Cole, 2008). Many politicians, famously Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, but also many others relevant global leaders and institutions, adhered to this idea and pushed forward policies based on this ideology especially during the last decade of the XX Century. After years of critiques due to increasing inequality and the undermined popularity of concepts like the trickle-down effect, the Washington Consensus, a guidelines based around neoliberal thinking, lost favor and was even declared dead by the US President Biden (Ip, 2021).

The covid pandemic pushed for a departure from the financial responsible approach towards one moved by social investment and spending. This marks a partial return to the economic policies of yore and while the market and free competition and fiscal responsibility are still guiding factors in policy making, the overarching postulate that

market and deregulation are the better and fairer allocators of resources are starting to be phased out in favor of policies that put social welfare above economic gains.

Despite this, from a statesmanship viewpoint, the debate on policy making surrounding socioeconomic inequality has turned into a quest for an optimal distribution of income, an egalitarian provision of basic goods and equality of opportunity. The next section argues that the main factor that led to focus into a purely quantitative, material, and monetary factors was the impressive economic performance and material improvement of living during the XX Century.

2.5 Economic Development and Inequality During the XX Century

Overcoming the Malthusian fears of an impending doom due to the grim prospects of a rising population and limited resources, humanity achieved an outstanding creation of wealth alongside an exponential population growth during the XX Century. Contrary to the apocalyptic predictions of the XIX Century, the population growth was overshadowed by the increase in capacity of the global economies to provide for these people (Hutton, 1974).

A good example of the prowess of the economic growth of this era is the dynamic of food production. While in the XIX Century the highest estimates calculated that the earth would only be able to sustain two billion people, the FAO recently reported that up to 10 billion people could be fed with the current crop yields (Berners-Lee et al., 2018). This is an outstanding achievement for mankind, as for all human history it was only until 20 years ago that humanity achieved the landmark of producing more food than what it needs to sustain the living population. The implication of this is not only a clear sign of the power and scale of the economic transformation during the last century, but it also speaks of the changing nature of modern problematics. For example, the hunger problematic cannot be explained as the result of insufficient production, but it becomes a problem created from by inefficient or unfair distribution.

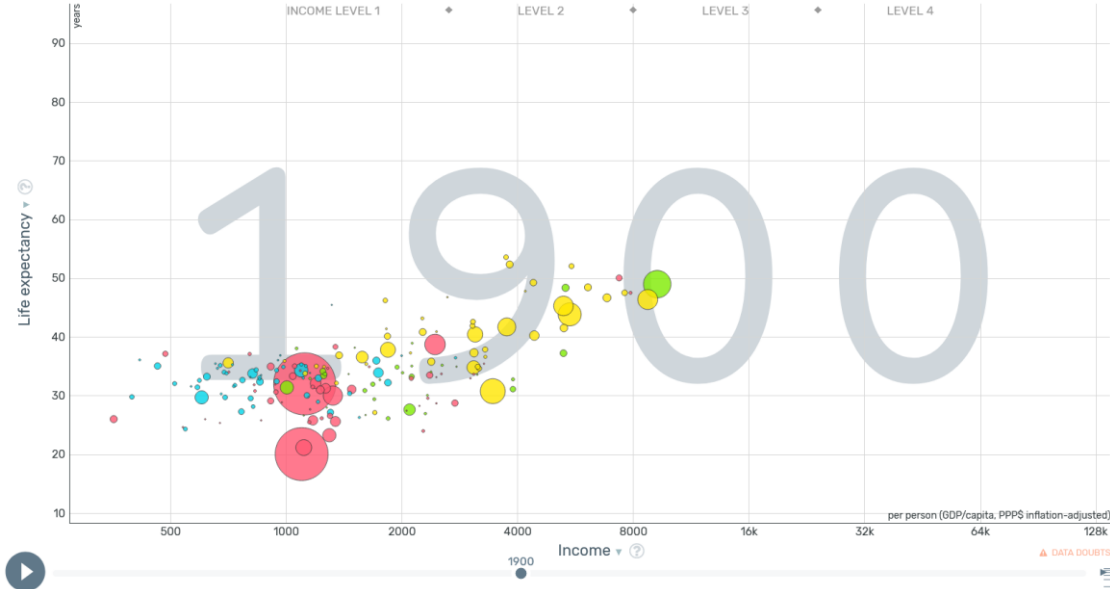
The progressive enrichment of humanity was not limited to food. Quantitative studies find that the life standards of someone in the middle-class today can rival, and in many cases exceed, those of even the wealthiest individuals from a hundred years ago (Easterlin, 2000). Massification has helped to democratize consumption to the point that many good and services that were previously reserved for only the most privileged individuals are now a relatively accessible to a wider section of the population

throughout high- and middle-income countries. Such is the case of international travel, formerly reserved to the elites and now turned into a gigantic industry with more than one billion people traveling internationally in the year 2019 (Gössling & Humpe, 2020).

A look on the quantitative development indicators reveal that all countries experienced a quantitative improvement in most key measures like life expectancy, literacy rate or access to sanitation as shown in Easterlin (2000). Average life expectancy in most countries today surpass that expected for the elites in the XIX century as does the average level of education, with analphabetism experiencing a steep decline during the XX Century. A more revealing indicator is that the countries that poorest countries experienced a higher rate of growth in many indicators than rich countries.

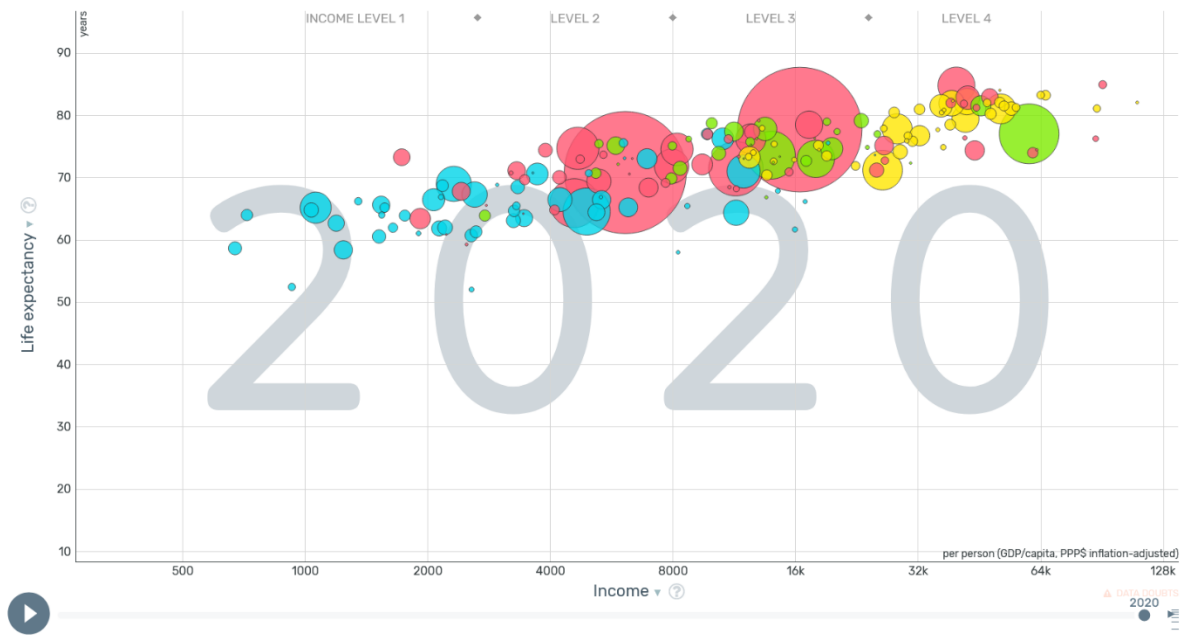
Figure 2

Life expectancy and income per capita year 1900¹



¹ [https://www.gapminder.org/tools/#\\$chart-type=bubbles](https://www.gapminder.org/tools/#$chart-type=bubbles)

Figure 3
*Life expectancy and income per capita year 2020*²



Figures 2 and 3 help illustrate the transformations experienced during the XX Century. The vertical axis shows the life expectancy at birth while the horizontal axis shows the per capita income. Each circle represents a country, and they are color coded according to continent: red is Asia (including Oceania), blue is Africa, yellow is Europe and Green is America. The circle's size represents the population. These two figures give a very good overview of the general improvement of life conditions during the XX century as all countries moved up and to the right. That means, all countries experienced dramatic improvements of these two indicators.

Comparing the two figures also reveal some of the problems of XX century development, being the distribution of income and wealth the most evident one as the difference in income per capita between poor and rich countries broadened. It is also evident how a regional divide formed; African countries were not alone at the bottom of the scale at the beginning of the Century but are pretty much left alone by 2008. Other regions as North America and Western Europe clearly benefitted more from this process.

As was also the case of the food problematic, the enriching process was very unbalanced and unfair. It became clear that economic growth instead of being an equalizing decentralized process, in practice a handful of countries and social groups

² [https://www.gapminder.org/tools/#\\$chart-type=bubbles](https://www.gapminder.org/tools/#$chart-type=bubbles)

benefitted much more than others. The interest of understanding this dynamic oriented the study of inequality into the field of distribution. The next section presents a summary of the diverse theories and methodologies surrounding the unequal distribution of income and wealth as well as the opportunity approach.

2.6 Qualitative and Quantitative Inequality and the Fallacies at Understanding Inequality

As mentioned, there is no unified understanding of socioeconomic inequality but instead various visions on inequality co-exist simultaneously and often get mixed up with each other (McKay, 2002). Each one of these definitions spans out of very different and specific views on inequality that are often only valid under a determined academic field such as sociology or economics (d'Hombres et al., 2012). As a result, there is big debate and controversy around inequality, and this has also opened the field for confusion when talking about the topic.

Measurement is perhaps one of the most challenging parts of studying inequality. Although the idea that socioeconomic inequality is up to some degree multidimensional appears to be broadly accepted, the complications arise at its measurement as the methods used to do it retroactively shape the way inequality is understood and measured (White & Carvalho, 1997). Many conceptualizations of inequality aim at including a mixture of socio-economic variables that are quantitative and qualitative in nature (McKay, 2002).

From a quantitative view, income and wealth inequality are often the prime indicators for measuring inequality, as they are straightforward numerical variables that are easy to measure and compare (d'Hombres et al., 2012). In comparison, other quantitative variables like education, access to sanitation, nutrition or housing are much more difficult to quantify, measure and compare. Not only is quantifying these variables a difficult task but they require some degree of aggregation for them to be compared in a meaningful manner. The aggregation process of this indicators is normally subject to academic criticism due to its relying on the researchers method (Aristei & Bracalente, 2011).

Despite these complications, many authors and institutions customarily disregard the complexity behind inequality and use solely monetary indicators, such as the Gini coefficient, for assessing inequality in broader terms and allow for comparison between

groups, regions, demographics, and countries. The justification for this rationale is the diverse studies that show correlations between income and wealth inequality with many other social hard to measure variables (Bourguignon, 2018).

Despite its practicality, this approach ends up undermining the debate on inequality as it leaves outside plenty of meaningful information and makes the topic seems trivial. Furthermore, a very important element that is often left out by this approach and that further complicates the issue are the non-quantifiable variables such as institutions, opportunities, or social capital that many conceptualizations of inequality have.

There are alternative approaches at measuring inequality that try to depart from entirely monetary or quantitative approaches. Among them, the one based in instrumental freedoms, pioneered by Amartya Sen, tried to overcome the quantifiable approach by proposing a different understanding of inequality (Sen, 1999). This approach maintains that fairness does not come down to having the same but being capable of doing as much as any other person in life. Unfairness then happens when one is prevented from doing something for an arbitrary reason, like discrimination by race, gender origin, etc. In contrast, being born in a precarious situation is not necessarily unfair if one is given enough opportunities to escape this situation (Sen, 1999).

An intrinsic assumption of these two approaches is that societies are built up of just one group of individuals who are all conceived to be capable of performing any role in society. Furthermore, these models assume that all individuals are playing on the same field and are thus made responsible for their own success or failure in life, justifying the privileges of those better off and the poor conditions of those who are worse off. This assumption is not exclusive to the purely quantitative approaches as one can also see that this idea is very much present even in the heterodoxy like that of Sen.

In opposition to these approaches, sociologist like Marx, Weber, or Bourdieu devoted great part of their work to understanding the way in which societies are built up, what divides the individuals inside them and how they end up building segregated groups. Their conception of inequality is not based in society made up of potentially equal individuals, but they rather conceive society as unit with differentiating groups with linked roles that self-reproduce from generation to generation.

2.7 Living in a Segregated Society

Although a very well-known problematic in the developing world, the 2008 financial crisis brought back inequality to the mainstream academic and political discourse in the global north after it revealed the dire state of socioeconomic inequality in developed economies like the USA and Europe (Stiglitz, 2011). After years of being regarded as irrelevant, or a stage in economic development, it was a big breakthrough to recognize that socioeconomic inequality, one of the first documented problems of capitalism, was still very much relevant.

Stiglitz also argued that the financial crisis exposed the economic systems in many countries which are designed to favor the rich at the expense of the poor. The way the crisis was managed further helped to reinforce this idea as people in financial institutions were quick to dismiss any responsibility and got to walk out of the crisis with their already big fortunes or even with high bonuses (Nicol, 2018). Simultaneously the social systems for the poor and elderly were severely affected by the fiscal austerity that came as a result of the financial crisis (Peck, 2014).

Coincidentally, one of the economic mechanisms behind the misallocation of the created wealth was described by Piketty in his famous *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Piketty, 2014). In this book he showed that, contrary to mainstream economic theory, the rates of return of capital oscillate closely around 5% on long historical series while the increases in productivity (which according to theory correlates with the gains of labor) very rarely exceed this rate, only doing so during short lived periods.

With these two results and making use of the mainstream economic theory, Piketty showed that the profits from capital accumulate faster than the gains from the return of work on the long run (Piketty, 2014). Proving that people who own economic capital tend to become proportionally wealthier than those whose main source of income are the remuneration of work. Consequentially, this leads to an increasingly uneven distribution of income and wealth in the long run, as capital owners and workers follow two diverging paths when it comes to wealth accumulation.

These results are responsible for the popularity of his work, as they are in total opposition to the theoretical construction of the mainstream economics. Piketty shows that the value of capital and labor and their rates of return are not entirely dependent on their relative scarcities (Piketty, 2014). This defies the idea that all individuals are

playing on a leveled field as the ability of capitalist to steadily sustain such rates of return is a showcase of power that comes in stark contrast with the situation of the workers, who have to do with what the market offers them.

Piketty's findings do not constitute an attempt to build a new theory, as his thinking remains very much in line with mainstream economics. His work however can also be interpreted as evidence of the existence of groups in capitalism that play different roles in the system, which goes against the postulates of modern economics. This as Piketty's findings clearly show that being a capital owner in the capitalist system has a very different meaning than being a worker. This manifests on very different economic roles as capitalist as a group accumulate wealth faster than those who work.

Contrary to the level playing field for all idea that is the base of mainstream economics, this is a clear insight that capital owners occupy a different space in society. One that only a very small group do and that leads to very different outcomes in life and lifestyles. The characterization of Piketty also shows why this group tends to be closed. As under normal circumstances, the recipe to become a capitalist is having started in life as a capitalist and those surviving on their labor can only under rare special conditions become capitalist.

Here it must be noted that the configuration of the groups portrayed by Piketty and Marx in this chapter are isolated examples that bear little connection to each other. In fact Piketty has said that he is not familiarized with Marx's work and that neither the name or the content of his book was supposed to make reference to Marx's *Capital* in any way (Chotiner, 2014). However, it is remarkable that both authors point towards the existence of groups inside capitalist societies that defy the idea that the system is fair. Both authors see capital playing a major role in the division and reproduction of society.

The examples of Piketty and Marx show that society can still be divided in groups according to the role people play and that the life experience of a person is heavily marked by the role they have. This has big implications, as it defies the idea that each person can build their own path in life, undermining the perceived fairness that well-off people have about their place in society and the deserved lower position when it comes to those who are worse off. Another implication of denying this assumption is that it reveals that there is a structural rigidity that re-enforces inequality across generations.

Marx and Piketty's examples give up three different groups in society with defined roles in the capitalist system: those who own a big share of the capital and get richer in a faster way than workers –capitalist–; people who must sell their labor and have to do with little capital –workers–; and those who cannot even work –the marginalized–. Even if this is not in line with mainstream theories of production and distribution, the logic behind each of these groups is sound.

Having departed from an economic perspective that centers around the capitalist system, it is necessary to devote some space to define these groups in relation to the system from a unified point of view and in a more precise way. For this, it is necessary first talking about the defining characteristics of the capitalist system, work and capital, and their importance in social stratification.

2.8 The Importance of Work and Capital

Although it is the reality of a few privileged individuals, for most people the profits from economic capital are non-existent or not high enough to sustain a living. Capital and wealth are also relative. For many people with significant economic capital in comparison with the rest of the population, the cost-opportunity of not working is so high that they continue to do so despite their wealth. This is the case of high-pay executives or world-renowned artists, who continue working despite having enough capital to allow them not to work. Outside this extreme example, it stands that for most individuals owning capital does not automatically exclude them from the labor market.

For most people, however, the biggest or only asset they have is their labor, which they sell in the labor market. This makes it not only a very big group but also much more diverse than those who live from capital. This group includes everyone from a manual worker to a titled and famed lawyer. In such a diverse group it is logical that the relation of everyone with work is not equal, as not everyone can aspire to have the same job and every job is remunerated and valued by society in different ways. It comes as a result that people inside this group can occupy very different places in society.

The job a person performs is dependent on the abilities that a person has, as the skills required to work an office job or to be in a prestigious academic position are usually very different from those required by someone doing some very specific kind of manual task. These established capacities belong to an extended definition of capital that goes

beyond the notion of economic capital. It encompasses all assets people have that are relevant to performing a specific task. Being each job associated with a specific reputation and wage, it is necessary then to understand the role of capital in the stratification of society.

Work is one of the most relevant characteristics leading up to the stratification of society. From those who can do without working but continue to work to those who depend on their labor alone to survive but still do not find a job. On top of this, work does not have an intrinsic value, that is, the value of work is not determined by the worker himself, but it is instead determined by diverse mechanisms, like a direct negotiation process, a unionized tariff, or any other private or public agreement. The compensation of work then represents an evaluation of its social and economic value.

For this dissertation, capital is the main differentiating factor behind the different outcomes in life. Capital not only takes time to acquire but being an accumulative process, it also depends heavily on the path of accumulation. One cannot simply wish to have more money or more education, the accumulation of these requires a substantial amount of time and they are also subjected to varying degrees of success. In the same way, deciding to drop a successful career in finance to pursue one in the arts may prove to be very difficult. For example, although everyone in the world could speak any language and have any profession, it is very difficult to master many languages simultaneously and it is safer to start forging a path towards the desired profession since earlier on to guarantee success in it. Many sorts of capital can also be unreachable, as it is the case of social connections.

Capital accumulation then is one of the most important processes in one's life. However, capital is not an atomic entity, rather the opposite, capital can take several forms and each one has a different behavior and different implications. It is necessary then to further understand these forms to understand how societies become segregated, as they are closely related to work and are often the decisive characteristic in employability. Although there are many views regarding how to categorize capital, as well as a debate surrounding its definition, there are forms of capital that are broadly accepted by economists and sociologists. This dissertation uses the following forms of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital.

Economic capital consists of valuable assets and exemplifies the clearest form in which one can understand capital as economic constraints are defining of the day-to-day life and of the interactions with many subjects (Bourdieu, 2005). Its most defining characteristic is that it can be easily quantified, either in numeric or monetary terms, and transferred. In this way, the balance on the savings account, the possession of a car, a house or valuable goods all constitute different forms of economic capital.

Economists often propose that this form of capital is correlated with the other forms of capital as costs can allegedly be ascribed to all of them, at least from their perspective. It could be argued that more economic capital can grant access to better education (cultural capital), a more sophisticated taste and manners (symbolic capital) and better social connections (social capital). This is not necessarily the case and the claim by itself is misleading because it ignores the nature of the other forms of capital. Not all cultural, symbolic, or social capital can be exchanged for economic capital.

Cultural capital refers to the knowledge and information that a person has and that is recognized socially (Bourdieu, 2005). Anything from a formation as an engineer to having command of multiple languages accounts as cultural capital. It plays a big role in the labor market, as it has a direct connection with jobs and wages and usually grants access to reserved spaces as are academic institutions. It is worth mentioning that this is not a linear construction where all knowledge matters or that all cultural capital accumulates on top of each other. Bourdieu differentiates between three kinds of cultural capital: that which has been assimilated -incorporated-; that in form of cultural goods -objectified-; and that which is recognized -institutionalized-. Cultural capital includes knowledge that is not easily learned as well as knowledge that has little potential for direct economic value, for instance, the knowledge of the household or what called reproductive work by feminists (Schwartz, 2019). These skills are certainly essential to mankind, but hardly anyone gets paid for raising a child, and if they do, often this is after having acquired some certifications to do it professionally.

Cultural capital is not as easily transferred as economic capital. One cannot sell a college degree and, while learning engineering is possible, being accepted and successfully graduating as an engineer is not a given. Learning depends intensely on other factors such as previous developed skills, talents, dedication, and the accumulation of the other sorts of capital. Even overlooking this, knowledge is transmitted at a much slower speed than economic capital. As an asset then,

knowledge can be as valuable as the market dictates, and most of its value resides in its difficulty to share it and the profits that can be made from it.

Social capital refers to social relationships (Bourdieu, 2005). Human beings exist only inside a social context and social capital is the tissue that brings them together. Although this may seem as a very abstract form of capital at first, the job market provides good practical examples of its relevance. Social capital manifest in the market as the value of social connections. For instance, brokers are individuals that play a special role in linking job seekers with adequate vacancies or businessman with business opportunities (Fuhse, 2016). Although an individual may be ideally qualified for a certain job, without a broker they would not have been able to get it. From a market perspective, if two individuals have similar qualifications the one with a connection to a broker is the one that gets the job, thus making this connection to have a market value.

This example only shows a small share of what can be accounted under social capital. Social capital has also the characteristic of not only personal but also shared. Social capital has a community value and includes the relation of trust and respect among the participants of a community (Putnam, 2000). A community with high social capital (small village where everyone knows each other) is less violent than one with very little social capital –a slum of people running from violence–. The same is the case of the workplace. One with high social capital is more efficient than one with a lower one. This is one of the reasons why companies are nowadays invested in creating good working climates and try to modify their governing structures in favor of building social capital among its employees.

Symbolic capital refers to goods and social elements that are recognized and valued role in a determined social field (Bourdieu, 2005). Symbolic capital is often linked to other kinds of capital, like education or wealth, but differs in that it is not valued by the market but by specific tranches society. The relevance of Symbolic Capital depends on the context and the ethereal rules in each part of society that most people must avow to, often without even realizing. Symbolic capital is then the legitimation of the other sorts of capital inside a determined social space.

A basic example of symbolic capital is the advantage that an academic title gives at accessing the academic, journalistic, or political sphere. The same title however

presents no advantage at accessing many others professional sphere and can even a disadvantage. Symbolic capital can include goods and manners that are associated with a social space, and many other characteristics like being recognized as a person of higher morals inside a close friend's group or having an official higher dignity due to occupying a special position in society (Bourdieu, 2005).

At this point it is worth emphasizing that there is not always a direct correlation between all these different forms of capital. Although they often correlate, it is rare but not impossible for someone with a lot of economic capital to possess less cultural capital than someone with lower economic capital.

Another remark worth doing is that although the nature of capital is accumulative, only economic capital is easily quantifiable. That means, while it is straightforward to check if someone wealthier than someone else, the same cannot be done when comparing two persons education or taste, especially given that the valuation of these forms of capital depends on the context where this is taking place. An approximation can be made by means of a constructed indicator, but these suffer from the traditional problems of constructed indicators and are only valid in contained realms (Aristei & Bracalente, 2011).

Each person then has an individual combination of these forms of capital and this personal assortment of capital is the main variable at play while finding a job that comes attached with certain reputation and wage. These jobs also end up working in a reflexive manner by allowing the individual to further accumulate capital, like work experience or social connections.

While the process of capital accumulation at this point seems very straightforward, it would be misleading to think that everyone's process can follow the same path and have similar results. This would once again be a conclusion from the idea that individuals are all playing on a similar field. While people could share similar paths of accumulation, when accounting for the diverse kinds of capital is evident that the nature of the path of accumulation has the same importance as the accumulation itself. Fortunately, sociology also has studied this. Works like Bourdieu (1984) and Vester (Vester et al., 2001) show that this process is heavily dependent on the initial conditions, as the process originates in the family and for the most part replicates and transfers capital from one generation to other.

In the next section modern neoliberal capitalism is presented as well as its role at replicating inequality.

2.9 Neoliberal Capitalism

The role of neoliberal capitalism in rising inequality is one of the main axioms on which this dissertation rests upon. It is necessary to note that the rise in inequality during the last decades has been accompanied by the rise of a very specific form of neoliberal capitalism as one of the dominant socio-economic system throughout many parts of the world (Smith & Langman, 2018). While during the biggest part of the XX century there were economic systems that served as socio-economic alternatives to capitalism, following the fall of the Soviet Union, there is a progressive adoption of capitalism, or capitalistic practices, by the countries that presented these alternatives in the past. Being perhaps the most memorable example the dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile and the immense influence of the Chicago School in reshaping Chile as a neoliberal beacon. Precisely this is the famous argument behind the “end of history”, Francis Fukuyama famous work (Fukuyama, 1992).

The adoption of neoliberal practices is however not universal or uniform, nor have the consequences of the adoption of neoliberal reforms been equal throughout different countries. On the contrary, the differentiated and progressive adoption of neoliberal capitalism has taken very localized forms. One of the most extreme examples of this transition is the severe process that the many of the countries in Eastern Europe, especially the states who were part of the Soviet Union, went through when switching from a planned economy system to a neo liberal market economy. The extremely quick transformation, especially in the cases of Russia and Ukraine, brought a period of economic and social upheaval during the 90's that is now known as “shock therapy” due to its severity (Wilson, 2014). Conversely, countries like China and Vietnam avoided this shock while adopting several neoliberal policies and switching from a planned economy model to a mixed system. In comparison with the countries in Eastern Europe however, the adoption of a market oriented economic system was not accompanied with a switch the adoption of a democratic model or any other political institutions, instead with a single party system (Weber, 2021).

As the cases of China and Vietnam show, neoliberal capitalism is not a monolithic structure that takes a unique form, but it instead is a set of political economy principles that influence socio economic policies (Wilson, 2014). Neoliberal capitalism envisions a return to the fundamental principles of capitalism, which are associated with the liberal school of thought of the XIX Century as described in Cardoso (2012): private property, free markets, rule of law and development of entrepreneurship (p. 587). What lays at the core of this set of principles is perhaps the most relevant part of the capitalist system, as summarized by Joel Mokyr (2009) in Cardoso (2012): “The Enlightenment view of the economy was that it could be improved, and that material life would get better if radical changes were made in the way institutions were set up and useful knowledge was utilized” (p. 587). That is, the idea that institutional change should look towards material improvement in the economy.

The debate surrounding these principles are very localized and based on politic, historic, and economic factors. For example, despite adhering to a free market ideal, many countries also regulate markets of key commodities such as medicines or basic utilities. While welfare states have established a system of redistribution to fund social expenditure through taxation, thus reducing the profits of capital owners and high earning employees, other states favor a low taxation system under the premise that economic growth is more beneficial for the society than any redistribution scheme that could be set in place (Dorling, 2012). Another good example is the limitations to private property in China that rely on the citizens classification in the Hukou system, being country people only allowed to own land in the countryside while city inhabitants are limited to the urban areas (Chen et al., 2022).

The process that leads to the formation of each country’s system is in constant evolution through the national political debate. This is however not an autarchic process, but it is also influenced by overarching international tendencies. During the late XIX and early XX Centuries social movements pushed for economic and social rights as well as state welfare, which led to the creation of social institutions funded by the state, as well as the introduction of labor regulations and the regulation of markets. Since the second half of the XX Century there has been a push for increased deregulation and a for profit logic in key public enterprises which gained further momentum with the advent of the information age in the 80’s (Burgmann, 2016).

It must be acknowledged that the spread of neoliberalism around the world is linked with the economic dominance of the EEUU at the end of the XX century and the progressive rise of neoliberalism as an ideology after the failure of Keynesianism (Wilson, 2014). Alongside this transformation, the stagnation of wages, especially for those with low incomes (Verdugo, 2011), and the higher insecurity in the job market led to higher income and wealth inequality (Piketty, 2014) broadening the gap between workers and capital owners. The case of the USA constitutes a prime example of this, as the average salary for blue collar workers have decreased in comparison to the 70's while the salaries of executives have increased significantly (Dögüs, 2019). Taking in consideration the rise in the prices of assets that the most common goods used to accumulate wealth, it has been argued that the millennial generation, those born from the late 80's and the 90's, is the first one that would live in worse conditions than the previous generation³.

Perhaps one of the most relevant and disruptive characteristics of the wage of neoliberalist transformations is the re-definition of the labor market and the power relationships inside it. In contrast to the regulated labor market of the mid XX Century, characterized by strong unions that gave workers a negotiating position to counteract the power of employers, the de-regularization of the labor market pushed by neoliberal thinking paired with constant technological advances and increasing globalization progressively pushed for displacing the idea of secure work in favor of more efficient job switching and a life of constant adaptability and learning following the demands of the labor market (Elfert, 2018). This transformation brought rapid change in many aspects of the economic system, unfairly benefited those with more capital at the expense of the poorest individuals in the poorest countries, arguably making them poorer, and leading to increasing income and wealth inequality (Ebrahim, 2007).

Despite the narratives that portray movements such as “lifelong learning” as a novel approach of global financial capitalism, the rationale behind the neoliberal reforms of the labor market harkens back to the primigenial characteristics of capitalism and the liberal principles of thinkers such as Adam Smith and other fundamentalist like Friedrich Hayek (Wilson, 2014). New technologies, globalization and the rising centrality of financial capital played a role in the transformation of the global economic

³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/03/millennial-wealth-inequality-how-the-western-worlds-young-adults-are-suffering/>

system that transformed the labor market worldwide. This transformation turned localized industries into specialized parts of global supply chains and markets. However, the traditional capitalistic logic of cost minimization and profit maximization remains the main force behind this process and is the logic that leads to instability and poor working conditions that workers must face and that lead to increasing inequality (Wimbauer & Motakef, 2020). The arguments given to support these policies, such as the trickle-down effect, have been repeatedly criticized as being actually sources of inequality to the point of being rejected by many economists (Burgmann, 2016).

2.10 A Return of History

The modern labor market as envisioned by the neoliberal reforms is not an entirely new scenario but evoke a return to primordial unregulated capitalism. In fact, the similarities are such that many of the current labor protections are in place as a response to problematics that have become relevant again due to the disruptive nature of the neoliberal of the labor market.

The case of Uber is a good example of this, as the problematics of Uber drivers today like over working, informality and lack of agency, do not differ much from those that made necessary the introduction of taxi regulations around a century ago (Mathew, 2015). The response to Uber from a regulatory standpoint has varied around the world. The more disruptive scenarios due to introduction of Uber can be seen in the middle and small transport markets in the USA. There, Uber had enough power to swing legislators in their favor and for the most part prevented the introduction of regulations that would affect their business model. This was possible thanks to their popularity with consumers and the strong financial muscle that their start up structure gave them (Tzur, 2019). In contrast, in countries like Germany and Sweden, Uber lacked the popularity that it had encountered in other countries, and it also had to find a way to fit inside the established regulation for passenger transport. This was thanks to both countries having very organized branches with clear political representation (Thelen, 2018). Although this is just the example of the experience and impact of a single transnational company in a historically very regulated market, it illustrates the extent of the push for de-regulation and that the local actors can have a role in shaping the results of the reforms.

Outsourcing and the globalization of production chains are also examples of the transformation of the labor market that follow the neoliberal logic. While part of this process is based on comparative advantages, where some places have better conditions to produce due to a natural advantage, being the prime examples countries with temperate climates and agriculture or resource rich countries and mining, the big motor of this process in the globalized world has been fueled by a race for cheaper labor, laxer regulation, putting the interests of the firms first while profiting for undermining the power of workers (Palley, 2021). Only a small amount of individuals have profited from this process, leading to rising inequality throughout the countries where it is present (Pieterse et al., 2009).

Further clues that point at the reversal of rights as one of the consequences of increasing inequality can be seen with the current pandemic, which has provided clear evidence of the structural differences between different kind of jobs and employment sectors. While for many employees continuing to perform their tasks online was an option, or even continue earning their wages without having to work, many were prevented from working and were left with no little to no option to earn money. The distribution of the risk brought up by the pandemic was also very unbalanced, while most of the high paying jobs moved to a low contact scenario, many low paid sectors had to face the higher risks (Delavega et al., 2022).

The recovery from the pandemic has further shown how deep these differences are, as it has been observed that those who were less affected by the pandemic recovered faster than those who were more severely affected by it, a process that has been coined under the name of K recovery (Dalton et al., 2021). Furthermore, contrary to the apocalyptic outlook that was briefly present at the beginning of the pandemic, the global health crisis brought extraordinary growth in many high yielding industries like technology and communications, making the wealthiest people in the world even wealthier while simultaneously undermined the most affected sectors like hospitality and tourism who are characterized by low margins and profits (Ahmed et al., 2022).

These are only some scenarios that however present a solid picture of the transformations that the labor market has experienced during the recent years. Regarding inequality, this transformation has created a few winners and many losers. While the negative effects of this process on wealth and income inequality are clear and widespread throughout the global economy, depending on the country, this

transformation also presents a clear reversal of some of the achievements of the workers' rights. This dissertation aims at contributing to the understanding the consequences of inequality on the social structure of societies.

2.11 Summary

This chapter presented a brief history of thought on socioeconomic inequality and argued in favor of an understanding that departs from an economic approach. Inequality has its roots on segregation inside societies which developed since the early sedentary societies. Dissatisfaction with the differential privileges in life has traditionally been a source of tensions and social change.

With the advent of capitalism, what was originally a social process started being influenced by economics. The XX century brought a period of unparalleled economic growth that diverted the original interest on inequality towards approaches that justified inequality on the base of opportunities and effort on one side, and poverty relief on the other. In recent years the interest on socioeconomic inequality has risen again as has the evidence that groups inside society can be defined from their role in the system. This resembles the thought of classical economics on the structure of the economy and defies the established assumption of a leveled playing field. Work is an element that connects the social and economic spheres, as work is a representation of different sorts of capital.

The next chapter argues that work plays a fundamental role in the reproduction of inequality inside the capitalist system by reproducing privilege and sequestering opportunities, especially under neoliberal policies that tend to reinforce these two effects. This is incompatible with the understandings of inequality that rest on the assumption of a leveled playing field. The chapter shows that the capitalist system reinforces inequality by creating economically separated groups that derive from the different relations people have with work. Departing from Bourdieu's theory and using historical elements, it argues that social reproduction paired with the liberal economic capitalism is at the core of this role separation. It also shows that the efforts to undermine this system through policies, although not nearly as effective as intended, does have some small effects inside the worker class. The chapter presents the rise of neoliberalism as having actively undermined these efforts and further reinforced the reproductive characteristics of work and increasing the separation between groups.

3. Chapter 3: Precarious Work and the Reproduction of Inequality

This chapter will focus on the mechanism behind social replication and the role of work in it. It starts by elaborating the concepts of habitus and social replication followed by the definition of precarious work and the role of labor movements in it. It will then introduce the role of neoliberalism in the precarification of work and the transformation of the labor market. It concludes by exposing how this process creates a big divide inside the worker class.

3.1 Habitus and Social Replication

This dissertation has presented that in a capitalist system, different forms of capital define the roles that people play in different socio-economic spaces which in turn creates the stratification of society. However, there remains the question of what gives shape to the accumulation of capital of any certain individual. As the previous section showed, capital, other than economic, is not easily transferred. The force that organizes the different combinations of capital that correspond to the adherence to different sectors of society is crucial in understanding not only the stationary situation of inequality, but also its individual and intergenerational reproduction.

Following Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) capital accumulates in a determined way and not out of a random or meritocratic process. To the contrary, the described path of accumulation of capital is not only dependent, but often also delineated by the family and society where an individual is born. The influence that parents have on the formation of their offspring is deep and lasts for a lifetime. This formation is peculiar in that it includes elements that are given by the parents willingly as well as elements who are given inadvertently. For this reason, it is not revealing to say that under normal circumstances, parents want the best for their kids and that kids often follow the paths created for them by their parents, either consciously or unconsciously.

For this dissertation, the grounding stone behind this process will be the concept of habitus following which is peculiarly relevant for social segregation and the reproduction of inequality. This concept sets the foundation of how the different forms of capital accumulate and how they lead to the classification observed in society at broad. A person's habitus defines his aspirations, expectations, preferences, and ways of going around in life. Departing from Bourdieu (2005), the habitus is a system of dispositions that is tightly associated with the social position in society and is itself

shaped by the different socializations spheres an individual interacts in, being specially relevant during the developmental periods of the life, like early years, basic education, professional formation and first years of the professional career.

Being life experiences the main force behind the formation of the habitus, it makes sense to observe that there is a significant correlation between the incomes, careers, and social positions from generation to generation. Habitus then can be understood as a major force in social replication. This principle applies to people from all the distribution of the capitalist system, from the marginalized to the elites (Rehbein et al., 2015). It contrasts strongly with the image of modern capitalism pushed by neoliberal thinkers. This image, aided by concepts like “meritocracy”, “equality of opportunity” and the push for entrepreneurship, argues for the idea that individuals can improve their social position and that this possibility depends on the personal effort and the fairness of the society they live in is fair (Ramos & Van de Gaer, 2016).

There is however a substantial collection of evidence that disprove this idea, as the historic level of economic growth does not match the negligible level of social mobility in wealthy societies, while in developing societies mobility was only possible during transitional periods but not as a trend (Jodhka et al., 2018). Social replications seem to be a chronic impediment for social mobility throughout very diverse societies regardless of economic growth and wealth, outside a few scenarios depending on luck or extreme talent.

Being work the main tool at combating inequality from an economic perspective and considering the rising economic inequality and the lack of social mobility due to social replication, this suggest that progressively worse working conditions that came because of the rise of neoliberal policies are creating a wider divide inside the working class. Low social mobility paired with the increasing concentration of all forms of capital by a part of the working class creates a breach that is responsible for the rise in inequality. Accordingly, this supports the idea that the achievements of the labor movement have progressively been undone due to the rise of neoliberal policies and the global socio-economic transformations of the last decades.

Although the debate surrounding the effects of neoliberalism on work is not settled, there is an agreement among academics regarding the negative effects of

neoliberalism on work. Namely, that neoliberalism through different ways leads to the precarization of work, as described by Kalleberg & Vallas (2017):

Neoliberalism, as an economic and policy doctrine that equates marketization with the furtherance of human freedom and individual choice, is obviously a central concept for students of precarious work, since it opposes all collective arrangements that might interfere with market forces. (p. 8)

To test this hypothesis, it is necessary to describe what makes an occupation to be described as precarious work as well as what actions are accounted as precarization. The next section begins with a description of the characteristics that are associated with precarious work as well as the evolution of policies aimed at controlling it. Then it presents how neoliberalism has actively undermined them and will end by presenting the research question based on the theoretical part that will later be studied in the practical part.

3.2 Precarious Work

Despite some authors taking a non-historical approach to the precarization of work, this dissertation is aligned with Kalleberg & Vallas (2017) and argues that the separation between precarious and other forms of work requires an understanding from an historical perspective. In line with this thesis, precarious work does not present an entirely new phenomenon as it is present in all societies, current as well as ancient. Admittedly, how precarious work is currently understood is marked by the evolution of labor relationships and the socio-economic systems. This evolutionary approach to the subject difficulties an all-encompassing definition due to the diverging development of modern societies. However, the rise of neoliberalism provides a point of reference due to its global effects on production chains and work relations.

It would be difficult to justify using the same definition of precarious work that is used today in historic societies as well as throughout different countries. Many of the jobs and conditions that are considered precarious today were the only option for the majority if not all the population in ancient societies. Especially in small communities without many specializations, most jobs had to do with survival and pretty much no one would be excluded from them, regardless of age or gender. Clearly, these jobs provided no security or stability, as the factor that affected these were dependent mostly on exogenous factors like the climate. Although instability is agreed as one the

key characteristics of the current definition of precarious work and many of the jobs that mankind has been performing since its origins are very unstable, these jobs have only gained the precarious status rather recently (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017).

Through the historical development of societies, the first elements of precarious work can be seen in slavery and later in serfdom. Already in societies like Greece and Rome, there was a clear cut between proper citizens, freed people and slaves, with very different rights and usually being tasked with the undesirable, hard and precarious jobs (Fynn-paul, 2021). Curiously enough, slaves and captured individuals during Roman times were often employed in sectors where precarious work can often be found today like construction, agriculture, housework and mining (Bernard, 2017).

Taking in consideration that the most crucial element of slavery and the commodification of workers, has been banned in all countries, at least formally, it is necessary to note that slavery is not directly comparable with the situation of precarious workers today, nor are precarious workers today necessarily a direct successor of former slaves. However, very precarious work conditions such as forced labor are still present in many countries today. It plays a very important role in several lucrative industries that rely on raw materials and cheap labor like the chocolate or fishing industries (Nolan & Bott, 2018). To summarize, although the spurs of slavery can very well be seen in discriminating structures until today, the logic behind this comparison rest on the different conditions and opportunities that come associated with different jobs inside a progressively more integrated economic system.

The case of forced labor and precarious workers in global production chains reflects the existence of a big segment of the job market where precarious jobs coexist in the same productive structure as non-precarious jobs. The advent of neoliberalism has made this process widespread throughout different professions, economic sectors, and income levels. This dissertation focusses on the observed split between precarious and non-precarious workers aided by neoliberalism.

3.3 Insecurity

As exposed, not any single criteria automatically qualify a job as precarious work, but rather a combination of a few or any extreme scenarios of any single one can qualify a job as precarious. The national context and economic sector are equally important at establishing what qualifies as a precarious job, as the existence of legislation does

not translate into enforcement, especially in sectors where controlling and enforcing is difficult or too expensive (Almeida & Carneiro, 2012).

This dissertation will follow Castell (2004) arguing that the binding element of the diverse forms of precarious work within their specific context is insecurity. One good example to illustrate this problem are people active on the illegal side economy. Although individuals in these kinds of jobs would rank high in income in comparison to other precarious and even non-precarious jobs, the inherent insecurity of doing something illegal repercussions of being a criminal would automatically make a criminal someone in a precarious condition. Similarly, working as a security guard or as a waiter may provide a stable income throughout life, but the security these kinds of jobs offer as well as the chances of improving the conditions while remaining in these jobs are difficult at best, as wages are usually not high enough nor they offer opportunities to move to a better job. Finally, someone working as a freelancer might prefer a very informal employment relationship to maximize their earnings or job opportunities.

Although many of the jobs that would fall under the concept of precarious work have existed for a long time, as was previously exposed in the case of mining and agriculture, it is necessary to note that current precariousness doesn't depend entirely on the kind of job. Many jobs that would traditionally fall in the precarious category today enjoy enough protections that make them less precarious in comparison to other non-regulated jobs or jobs in new sectors. In the case of mining for instance, although it remains a very hard and dangerous profession, it is nowhere near as precarious as in the past, and countries have progressively introduced regulation aimed at diminishing the negative effects to the community of this activity as well as guaranteeing basic rights of the miners (Williams, 2012). In comparison, many new forms of employment, like subcontractors, or employees in other traditional sector, as is the case of sex work, remain precarious.

The modern labor market is based on the liberal idea of free market as the best allocator of resources (Pulignano, 2017). Ideally, supply and demand for a certain task match in the market and establish the intensity and wage of workers for any given task. The formation of the modern labor market was outlined by different transformations that replaced traditional institutions for ones based in capitalistic and liberal ideals as described in the previous chapter.

In the previous chapter it was also shown that this process was unfair and exploitative, as presented by Marx, (1867). The successive dismantlement of structures of domination like serfdom or slavery that followed the ideals of equality of the late XVII Century and the monetization of work and life that accompanied early industrialization, incrementally expanded the share of the population that relied on their ability to trade their labor in the labor market to survive. The transformation from traditional forms of labor organization to a market where all work is rewarded in monetary terms serves as a cornerstone of precarious work, as uncontrolled capitalism is characterized by exploitation and unbalanced power relation between workers and employers. It also portrays the origin of the tensions between workers and employers regarding working conditions, exploitation, and fairness. The results of the diverse labor movements that originated out of this conflict established the foundations for differentiating precarious from non-precarious work.

3.4 Labor Movements

Labor movements encapsule the injustices of uncontrolled capitalism and as it reaches a tipping point (Schweinitz, 1959). This makes labor movements a result of the level of development of in a country or region. The formation of labor movements associated with industrial capitalism started by the early 1800's in the more industrialized countries at the time as the UK, Germany and the USA. By the second half of the XIX Century capitalistic practices had created a system that concentrated wealth and privilege in a few hands by exploiting the work of the biggest share of the population. Furthermore, not only were the extreme levels of inequality from the late XIX Century, but the working conditions of most workers paled in comparison to the luxurious lifestyles of the early capitalists (Hobsbawm, 1974).

Increasing unrest of a significant part of the workers paired with the repression and refusal to acknowledge their demands helped fueled these movements (Schweinitz, 1959). Although different movements had different rationales behind and pursued different goals, the increasing momentum of diverse movements progressively led o developments to recognize and protect workers' rights.

The results of this diverse movements vary from country to country but an improvement on working conditions for workers with legal protections, new rights and standardized working hours and wages was seen in many places as a direct result of labor moments.

Among the most significant reforms that originated on this movement is the 40-hour week with two days off that started after an initiative of companies like Ford and was progressively adopted in a majority of countries pushed forward by local movements (Baily et al., 1942).

One of the main objectives of the negotiation processes was to promote social stability and minimize the chances of social unrest, which ultimately results in bigger economical losses and could ultimately translate into a bigger risk for capital owners. As a result of this, legislation in many countries was drafted to recognize worker unions as legitimate congregation while the right protest to protest was protected (Rimlinger, 1960). It is worth mentioning than there was always a delay between the legal concessions to the workers and their implementation, at times even by design (Schweinitz, 1959).

Another clear example of a break with the past is the movement against child labor during the turn of the XX Century. The National Child Labor Committee started in the USA at a time when it was estimated that one in 5 children under the age of 14 was working and made up to 20% of the workforce in manufacturing (Moehling, 1999). This was mainly due to industrialization, as machines were easy enough to be operated by children and did not require the physical strength that other tasks required. This did not mean that the jobs children made were easy, on the contrary, the youth often performed especially rough and risky tasks in factories or cotton mills (Pace, 2002).

The progressive adoption of labor legislation made by the mid XX Century customary to have strong regulation in many industries aimed at protecting not only consumers but also workers (Befort, 2002). Areas where people were especially at risk of being exploited or where they could face extreme risks were of special attention, and mechanisms and policies were quickly implemented to close the gaps where this could happen. However, this is an ongoing process precarious work is still present throughout the world in forms that share many similarities with old forms of precarious work mixed with new elements of the information age and aided by the rush of deregulation popularized by neoliberalism in the late XX Century.

3.5 Neoliberalism and Precarious Work

The transformations of the labor market are nothing new but rather a core element of the capitalist system. Following Bialakowsky (2019), these transformations can be

understood as part of the processes of reclassification that reproduce forms of domination inside society. This as the described precarization of works as an oppressive reclassification by reproducing the domination, exploitation and subalternization elements of neoliberal capitalism and tries to counteract the emancipatory character of the previous reclassifications.

Not only there are new kinds of jobs constantly being created but existing jobs also transform through time. However, the rise in instability through deregulation in recent years points a signal of the rising trend towards precarization of work (Pulignano, 2017). It is also worth mentioning that this process affects the entire economic system and is not limited to certain countries, economic sectors, or the marginalized groups.

Academics debate around the diverse effects of neoliberalism on the precarization of work. Kalleberg & Vallas (2017) group the academic debate surrounding this issue in two strands. The first strand is derived from sociological thinking surrounding the focuses on the role of precarity as a part of modernity:

This strand of theorizing emphasizes that what workers face today is not merely a temporary shift in the balance of power between capital and labor or a development that reflects a Polanyian double movement (Polanyi, 1957), but instead the emergence of a new stage in the political economy of modernity, a successor to “organized capitalism” whose coordinates are only now coming into view. (p. 5)

The second strand focuses on identifying the economic forces behind the transformation of work and its precarization. Among them the de-unionization movement, the financialization of companies and the profit maximization logic, globalization, outsourcing and its effects on labor markets, and the digital revolution (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017, p. 5).

Both strands reflect on the observed transformation on work relationships due to neoliberalism as a global process that redefines working conditions and resembles a return to the incipient stage of capitalism:

Taken together, these theoretical and economic strands of thinking provide powerful cause for concern regarding the changes taking place in the nature of work and employment regimes across much of the advanced capitalist world, with potentially far-reaching consequences not only for workers’ lives but also

for social and political institutions more generally. (...) Moreover, in their effort to capture the novel or qualitative features that precarious work has imposed on the labor market today, many scholars have adopted an ahistorical approach, overlooking that in fact, precarious work represents a return to the instabilities that plagued the labor market during earlier periods of capitalist development, before the effects of Keynesian economic policy, unionization, and the welfare state had been achieved. In truth, precarious work has historically been the norm; its appearance represents a resurgence rather than a completely novel development. Arguably, it is the standard work arrangement that should be problematized, with attention given to the structural conditions that underpinned its relative (if temporary) success. (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017, p. 6)

The return to the basic form of work arrangements encouraged by neoliberalism has different effects for different workers. One of the most extreme and visible examples are several of the companies in the “gig-economy”, as they have done a big push to radically re-define the relationships between a company and its employees in a way that shows a clear break between them. While the headquarters of the company employs people with high concentrations of the diverse sorts of capital, in the sense mentioned before, usually in very favorable working conditions and payment schemes, the company simultaneously actively tries to minimize the relationship with the rest of their workforce and their overall cost. Their legal argument being that they do not employ people directly but that they subcontract their work to independent workers, and it is the responsibility with their shareholders to minimize cost to maximize utilities.

Among the most notable examples of this logic are firms like Uber, Amazon or the diverse delivery services that hire high paying employees in their central while low earning precarious workers are doing most of the actual work. Despite being more visible there, this however is not reserved to new companies but it is a trend that is getting widespread across most industries and that can be tracked back to globalization and outsourcing that has been going for decades (Smith & Langman, 2018). While one of the reasons for outsourcing was avoiding labor protections and hiring precarious workers at a low cost, the new trend practices reveal how employees in a single production chain get to be treated very differently, regardless of the geographical location.

The transformation of work because of the rise of neoliberalism is having differential effects on labor. By having winners and losers, the effects of this transformation not only rest on increasing precarization, but on undermining a group of workers while empowering other. The next section uses the example of the labor market of the United Arab Emirates to further illustrate this point.

3.6 Precarious Work, Expats and Migrants

The focus with precarious work is derived on its almost universal presence, as it is not exclusive to certain countries, but it is rather a characteristic of capitalism and globalization (Pulignano, 2017). Despite widely varying degrees of labor protection throughout the world, precarious works are present throughout developing as well as industrialized countries. The lack of protections for workers in developing nations is well known and has been exploited for decades by the outsourcing of work. A different scenario happens when rich countries must source workers from other countries to perform the tasks due to diverse of reasons that include a small supply, an excess in demand, due to the hardships associated with a job or its unattractiveness to the locals, usually due to poor working and bad pay.

Very good examples of this are workers on healthcare, construction, and crop picking which are fields where the demand exceeds the supply in many developed countries. Looking throughout rich countries it would be rare not to find a substantial number of migrants in any of this fields. Extreme examples of this are the gulf countries of Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, with rates above 70% of the population being non-nationals born abroad (Khan & Akhtar, 2021).

Although the migration component will not be the focus of this thesis, the situation in the countries with the exceptional rates of immigration in the gulf countries provides a good example to illustrate the prevalence of precarious work worldwide and its dual role. With only 11,7% of its population being Emirati nationals, the United Arab Emirates is the country with highest net migration rate in the world excluding the Papal State and further shows the difference between different kinds of workers⁴.

Although most of the population in the UAE is composed by migrants which usually are in precarious work conditions, it would be mistaken to consider them as one single group. Indeed, a big part of the migrants to the UAE are working in construction and

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.TOTL.ZS?locations=AE>

other occupations that closely match the definition of precarious work, but there is also a substantial share of the migrant population that are employed in high skilled, well-paid, and well-regarded jobs (Sönmez et al., 2011).

The differences between both kind of migrant workers are not only limited to the kind of jobs they perform but are also associated with their inclusion in the civil society and protection of their rights. In the case of low skilled workers in the UAE, routine violations of basic human rights, like forced work, retention of travel documents and risky working conditions are the norm (Sönmez et al., 2011). This is quite a different situation in comparison with high skilled workers who even get some prerogatives in comparison to even the own Emirati population, for instance access to alcohol and other prerogatives that go against the land's implementation of sharia law (Smith & Fleet, 2010).

This situation is not exclusive to the United Arab Emirates or the gulf countries. The divide between low and high skilled migrants worldwide has become a controversial topic as one of the consequences of the globalized world economy and reveals the segregation present in societies through the different experiences of migrants. Perhaps the most popular take that this debate has taken focuses on the discourse analysis of the use of the term expat and migrant.

Although there is no universal definition, the term expat is often used to address high-skilled workers in good or well-regarded jobs like medicine, engineering, or finance, some academics argue that expats should be understood as privileged migrants (Kunz, 2020). This kind of migrants generally arrived at a privileged position in their host country, not only when compared with typical economic migrants but also inside the general society itself. This sometimes leads to complains from locals who based on the stereotype of the poor migrant, argue on nationalistic grounds that locals should have priority access to these positions. Although expats may sometimes have to deal with discrimination practices like racism and lower pay than a local in a similar position, their condition is very favorable in comparison to other migrants who are subjects of exploitation (Sönmez et al., 2011).

Immigrants or “low-skilled migrants” are terms used to describe workers who perform low paying and low regarded jobs usually in gastronomy, construction, or agriculture (Kunz, 2020). On top of the racism and cultural rejection that they must live daily,

economic migrants also face the hardships of surviving on wages and conditions that are too unattractive for locals or outright illegal and are subjects to little protections. Economic migrants must often face narratives that describe them as dangerous, lazy, wanting to profit from social services, and are often singled out as one of the main problems in the country.

It is important to note that both kind of migrants follow economic incentives and fulfill a task in the host country, but despite of this they are portrayed in very different light inside their receiving societies. Qualified migration is often portrayed by many countries as desirable given that they bring innovation and much necessary workers in key areas for the country. Meanwhile guest workers face much stricter rules and none of these benefits, being managed more as an asset that companies secure from abroad to perform a specific task (Kunz, 2020)

It is important to note that this is not an isolated or anecdotal fact, Weiß (2006) shows that migrants almost always land in a similar environment an occupation as the one they had in their home country. Be it, they may go through an accustoming period where they find their space in the host country. This then goes against the idea of migrants as a bulk of people, as this fails to portray the significant diversity inside a group of migrants and, most importantly, fails to represent the segregation present in the job markets in both societies.

This divide between how migrants are perceived is a good element to argue that the local job market is segregated, and that this division not only applies to migrants. Further encouraged by the rising precarization of work due to neoliberalism, the separation inside the body of workers is becoming more evident not only among expats and migrants, but inside the working people of developed and developing countries alike.

3.7 Summary

Social replication tentatively presents a good explanation for the observed inequality while at the same time it is intrinsically related to work. For most individuals in any give society, those who rely on their labor for a living, work is a fundamental element of their social position, being their habitus associated with the kind of occupations they perform. Historically, the rise of labor movements counteracted the effects of the incipient capitalism. However, the current transformation of work pushed by

neoliberalism has started a precarization process that goes against these achievements. This increasing precarization affects all countries, industries, and kinds of work but it does so in a differential way. As the example of the UAE shows, this process has clear winners and losers and the split between them is evident. Analogically, the coexistence of very diverging scenarios inside a single productive chain shows how precarization is concentrating the benefits among a handful of employees on the expense of the biggest share of the workers. This is not new and instead resembles the early stages of capitalism.

This chapter presented the mechanism and evidence to support the main hypothesis of this thesis, that neoliberalism leads to a divide inside the working class. The next chapter will present the empirical study done to provide evidence on this regard.

4. Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter will focus on the methodology used on the empirical part of the study and will introduce general results that will be developed in the chapters of each country. The chapter begins with the introduction of the habitus hermeneutics methodology as well as the justification for using this methodology to test the hypothesis. The second part presents the description of the study including the selection of the sample as well as the rationale behind the selection of the Germany and Colombia as the studied countries. The chapter then describes the collection of the empirical data, including the conduction of the interviews in two stages, the adjustment of the questionnaires for each country, the codification and analysis of the interviews. The general result of this process is then presented as well as the connection between them and the hypothesis. The chapter ends with a broad analysis of the collected data as an introduction to the following chapters.

4.1 Habitus Hermeneutics

As described before, a purely quantitative study could provide a high reach with robust results but would omit the qualitative components that are necessary for a class study following the work of Bourdieu (1984). For this reason, a case study is necessary to test the hypothesis. Two elements are necessary for this purpose: first, associating individuals a social class inside the presented framework; and second, collecting the individual's work experience considering the transformations in the labor market.

Bourdieu's methodology for constructing social classes is however limited, as there is no explicit structured methodology that can be extracted from his work. To depart from a structured methodology that allows for identifying the social classes of the participants of the study, the habitus hermeneutics methodology will be used being based to the one developed in the book *Inequality in Capitalist Societies* by (Jodhka et al., 2018). This methodology is also practical due to the international context of the sample. Although interviews need to be adjusted for national context, very similar social structures have been observed in the different countries it has been implemented, allowing to use this methodology in an international context.

The Habitus Hermeneutics methodology relies on qualitative interviews to identify the habitus of an individual and their stand in society while also providing a comparative framework to do a comparative study of social class in various countries. Open ended

interviews are performed and, after being coded, they are analyzed with colleagues of diverse backgrounds to establish the social class of the participant. Furthermore, these interviews also aim at collecting the information regarding the labor experience of the interviews as well as other quantitative socio-economic factors.

In the Habitus hermeneutics methodology capital, habitus, and other criteria, are used for identifying social classes which are bounded by barriers that the individuals from a determined class cannot cross (Rehbein, 2015). This means, societies are split in groups across dividing lines through which no mobility is extremely rare and not as pervasive as normally portrayed. The robustness of this methodology has been tested in a national as well as an international context. After implementing this methodology in different countries, four different social classes and 3 divisor lines have been identified in all the studied countries. These are: the dignity line, the expressivity line, and the aloof line (Jodhka et al., 2018).

The first line divides the marginalized and the fighters; it is called dignity because it separates those living in non-dignified conditions from the rest of the society. Prime examples of this are homeless individuals, those chronically unemployed, people who suffer from addiction, or those who live from crime. Individuals who are below this line hardly ever overcome this situation and join the next group, known as the fighters.

The fighters are those who are above the dignity line and are characterized by their aspiration of normality. This brings them to assign an utmost importance to financial stability and a career to be able to maintain an established level. This also creates a break between the labor and personal spheres, as the guiding factor is to have a stable and high enough income in the labor sphere to have freedom in the personal sphere. That means that decisions in the work sphere are mostly motivated out of economic necessity instead of other criteria. This class is very big and encompasses a wide portion of the population where social mobility is possible. The lower part of this class is known as defensive fighters, those whose motivation is to not fall below the dignity line. The higher part of this class is known as the aspiring fighters: those who have secured some significant concentration of different sorts of capital but are not part of the established. This empirical part will focus on this class and the relationship between the two subgroups that coexist within.

The line that separates the fighters from the established is called the expressivity line. This line is defined, as its name implies, by a closer connection between an individual's actions and their habitus, something that is not present in the fighters. Although early socialization and the resulting habitus play a major role in decision making across all social classes, actions are not solely determined by preferences, but are also dependent on means, or ultimately, different sorts of capital. The wide and ample assortment of capital that the established have is what allows them to live their habitus through their actions. This as the established have enough resources to pursue their goals as well as to keep a safety net that protects them in case of failing. Fighters compare unfavorably in these two aspects to established.

Furthermore, capital plays a dual role for the established as it allows for higher stability and opens opportunities that are not available to fighters. On the one hand, capital works as a safety net and ensures that the individual is not at risk of losing their social position. For example, an individual can start a very risky business with the certainty that if it were to fail, their economic means, professional formation and social connections would protect them from losing their social position. On the other hand, the diverse sorts of capital that someone from the established has opens opportunities that are not available to other individuals. For example, many highly regarded positions in society are only available to individuals with a very specific background and relevant connections in the field.

It is possible for an aspiring fighter to have a high degree of one sort of capital (usually economic capital), but they would per definition have very different cultural, social, and symbolic capital than an established with a similar economic capital, and this would in turn shape their actions differently. Importantly, this further increases the importance of the economic sphere for the fighters, as their position inside the fighters relies mostly on it.

A clear example of this situation can be observed in the closer interaction between the labor and the personal sphere in the class of the established in opposition to the primacy of the economic motivation in the case of the fighters. For the established, their career choice is not solely motivated by economic interests and there is instead a big influence seen by the personal sphere, while for fighter, working and higher earnings are the backbone of their social status.

The final dividing line is that of the aloof and separates the most powerful individuals in each society from the rest. Billionaires, monarchs, hereditary wealth, and political families usually fall on the other side of this line as they are not even subject to the limitations that the established are. Where the established set themselves goals to fulfill in life, the aloof approach goals with disenchantment as most things are available to them with relative ease. Being such a small group, the aloof are a relative closed group that is inaccessible to persons outside it. Therefore, studying this class is only possible for individuals that belong to it.

4.2 Study Description

The selection of the countries was done in the preliminary stage of the study alongside the selection of the methodology. The desire of including more than one country was based on the intention to test the hypothesis in an international context and discard it being a result of a localized phenomenon endemic to a single studied location. To allow for a comparison, the goal was to choose two countries with significant differences but also enough similarities. Colombia and Germany were chosen due to the similarities in their socio-economic systems and the lack of strong historical and social connections. This setting allows for testing the hypothesis in two relatively independent contexts and where similarities are mostly related to the socio-economic system. Furthermore, as it will be exposed in the following chapters, both countries went through a series of neoliberal reforms almost simultaneously during the 1990's. Further elements that justify the selection of both countries and why they make a reasonable field of comparison are included in each country's respective chapter.

The goal by choosing the Habitus Hermeneutic methodology was dual. In first place, this methodology allows to identify the social lines individuals are unable to cross. In second place, it allows to recollect the detailed personal experiences and difficulties that originate in the established economic system in a way that a purely quantitative measure cannot. Given the importance of work and stability for testing the hypothesis, as described on the theory part of the thesis, and being the study based on the class structure described by (Jodhka et al., 2018), the more relevant subject for the study were those belonging to each of the subgroups of the fighter class. For this reason, individuals falling in a different social class were excluded from the final data analysis.

The selection of the sample departed also from the emphasis on precarious work elaborated in chapter three. The ideal interview candidate was a person working in an unstable or a precarious job. In the case of Germany, people working jobs in subcontracting companies were chosen as the gateway to the low wage sector, *Niedriglohnsektor*. This sector includes some of the most unstable jobs in the German labor market as well as those more badly paid and with higher rotation. Individuals in other precarious conditions, such as freelancers were also interviewed. In the case of Colombia, and following the same rationale as in Germany, the interviewees were selected from the nascent gig economy as well as small and medium entrepreneurs and people with the *rebusque* mentality, essentially doing whatever is available. In both cases the interviewees were contacted through social networks posts on groups that these collectives have there to share information relevant to jobs.

Having defined the sample, the data collection phase took place in Colombia and Germany in two successive stages. The goal of the first stage was to determine the guiding questions and topics for the interviews in each country and to check for the feasibility of testing the hypothesis with the material collected. The second stage performed the interviews that were to be analyzed with the adjusted guiding questions in both countries. In the first stage the interviews were done in person. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the second round of interviews had to be done online.

The next stage of the process was the analysis of the interviews to establish the social class of the interviewee. This analysis was done with colleagues familiarized with the habitus hermeneutics and the established social class framework of (Jodhka et al., 2018). Those respondents whose social class analysis was not conclusive or those who fall on a different social class to the fighters, both aspiring and defensive, were dropped and the remaining interviews were codified. The codification of the interviews of the fighters identified the habitus traits and capital structures of the members of the fighter class and the role they play with work and social reproduction. This was made with special attention for the separation between defensive and aspiring fighters to test the hypothesis regarding the increasing separation between them. The codification was done with the MAXQDA software which was also used for visual data analysis.

4.3 Interview Process and Preliminary Results

The first stage was designed as in person interviews that developed as a conversation about the current work condition of the interviewee. The main emphasis was done on a description of the typical workday and aimed at including different elements: the reason behind the last job switch, the satisfaction with the current job, the typical strategies for finding a job, important people at finding a job, the prospects of advancing in the current job and the likelihood of it being automatized. The decision of choosing this theme was to prevent going into personal details that could have included data more relevant to class association but could also discourage the interviewees or make them more likely to lie given the informal context of the interview.

The preliminary interviews revealed the limitations that this was an unsuitable approach. As the typical work routine and solely work associated characteristics were not sufficient to test the hypothesis. Despite collecting relevant information relating to the work life of the interviewee, there were not clear enough elements to establish the class of the interviewee, which was further difficulted due to the small size of the sample. Among the interviews of the first stage, those respondents that voluntarily included elements of the life history of the interviewee were more relevant at uncovering the interviewee's social class. For that reason, the protocol for the interview was adapted to a life history model that included the questions relating to work. The final guiding questionnaires can be found on the annex 1.

A preliminary hypothesis of this study was that individuals in the informal and precarious work sector could belong to the marginalized class. This hypothesis was however discarded at this stage as it was clear that the interviewed individuals were part of the fighter class. Despite the instability, low wages, and lack of protection of this kind of jobs, no respondent fell in the marginalized class and the picture they gave from the sector was more closely associated with the fighter class.

The second round of interviews were based around a life history model. These interviews aim at uncovering the conditions that determined the outcomes in life of the interviewee, both those determined by the interviewee as well as those that not. Especial attention was paid to the elements relating to the professional path of the interviewee like family influence and support, dreams, desires, convenience, and other factors that relate to income, social position, and recognition. This approached proved

more successful at determining the interviewee's social class than the interviews focused on a typical workday.

After analyzing the interviews with colleagues and classifying the interviewees according to their social class, those who did not belong to the fighter class were excluded from the data analysis. A further classification was made by sorting the respondents as either defensive or aspiring fighters. For most respondents this process was very straightforward, except for one respondent who had some elements of the established group but was ultimately classified as an aspiring fighter. This helped to reinforce the concept of aspiring fighter as a subgroup separated from the established.

From a pool of 28 interviews in total, only 10 were selected for codification, 5 in Colombia and 5 in Germany. The analyzed interviews were selected to include representative types inside the fighter's group as well as each subgroup. They also included a variety of representative characteristics regarding the dynamic of work. The excluded interviews further reproduced what was said in the selected interviews. The codification and analysis of the interviews will be presented in the following section.

4.4 Respondents

Chart 1

Basic Information of the Germany Respondents

Germany				
ID	Age	Gender	Annual Income	Fighter Type
1	35	M	100.000 €	Aspiring
2	67	M	20.000 €	Defensive
3	34	F	60.000 €	Aspiring
4	29	F	40.000 €	Defensive
5	62	M	35.000 €	Defensive

Chart 2
Basic Information of the Colombian Respondents

Colombia				
ID	Age	Gender	Annual Income	Fighter Type
1	33	M	53.000 €	Defensive
2	29	M	21.000 €	Defensive
3	48	M	22.000 €	Aspiring
4	28	F	10.000 €	Aspiring
5	60	F	10.000 €	Defensive

4.5 Interview Analysis

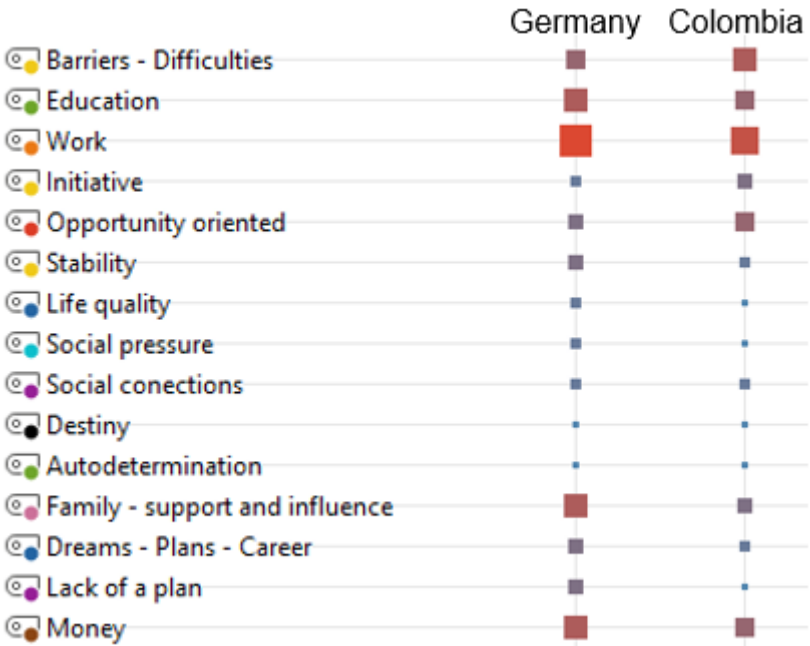
After being transcribed, the interviews of the respondents that were classified in the fighter class were codified with help of the MAXQDA software. Codification is based on selecting relevant passages and linking them with an associated code. The codes were derived from the transcriptions of the interviews by selecting the most relevant passages that related to the professional formation, career, and work life of the interviewee, as well as the elements that related to their position in the fighter group. Having used only respondents of the fighter class allows for the same codes to be used on all the respondents, as most of the codes were observed in all the respondents as can be seen in chart 1 and 2.

The codes were first obtained during an initial run of the interviews and were condensed during a second run. The remaining codes are valid throughout all the interviews and respondents. It was possible to assign multiple codes to a single segment, allowing the analysis of the interaction between different codes and how they create a profile for the respondent.

4.5.1 Habitus Traits and Capital Structures

Figure 4 presents the codes and their absolute frequency on the interviewees on Germany and Colombia respectively. Codes associate with both habitus traits and capital as will be described in the following section.

Figure 4
Frequency of codes in Germany and Colombia. MAXQDA



4.5.1.1 Barriers – Difficulties

This code was used when the interviewee referred to experienced difficulties perceived barriers in aspects relating to formation and professional life. Although described similarly, the relationship of the respondent with this code was split between two camps. For some respondents, barriers presented an opportunity of a big reward that required hard work, thus a barrier was often perceived as requiring hard work instead of being seen as an uncontestable fixity. Other respondents adjusted their actions according to the barriers and difficulties they faced in a non-confrontational matter. For them barriers presented and unsurpassable problem and did not allow for growth or change, or in the best-case scenario, these barriers presented an unreasonable challenge or a non-attractive investment payoff scenario.

This code also presented many of the issues that are associated with work, like uninteresting positions, low wages, bad working conditions, instability as well as some positive views such the challenges and rewards. Many elements relating to the specifics of the work sphere can be obtained from the passages of this code.

4.5.1.2 Education

This code was used on all the passages that were related with education. This includes simple mentions of the interviewee education process, as well as more abstract ideas like plans for further education and general reflections on the education as a subject. It was also used in association with other codes to capture the different perspectives on education.

4.5.1.3 Work

Passages containing information relating to the interviewees work life and experiences was included here. Interaction with other codes were used to further analyze the relationship of work with other variables. Among them, plans and money present the strongest interactions, as well as barriers and work were one of the codes with higher interaction with other codes.

As well as barriers, work also revealed many of the problematic and favorable characteristics of precarious work, such as opportunities and stability as well as less favorable as the several barriers or low wages. This were observed through the interaction of the code work with codes like barriers, money, opportunity oriented, life quality and other.

4.5.1.4 Initiative

Initiative was used in the cases were the interviewee exhibited a desire for doing things and had initiative that was outside the box and outside of that what was on the table. This code was the least frequent one and it is rather associated with someone from the established group of society. However, it was included as a reference of a characteristic of the higher class that can be exhibited by the aspiring fighter group. This code was not seen on the defensive fighters.

4.5.1.5 Opportunity Oriented

The Opportunity oriented code was used in the cases where the interviewees revealed being open to opportunities whenever these occur. Although like the initiative code, this code operates differently as the interviewees are open to opportunities and look forward to them but without coming up of own solutions. The role of the interviewee in this case is passive regarding the search of opportunities. Although this is present in both subgroups of the fighter class, aspiring fighters are much more likely to have it.

4.5.1.6 Stability

Stability was one of the core codes that defines all the respondents. Not only was stability acknowledged as a very important aspect in life, but it was also clear that stability was preferred by the respondents, while instability only being acceptable for a short time of if it was an opportunity to stability.

4.5.1.7 Life Quality

Passages refereeing to life quality are also remarkable normal and convey the picture of the fighter class. Very often the motivation for a certain decision regarding education and work rests on the life quality impact that this decision will have. Life quality itself is also a goal for choosing a career over another.

4.5.1.8 Social Pressure

Many of the respondents described social pressure as one of the characteristics that moved them the most to take certain decisions regarding education and work. In various scenarios respondents described having taken a decision based more on the societies position on certain job or education rather than on their own preference. This decision reflects the desire to fit in inside societal norms and established systems.

4.5.1.9 Social Connections

Among the actors that play a significant role in the decision-making process for some of the interviewees are the social connections. These include personal connections that opened the doors for a different position as well as those that played a significant role in shaping the interviewees career in a determined direction.

4.5.1.10 Destiny

This code was used on the passages that revealed the believe that destiny played a significant role in life. Some interviewees revealed the sensation of not feeling under control of their lives and let chance a bigger role in the decisions they took. Destiny was also used in some contexts as a proxy for hope. Many interviewees' answers to specific problems were to hope they will eventually work out, or that a solution would be available by the time they become critic.

4.5.1.11 Family Support and Influence

Families play a very significant role on life decisions and the formation of the preferences for education, work, and life. Family is naturally one of the most important actors in shaping an individual's life. This was evident in the interviews, but the role they take is not always the same: the name of the code "support and influence" comes from this observation. While some families take a purely supportive approach on the respondent's life, providing a security and guidance when needed, other approached the formation of the interviewees from a more active and influential role. This difference was felt along the aspiring defensive line and played a significant role in relation with other codes such as having a planned career or lacking one.

4.5.1.12 Dream, Plans, Career

This code was used to include all the passages where respondents articulated previous and present dreams and the results at following them. The interaction of this and other codes revealed the connections of dreams with other actors, the role of money and stability in the fulfillment of such dreams, plans or career goals.

4.5.1.13 Lack of a Plan

A remarkable fact of the interviews was the frequency with which many respondents reported having had a point or period of their life where they had no plan. In some cases, this was a temporal stage, but in other the lack of a plan is something that remained a characteristic of the labor life. The interactions with other codes reveal the different actors that influenced in getting in or out of this situation.

4.5.1.14 Money

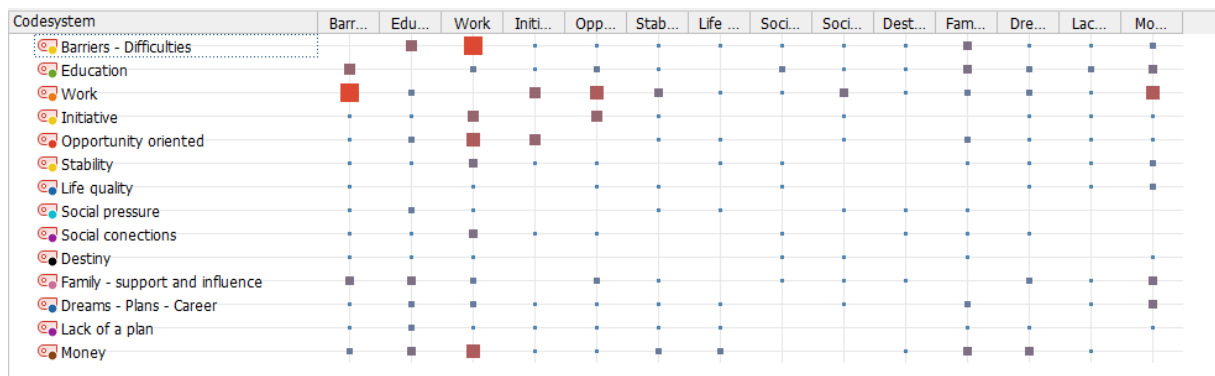
Money plays a major role in the responses and presents interaction with many other codes. It was through the interviews clear that money played perhaps the most significant role for the interviewees when it comes to decisions relating to education, career, as well as it being seen as the most important element for stability and life quality. Money played such a big importance that it was seen as a necessary part of any ventures or projects for the interviewees. Without a monetary component the interviewees saw no incentive in pursuing a goal and associate money as very socially relevant. Conversely, something that has a bad association with money is perceived in a negative way.

4.5.2 Interactions

Figure 5 reveals the frequency of direct overlapping between codes. In first place this allows to identify the most relevant codes, such as barriers, education, work, initiative, opportunity oriented, family and money. It is also clear that these codes interact with each other in a higher grade than with the less frequent codes.

Figure 5

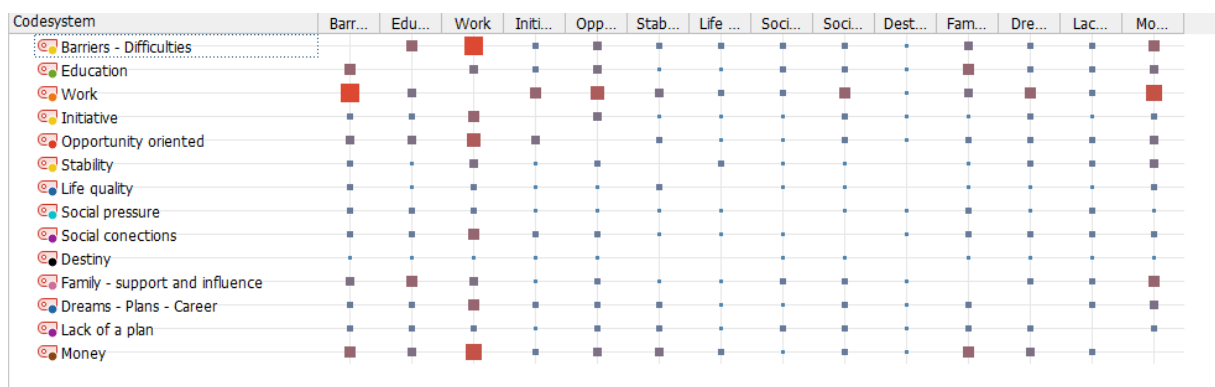
Correlation between overlapping codes. MAXQDA



Allowing for distance instead of direct overlapping on the code relationship analysis is presented in figure 6. This also include codes that are not completely overlapping but connected and reveals a closer interaction between them and highlights the importance of codes like stability, dreams, and social connections.

Figure 6

Correlation between codes with distance. MAXQDA



Although the trends are maintained, the codes closely relate to each other and that the previously observed dynamics of interaction remain present.

4.5.3 Clusters

Cluster analysis was used to compare the association between the different codes. This kind of analysis groups codes together according to their interaction and draws the relative distance between them on a chart. The cluster analysis was tried with different groups and reinforced the differentiation between the characteristics that relate more to defensive and aspiring fighter respectively. Figures 7 and 8 present the analysis of the codes with 3 and 4 groups respectively.

Figure 7

Cluster analysis for three groups. MAXQDA

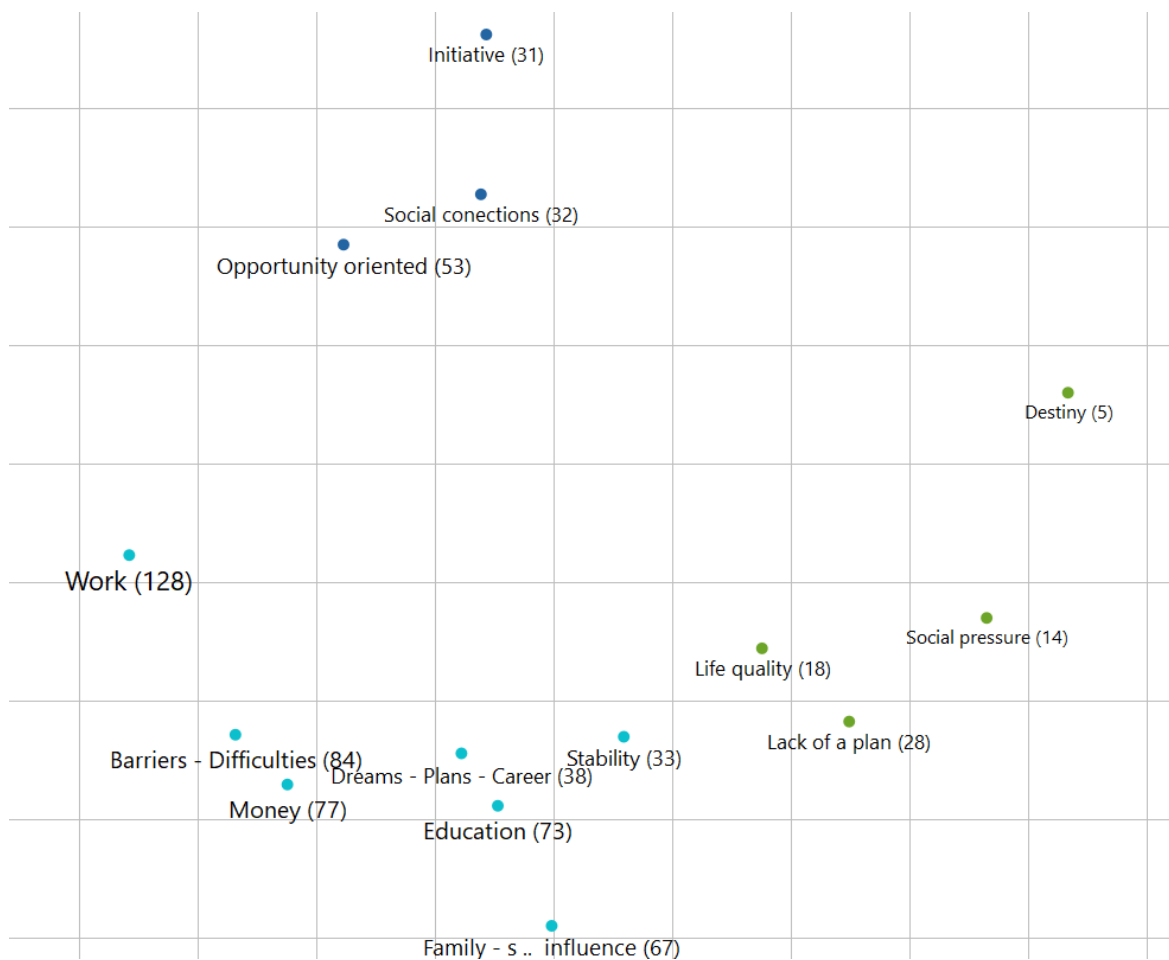
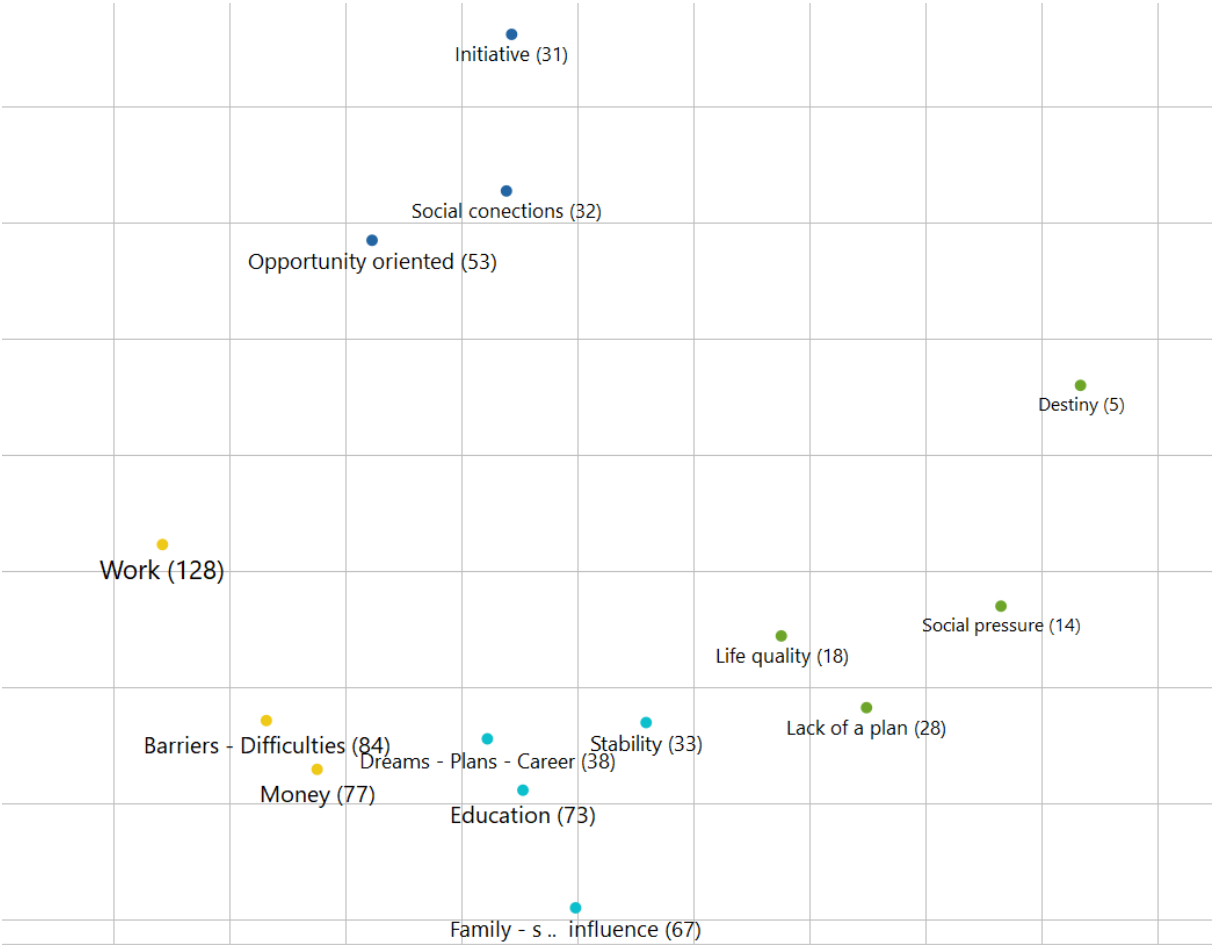


Figure 7 presents an interesting association between the different codes that can be associated with the two subgroups inside the fighter social class. The codes in dark blue, initiative, social connections, and opportunity oriented, are closely associated with the aspiring fighters and were mostly present on the respondents belonging to this

group. Analogically the codes in green destiny, social pressure, lack of a plan and life quality, are closely linked with the respondents from the defensive side of the fighters. The third cluster, light blue in color, presents the elements that are closely linked to each other and are not strongly linked with one of the other two clusters. Interestingly, this group presents the codes that are common to the fighter experience like work, barriers, dreams, stability, money, education, and family. This way of grouping the codes present and interesting picture and further draws on the relation between the groups inside the fighter class.

Figure 8
Cluster analysis four groups. MAXQDA



As a way of expanding this exercise, the analysis was run with 4 groups instead of three which is shown in figure 8. The new configuration of the clusters leaves the traits associated with the aspiring and defensive fighters intact and instead creates a

subdivision inside the traits associated with the fighter class in general, separating work, barriers and money from the other traits that relate to the fighter class. This can be explained as work, barriers and money play a bigger role as the articulating force of this class.

This clusters are the starting point of the class analysis in each country. The codes are associated with either aspiring fighter traits, cluster one, defensive fighter traits, cluster two, and common traits of the fighter class, cluster three:

Chart 3
Clusters and traits

Cluster one: Aspiring traits	Cluster two: Defensive traits	Cluster three: Fighter traits
Initiative Opportunity oriented Social Connections	Life quality Social pressure Lack of a plan Destiny	Barriers - Difficulties Education Work Stability Family support Dreams, plans, career, Money

4.5.4 Summary

The codification of the interviews allows for a systematized analysis of the respondent’s relationship with money, work, education, and many other elements that are relevant in the job market and the position an individual occupies within it. The overlapping and closedness between codes further reveal how these characteristics interact with each other and provide deep insights into how an individual chooses a determined career path. This analysis also supports the divergence between two groups inside the fighter class and allows to identify characteristics that are closely associated with one and another. The following chapters include the historical characteristics of each of the studied countries that are relevant at understanding the career decision taken by the interviewees as these should not be understood without the national context. Examples will then be provided that illustrate the transformation of work and the typical individuals that exemplify each of the subgroups inside the fighter social class. Examples will be given for each code that relate to the hypothesis of the transformation of work.

5 Chapter 5 Germany: A Compromise for a Welfare State

The development of the welfare state in Germany precedes the formation of the modern German state itself. Taking in consideration the convoluted history of Germany during the XX Century, social protections and the conditions of the labor market today are the result of an historical process that starts in the XIX Century, or arguably even before.

In the XX Century, the German welfare state became famous for a long list of social programs paired with higher taxes. However, like several other European nations and in line with the topic of this thesis, Germany experienced a push towards neoliberalism during the last decades of the XX Century that significantly transformed the social programs and institutions.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the formation of the welfare state in Germany and the factors that have shaped its labor market and institutions. It then presents the empiric material obtained through the interviews and argue that the current conditions favor some individuals over other, creating a divide inside the working class.

5.1 Brief History of the German Social State

The modern German state is relatively young in comparison with several of its European and American counterparts. Although the idea of a German nation can be tracked down for centuries, the formation of a unified German state did not come until the late XIX century. Unification, however, did not translate to stability, and the policies of the German state during the XX Century are as convoluted as the events that the country went through. Regardless of the changing political climate, since the foundation of the first united German state, the different political systems have all had a social component.

The beginnings of the welfare state in Germany are usually dated to the middle of the late 1800's and the introduction of the Bismarckian social insurance programs (Frohman, 2009). The main aim of these laws was securing some minimum standards at providing some guarantees for workers in case of sickness or accidents. Health insurance for workers, insurance in case of work-related accidents, death, or inability

to work due to old age were the main components of the Bismarckian reform (Born, 1959).

Other academics argue however, that these laws represented only one side of the origin's German welfare state as by the time of the formation of the German Empire, the independent states that went to form it had implemented diverse social policies, including programs aimed at poverty alleviation and the helping the unemployed (Frohman, 2009). The federal nature of the country also restricted the ability of the central government to intervene in these programs or overtaking them from a central position.

During the progressive industrialization of the Germany during the XIX Century, the power relations between employer and employee became a contentious issue that the diverse forms of governments of what would become Germany, as well as the unified Reich, had to address (Born, 1959). In the mostly unregulated job market of incipient industrialization working agreements were negotiated between employer and employee. The natural unbalance of power between the two parties meant that the only effective way of negotiating with the employer for most workers was by collectivizing their demands, this gave way to the important role of labor unions and legislation at transforming the conditions of the working classes (Born, 1959).

Along the escalation of the demands of the workers, the inequalities, and injustices between different sectors of the society became increasingly evident as industrialization progressed during the XIX Century. This was not only the case of Germany but rather a common trend of the rapidly industrializing nations of the north Atlantic. In many of these cases, the movements gained enough political force to become an important political player, often not only due to their popularity but also because they materialized as a real threat to the stability of the established regime (Herbert, 2014).

The proximity of the worker movements with socialist and reformist parties along the instability and risk that they presented for the newly born state is a crucial element of the advances of the movement in this early stage. The introduction of pro worker legislation and policies was accompanied with the ban of parties deemed too dangerous along other repressive policies in an art of negotiation process between the

interest of the government and the demands of the politically active workers (Born, 1959).

The severe crises during the first decades of the XX Century due to the Great War and the economic hardships that resulted from the Treaty of Versailles required the introduction of additional policies to address the difficult conditions that many were left which materialized in the form of the short lived Weimar Republic (Frohman, 2009).

Following the second world war, Germany was split in two separate Republics with very different systems. On one side, the German Democratic Republic adopted a socialist constitution that defined work, housing, and healthcare as basic rights that were to be provided by the state (Herbert, 2014). Consequentially, many of the objective of the previous programs were rendered redundant as unemployment and homelessness was not possible, or rather, not officially recognized by the state. The negative migration flow of the GDR also kept a shortage of workers in many fields as well as an oversupply of housing, making these goals relatively simple to attain (Schierhorn, 2010).

In the case of the German Federal Republic, it was founded on the precepts of returning to the institutional framework that preceded the NASDAP dictatorship. After the consolidation of the new republic, introduced the *Arbeitsförderungsgesetz* or law for the promotion of work (Schierhorn, 2010). This law presents a break in character with the previous laws by having a much broader social outlook. On top of regulating unemployment benefits, this law also regulated employment, and the job market. These transformations established the foundations of the *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* or social market economy, a concept that articulated the market with social equality in the post war years and that remains in place until today (Schierhorn, 2010).

This point can be marked as the peak of the German social state and the beginning of its downturn. The fall of the socialist block and the rise in popularity of neoliberal policies started a political turn where economic principles of efficiency and competition replaced the social goals of previous policies.

After the reunification of the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic, most of the institutions of the GDR disappeared and were replaced by the institutions of the German Federal Republic. Although this transformation included several prerogatives for the citizens of the former GDR, the almost overnight switch

from way of governing was especially hard for individuals in the so called *neue Bundesländer* or new States (the term commonly used to refer to the states of the former GDR). The reforms presented a very significant departure from the state that the communist regime had built. The introduction of the market economy reforms in hand with the privatization of property overseen by the *Treuhand* escalated into a significant economic crisis where many industries had to shut down and thousands of individuals were left without a job at the same time that the protections schemes of the German Federal Republic were being transformed (Schierhorn, 2010).

5.2 Neoliberalism

The switch from an equalitarian ideal to a market oriented ideal started at the end of the 90's and its most visible transformation can be seen in a series of privatization of public companies that led primarily to their sale to private investors, as was the case of *Deutsche Post* or to their restructuration as for-profit private companies owned by the state, as was the of the *Deutsche Bahn*.

This process was a result on the wide adoption of the ideals of neoliberal economics by a wider part of the European political parties: free market, efficiency, and profit maximization (Tsogas, 2001). The importance of privatizing state companies with a market mentality relies on the positive effects of competition and deregulation like innovation and lower costs. This was not the case before the privatization as many state-owned companies operated as monopolies and were at times infamous due to their uncompetitive service and high costs, as were the cases of transport and telecommunications. Similarly, operating as a profit oriented private company established financial responsibility as one goal of the firm hence lowering the financial risk exposition of the government. This in turn reduced the financial resources that the government needs to spend in the provision of services, ultimately translating into a more efficient use of tax money.

These reforms had a positive impact in the German Economy by increasing efficiency, lowering costs, improving the quality of public services while simultaneously lowering the cost on the state and creating new jobs. However, the implementation of the neoliberal principles in other aspects of the state also left significative negative consequences by changing the logic behind the labor market and social institutions.

Perhaps the most important ramification of this paradigm shift was the result of the *Hartz reforms* which included a series of recommendations for making the job market and social state more efficient (Pulignano, 2017). The policies that were born out of this concept were implemented in four phases, known as *Hartz I to IV*, and presented a mayor transformation of the job market and the social safety net in Germany. While the objective of lowering unemployment was addressing a problem of the era, several aspects these reforms also presented a reversal or a worsening of the established conditions, especially regarding the quality of jobs and the safety net for those unemployed.

One of the major objectives of the *Hartz Reforms* was to create a more flexible job market by creating new contractual forms of employment that undermined the negotiating power of workers (Pulignano, 2017). Although this initially fulfilled the intended objective of lowering unemployment and creating new jobs, the quality of the jobs created has been heavily criticized. A big share of these jobs was temporal, often associated with specific tasks for a limited time and rarely presented opportunity of becoming a permanent job. The flexibility also allowed for low wages in the German job market. Even in the scenarios where the hourly wage in these jobs might have been competitive in comparison with more traditional formal jobs, the flexible work schedule, and the way the worked hours were reported often translated into worse earnings than on a lower paying but more stable job.

Companies greatly profited from the rise of the low wage worker sector that was born out of the reforms, known as *Niedriglohnsektor* in Germany (Gerstung, 2019). The new regulations permitted hiring workers for short periods at low wages created a new work dynamic that was previously limited to informal work relationships. For companies, the work reforms derived from the *Hartz Konzept* were so favorable that they created a new job market composed of unstable and badly paid jobs to be performed by people who had few alternatives. Today, the low wage sector is so depending on the forms of work created by these reforms that studies shows that many major companies today depend on them for being profitable.

The effects were not limited to the low wage sector. For many employees these reforms translated not only in more instability but also in worse working conditions. For example, firms started replacing life-long occupations with temporal jobs and positions

that used to be secured for life became commission, subcontracted or temporal jobs that were attached to performance.

The safety net also suffered some major modifications, being the most significant one the unification of unemployment assistance *Arbeitslosenhilfe* –a federal program designed for those without a job and social help– and *Sozialhilfe* –a state program primarily for those who were unable to work– into *Arbeitslosengeld II* (Kurz-Scherf et al., 2005). These programs were originally established with solidarity as a guiding principle, being based on the historical system of poor relief. By the late 90's, however, these programs were being heavily criticized due to the abuse of the system by some and because it was not effective at improving their condition or returning to the job market (Kurz-Scherf et al., 2005). Paradoxically, instead of reversing this situation, the reforms have created a sector of precarious work for life (Motakef & Wimbauer, 2019).

The introduction of *Hartz Reforms* established tighter controls on the social help paid to the unemployed and created institutions and policies to limit and control those receiving it (Kurz-Scherf et al., 2005). In comparison with the previous system which had not built-in penalties in the system, in ALG II the amount received could be reduced under determined circumstances. Several aspects of the recipients were thoroughly controlled, especially with regards of additional income and life expenses, and were requested to be actively searching for a job and even take jobs chosen for them (often in the low wage sector) (Pulignano, 2017). This presents a major departure from the previous role of the state in the job market. Instead of guaranteeing a minimum with dignity, the priority of this new mechanism was to keep people employed and the social component was secondary to the market.

Subcontracting, lower wages, instability and worse working conditions progressively became more common in the job market as these practices became the norm for certain tasks through diverse industries (Kurz-Scherf et al., 2005). Defendants of the reforms point out that they created more jobs and can be attributed a good part of the economic growth of Germany in the last 20 years. However, studies have also shown that this has not translated evenly for all individuals (Kurz-Scherf et al., 2005). As the example of the low wage sector has shown, as do several other studies, that the liberalization of the job market created a bigger differential in wages between different occupations inside the German job market (Kurz-Scherf et al., 2005). Put in another

way, the valley between good paying jobs and not so good paying jobs has widened since the introduction of the *Hartz* Reforms.

The less strict job regulation and the rise in low paying positions that do not follow any tariff agreement led to the introduction of a national minimum wage in 2015 (Wimbauer & Motakef, 2020). This is a remarkable event in the face of the unionized German job market on which most salaries used to be governed by agreements between employers and workers for entire industrial sectors, making the necessity of a minimum wage a recognition of the negative effects of the liberalization of the work market.

The ramifications of the reforms are not only limited to the lower earning side of the job market but includes a significant share of workers regardless of their position in the income distribution. For example, the transformation of the mentality of work in the German Job Market is well underway and continues up to this day. Although some stable professional paths where remain, the established logic of working for one company or office during the entire work life has been progressively replaced by one where the worker needs to adapt their skillset according to the needs of the employer and ultimately those of the job market. Although a significant share of the population still represents the old way of thinking, among the younger generation the idea of everchanging work is an accepted fact of the future of work (Motakef & Wimbauer, 2019).

Although on the quantitative level, the transformations of the job market have had the desired effects on unemployment and growth, they also implied a transformation inside the composition of the *Mittelschicht*. The concept *Mittelschicht* can be directly translated into middle class but entails a deeper meaning. This concept originated on the post war and came after years of demand for equality in society which was channeled through the state by high taxes and a regulated market economy. The foundation of this concept is a redistribution system that through taxation, social expenditure and labor regulation aims at equalizing income and life standards for the working population (Keck, 2020).

Economic studies have found that there is a breach inside the German *Mittelschicht* that has been becoming wider in recent years (Verwiebe, 2014). On the lower side of this group, the difficulty of escaping *Hartz IV* and the vicious circle between relying on state help and low paying jobs has been documented (Wimbauer & Motakef, 2020).

On the upper side of the group, the accumulation of wealth on the higher part of the *Mittelschicht* following the reforms is also well documented. The higher income segment of the *Mittelschicht* captured a significant part of the economic growth during the last 15 years. Also, the rise in cost of living of the last decade has also been associated with increased income, consumption, while simultaneously affecting those on the lower side of the distribution.

This short summary contains the key elements of the transformations of the working class in Germany and its social state. Beginning with an early consolidation of industrialization and capitalism, by the XIX century the role of worker movements merged with the existing institutions to create the foundations of the German social state characterized by strong social programs and the influence of workers. During the XX Century these institutions further expanded until the rise of neoliberalism in the 80's when the social logic starts being replaced with the market mentality. Then, the social programs, while not cancelled, experience a major transformation that undermines their protective nature.

Having the historic and economic events streamlined, the empirical part will focus on the conditions of the modern labor market and the impact on the fighter class of the transformations of the recent decades. This allows to uncover the qualitative aspects of this transformations on the social structure of societies and social mobility.

5.3 Empirical Part

The empirical part collects the finding that relate to the condition of the modern labor market. Following the methodology presented in the previous chapter, the habitus traits of aspiring and defensive fighters are presented with especial emphasis on the elements that are a result of the neoliberal transformation as well as the positive and negative effects that those have had on the working population. First, the elements associated with the aspiring fighters will be presented followed by the elements associated with the defensive fighters. Finally, the elements that are shared by both groups and are characteristics of the fighter class.

5.4 Cluster 1 – Aspiring Traits

The traits of the aspiring fighters reflect the state of the modern labor market. The three main traits that associate with aspiring fighters were initiative, opportunity oriented and social connections.

These traits also reflect the character of aspiring fighters in Germany and the increasing separation with the defensive fighters. They are dependent on the intensity of social and cultural capital, as is the case of social connections during the early career, as well as the economic required to be initiative and opportunity oriented. For aspiring fighters, instability and informality is approached with a positive view as it is something associated with better job and more dynamic career.

5.4.1 Initiative

Some decisions taken by the respondents come from a motivation to change something in life although it not being a pressuring issue, for example, moving to a different town just for the sake of living in a different place. Similarly, the desire for knowledge or the passion for learning and academia can moved a handful to pursue a career that they might not do otherwise, or that might do little sense from an economic perspective.

Initiative was encouraged by relatives or acquaintances that support this endeavor. These individuals play a crucial role in enabling others materialize a broad idea or desire they might have. Having experienced with following own initiatives enables a person to approach challenges and career paths with a more open perspective and with a more optimistic take. Such decisions, although risky, tend to provide a higher return in the long run and associate with the maximizing ideal of neoliberalism.

However, the interviews revealed that initiative does not outweigh the conditioning towards stability that the interviews revealed as characteristic of the fighter class. While initiative was seen as good and encouraged, it was always contrasted with their feasibility and very risky goals and unlikely to achieve goals were discouraged.

Ich bin jemand der schon neugierig ist und schon am Anfang an mit der Industrie zu kämpfen. Eigentlich wollte ich wirklich Forschung betreiben, weil ich einfach Interesse an Machine Learning hatte und wollte eigentlich eher in die Tiefe gehen, was wissen an geht.

I am someone who is curious and was already struggling with the industry at the beginning. Actually, I really wanted to do research because I was just interested in machine learning and wanted to go more in depth about how it works.

Ja, also, ich habe mir am Ende des Sommers, habe ich mir, einfach Zeit gegeben. So ok, macht einfach die erste drei Monate nichts und schaut, ob du ein Projekt findest. So das war wirklich so. Einfach gesagt. Ok du verzichtest in diesen Monaten auf eine Stabilität und schaut mal was passiert.

Yes, so at the end of the summer I just gave myself time. So ok, just do nothing for the first three months and see if you can find a project. So that was really it. I just said ok you do without stability in these months and see what happens.

5.4.2 Opportunity Oriented

From the aspiring fighter viewpoint, remaining open to opportunities is a key component for long term stability. While choosing a defined path in life can be rewarding and grant short term stability, a sudden change in external condition could be devastating in the absence of a strong enough support network. For this reason, respondents reported being open to diverse opportunities as this is a safer bet than choosing a single path and pursuing it. This was especially the case for individuals that put a big value in maximizing returns, which is associated with the neoliberal logic.

The predisposition to be opportunity oriented is also influenced by the parents. Parents without a carefully thought-out career, themselves more opportunity oriented, are rather inclined at encouraging their kids to be open to diverse job opportunities and career paths rather than pursuing a safer career. Careers with a diverse array of topics that on the surface provide more opportunities can be more interesting for people that prefer to follow an opportunity-oriented take.

Education also plays a big role in this trait, as some academic formations are perceived as key to be open to all opportunities. In the case of Germany, the Abitur still has the reputation of enabling people to pursue a wide array of desirable careers and jobs. The Abitur is the highest degree awarded in secondary education in Germany and allows graduates to study at universities.

Despite the consensus on the value of the abitur among the interviewees, the perceived importance of this qualification has been changing through time.

Respondents from all the age ranges said that desirable jobs today are reserved for those with outstanding academic qualifications, voluntary work, and personal connections. While aspiring fighters have access to some of these traits. For many, these are limiting factors as they lack the resources and time necessary to devoting to these characteristics before entering the labor market. Securing all these is more closely related with being someone from the established class.

Being opportunity oriented has a big positive impact in the professional life. However, it requires the disposition of switching jobs on a short notice and learning new skills that are necessary for the new position and assuming more responsibilities. Aspiring fighters were more inclined to take these opportunities while defensive fighters are not so keen of change. This predisposition for stability can be limiting, as even very stable jobs can open paths to new, interesting, and better paid jobs.

Many opportunities will come unexpected and from different individuals and environments. Being able to recognize and benefit from such opportunities is a necessary skill that is more present in the aspiring fighters. Similarly, negative outcomes are also be seen as an opportunity by someone with this trait and devastating for someone without it.

Negotiating is also a component of being opportunity oriented. Negotiating work conditions can turn a job into a more meaningful opportunity. Being opportunity oriented also refers to getting accustomed to using legal loopholes for personal purposes. However, the value given to the own work also relates to limitations of the support network of the respondent.

Das war eine Gesamtschule für, wie gesagt also, für alle, fortlaufenden Wege. Also ich hätte dort den Hauptschulabschluss machen können. Ich hätte die mittlere Reife machen können, ich hätte zum Abitur weiter gehen können.

That was a Gesamtschule that is, one school where you can do all paths. I could have done the secondary school leaving certificate there, I could have done the intermediate school leaving certificate, and I could have gone on to the Abitur.

Sie haben mir immer gesagt, so guckt, dass du einen guten Beruf findest, aber sie haben nie gesagt, ok in dieser Richtung muss du jetzt gehen. In nach hinein bin ich jetzt doch froh, dass es mich nicht gesagt wurde, oder ja, ich wurde glücklich am Ende.

They always told me, to look after finding a good profession but they never said, ok you have to go in this direction. In hindsight, I am now glad that that was not said to me, and that I became happy in the end.

Aber dann habe ich mich in die Frankfurt Oder Uni verliebt. Also, in die Viadrina und habe den Studiengang für Kulturwissenschaften denn angenommen, weil die hatten mal so eine Aussicht auf ein Auslandssemester, was ich wieder spannend fand. Emm, nternational, paar Fächer sind ja auch auf Englisch, das ist ein bisschen die englische Sprache wieder üben konnte, du musstest noch eine dritte Fremdsprache, eine zweite Fremdsprache.

But then I fell in love with the Frankfurt or university, the Viadrina, and started the course of studies for cultural studies there because it included a semester abroad, which I found exciting. Emm, it's also international, some subjects are also in English, so I could practice a bit of English again, and you had to do a third foreign language, a second foreign language.

5.4.3 Social Connections

Networking is an essential ability for career development through which jobs and career related opportunities are found. Opportunities often come from unexpected social connections and can provide a new take to career formation by presenting a new field. Social connections can also give a different perspective to the job search, although an individual might be unaware of this. Someone with this trait has better chances of succeeding in the dynamic neoliberal labor market.

The interviews show that in Germany, racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural characteristics are determinant at the construction of social connections as integration is a pathway to social connections outside the inner social circle. Social connections also play an essential role in crucial career defining moments like moving to a new city or starting a new job, providing a support network that facilitates. While this was seen on aspiring and defensive fighters, aspiring fighters made more use of them in a strategic way for career advances.

Weil mein Aussehen und meine Integration relativ gut waren, Sachverhalten usw. und mein Aussehen ist jetzt auch nicht irgendwie "balkanesisch" sondern, nicht unbedingt dass ich jetzt oder dass meine Eltern aus Kroatien stammen,

daher war es eigentlich alles im Rahmen also, zwar nichts zu hart für mich sage ich mal.

Because my appearance and my relatively good integration, behavior etc. That is, my appearance is somehow not too "Balkan" or rather, not necessarily that I or my parents come from Croatia. Therefore, everything worked out fine, I'd say I didn't have it hard.

Dann habe ich denn so die Idee bekommen, emm, in den Journalismus reinzugucken, Medien. Vielleicht wurde ich da von Papa bisschen inspirierend, weil er auch in der Gegend relativ viel unterwegs war. Emm, Wir hatten ein guter Freund der Familie der damals bei RTL Group ganz groß war, im Vorstand irgendwo und so bist du dann über Beziehungen und über Leute die du kennst, habe ich dann meines erstens Praktikum bekommen nach meinem Abitur.

Then I got the idea to look into journalism, media, maybe I was inspired a bit by my dad because he was on the road a lot in that area. Emm, we had a good friend of the family who was very big at RTL Group at the time, on the board somewhere and so I found my first internship then through personal connections.

5.5 Cluster 2 – Defensive traits

In contrast to the previous traits, the traits that are more closely linked with the defensive fighters present them as risk avoidant and giving a higher value to the day-to-day life over risky time and effort investments with possible higher returns.

As in the case of aspiring fighters, the traits: life quality, social pressure, destiny and lacking a plan reflect the conditions that further create a breach between the aspiring and defensive fighters.

5.5.1 Life Quality

Life quality is a goal by itself in the case of many defensive fighters. Life quality is expressed as an ideal that has various degrees and which is approached with diverse degrees of tolerance. The trait of life quality reflected by the interviewed defensive fighters relates with having a desired level of comfort in life, a determined and stable lifestyle according to the given circumstances.

For instance, the life quality expectations at a young age or during the time as a student are different to those as an employee. It was clear from the interviews of the defensive fighters that something acceptable during the youth, like sharing a flat, becomes unacceptable as an employee. This was not the case with the aspiring fighters who were willing to do compromises to achieve determined goals.

This preference for what is defined as life quality were established since a young age. Life quality is a balance between the different aspects of life. Therefore, not any single element dominates the other and there is flexibility with regards to different criteria. In an ever-changing labor market, not being flexible nor learning how to deal with change can present a serious disadvantage.

Social and personality components also make part of life quality at broad. For example, someone with specific moral values will not have a good opinion on a position that demands a different value set. There was a higher tolerance on this regard by aspiring fighters.

Nee habe ich nicht. Ich habe kein Ökonomisches Ziel, z.B. jetzt wo ich sage, ich möchte in 10 Jahre so viel zurückgelegt haben und Haus haben. Also, mein Ziel ist, ein gutes Leben zu führen, frei zu sein ja, Flexibilität.

No, I don't, I don't have an economic goal, for example, I don't say I want to have put so much back in 10 years and have house. So, my goal is to live a good life, to be free yes, flexibility.

5.5.2 Social Pressure

Social pressure is significant factor in structuring a career as the respondents adapted their choices according to societal expectations that were pushed onto them. While family and people in the social circle play a big role in career choices, social expectations play a significant role as well. These are a result of the apparent or observed position of certain careers in society, the prestige attached to different career paths or the value of education or a stable, dependable, high paying job, among others.

Social pressure was also experienced by the respondents on the base of social prejudices that relate to stereotypes on gender or ethnic grounds. For example, they believe in the divide of professions along gender lines and the association of certain backgrounds, like ethnicity or migration, with certain professions. This was not the case

with aspiring fighters, who were less prone to making this kind of associations and in general disregarded a good part of the social pressure and defended their choices.

Working inside the societal expectations without fully committing to them was observed in various cases. This shows that individuals who commit to fulfilling social expectations are not uncritical of them, but neither are they willing to go against them. Social pressure also relates to role in the social group. For someone in a central role, main caregiver, the expectations are different as for someone who does not have this centrality.

Social pressure changes and the expectations constantly evolving and being reshaped by society. Many respondents described that items that were relevant previously have become outdated. The quick changes in the labor sphere can easily undermine the advances of compliance that defensive fighters had done.

Ein sozialer Druck war schon da, das war, kam schon wieder gerade so von, von der Oma die dann halt immer denn sag so, ja du machst das Abitur und dann wirst du halt eben bei der Stadt arbeiten, bei uns im Rathaus, und dann wirst du das halt machen, oder, also, es ist schon halt so, also, man wollte schon so präsentieren und sagen, sie macht das mal richtig.

A social pressure was already there. For instance, it came straight from the grandma who would say something like, yes you go and get the abitur and then you will work with the city administration with us in the city hall. Then you will make this or that. It is like this, as if she wanted to showcase you to others and say, she is doing it right.

Ja, also, ich war ja, ich bin immer zu Schule gegangen, habe nicht verfehlt oder so. Ich hab die Sachen gemacht die ich machen musste aber habe auch nicht Streber Sachen gemacht.

yes, well, I was, I always went to school, didn't skip class or anything, I did the things I had to do but also didn't do nerdy things.

5.5.3 Lack of a Plan

Lacking a plan reflects a loose disposition regarding life outcomes and career path which is a clear trait in many of the answers of the defensive fighters. A basic

observation of this trait is favoring short term decisions based on the current context over ones that are more planned and structured and favor long-term outcomes. This short view approach left respondents in positions that were negatively affected by the increasing instability of the labor market after the reforms.

Some also have a flexible approach to shaping a longer-term outlook. For them, lacking a plan is a strategy that encourages looking out for opportunities by delaying change while proactively considering different options. For example, trying different jobs before choosing one for a longer term. In many scenarios some basic underlying ideas may exist, but they might not be completely developed, and direct experience can change the opinion regarding them.

It is also clear that while education can provide clues on what path to follow, for many respondents it was not enough to choose a career and can even lead toward professional dead ends. Lacking motivation towards a career life can retroactively influence the academic or formative years as well as the creation of long-term plans.

For some respondents, lacking a plan or a clear direction was also influenced by the social context. Too many opportunities can make choosing a single plan, career, or path difficult in the absence of guidance. For some respondents, lacking a plan or having a not very structured plan, is used as a long-term strategy to approach decision on a case-by-case basis and avoiding the commitment that building a detailed or structured plan from an early stage in life requires.

Nein, ich habe überhaupt keine Idee gehabt, was ich danach machen konnte, gar nichts, null. Deswegen habe ich, ja während des Studiums auch geguckt ok, kann ich vielleicht was anderes machen.

No, I had no idea at all what I wanted to do afterwards, nothing, zero, that's why during my studies that I thought, ok maybe I can do something else.

Aber, wir gesagt, hat kein Spaß gemacht. Ja, das hat mich denn auch dazu getrieben vom Studium weg zu gehen, nicht da beraten zu lassen.

But, as we said, it was no fun. Yes, that drove me then to go away from the study, not being advised.

5.5.4 Destiny

While aspiring fighters have a very hands-on approach on their life, especially their career, defensive fighters are more prone to see it as an outcome of events outside their direct control and even as something accidental. For these individuals, destiny or just sheer luck played a very important role in their lives and at times perhaps bigger than the one they actively played.

Interviewees described in hindsight, that many events that played crucial role in their lives came down to sheer luck. Although this does not necessarily mean that the interviewee does not deserve to be where they are, this feeling acknowledges that the current outcomes were unexpected.

This association was also made regarding historical events that can be associated with current outcomes. Many respondents are aware that their career worked out the way it did thanks to them being in a specific place at a specific point in time. Acknowledging that they most likely would have not succeeded under the current circumstances or in a very dynamic labor market.

Dann bin ich halt zufällig an so ein Recruiter Job gestoßen. Also dann, ich werde Recruiter, bzw, ich habe mal eben, oh Gott ich habe, bestimmt, ich habe auch angefangen dann Bewerbungen zu schicken, so nach UK und nach Irland, oder Masterstudiengänge, eventuell doch nur hinten dran zu packen aber dann in einem anderen Land bin ich mir nicht so sicher, also ich will da vielleicht ich in Deutschland bleibend gucken, hatte alles wie gesagt nicht geklappt, und da wurde ich hat auf diesen rekrutier Job gestoßen.

Then I just happened to come across a recruiter job. So, then I decided to become a recruiter. I had back then just started, oh God, I had started to send applications to the UK and to Ireland, or for master's degree programs. Not entirely convinced but out of the desire of something but then I was not so sure about going to another country. So, I also wanted to have a look and maybe stay in Germany if the applications didn't work out and then I stumbled upon this recruiter job.

5.6 Cluster 3 – Fighter traits

While the previous traits were closely associated with each one of the subgroups of the fighter class, the traits of cluster 3 were distributed fairly equal among both groups.

These traits however further help to portray the general transformations inside the fighter class due to the neoliberal reforms and their impact in the fighter class as a whole. They are: barriers – difficulties, education, work, stability, family support and influence, dreams, plans, career, and money.

5.6.1 Barriers – Difficulties

All respondents agree that having a good academic performance is required for pursuing many careers. They also agree that desirable professions and jobs require specific qualifications that are harder to get into due to a high number of applicants. One difficulty reported was that to get into a specific career in Germany it often requires following a path that is clearly defined and structured. Without fulfilling all the requirements to achieve the required qualifications, it is unlikely or outright impossible to find a job in the desired sector.

It was also clear that academic performance presents different challenges to different people. In Germany, people experience classification and exclusion from an early age and even basic education has an application process that depends on personal recommendations and probation periods. This had an impact in the responses of several interviewees.

The interviews show that having a migration background plays a big role in the early formation and unfairly benefits individuals without a migration background. Education needs networks of support and is a special effort for many. Several interviewees reported the positive influence from people and their role in preventing them from dropping out of education or choosing a career with a longer-term reward.

For certain professions it is harder to find an open position as there are less vacancies than people applying. Giving up on dreams or careers is not uncommon among the respondents. At times the actual conditions of a job can differ from the expectations or necessities of the individual and lead to disenchantment. Although the interest is not gone, pursuing the dream is not interesting under the current conditions.

Respondents also reported the difficulties of advancing inside a company. Although it is possible to get ahead in companies, there are also limitations and glass ceilings. For example, climbing to a higher position is often linked with education or training, which

has a cost in loss income and time. Sponsored education or training comes with time and employability commitments, limiting the possibilities for switching jobs afterwards.

When thinking about switching to a better job or a better opportunity, respondents reflected on the emotional cost of this decision. These costs can often be a deal breaker. One negative aspect of switching jobs, especially if not properly planned, is that it can often mean to start from the lower position than on the previous job, even in the case of a pay increase. Conversely, very stable jobs, like working for the state, present less opportunities with the upside of requiring no commitment as the responsibilities ends with the work shift. Sometimes the desire for stability can conflict with higher expectations from the relatives. Reaching high position often requires traits that are not popular with the social environment and time invested in work can conflict with life quality.

It is clear from the interviews that employer expectations are different today than in the past. For instance, not many years ago switching jobs was uncommon and switching frequently was seen as a sign of poor performance and poor employability outlook. In contrast, today switching jobs is not only more common but is also not frowned upon and even expected in some fields. Company dynamics that are not related to the employer also have started to make an impact on an employees' professional life. Company mergers, acquisitions and bankruptcies that are in no way related to the employee can lead to a change of tasks, position, unemployment, and ultimately bad work records for employees. The working logic and ethic have changed; use of personal belongings and time for company purposes is expected.

Regarding the social help of the German state. Many respondents complained that living on Hartz IV money does not mean a lack of occupation as it is popularly portrayed. Instead, social help will be alternated with small jobs or other ways of making money. Furthermore, this is thoroughly controlled, and the money earned through side occupations will often have a negative impact in the state helps. Similar problems were reported regarding retirement system. For example, that going early in retirement limits the money one can earn on the side once retired. It was also clear that working through old age and in retirement is a reality for many individuals, even in a rich country like Germany.

Mein Abitur Schnitt war nicht gut genug, deswegen habe ich dann für Physiologie, wo ich unbedingt rein wollte, hätte ich keine Zulassung bekommen oder ich musste erstmal Warte Semester aufbauen, um einen Studium Platz zu bekommen.

My abitur average was not good enough, so I then went for physiology. I would not have gotten admitted where I really wanted to get in or would have had to wait some semesters to get a study place.

Normalerweise musst du ein abgeschlossenes Studium haben und Volontariat zu machen, also, das war wieder so ein Ding, wo ich mich ein bisschen rumgemäkelt habe aber ja, genau, dann habe ich das Praktikum gemacht, hat da gute Leistung gebracht und die haben mir dann, das Volontariat angeboten, dass ich dann.

Normally you have to have a degree and do a traineeship. So that was another thing where I wondered around for a bit but yes, exactly, I did the internship, performed well there and they then offered me the traineeship that I could then do.

Das Ding war, da durch das ich vorher in Wedding auf die Grundschule gegangen bin und dann in Prenzlauer Berg auf das Gymnasium, war schon allein von den Menschen sehr anders, weil, auf einmal, hattest du fast kein Migrationshintergrund mehr und vorher sehr viel und das war anspruchsvoller.

The thing was, because of that I went to elementary school before in Wedding and then to high school in Prenzlauer Berg, it was very different just from the people. Because all of the sudden, there were almost no more people with migration background and it was much more demanding.

Ja, da war ein bisschen orientierungslos, da habe ich Germanistik, Publizistik Geschichte studiert. Damals, ich habe das Grundstudium gemacht, damals war's nicht so bequem wie Heute, vor allen, die Mitschüler haben meistens eine fertige Berufsausbildung, war das Basis des Grundstudiums und denn war ich ein Abbrecher, weil ich gemerkt habe, ich habe mich auch beraten lassen, von der Agentur für Arbeit, wie die es heute heißt, weil ich mehr geeignet bin für kaufmännische Sachen. Ok, und da habe ich denn, mich irgendwie nach einer

Lehre und bin denn beim Scheren gelandet und danach bin denn, beim Spekkauf angekommen.

Yes, I was a bit disoriented, I studied German language and literature, journalism, and history. At that time, I did the basic studies, back then it was not as comfortable as today, almost all the classmates had a finished vocational training. I finished the basis of the basic studies and then I dropped out because I noticed that, after going to get advice by the Employment Agency, as it is called today, that I am more suitable for commercial things. Ok, and then I found an apprenticeship with Shearing and afterwards is Moved to Spekkauf.

5.6.2 Education

The respondents showed that schools that provide a comprehensive path towards college are preferred by many parents that want to provide their kids with stability. Unfortunately, this is not possible for all due to the nature of the German school system and because schools with a good reputation are hard to get in.

As mentioned before, the abitur used to be a safeguard to getting into good jobs, at least in the imaginary of the people. However, this has changed and in recent times the perception of the respondents across ages is that at least a college degree and a master's degree are required for the most desirable jobs.

The perception of some school subjects being boring, as was the case of many respondents and their relationship with math and other science subjects, has long lasting implications. For those who approached without passion, even careers with a bad reputation can be hard. Faced with no clear career path, remaining in school is an option used by many to delay facing the job market.

In various cases, a monetary proposition that relates to education is missing, which can encourage a career switch. However, despite negative prospects, education is often seen with good eyes and motivation. There is a true feeling and desire of more education.

Respondents across the entire class revealed the importance of individuals in crucial positions of the education system and the important role they play. Such is the case of those in charge of giving recommendations and deciding which path a person can

follow. These have a big influence in a person's academic path and career and securing a recommendation has life changing effects.

Race and migration can negatively influence academic performance even. Respondents recounted the difference in academic performance between schools according to the share of migrants that attend it. In schools with better reputations the share of students with a migration background diminished significantly. Accordingly, schools with higher share of migrants were associated with lower academic performance.

The interviews revealed that lacking orientation has a great impact on education. The expectations surrounding a career can easily become undone, even before finishing the degree. Quitting is however unlikely as this will count as lost time and the advantage of a title is a big incentive. Switching fields altogether after finishing education is more likely.

Respondents also have mixed feelings regarding the transformation of the educative system in Berlin and Germany in recent years. Before the rise in popularity of comprehensive schools or *Gesamtschule*, the segregation between the different tiers of the structured system was very clear and the lower tiers had a bad reputation that difficulted finding a job. Almost all agree that this is a positive development. However, many voice their concerns regarding the impact of this style of education on quality. Arguing that bad students would negatively affect the performance of the good ones. Learning throughout work life has become normal, even for people without a call for learning new skills.

The pressure for finishing a degree is very low when the financial side is covered. The motivation to do a PhD, or lack thereof, is not necessarily linked with financing. Some individuals will not pursue further education despite having the financial side of the PhD covered.

Wir haben uns da schon für eingesetzt, dass ich in die Fritz Kassen Schule komme weil die halt eben eine ziemlich gute Ruf hatte auch und bin mir nicht ganz sicher für die ganze bewegt Grunde aber das war schon bedacht, also, man hat schon da versucht, dass ich in diese Schule komme, grade ich glaube hinter dem Aspekt, dass ich halt eben dann weiter machen kann, in der selben

Schule und dann nicht wechseln muss und, das waren halt dort alles, dann abschließen können wurde aber ich kann nicht ganz genau sagen.

We have already decided that I should come into the Fritz Kassen school because it had a pretty good reputation but I'm not completely sure about why we moved, in any case it was already decided that I should go to that school. I think behind it was the aspect that I could just then continue in the same school and not have to change to be able to finish.

Das hat mir angezeigt, dass, du muss halt einem Studium abschließen, um in der Lage zu sein wirklich ein Gehalt zu verlangen oder halt eben, bei den öffentlichen die haben halt, Tarifgehälter und da war es halt, ein Redakteur beim Einstieg waren glaube ich 3000 Euro oder irgendwie sowas, und ja ok, das ist das doppelte, was die mir angeboten haben in den Privaten.

That showed me that you must have a completed degree to be able to really demand a salary or just to get the salaries at the public media. They have regulated salaries and an editor there starts I think with 3000 euros or something like that, that's double what they offered me in the private media.

5.6.3 Work

The interviews show that the formation of the preferences for careers starts early in life. The pressure for a career often starts from the pressure of being independent. This comes originates in the parents, family, and the government.

Many respondents have a bad opinion regarding some careers which are undesirable but in theory available for everyone in case of a need. These include technical or manual jobs that are unattractive for many, as are basic jobs in accounting or working as a clerk. The repetitiveness of them as well as the physical effort are responsible for their unattractiveness. However, if a good, interesting, and fulfilling job is badly paid, this can also be a deal breaker.

For the respondents, some jobs are attractive due to the stability they offer and are preferred over more unstable jobs with better but uncertain opportunities. The prospect of higher pay on the private economy must be weighted with the stability and relative ease of a job with the state, where experience comes with a higher rank and pay automatically. Older interviewees reported older jobs having disappeared due to

automatization, making a living out of a manual or non-technical job in Germany progressively more difficult.

The responses also show some improvements in recent years in the German labor regulation. For example, many desirable internships in Germany were badly or even not paid. Making them a source of exploitation and only an option for those who could go without earnings for a long time.

Many vacancies require extensive application process that discourage many possible applicants. While for some searching for a job is hard, for many with desirable qualifications the hard part is choosing only one job. Looking for jobs and opportunities is also subject to time constraints, so people under pressure and in need, usually, turn to any available job. Similarly, the need to collect work experience to apply for better jobs and start a career often pushed the interviewees into jobs they had not considered. For many individuals, opportunity and luck can shape the career path massively, as a job can lead to choosing a career path in a field that was unplanned.

Working while studying can be done out of need but is a big sacrifice and something that only the respondents with enough of a social network could do. The life work balance plays an important role, because of some respondents are not willing to sacrifice it for expected returns outside a limited time.

The respondents revealed that although jobs in engineering are well paid, they can also be very unstable. For some of the respondents, losing a job can be an opportunity of finding a new path and new opportunities.

Ich glaube meine größte Angst war endlich davor, diese IHK anerkannten Ausbildungen die du mit einem Realschule Abschluss machen kannst also, Küchen Hilfe oder, also Koch oder keine Ahnung, als was in der Richtung, dann muss aber ja, Buchhaltung, Finanzen das sind alle ja so Themen, die dann in die Berufsschule angegangen werden, und für solchen Themen hatte ich halt irgendwie keine Lust darauf, ich halte irgendwie so, Buchhaltung, Rechnungswesen, BWL, Mathe, Zahlen, das ist halt was mir überhaupt nicht zugesagt hat.

I think my biggest fear was ending up doing one of these IHK recognized trainings that you can do with a secondary school diploma. Something like kitchen helper or so cook or something else in the direction or something like

accounting, finances which are all yes so topics that are addressed in the vocational school, and for such topics I had just somehow no desire. I think somehow so, accounting, business studies, math, numbers, that's just what has not appealed to me at all.

Ich musste mir irgendwann mal was anderes, suchen, das war so, Job Portale durchforsten, was für Jobs gibt es eigentlich, ich habe desto ganz oft, wenn du grade so geizest, wissen chatten magst, wohin, wohin willst du, ehm, ja, das war also, ziemlich schwer zu finden.

At some point I had to look for something else. I had to search through job portals and seeing what kind of jobs were there actually available. When you are so stingy like me, you like to chat and end up many asking questions and so yeah it was pretty hard to find something.

Und tja, so habe ich ein Paar Jahre hingbracht, und ein bisschen länger da war bei dir Firma (Inquis), in Dienst, Verkauft in dienst, ne Firma, die Kassenmultimedia stellt, Geld rein, ja? es war immer so gestaffelt, fünf, fünf, fünf, fünf, das du keine sechster aus Versehen rein kriegst, so dass du ihn leicht du zählen hast und so. Ja, und das war ja, bevor Computern das gemacht haben, wirklich eine große Arbeitserleichterung, und war schön mit der Firma, es hat schon Spaß gemacht, aber er war doch ein bisschen langweilig auf Dauern.

And well, there I got a couple of years behind me, and a little longer with the other company (Inquis), in service, sales and service, it's a company that provides cash registers, money in, yes? it was always so staggered, five, five, five, so that you do not get a sixth one in by mistake and you can easily count them. Yes, and that was, before computers did that, really a big help at work, and was nice with the company, it was already fun, but he was a bit boring in the long run.

5.6.4 Stability

All respondents associated stability with a principle to follow in life, especially with regards of career and the kind of jobs to be pursued. While many families and relatives encourage respondents to pursue stable and dependable jobs in the short-term other

pushed for risky alternatives that might provide a higher return and stability in the long term.

The push for stability reflects the desire among the respondents of securing a point where conditions would not change. In the case of school, stability reflects the impulse of not switching schools or dropping out of education. One of the advantages of stability, from the viewpoint of the respondent, is that it also requires little effort.

The responses reveal that stability is increasingly becoming a reflection of income and wealth, as this is the key to stability in many other aspects of life. The promise of stability that money offers is enough to overtake in importance other factors like the wish of doing something or a unstable undesirable scenario. Money is however important only up to a certain degree. The promise of a higher income is weighted by the necessary sacrifices to obtain it. In the end, money is a means of securing a lifestyle that is made up of various components, a balance of work life, career, family and more.

Big companies are attractive as they offer stability in many fields in comparison with smaller companies. Although there are not as many as in the past, there are still career paths that provide unparallel stability, such is the case of becoming a civil servant in Germany, a *Beamte*.

Na ja, weil das einfachste oder weil die Alternative war, aus der Schule rauszugehen und jetzt keine krassen Arbeiten mehr zu schreiben und nicht mehr freitags um 13 Uhr Schluss zu haben, die Alternative dazu wäre gewesen nach der 10. Klasse, ne, nach der 9., ne nach der 10. Klasse, mit der mittleren Reife rauszugehen und dann die 40 Stunde Woche anzufangen.

Well, because it was the easiest or because the alternative was leaving school after the 10th or 9th grade and instead of writing papers and finish on Fridays at 1 p.m. start working a full 40-hour week.

Ja, mein Ziel ist einfach nur, ich werde nie ohne Geld sein, ich musste mir nie Sorgen machen, keine Frage, meine Familie hat mich immer perfekt mir unterstützt, aber ich meine ich komme trotzdem aus einfachen Verhältnisse und ich weiß was es bedeutet hat, wenn du halt wirklich vom Mund Sachen weg sperrst und wirklich, oder halt kein Minimum haben.

Yes, my goal is just, I will never be without money. I never had to worry, no question, my family has always supported me perfectly, but I mean, I still come from humble origins, and I know what it meant when you just really need to leave things off your mouth, or just have no minimum.

5.6.5 Family Support and Influence

Family is one of the most influential actors in shaping the respondents career paths, through actions, recommendations as well as less evident elements like the formation of career preferences, dreams, and expectations. The economic and psychological support that the is also a fundamental part of the formation of any individual and is equally important in the formation of career. The influence of family varies among the respondents. While some are heavily influenced by their families, the opposite is true for others.

The big role of education in the career gives parents and their early decisions regarding education a significant importance. Many parents see in education an opportunity to give their children chances they did not have. Family influence also includes recommendations regarding the selection of a career and can at times be not entirely relevant for the current time. Family can give recommendations that are not necessarily based on current ideas.

The family origins shape the influence they have on someone's education. A family that has a more educated and career-oriented perspective would encourage this more on their children than one with a non-career-oriented background. Another important aspect of families is the pressure they make regarding certain things like finding a job, studying, or choosing a determined career path. Family members can serve as an inspiration at choosing a career. The dissatisfaction of family with a career choice can be very evident and generate some conflicts. Especially when the sacrifices they made, and their expectations do not appear to match.

Economical support is one of the most important elements that family provides. Having support provides stability in times of need and encourages taking more long-term decisions or one that allow a higher return.

Zuhause wurde mir schon gesagt, dass ich halt irgendwie eine Karriere machen muss und irgendwie, unabhängig sein sollte und mein Leben zusammen

bekomme, emm nur halt eben in Sinne von welcher Richtung oder was für einen Job ich machen sollte, da hatte ich wirklich wenig.

I was told at home that I just somehow have to make a career and somehow, should be independent and get my life together, emm I really had little in terms of what direction or what kind of job I should do.

Bei meinem Elternhaus, man muss schon arbeiten so, es ist, man kann nicht nur, also, Arbeit ist gleich Status, wenn du irgendwo angeschubst bist, bei einer Firma, möglich natürlich auch eine wohl angesehene Firma, dann bist du jemand. na , und das geht von meinen Eltern leider irgendwie und kommt, und in jeden Gespräch kommt das auch, so ne, willst du nicht jetzt endlich mal dich bewerben bei einer großen Firma, hier, der Parma Konzern in Ingelheim, der braucht immer Leute, ahm, das ist ein sicherer Arbeitsplatz und so, weißt du, und ja, ich bin mittlerweile erwachsen und habe meine eigene Vorstellung aber das prägt so, den mindert, und wenn man immer wieder mit diesen Fragen wird, dann lässt end das glaube ich unterbewusst nicht so los, und ich wird doch eher unruhig, ich werde sagen ok ich muss was arbeiten, und ja das hat beides, also, diese Prägung, und einfach das ich kein Projekt gefunden habe wo ich sagte, ok da stehe ich voll, ich will das machen, ich habe mich immer gefühlt, ok, ne, ich mache jetzt einfach entweder Freelance oder FTE, Freelance wäre eigentlich sogar die beste Möglichkeit momentan.

At my parents' house you have to work, you can't avoid it. So, work equals status, if you're go to a company, possible of course also a well-respected company, then you're someone. Well, that came from my parents and unfortunately somehow comes back, in every conversation it comes back. So hey, don't you want to finally apply at a big company here, the Parma Group in Ingelheim, they always needs people, that's a secure job and so. You know? and yes, I'm an adult now and have my own ideas, but that's what shapes me, that's what diminishes me, and if you're always asked these questions, then I don't think you'll let go of that subconsciously, and I tend to get restless. I'll say ok, I have to do some work and yes, that there are these two aspects. So, I have this imprinting but I also simply have not found a project where I said, ok there I stand fully, I want to do that. Instead I've always felt, like ok, no, I just do now

either freelance or FTE, freelance would actually even be the best option at the moment.

5.6.7 Dream, Plans, Career

Even in the case of the respondents that let destiny play a major in their lives, all individuals have preferences regarding what they like and dislike. These preferences ultimately build a plan that a person uses as a guide inside the job market. Some career plans are not about what career to have but which one to avoid. Plans can be very fixed or can depart from approaching a subject with curiosity. Career plans continue evolving throughout life and usually get more defined.

A fundamental element in the career plans of many respondents include monetary expectations that help shaping them. Plans also accommodate desires of moving to a different place or living in a new environment. Plans also include some elements of a profession as well as characteristics of how to perform a job. Fulfilling dreams can include achieving diverse elements that one aspired to in a different context to the one originally intended.

Ich habe mich dann zum Ziel gemacht, ich suche mir nur ein Volontariat, also, eine Ausbildungsstelle, um dann wirklich beim Radio bleiben zu können, und halt eben dann, ich will auf jeden Fall im Rundfunk/Journalismus bleiben zu können, ja das ist mein Ding, das will ich machen.

I then made it my goal to only look for a traineeship, i.e., a training position, in order to then really be able to stay in radio, I definitely want to be able to stay in broadcasting/journalism, yes that's my thing, that's what I want to do.

Es war so, dass ich in den Semesterferien bei der Kindergeldkasse gearbeitet hat, die damals noch selbständig war, aus 5 Stellen in Berlin eine gemacht hatte, und unheimlich viel Akten liegen hatte, die habe ich mit abgearbeitet und ich fand es nicht schwer, fand es leicht und da bin ich so darauf gekommen, dass Studium für mich nicht das wichtige ist, zumal sich zu der Zeit.

It was so that I worked in the semester break at the child support office, which was still independent at the time. I made one out of 5 jobs in Berlin, and had a tremendous amount of files lying around, which I worked through and I didn't

find it difficult, found it easy and that's how I came to the conclusion that studying is not the important thing for me, at least at that point in time.

Genau das, was ich jetzt mache, eigentlich also für mich ich wusste nicht ganz genau die Richtung, aber es war für mich klar, dass ich irgendwas mit Richtung Ingenieurwissenschaften studiere.

Exactly what I'm doing now, actually so for me I didn't know exactly the direction, but it was clear to me that I'm studying something with the direction of engineering sciences.

5.6.8 Money

Money is a crucial element in shaping work, career, and the enjoyment of life for the respondents. Its power and effect in many instances of life spaces is undeniable however it can also be overstated. Money has the power over many aspects but not all. Respondents increasingly see money as the gateway to stability, consumption, and the desired lifestyle.

The relative wealth of the community shapes the early formation of the individual including the relationship with money. The influence of money appears throughout the individuals' life. A social support network is a guarantee in cases of need or during transitions, making the role of money in the inner social circle more important.

The interviews reveal that expectations surrounding money and wages are often not met. Money is one of the main reasons that respondents quoting for looking for a different job or career. Similarly, they report that for any given profession, jobs with good reputation or stability have the more barriers of entry and face more competition. The same job can have different compensations on different branches. This usually comes associated with higher responsibilities or a more profitable field.

However, money is not the only motivation for the respondents. After a certain point, or under determined circumstances, a higher income is not necessarily a more interesting proposition and basic goals, stability or elaborated plans become more important.

Money is important in conjunction with other criteria and not only by itself. Having money for the sake of having money is not interesting to the respondents. Projects that

come from the own motivation can be done with or without an economic interest in mind, this depends on the original relationship with money.

Ich habe studiert, ich habe hier einen abgeschlossenen Bachelor, Master, keine Ahnung, emm, gibt mir mehr Kohle, das war halt, dann wieder der treibenden Kraft, und emm, so habe ich mich dann ja, für zusammenhängenden Studiengänge also, nicht für Journalismus, selbst oder für Medien oder sowas, da haben halt denn, Politik Wissenschaften, sozial Wissenschaften, also, bin ich dann in die geistlichen Wissenschaften gekommen.

I studied, I have here a completed bachelor, master, gives me more money. That was just, then again, the driving force. So, I then applied for related courses of study, that is, not for journalism or for media or something, and instead for political sciences, social sciences and so. I then ended up at the sciences of the mind.

Ahm, es gibt, also, ich habe auch gerne Nebenprojekt, das man nicht monetarisieren muss, also, just for fun, Hobbie mäßig, aber wenn man ein Projekt, wenn man nichts anderes hat, also, kein anderes Einkommen, habe ich das gefühlt, dass man das Projekt, wenn jemand arbeitet und irgendwie auch zukunftsorientierte gewinn bringt, irgendwie voran treiben muss, ahm mir fehlt ja diese, diese Verspieltheit wenn du sagst, ist mir eigentlich egal, ich habe ein Kontostand, der kann noch, ein halbes Jahrlang so weiterleben.

Ahm, there are, well, I also like to have a side project that you don't have to monetize. So, just for fun, hobby-like, but if you have a project, if you have nothing else, so, no other income, I felt that you have to somehow push the project, if someone works and somehow also brings future-oriented profit. Ahm I miss this, this playfulness when you say, I don't really care, I have an account balance that can still live on for half a year like this.

5.7 The Crumbling of the Mittelschicht

The interviews provide a deeper insight of the transformation process inside the German *Mittelschicht* and allow to peak into the future developments of this dynamic under the current circumstances. One of the first appreciations of the interviews that relates to this dynamic is that neither the defending nor the aspiring fighters felt a

stability in their context of their situation. It had either worsened in the last years, as was the case of the respondents on the lower side of the distribution, or it had improved at least partially.

The German respondents on the lower side of the income distribution revealed the extent of the progressive deconstruction of the social state in the last 30 years. Especially in the cases of interviewees in their 60's who were identified as defensive fighters, their career closely follows the transformations from the job market in Germany. A life that might have not started with a promising job or career in the 70's and 80's, usually in non-qualified positions such as a salesman or typist, provided a reliable income and stable prospects back at that time. As told by the interviewees, one of the major sticking points for these kinds of jobs was their stability and dependability. However, the conditions in these kinds of jobs progressively worsened as the firms started following more market-oriented practices to compete.

This is adequately illustrated by the life story of one interviewee from Berlin. Growing up in the capitalist side of the divided Berlin from working parents, he enjoyed a normal childhood and managed to get into university. After dropping out due to economic pressure of starting to work, he found a stable job as a salesman that was stable and provided enough for him, his wife and raising their kids. Years later, after being relocated to southern Germany and living there for a couple years, he decided to resign to move back to Berlin. This is the point where his labor instability started. Unfortunately for him, the successive bankruptcies of the places where he worked progressively pushed him to switch to ever more instable positions. While his first position job was an undetermined contract, successive working contracts were progressively shorter and more unstable. In the 90s he switched to work as an associated salesman, a job where his earning was mostly based on his performance.

After a dwindling level of sales and facing a progressive reduction of his income, in the early 2000s he started requesting support from the social programs of the government at time. Although he actively continued looking for a stable job, long lasting jobs became more scarce and harder to get in. As the *Hartz* reforms were implemented, his prospects for finding a stable job disappeared. From there on he worked intermittently in short term jobs many of which were allocated by his social worker at the job center. He has remained in this condition since then until today. While being past the age of retirement (67), he continues working on all sort of temporal jobs and plans to do so

for at least a couple of years more to secure a better retirement pension. Due to all the years of labor instability of his previous years and the low wages, his projected pension currently is not high enough for him to retire at this point.

This story clearly exemplifies the process by which many members of the *Mittelschicht* were affected by the transformation of the job market in Germany. Although the Hartz reform played a substantial role in the transformation of the *Mittelschicht* the movement towards a market-oriented system also has severe consequences. Histories like that of this interviewee are not unique but are representative of many old people in Germany. Many events associated with this have been brought to light in recent years, such as poverty in old age, living as a low earner, gender pay gap and social stagnation.

One aspect that complicates the analysis of this transformation and limits a broader discussion of its effects from a quantitative perspective is the aggregated nature of data that falls short at presenting stories of social transformation like those of these interviewees. While the previous example represented the situation of many whose life story follows a downturn trajectory, progressively being left without options as time has progressed, there is also a bulk of stories that present stories where a positive development is present. Rejoining these two narratives is essential to properly understand the transformation that has taken place.

Departing from the situation of those in a defensive position another type of interviewee became clear, those who clearly belong to the aspiring fighters and have profited during the last years of the transformation in society. One such key example is the professional path of an interviewee in his mid-30 who works as a software engineer. He has seen what can be considered as upward social mobility, at least from a quantitative standpoint. While his parents come from the countryside and had no tertiary education, they found stable and good-paying jobs in the German pharmaceutical manufacturing industry which allowed them to provide a good upbringing to their sons.

Following several years of academic formation, where the parents played a crucial role at motivating their sons into going into college and pursuing a well-paying career, the respondent has worked on a series of good jobs and has been able to pursue his professional interest in diverse companies. In no case he had to take a job he would

not like, as well as in situations where the working conditions became suboptimal, he could quit and enjoy some months without pay. He is also clearly aware of the advantageous position that he has inside the modern job market.

He describes that, while some people have real difficulties in finding a job, his problem lays not on finding one but on choosing one from the diversity of good and interesting offers he gets. He also states that his education enables him to enjoy this privilege. Had he followed the path of his parents would have not only limited him, but such jobs are rarer and comparatively less attractive as they were in the past. The mentality of moving from job to job and pursuing a career in multiple firms corresponds with the new work mentality, which defies the German norm of staying with only one company for life, as is the case of his parents. Clearly, he has benefited not only for the change of mentality in the job market, but also thanks to the immense growth that startups and the IT industry had during the last decade.

Although it is too early in his career to make a prediction of how his retirement could be, a priori it is a safe bet that he will retire in much better conditions than someone in a defensive fighter position. It also clear that he enjoys much better conditions than his parents, in comparison to them he also experienced a jump in income and labor conditions. However, it is also worth pointing out that this respondent doesn't fall in the established category and remains very well inside the fighter group. For one, the advance knowledge that allows him to find good jobs and switch between them, his cultural capital, is very limited to one specific field that happens to be very well paid. He also describes having had problems working with colleagues from more privileged backgrounds, describing their demands (like working extra hours and demanding great availability) to go against his working style.

Regarding economic incentives, although not definitive, for him they play a major role in choosing one job over another. To the question if he would volunteer some hours of work to a project without a pay, he is clear in saying that such conditions are not interesting for him and there must always be some economic compensation for him to joining a project, even if it is in the long run. Although he actively tries to fight it, he is very aware that the formation his parents gave him, especially when it comes to pursuing stability, still shape his decisions. Although he has tried having more managerial roles, a stable 9 to 5 jobs seems more attractive to him, at least at this point in his life. Finally, in this point in his career he describes his biggest difficulty in not

having a clear objective defined, in a way he feels he has followed a path without a clear direction. Not having a clear aspiration to follow in the future may even be the biggest limitation for him to advance professionally. For these reasons, the habitus hermeneutics classified him on the fighter side and not on the established one.

5.8 Summary

Post reunification Germany presents a scenario that showcases the transformation of the social state that created an increasing breach between the two main groups inside the social class of the fighters, between those who are on the defensive position and those on the aspiring side. This distinction is not new and can up to a certain degree be assimilated to the German concept of *Mittelschicht*. However, the process of change inside the German society that happened at the end of the XX Century modified the relationships inside the fighter class and diffculted the mobility between these subgroups. The empirical material shows the growing differences inside the fighter class as a result of the neoliberal reforms.

This can be associated weakening of the *Mittelschicht*. Not only are individuals in this part of society increasingly separated but the growing distance between them would also made very it unlikely for someone to be able to move from one to the other in the future. This is operated by the rising importance of accumulating diverse sorts of capital for those on the aspiring side in comparison with the lack of economic capital on the side of the defensive capital that the quantitative data provides. The traits associated with the aspiring fighters are also more clearly associated with the goals of the neoliberal reforms than those of the defensive fighters.

Although the German example presents a good image of the process of modification of societies due to the progressive adoption of neoliberal practices, it also comes with limitations due to the specifics of the German system. This as the character of the German system up to the neoliberal reforms was shaped around the concept of *Mittelschicht* which is endemic to Germany and can only be compared with a handful of systems in other countries. Therefore, making the causality between the reforms and the transformation of the system more marked.

The case study of Colombia allows to contrast these results and see if the transformation of the working class has been happening at broad or if this is just a

result of the specific conditions in Germany. This comparison also reveals the common elements behind the reforms and those that are unique to each country.

6. Chapter 6: Colombia: A Collision of Forces

Colombia presents a clear contrast from the German scenario in many aspects. Not only are the major differences on the socio-economic indicators but the historical and cultural backgrounds of both countries are significantly independent from each other. The same can be said of the international ties between both nations which are limited to a small trade volume and minor migrations, being the most notable those during the XIX and XX Centuries from Germany to Colombia and in recent decades from Colombia to Germany, in both cases being economics and military conflicts the main motors for these migrations (Caballero, 2018).

Despite the relative independent historical context and lack of strong socio-economic ties, today the economic and social systems of Colombia and Germany share several elements, making them a good case to test the hypothesis as international moment. It reduces the possible bias of the observation describing a process endemic to a single country. The virtue of this comparison is that it allows to check for similar transformation because of the increasing popularity of neoliberal practices and to test if there has been progressive synchronicity in this process in the recent decades between relatively unconnected and historically different countries.

Colombia and Germany today are well embedded in the global capitalist system and participate in many of its institutions like the WTO, IMF and World Bank. They also trade freely in the global market and negotiate international treaties to promote trade. Although neither is among the others most important trade partners, the signature of the free trade agreement between the EU and Colombia has progressively increased the economic ties between both nations. Both countries have gone through a series of neo liberal transformations since the 1990s and after the accession of Colombia to the OECD, the country has started following policy recommendations that further align the country's economy with the rich and industrialized nations from the global north that are members of this group like Germany⁵.

This chapter argues that transformations in Colombia that affect the structure of the working class are linked to a global process of adoption of neoliberal practices. They have as a result the increase in the barriers between the groups that conform the fighter class, resulting in the perceived lack of social mobility. This chapter starts with a historic

⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/colombia/colombia-accession-to-the-oecd.htm>

recount of the formation of the Colombian state during the XIX and XX Century with emphasis on the institutions linked to labor and social services. It then shows the transformation of the state in recent decades and ends by presenting the empirical findings regarding the work market in the neoliberal era.

6.1 A Political Process

Taking the last conflict of the Spanish Reconquista –the battle of Boyacá– in 1819 as the end date of the independence process of Colombia, the formation of the first Colombian Republic precedes the formation of the Weimar Republic in 1918 by almost a century. In comparison with the German state, the Colombian state has experienced few significant changes since its inception in political, geographical, and social terms. Being the most notable exceptions, its participation in the failed Gran Colombia Project from 1819 to 1830, the secession of the State of Panamá, and several territorial changes that however amounted to little population change (Bushnell, 1994).

Gaining independence as a consequence of the secessionist push that spread throughout the Spanish Empire due to the constitutional crisis of the early XIX Century, the early years of the Colombian republic closely reflected the economic and social system established at the time of the colony (Bushnell, 1994). The independence from Spain came without major socioeconomic transformations, as the lack of a central government able to control the new independent territories left the regions to act independently. The immediate effects of the separation from Spain were the end of the privileges of the Spanish born over the local born, and the opening of the ports to the world (Bushnell, 1994).

The years from 1819 to 1886 are a period of political turmoil where the political organization of the land, the role of the church, the integration with the world as well as several social institutions, are constantly being reevaluated. An initial conservative spirit found a break from 1853 to 1886 in a period of liberal government that includes the abolition of slavery, a federal system, the push towards a laic state (Bushnell, 1994). However, by 1886 a centralized government based in Santa Fé de Bogotá, the former colonial capital, had gained control of the territories the country and had reversed many of these reforms, except for slavery.

Despite the political dynamism of this era, the effectiveness with which these reforms transformed the country is questionable. The dynamism in the political sphere in the

Colombia of the XIX Century contrasted with the lethargic implementation of policies that varied depending on the location (Caballero, 2018). This was partly due to the relative autonomy of towns, which was a trait inherited since the time of the colony. Owing significantly to the complicated geography of the country, major towns had established self-sufficient regions of influence that were autonomous from each other, undermining the potential of the central government to enact reforms effectively (Caballero, 2018).

Although some reforms were successfully implemented during the early years of the republic, they brought little real change in social and economic terms. The impact of the liberal reforms was limited due to the power amassed by the establishment and the conservative attitudes of a significant part of the population, which were willing to reform but at a slow pace (Bushnell, 1994).

The same can be said of the abolition of slavery and the return of native lands to indigenous groups. Although both were de jure achieved by the middle of the XIX century, they did not lead to a further integration of these groups into society. As it had been common throughout the Americas, while slave owners were compensated the liberated people faced grim prospects and often created new communities in remote and inaccessible areas (Bushnell, 1994).

Outside the major urban areas, where a new class of artisans and practices that resembled industrial capitalism started developing, Colombia kept the pre capitalistic structures of production established during the colonial era for the most part of the XIX Century. The day-to-day life in the new republic was very similar to colonial life (Bushnell, 1994).

The transformation from an agrarian society into an industrial one will only properly begin in the XX Century during the period of stability that followed the 1000 days war and the separation of Panama (Bushnell, 1994). This period saw the beginning of a push for modernization of the country, its economy, and institutions. However, while other South American countries had quickly embraced modernism on a major scale, the balance of power and widespread conservative attitudes kept Colombia from wholeheartedly embracing modernism (Bushnell, 1994).

A good example can be seen in the case of immigration. While countries like Argentina and Chile encouraged immigration from Europe since the XIX Century, based on the

premise that whitening the society was fundamental for modernization, Colombia's liberal immigration policy ended after the liberal period (1853-1886) when several limits to immigration were set based on the moral eligibility of the migrants (Matoma, 2009) and also out of fear the political influence that anarchist and socialist migrants might bring with them (Caballero, 2018).

The fear of a worker's movement in the absence of a worker's class, as by the time the ban on immigration was established the country was still mostly based on colonial structures of exploitation, is an early sign of a repetitive element that characterized and continues to shape Colombian politics to this day: the reluctance and fear of social change of a big share of the population and parts of the political establishment.

However, despite its lethargic pace, the liberal push for modernism continued and the consolidation of modern capitalism in Colombia can be observed during the 1920s in a period of relative affluence called *La Danza de los Millones* (the Dance of the millions). By this point, cities had become the focus of economic activity and a sizable worker's class had been established. The extractive enterprises and subsistence agriculture that had dominated the country from the time of the colony were joined by growing industries that introduced practices like mass production, shift work and wage labor (Bushnell, 1994). The increasing investments in infrastructure and the establishment of governmental and financing institutions further cemented the conditions for capitalism in the country (Torres et al., 2016).

6.2 The Social Question

It is important to note that in comparison with the industrialized countries in global north and several other Latin American countries, industrial capitalism in Colombia never reach a scale near those of any industrialized nation. Colombian industrial development was almost solely focused on satisfying the local demand. Among the reasons for this are to the high cost of imported supplies necessary for manufacturing, the economic unfeasibility of most exports outside extractive or agricultural produce and the lack of economic incentives and investments of successive governments, among others (Bushnell, 1994). The state of industrialization and the popularity of capitalistic practices was therefore never as overwhelming as it had been in the nations that had seen the birth of the industrial age, specially outside the main urban areas.

The reduced scale of the industry delayed the formation of workers movement and social demands. By the year 1918, 57,3% of the population worked on agriculture while only 25,7% worked on the industry (Millán, 2020, pp 1246). While the first worker movements had been born in the mid XIX Century in Europe and the USA and were already playing a major role reforming the institutions that governed the worker class, in Colombia the first protest associated with workers were only reported until the beginning of the XX century, and a full workers movement would only take shape by the early 1920s (González Arana & Molinares Guerrero, 2013).

Taking inspiration of the workers movements in other countries, protest and manifestations started at the brink of the XX Century and were concentrated on mines and plantations. These were not the first uprisings in either the colonial or republican time but were the first ones that hinted at an organized workers movement. They condemned the poor working conditions that included everything from overworking, dangerous activities, low pay and the custom of paying in a currency that could only be used on a limited number stores (Millán, 2020). Along demanding better working conditions, these protests also demanded increased participation of workers in society. Progressively gaining momentum, the isolated protests became a more unified movement by the 1920 and started being recognized as a political movement, under the name of *Cuestión Social*, or Social Question (Sarria, 2018).

This movement enjoyed some early success like the recognition to the right to protest in 1919 and the recognition of labor unions in 1931 (González-Arana & Molinares-Guerrero, 2013). It was, however, only until 1945 that worker rights were recognized by the government with the law 6 of 1945. This law is marked as the beginning of social state in Colombia as it recognized workers as subjects of rights.

The reaction of the political and business elites to these movements varied through this period. The first protest did not wake up major worries in the political class and even led to concessions to some of the worker's demands on the assumption that they presented no rise (Sarria, 2018). However, the relationship between the movements and the ruling class progressively worsened as they gained importance, grew in supporters, and the strikes became more present, longer and costly (Sarria, 2018).

The coinage of the term 'social question' is itself a sign of the increased importance that the movement was gaining and the reluctance of the government to address it. Grouping workers and social demands under the term "social question" comes close to the way the British Government years later would describe the Irish conflict as "the troubles" (Cajas-Sarria, 2020). While the apparent success of the movement in its early days stagnated, the government remained reluctant of change, or even hearing the demands.

Although officially legal, being the right to protest recognized as legitimate, amid rising concerns for the eventual potential of the strikes, force was increasingly used to control the strikers and push the workers to go back to work. This progressively escalated making the likelihood of a protest going violent higher with time and increased the animosity between both sides (Cajas-Sarria, 2020). The tools against this movement were not only limited to the use of force, but the justice system introduced legislation that banned such behaviors, associated them with anarchism and communism, and focused on investigating and prosecuting the leaders and more visible participants of the movement (Sarria, 2018). Among escalating conflicts, the animosity between both groups reached new heights with '*la matanza de las bananeras*' (the banana plantations killings) where hundreds of striking workers from the United Fruit co. were executed by armed forces to end the month-long strike (Millán, 2020).

The conflict that originated between the social question movement is the main precursor of the internal conflict in the country that remains relevant until today. While on the ground the protest was subdued by force with ever increasing violence, the political advances of the group and their demands were undermined by the political conservatives, even during the return to power of the liberal party (Cajas-Sarria, 2020).

Jorge Eliecer Gaitán was a liberal leader who had taken the direction of the movement and was enjoying a successful political career with chances at the presidency. His murder in 1948 also killed the hopes of institutional change and gave way to a new era of violence and political instability that threatened the central conservative government (Millán, 2020). The years following the death of Gaitán are among the most ruthless and violent years in Colombian history, a period where the conservative party concentrated all the power after the other parties refused participating on the 1949 elections (Rudqvist et al., 2003). Partisan violence became widespread, and the original meaning and ideals of the movement were lost to the desire of revindication

by any means possible (Girardot, 1996). The prevalence of violence and political instability throughout the country, paired with the increasing risk of a dictatorship modeled after Franco's Spain by the president and head of the conservative party Laureano Gómez (Cajas-Sarria, 2020), led the military headed by Gustavo Rojas Pinilla to take over the government in a coup-de-etat that was supported by the majority of the politicians.

Paradoxically, taking in consideration the violence and ruthlessness of most military governments throughout the Americas, the military government in Colombia allowed for a de-escalation of the conflicts that followed the death of Gaitan by removing the conservatives from power and implemented necessary reforms that were reasonably well received by the population (Bushnell, 1994). Rojas government passed some reforms with a progressive character, for instance by recognizing the right of woman to vote, and emulated other populist governments of Latin America with socioeconomic policies aimed at the basic necessities of the poor. However, his popularity lowered with the increasingly worse economic conditions and the resurgence of violence, which led the political establishment to find a way back into power.

The successor of the military regime came as an agreement between both sides of the political establishment called *Frente Nacional* or National Front, where both established parties, the conservative and liberal, agreed on alternating the presidency for the next 12 years (Rudqvist et al., 2003). The idea of sharing power was not groundbreaking, as the experiences during the 100 years prior had shown that the concentration of power on the hands of a single party and the lack of cooperation between political parties was the main reason behind the politically motivated violence (Bushnell, 1994, p. 216).

Before the accord, both the conservative and liberal party had remained in power for long periods which were known as *hegemonías* or hegemonies, as a switch in government would imply a complete overhaul of most institutions. The legislative agenda would also be governed by the party in control, thus during the liberal periods, reforms would be made while on conservative periods, regressive measures were taken (Bushnell, 1994). It is worth mentioning that although both parties shared power intermittently during the late XIX and the first half of the XX century, the conservative party was significantly longer on power than the liberals. The worse part of the violence,

including the murder of Gaitán and the build-up to the coup d'état, was during the rule of the most radical arm of conservatives (Bushnell, 1994).

6.3 Red Scare

The influence of the United States in Colombia, which had started due to the commercial interest of the USA during the first half of the XX Century in extractive industries, banking, and investment, turned into political influence shortly after the end of the second world war as the USA quickly sought to align the country on the anticommunist block (Cajas-Sarria, 2020). In this aspect, both the conservative governments of Gómez and Rojas shared the idea that communism was to be stopped at all costs.

The consequences of this alignment with the USA had deep repercussions on the side of worker movements and labor rights (Cajas-Sarria, 2020). The anticommunist decree of 1956 opened the door to criminalizing any action that could be loosely associated with communism, leading to the persecution of left-wing parties, labor unions and censoring the press. The interest of the USA also led to the separation of the communist party from the liberal party and the prosecution of their leaders (Bushnell, 1994).

Alongside this process, the industrialization of the country continued as the government implemented a series of reforms that aimed at the developing of a local industry through the import substitution scheme (Bushnell, 1994). This scheme established protectionist measures against imports and incentives for the creation of local industries that replace imports or that produce goods for export. In practice, industrialization was limited to profitable industries that were unfairly protected and subsidized by the government and that never overcame their reliance on imports of machinery and raw materials. This policy benefited only a handful of individuals, capitalist and exporters, while it affected the biggest share of the population who had to deal with two-digit inflation, unemployment, and scarcity for decades (Bushnell, 1994).

Some aspects of the social demands were address during the *Frente Nacional*, as was the case of the agrarian reform of 1961. However, many of the aspects from the social question that had originated the conflict were overlooked by the junta as well as during the *Frente Nacional* era (Bushnell, 1994). Furthermore, although in theory the

agreement should have brought different policies and politicians every four years with each presidential election, in practice both parties, having secured political power, became a political establishment increasingly disconnected with the realities of the country (Bushnell, 1994). This remained even after the period of the *Frente Nacional* expired.

Encouraged by the reluctance of political establishment to address the request of the workers' movement, new political movements and parties that profited from the popular desire for change like the *Unión Patriótica* on the left or the populist ANAPO (national popular alliance) were born. Although legally recognized, these parties had little chance of political power due to the *Frente Nacional* agreement that limited power to the two traditional parties and the control of politics by both parties once the Period of the Frente was over (Rudqvist et al., 2003). Simultaneously, several armed groups like FARC and ELN were founded motivated by the continued omission of the state in addressing the long-standing demands of the people (Bushnell, 1994). This occurred alongside the cold war anticommunist framework, that led many of these groups and social activist to be prosecuted by their alleged affiliation with the USSR, Cuba and or Communist ideas. This often led to the prosecution or assassination of many members and limited the desire of protest.

The *Frente Nacional* and the period that followed saw politic and social stagnation paired with an economic system where only a few benefited at expense of the population at broad. Paired with the average economic growth, the discontent of a big share of the population was notable and increasing. The peace that the *Frente Nacional* brought was increasingly challenged by very similar issues to the ones that had started the escalating violence at the beginning of the century. However, there were significant differences. On the one hand, and in contrast to the previous violence, the conflict was not headed by the dominant political parties, but it was between the government and the social movements and armed groups. On the other hand, while armed groups in the past could not challenge the state, and the magnitude of the violence resulted on different political arms fighting each other during the violence, the rise of drug trafficking in the 1970's and 1980's redefined the nature of the social conflicts in Colombia.

6.4 Drug Traffic and a New Constitution

Although the country had been plagued with conflicts since its inception, the rise of drug traffic in the 1970's gave illicit groups access to massive economic resources (Bushnell, 1994). The war against the drug lords during the 1980's presented a transformation of the social fabric of the country the unlike anything that had occurred before. For the first time, it challenged the political and economic establishment that had ruled the country since the colonial times (Caballero, 2018).

The past conflicts were fought between different fractions of the establishment, as was the case of the liberals against the conservatives who trace back their roots to different fractions of the independentist movement, or against groups that lacked the resources available to the state, as was the case of the guerrillas who were more influential in the regions and remote locations but were almost universally absent in the towns and cities. On the contrary, the war that the drug lords launched against the state came from the middle of society and was incredibly destructive due to their seemingly unlimited resources paired with the capacity and willingness to wage war against the state and the other armed groups (Bushnell, 1994).

During this period murders of political figures, judges, policemen, military personnel, public figures, and terror attacks on the population increased to the point of becoming routine and seriously weakened the ability and willingness of the state to exercise the rule of law and pursue their policies due to the heavy price that this entailed (Bushnell, 1994). Another destabilizing factor for the ruling class were the effects of drug money on economics and politics (Caballero, 2018).

On economics, the seemingly limitless financial resources of the cartels permeated every level of the economy, everything from setting up small, medium, and big companies as well as buying shares into established and successful companies (Bushnell, 1994). The money that drugs traffic brought to the country poured into parts of society that were usually excluded from the economic activity reinvigorating entire communities and depressed regions. However, this money also led to increasing concentration of land and created a new conflict between the new rich and the established guerrillas. The rise of the paramilitary groups, sponsored by the new rich to combat guerrillas and members of left wing organizations, introduced a new actor

against labor movements who were traditionally associated with the guerrillas (Bushnell, 1994).

On the politics front, drug money opened the path for politics to new individuals that started scrambling the traditional order of power (Rudqvist et al., 2003). Before this era, the political establishment were a small group of oligarch families who had been in control since the colonial times with almost no exception. By the mid-1980s the political and judicial bodies were already being influenced by the drug cartels.

Seeing in politics a path towards power and a more peaceful and efficient way of dealing with the state, the cartels started investing money in politics to influence legislation favorable to them and to get their own candidates elected (Rudqvist et al., 2003). Eventually, entirely new political groups that were later proven to be affiliated and financed by the drug lords, rose to prominence on the regional and national level.

Topped with the rise of new political elements, the instability that the country was sunk in seriously undermined the order that had been laid out by the National Pact and the desire for major reforms was unstoppable. One of the most relevant conclusions of the chaos the state and the civil society were sunk in due to the war on drugs was the new constitution in 1991.

In contrast to many neighbor states like Venezuela, who adopted multiple constitutions during the XX Century, by the end of the XX Century Colombia was still governed by a reformed version of the constitution of 1886. This constitution was not only a legacy of a different time, but it was also a remanent of a conservative government that entrenched the role of the church as part of the state and was not up to the task of securing the values that the citizens demanded, even less at the end of the XX Century (Bushnell, 1994). By the 80s it was clear that this constitution was an obstacle for many of the social problems at the time, so the need for a new constitution was capitalized by many groups who wanted to implement structural reforms in the state as well as those who could profit from a different legal framework, as was the case of the drug cartels (Bushnell, 1994).

The constitutionalist envisioned a very different country and finally succeeding in reworking Colombia as a social state, loosely based on the German model of social state (Silva Henao, 2012). The new constitutions redefined the relationship between the state and its citizens, in contrast to the assistive state that prevailed until that era,

where it was not the main interest of the state to provide for the well-being of its citizens and most prerogatives were granted on their availability and could be denied or be subject to limitations. The social state established an array of obligations that the state has with its citizens and that it must proactively work to provide (Silva Henao, 2012). Among the most relevant ones regarding the working population, the 1991 constitution established the rights to healthcare, employment, and environment which the state was obliged to guarantee (Silva Henao, 2012).

The 1991 constitution presents a point where the gained political influence of groups from outside the political establishment transformed the institutions of the country in a way that had been impossible before. Once ratified, the 90's saw the construction of a legal framework that established institutions aimed at fulfilling the obligations of the state of protecting these new rights. However, the shape these new institutions would take was greatly influenced by the concurrent transformation of the guiding principles of the economic system which followed the neoliberal logic.

The writing of the new constitution was concurrent with the most significant change of direction in economic policy the country had seen since the XIX Century by the abandonment of protectionist practices and replacing them with an open economy (Bushnell, 1994). By the early 1980's it was clear that the import substitution scheme had reached its limits and that further economic development was impossible without a major rework of the economic policies. The situation was also dire for Colombian consumers, as during the 1980's there were shortages of major commodities, and the high prices paired with the low quality of the available ones further kept consumption low, which was a result of firms favoring profits over increased production (Bushnell, 1994). The rise of the Washington consensus further pushed for the adoption of a neoliberal economic program that was implemented by the government and the constitutionalist. This transformed the country immensely in a short time, as it went being locked from international trade to opening to markets and promoting free trade and foreign capital.

Being privatization of social enterprises and public services a component of the neoliberal plan in the interest of financial stability, it played a big role in the resulting institutions (Rudqvist et al., 2003). This created a hybrid as many aspects of service provision were privatized alongside the establishment of institutions for the provision of rights for the most undermined. Therefore, a right had to be guaranteed under the

efficiency and cost cutting logic of neoliberalism (Rudqvist et al., 2003). A remarkable example of this is the healthcare reform, where the system has universality at its core alongside the private provision of healthcare even when the health provider is a company owned by the state (Rudqvist et al., 2003). As a result, instead of a tiered system or one dependent of economic contributions, all individuals were included in the same system and were eligible for the same healthcare.

These economic transformations had huge implications for the working population. A substantial share of the firms could not compete without the protectionist measures in place and went bankrupt because of the new economic policies. Studies find that from 1995 to 2015 about 1000 companies closed as a direct result of the reforms (Garcés Correa et al., 2017). This had the additional effect of starting the de-industrialization process in the country, which continues until this day and has destroyed tens of thousands of qualified jobs (Garcés Correa et al., 2017). The reforms had further negative consequences for workers. The deregulation of the labor market made the labor relations between companies and employees more flexible. It also introduced novel forms of hiring and subcontracting, as well as diminished worker protections, thus quickly undoing the achievements of years of worker demands.

This short summary of workers right and the workers movement in Colombia would not be complete without including one of the most relevant elements of the system, the immense share of informal work. For most of its existence, formal jobs that were traditionally limited to a small share of the working population (Uribe et al., 2006). From the available information, since the year 1988, between 40% and 60% of Colombian labor is employed in the informal sector (Uribe et al., 2006). In recent years this has been one of the main arguments against labor legislation, as it is argued that this legislation creates more costs, discourages formal jobs, and creates a segregated system where the legal benefits and protections are benefiting the most privileged individuals, namely those with a formal job. However, the background of these proposals is usually not improving the conditions of those in informal jobs, but rather undermine the conditions of those with a formal job.

The previous outline of Colombia's history with workers movements gives an insight into the structure of the working class. Departing from colonial structures that persisted after the independence, true capitalism only started developing in Colombia at the beginning of the XX Century. Since that time, the demands of the workers movements

have consistently been overlooked until periods of crisis or social upheaval like the partisan violence in the 40's or the war on drug traffic in the late 80's. The provisions secured by workers established some protections despite the unpopularity of the reforms among powerful groups. However, the high informality in work relations constitutes until today one of the major hurdles for workers' rights. The rise of neoliberalism further undermined the situation of workers as has the transformation of the economy.

6.5 Empirical Part

Despite the many differences between Germany and Colombia, the previous summary reveals the similarities of the neoliberal transformation in both countries. On one side, the liberalization of the labor market and the privatization of public companies occurred in a similar fashion, out of the same motivation and with a certain degree of concurrence. Although limited to the share of the population on the formal sector, the protections achieved for formal employees were undermined as a result as was the case in Germany. The empirical part focuses on the traits and capital accumulation that relate to the neoliberal principles and that support the widening of the breach inside the working class.

6.6 Cluster 1 – Aspiring Traits

As was observed in Germany, the traits that associate with the aspiring fighters reflect the modern labor market in the country and how it has been shaped by reforms of neoliberal character. Initiative, opportunity oriented and social connections remain as the main traits that relate with the aspiring fighters.

6.6.1 Initiative

The interviews showed that an idealized professional path starts to be shaped since early in life and in often includes a disposition for initiative. This as teaching to be open to opportunities of professional development is often encouraged as a potential alternative to regular bad paying jobs, a skill that reflects the situation of the labor market in Colombia after the reforms. Accordingly, the ability of moving between specialties and recognizing job opportunities is essential for professional development in the modern labor market in Colombia.

This also relates to another characteristic that associated with the aspiring fighters in Colombia, giving worth to the own work and not settling for subpar wages. Learning to operate in high stress environments is another of the traits that pays off in high demanding positions.

Contrary to the respondents in Germany, entrepreneurship is encouraged and can be practiced and evidenced early on the career regardless of future decisions regarding employment. This hints at entrepreneurship in Germany being reserved for people from the established group and shows the difficulties of operating inside the regulated German system without the necessary qualifications or capital. In contrast, respondents in Colombia see entrepreneurship or being independent as a real possibility. Respondents are however aware of the difficulties of entrepreneurship and accept that it takes many tries and overcoming failures to succeed.

Y pues, si tu trabajas en un ambiente de finanzas que no te pagan bien no tiene sentido, este tipo de trabajos son muy pesados, pero la compensación económica es uno de los perks que tiene, tienen que pagar bien, entonces era como estoy en el único lugar donde no pagan bien, entonces empecé a buscar trabajo nuevamente.

And well, if you work in a finance environment that doesn't pay you well it doesn't make sense, these kinds of jobs are very heavy, but the financial compensation is one of the perks, they have to pay well, so it was like I'm in the only place where they don't pay well, so I started looking for a job again.

Después haciendo monitorías, yo era monitor de sala, monitor de modelos matemáticos para informática, porque soy un fan de la matemática, loco, siempre lo he sido, me encantan los números, y entonces me iba muy bien y en la universidad me hice conocer, y me fue muy bien, y después ya entré en una empresa de un profesor, la empresa quedaba en la 127, y yo iba en la noche, abría con las llaves, él me pagaba por horas, a veces los sábados tenía clases con él, y pasábamos derecho el viernes, el tipo también sin dormir, él a dar clase y yo a recibirla, y ahí pues me fui haciendo conocido y ahí empecé a programar, ahí fue que aprendí a programar ya duro, programaba en las tecnologías de esa época, que se usan hoy.

I was a monitor, a monitor of mathematical models for computer science, because I am a crazy fan of mathematics, I have always been, I love numbers, and then I was doing very well and at the university I made myself known, and I did very well, and then I joined a company of a professor, the company was on 127th Street, and I went at night, I opened with the keys, he paid me by the hour, sometimes on Saturdays I had classes with him and we went straight through Friday. The guy also without sleeping, he to give class and I to receive it, and there I became known and there I started to program, there I learned to program hard, I programmed in the technologies of that time, which are used today.

6.6.2 Opportunity Oriented

As with having initiative, being opportunity oriented is encouraged by the parents of the Colombian respondents from an early age. This is a result of the high competition in many aspects of life in Colombia and adds the necessity of acting in time to secure the opportunities, which was not so clearly present in the German respondents. This trait demands higher time commitment as well as effort which is validated when the strategy pays off. In general, being opportunity-oriented talks about a closer relation to a more dynamic labor market.

Similarly, when faced with few opportunities for professional development, respondents report that knowing when to move to a different job is essential for career development. The same is the case at identifying ideal vacancies at the right time, which is a fundamental skill for career development as is taking the opportunity to move away from a badly paying position. All these skills become vital in being opportunity oriented in Colombia after the reforms of the labor market.

A bueno sí, pues en el colegio público en el que yo estudié, era un colegio técnico, entonces, cuando uno está como en octavo, escoge una técnica, entonces pues ese colegio, para hacer ebanistería, fundición, sistemas, electrónica, bueno, obviamente todo en la parte técnica, yo escogí, bueno, entre escogí y me tocó, porque se iban acabando las demás, me quedé en metalistería, que es pues todo el tema de soldar o de trabajar en metal digamos, cortar, hacer piezas nuevas, eso y pues fue una formación adicional que recibí pues nunca la ejercí, pero sí es una formación que tengo.

Well yes, in the public school where I studied, it was a technical school, so when you are in eighth grade, you choose a technique, so that school, to do cabinetmaking, foundry, systems, electronics, well, obviously everything in the technical part, I chose, well, I chose and I had to, because the others were running out, I stayed in metallurgy, which is all about welding or working with metal, let's say, cutting, making new pieces, and that was an additional training I received, I never practiced it, but it is a training I have.

6.6.3 Social Connections

Respondents of the aspiring fighters in Colombia are very aware of the importance of social connections in achieving their career goals. Social connections or acquaintances can provide essential support in times of need. Several respondents made an emphasis on the importance of a good relationship with the direct boss to secure better career opportunities. However, being inside a very hierarchical and segregated workplace limits the usefulness of social connections.

The interviews showed that social connections require diverse sorts of capital, especially cultural and symbolic capital, to be useful at improving career prospects. While in Germany social connections were built upon a less hierarchical interaction, social connections in Colombia had to operate inside the highly hierarchical work sphere. In this sense, Colombian respondents who have the sorts of capital required to make use of social connections fair better prospects on the modern labor market in comparison to those who don't.

As in the case of Germany, when given social connections can lead to switching jobs by presenting different opportunities that are unknown. Different to Germany where social connections can at times be distant, social connections in Colombia rely much more on trust and mutual respect. Building a reputation in a branch allows for making better social connections in the same branch.

En ese momento, yo ya estaba estudiando, en el octavo semestre, y uno de los profesores, que era como el coco de la universidad, tenía una empresa, y yo ya estaba trabajando en ese momento.

At that time, I was already studying, in the eighth semester, and one of the professors, who was like the bogeyman of the university, had a company, and I was already working at that time.

Entonces, mi gran apoyo fue Víctor, porque me ayudó desde Indra, me dio unas palabras de agradecimiento increíbles que me ayudaron más adelante.

Then, my great support was Victor, because he helped me from Indra, he gave me incredible words of gratitude that helped me later on.

6.7 Cluster 2 – Defensive traits

As in the case of Germany, the traits that associate with defensive fighters are closely related with stability and risk aversion. They also portray the characteristics that allow for a breach between the subgroups to widen life quality, social pressure and lack of a plan.

6.7.1 Life Quality

The defensive fighter interviewed in Colombia described shaping their careers around life quality, in the short as well as in the long term. Material conditions play a very important role for Colombians. Therefore, giving a higher level of importance in having enough money to secure the life quality they are used to or that they aspire to have. This relates to the increased role of money in life after the neoliberal reforms.

Among the Colombian respondents, playing inside established traditions is associated with life quality. For example, living with the parents is not badly seen if single. Instead, moving out while single can be taken as a bad act. Similarly, many characteristics of life quality are socialized in Colombia. For example, being able to help friends and family is a priority for many to consider themselves living a good quality of life.

In general, life quality and its dependency on money can conflict with demands from the employers or an entrepreneurial desire from the workers. Opportunities were often lost due to some secured stability which conflicts with the ideal of sacrificing the current conditions for more favorable conditions in the future. The difficulties for relenting the desired life quality can be a big obstacle in the face of the modern labor market.

Primero, yo no creo que sea tan inteligente como para hacer una empresa, brillante, o sea, yo siento que todo lo que he logrado profesionalmente es producto de la dedicación y el esfuerzo, segundo, para mí es muy importante estar cómodo.

First, I don't think I am so smart as to make a brilliant company, that is, I feel that everything I have achieved professionally is a product of dedication and effort, second, it is very important for me to be comfortable.

Sí, sí, no, puedo salir más, aprovechar más, y pues bueno, es un tema como de costumbres, uno ya, no sé, se acostumbra a eso, pues como que no.

Yes, yes, no, I can go out more, take advantage of more, and well, it's a matter of habit, one gets used to it, I don't know, I get used to it, well, it's not like that.

6.7.2 Social Pressure

Colombian respondents reported that social pressure for academic performance is present from an early age as well as the pressure regarding the career choice and work life. This is present in very diverse settings of society. For example, respondents reported that schools play an essential role in making social pressure by reproducing the expectations of society in the classroom.

Social pressure in Colombia tends to portray bigger differences and more unrealistic scenarios. There are strong prejudices regarding certain careers even inside the academic field that become stronger when comparing between different fields or sections of the labor market. The transformations of the modern labor market in line with the neoliberal reforms has increased the speed at which these changes in perspective happened and what sorts of professions and trades become non fashionable.

In general, the importance of money is omnipresent and is highly valued by most respondents up to a point. As was the case in Germany, after a determined point, more money was not necessarily desirable for the respondents and elements like the social standing of a profession end up shaping career paths.

Sí, en, digamos que, a mí me iba muy bien en el colegio, en mi colegio tenían una obsesión enfermiza con que la gente entrara a la universidad nacional, era como un target para el colegio era muy importante, o sea, casi que yo creo que el único indicador con el que medían el desempeño del colegio era el porcentaje de estudiantes que entraban a la nacional, entonces, ese siempre era como el challenge, o sea, realmente si por posición económica, privilegios o lo que fuera tú podías pagar el rosario, el externado, los andes era como, pues sí pero eso no, como colegio no nos representa un reto, entonces era siempre la métrica de como se está preparando usted para el examen de la nacional o comentario de clase de, estamos viendo la formula, todavía me acuerdo, la fórmula del ácido acetilsalicílico y el profesor de química decía, eso se lo preguntan en el examen de la nacional, ese tipo de cosas,

Yes, in, let's say that, I was doing very well in school, in my school they had an unhealthy obsession with people entering the national university, it was like a target for the school, it was very important, that is, I almost think that the only indicator with which they measured the school's performance was the percentage of students that entered the national university, so, that was always like the challenge, that is, really, yes, by economic position, privileges or whatever, you could pay for the rosario, the externado, the andes, it was like, yes but not that, as a school it was not a challenge for us, so it was always the metric of how you are preparing for the national exam or class commentary, we are looking at the formula, I still remember, the formula of acetylsalicylic acid and the chemistry teacher said, they ask you that in the national exam, that kind of thing,

6.7.3 Lack of a Plan

A passive attitude towards life was clearly seen in the responses from the interviewees in Colombia and is perhaps one of the most defining characteristics of the defensive fighters. Despite acknowledging the importance of money and wanting to have a stable life quality, many defensive fighters in Colombia are unclear about how to achieve this and expect external forces to point them towards a direction or open an opportunity for them.

Lacking a plan is also boosted by the labor market in the country. A characteristic element of the respondents in Colombia is the perceived difficulty of finding a job or starting a career in most fields, especially in face of the progressive liberalization of the labor market.

Many respondents reported a moment in their lives where they had no options or clear alternatives to start, even after years of formation or education. Although in Germany some individuals reported being lost, they all knew of alternative jobs they could do and in praxis ended up starting a job rather quickly. In comparison, many Colombian respondents stayed outside the job market for long periods due to the lack of vacancies or comparable jobs they could perform. Studying to get a degree for which employability is very unlikely is a big problem for many defensive fighters in Colombia.

On a positive note, lacking a plan allows considering different options than the ones traditionally thought of. Some respondents decided to set deadlines as a way to keep the lack of a plan in check and choose the best available option found inside a time frame.

Me acuerdo que yo dije "tengo hasta el primero de Marzo, de vida". Yo había hablado con los españoles en Indra, para una contratación. Pero en ese momento cayó un ere, que es una reforma muy grande, en donde sacaron a más de 2000 trabajadores, y pararon todas las contrataciones. Y teníamos con ellos charlados un proyecto en México en junio. Pero pues yo dije: sí hasta Marzo tengo vida.

I remember I said: "I have enough to live until the first of March". I had talked to the Spaniards at Indra about hiring. But at that time there was an ERE, which is a very big reform, where they took out more than 2,000 workers, and stopped all hiring. And we had a project with them in Mexico in June. But I said: yes, I can manage until March.

6.7.4 Destiny

For many defensive fighters in Colombia, destiny plays a significant role in building a career and accumulating capital. This helps to offset the balance of positive and negative events. Colombian respondents were more inclined to believe in the role of destiny in their careers than their defensive German counterparts. This is further

reinforced by the religious associations that lead to religious interpretations from good and bad events.

From the responses, it is also clear that Colombian fighters value the positive side of destiny but are more concerned with being prepared for unexpected negative events. For example, not giving up when career plans and investments fail leading to great economic loss. Learning to cope with destiny as a part of the growth process is a skill to survive in an unstable condition. However, it also covers the deep affectations and changes that reforms bring with them and prevent a proactive approach to counteract them.

La tenía invertida, sí. La tenía invertida en transporte. Habíamos comprado una mula. Una tractomula. Y hermano, la Mula se estrelló, pérdida total, y resulta que no estaba asegurada... Esta persona también yo siento que no manejó las cosas de la mejor manera. No se trata de buscar culpables, pero... Entonces se perdieron. Mis ahorros de vida se perdieron.

I had it invested, yes. I had it invested in transportation. We had bought a truck. And brother (sic), the truck crashed, total loss, and it turns out that it was not insured. This person too, I feel that he did not handle things in the best way. It's not about looking for blame, but.... So, my money was lost. My life savings were lost.

6.8 Cluster 3 -- Fighter traits

As in the case of Germany, the fighter class in Colombia is also characterized by the main traits that are common and present in the responses from members of the defensive and aspiring fighters. The responses reveal the impacts the neoliberal reforms with many elements being more pronounced than in Colombia than in Germany. This suggests a more prevailing precarity among the fighters of Colombia than those of Germany.

6.8.1 Barriers – Difficulties

For respondents in Colombia, family conditions can be a source of help but also of conflict. Problems between family members are not uncommon and usually become a source of conflict that affects the development of the person. Core family members

have a much more important role in Colombia than in Germany and their absence comes with serious consequences. Especially when a big family group is relying mostly on a single person.

Many respondents reflected on a conflictive or unstable familiar environment and its consequences on the academic formation and professional life. Furthermore, the cost of education is a big problematic in Colombia that limits the possibility of many people that want to study. Many feel that the quality of public basic education is irregular and does not preparing students for work as it should. Technical education has a limited employability and does not enjoy a good reputation. In comparison to a university degree, a technical degree is no match in employability nor when seen as an investment.

Respondents also reported big differences between public and private education. Public universities focus more on technical abilities while private universities focus more on managerial skills. The reputation of private and public universities play an important role at searching for a job and was firsthand experienced by various respondents.

Respondents who graduated from public universities faced several prejudices, like being unreliable, violent or have bad manners. Opposite to that, graduates from private universities have unfair advantages on application processes. Some companies even restricting applications to graduates from these universities. The public higher education system in Colombia is highly bureaucratized and expensive. This makes getting a title a long and complex process that are difficult for many families.

Contrary to the respondent in Germany, respondents in Colombia did not feel a direct connection between internship, assistant jobs, and more formal positions. The chances of staying after a successful internship are low as they depend on available vacancies and are also open to applicants with more experience and education. There is the generalized feeling that good opportunities or even average opportunities are reserved for those who are already privileged.

Respondents also experienced diverse forms of labor exploitation. Recent graduates are prone to being exploited due to their lack of knowledge of the legal system and abusive employers, who profits from the unstable situation of the employee, the difficult job market, and their need for a job. Internal tensions derived from perceived benefits

can lead to problems with an employer as does overworking and its serious consequences on mental health. The internal bureaucracy of private companies can limit the reach of workers.

Defensive and aspiring fighters also saw the reach of their career with relatively ease. There are opportunities to advance career wise, but they are hard to get and not really encouraging. Advancing the career is linked with academic formation but also social connections and opportunities, all that come with a cost or are not present. The relatively small scale of the labor market makes switching Jobs a big challenge after having specialized in one subject.

In the case of some respondents, working from the global south for a company in the global north presents an opportunity for higher earnings, but the normal legal protections are not present. In this cases trust is the only guarantee of the continuation in a job.

Acá en Bogotá. Negociamos como por dos millones el sueldo. La oficina del tipo era en Juan Valdez, y el tipo resultó ser un aprovechado horrible, porque resulta que el sueldo de dos millones, me lo pagó por prestación de servicios. Hoy por hoy uno sabe cómo es la vaina. Y pues resultó siendo igual o incluso tal vez un poco peor del millón trescientos que me ofrecía todo el mundo. Entonces, pues, inocencia.

Here in Bogotá. We negotiated the salary for about two million (450€). The guy's office was in Juan Valdez (coffee), and the guy turned out to be horrible. It turns out that he paid me my salary as service contract. Nowadays I know how it is but back then I didn't, and it turned out that he ended up paying me the same or maybe even a little less than the 1,300,000 that everyone was offering me. For being naive.

Obvio. Pero creo que a todo el mundo le pasa. Todavía uno ve gente que le dice: ¿Prefieres por nómina o prestación? Y le pones el mismo valor, y la gente dice "no me interesa". Cuando la diferencia de uno y otro es la mitad. Es tremenda. Eso se ve mucho hoy. Yo trato de formar a la gente en ese aspecto. Entonces, me acuerdo que, para entrar a la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros, él me dijo incluso como "usted me pide dos millones, yo le pago dos millones pero si entra y pasa una prueba".

Of course. But I think it happens to everybody. You still see people who say: Do you prefer payroll or contract? And you put the same value, and people say, "it doesn't matter". When the difference between one and the other is half. It is tremendous. You see that a lot today. I try to train people in that aspect. Then, I remember that to enter the National Federation of Coffee Growers he even told me "You ask me for two million, I will pay you two million but if you enter and pass a test".

6.8.2 Education

The careers of the parents influenced the career choices of the Colombian respondents. Family and individuals in the social circle that highlight the importance of education and provide advice are also important in choosing a career. Increasingly in recent years, career choices are more influenced by the expected returns of a career. The selection of a university and career choice is the result of an optimization between students' expectations, the academic contents, soft skills, and others. In the case of respondents for whom money was not the top priority, they felt the Colombian academic system and many institutions are very old fashioned and limit the reach of motivated students and don't allow them to fulfill their potential.

Inside careers there are prejudices against choosing a determined path and prefer a determined profile for their graduates. There has been a generational change, while a college degree was enough in the path, to advance professionally today requires further education like a specialization, a minor or a master's degree.

Yo tuve educación normal, es decir, jardín primaria secundaria, o sea no hubo vacíos o algo por el estilo, un hogar normal de clase media bogotana, con ups and down, entonces por ejemplo, cuando el abuelo de mi papá murió, pues se notó un poco, pues esa pérdida, en términos de mi abuelo, él pagaba muchos de los gastos que mi papá no cubría con respecto a mi educación, él pagaba mi colegio, él pagaba mi clases de matemáticas, él era el que ayudaba a mi mamá realmente con esas cosas, entonces el único cambio que yo recuerdo muy bien, es que cuando él se murió sí se sintió un poco como esa abundancia de escases, por ponerlo de alguna forma pero eso nunca tuvo impacto, no sé, no ir al colegio o alguna cosa así.

I had a normal education, that is to say, primary and secondary school, there were no gaps or anything like that, a normal middle-class home in Bogota, with ups and downs. So, for example, when my father's grandfather died, it was noticeable, because my grandfather paid many of the expenses that my father did not cover with respect to my education. He paid for my school, he paid for my math classes, he was the one who really helped my mom with those things. So, the only change that I remember very well, is that when he died it did feel a little bit like, an abundance of scarcity, to put it in some way. But that never had an impact, I don't know, not going to school or anything like that.

6.8.3 Work

The selection of a job for Colombian respondents can be influenced by pride or other personal prejudice. They also report that career paths are at times complicated and not so flexible. Compared to other countries, the bureaucratic process in Colombia to get into an average position is too long, complicated and excruciating. The tracks that lead to top positions are clear for employees, but they remain inaccessible for most.

Good and motivated employees can be overexploited under the excuse of the new work logic. Education is an investment that needs to be compensated. Companies fight off for good employees and support investments in education but use this to their advantage. There are branches where high compensations are traditional and expected but it is still normal to see bad wages and exploitative practices in them.

Many respondents, even in not so favorable conditions, would rather wait for a job that pays better than take a bad offer. Respondents aware of their worth can at times successfully negotiate a pay raise. Social networks are crucial for finding jobs in these circumstances. Rotation in executive or well-regarded positions in companies is very low.

Entrepreneurship is seen by respondents as an opportunity for higher income and independence. However, this also comes with increased stress and instability. Not many believe they have what's necessary to successfully become independent.

Employers in the global north are very attractive for many respondents due to the relatively high wages after exchanging, this can offset the problem of lacking stability and labor protections.

Me fue muy bien. Estuve en proyectos en un montón de lados: África, Asia. Y hubo un momento que incluso la directora de la Maestría de los Andes - Rubi se llama - ella tiene una empresa muy conocida en Bogotá, me hizo una propuesta muy buena pa' irme para allá. Yo sin buscar trabajo. Y cuando me fui a ir, mi jefe de Visa estaba en la oficina, y la vieja hizo una vaina que nunca la vi hacer con nadie, y fue que me dobló el sueldo en un día, literal. Me acuerdo que pasé de dos millones como cuatrocientos-quinientos que estaba, a cuatro millones ochocientos en un día, por irme. La vieja no me dejó ir y me dobló el sueldo. Esas cosas fue como que no pasan. Pero pues ahí me quedé, me la jugué en Visa. Y allá conocí un gran amigo, Andrés, que él fue quien después me llevó a mi siguiente trabajo.

It went very well. I was in projects in a lot of places: Africa, Asia. And there was a moment when even the director of the Master Program at the Universidad de los Andes - Rubi is her name - she has a very well-known company in Bogota, she made me a very good proposal to go work for her. I was not looking for a job. And when I went there, my boss from Visa was in the office, and the old lady did something I never saw her do with anyone, and she doubled my salary in one day, literally. I remember that I went from two million, four hundred, to four million eight hundred in one day, to stop me from leaving. The old lady wouldn't let me go and doubled my salary. Those things just don't happen. But that's where I stayed, I went to Visa. And there I met a great friend, Andrés, who was the one who later took me to my next job.

Sino por el sector en el que estaba entonces hice una maestría en transporte, que me ayudó a pagar la empresa, mitad la pagó la empresa mitad la pagué yo, pues, hasta donde estuve porque me salí un poquito antes de terminarla.

But because of the sector I was working in I did a master's degree in transportation, which the company helped me pay. Half of it was paid by the company, half by me, well, up to where I was because I left a little bit before finishing it.

6.8.4 Stability

Certain career paths provide higher stability, however, going up these paths can be very competitive and require a lot of effort. Respondents with certain professions are

more inclined to take these high effort high risk paths. However, even in these scenarios, effort, stability, and comfort need to balance out for all the respondents. Too much risk, effort or too little stability are hard to justify for the fighters.

Different stages in life demand different stability. While stability at the beginning can be seen as an ideal, it progressively becomes a necessity. Being valued by the employer or becoming an essential part of the team is a strategy to secure stability used by many respondents, even if this is just a perception. Diverse forms of contracting are less stable by nature but are acceptable given a higher pay that can provide in the case of losing the job.

El esfuerzo, segundo, para mí es muy importante estar cómodo.

The effort, in second place, for me it is very important to be comfortable.

En el corto plazo, digamos, me siento, y creo que la palabra es ésa, me siento cómodo, me siento cómodo, por la carga que tengo de trabajo, que no es muy grande, por lo mismo que decía ahora.

In the short term, let's say, I feel, and I think this is the word, I feel comfortable, I feel comfortable, for the workload I have, which is not very heavy, for the same reason I was saying just now.

6.8.5 Family Support and Influence

Family support was essential for development and, later, for the professional life of the respondents in Colombia. Varying degrees of support create different conditions and mentalities surrounding work. Complex family environments led to difficult upbringings for various respondents. Some families are vulnerable and exposed to sudden changes and this leaves greater repercussions.

Family shape a person's career since an early stage in life. Expectations of the respondents are shaped around the careers of the parents as well as their expectations. Family can support and encourage soft skills that might be relevant for career development, stability, or lifestyle. The insistence of family members on certain career aspects appears to pay off more than privilege. Traditionally, parents want their kids to have better chances and better careers than they had.

En ese entonces, pues es que yo venía de un tema totalmente empírico. Cuando uno es desarrollador, usted viene en un mundo donde la comunicación es complicadísima. Somos incomprendidos. Los desarrolladores y técnicos no sabemos expresarnos ni comunicarnos con el mundo. A mi tener habilidades de comunicación me ha costado un montón. Y creo que se lo debo a desde que era chiquito, porque cuando era pequeño yo fui cantante y cuenta-chistes y... y ahora es que siento que me afloró todo el tema de comunicación.

At that time, I came from a totally empirical background. When you are a developer, you come into a world where communication is very complicated. We are misunderstood. Developers and technicians do not know how to express or communicate with the world. Having communication skills has costed me a lot. And I think I owe it to the fact that since I was little, because when I was little, I was a singer and a joke teller and? and now I feel that all the communication skills have come to the surface.

Sí, sí, mi papá yo creo que le había enseñado a un alemán a ahorrar, porque, era, era, pues se ahorra todo, era impresionante.

Yes, yes, my dad, I think he would have taught a German to save, because he saved everything, it was impressive.

6.8.6 Dream, Plans, Career

Career plans are partially influenced by diverse actors but are also equally defined by the individual. Dreams are also shaped by the context. Respondents were often inspired from persons in their surroundings. Recent trends push Colombian fighters to give money a higher value than following a vocation or pursuing a career. In this sense, dreams are increasingly modeled after what can bring money.

Some respondents aimed at achieving dreams that are more important than a purely economic compensation. However, they can go through great hardships to accomplish them. A dream can also be hard to achieve but also trivial in result. Stability itself can be a dream. Giving up on some dreams can be hard but also liberating.

Que la universidad llevaba gente a dar charlas, gente de Colfuturo, gente del London School of Economics, gente de, Corner, de las universidades cuando van a visitar, y pues yo iba a las charlas para entender que programas ofrecían,

entonces a las charlas siempre llevaban gente de la maestría de finanzas, de la maestría en economía, de los doctorados en economía, y en ese momento yo no tenía ni idea qué quería hacer, entonces era como ir a todo y ver cómo, bueno qué universidades existen y empezar a ver los rankings, y empezar a ver, en donde han estudiado las personas que tú, profesionalmente, estás empezando a admirar, entonces no sé, los profes que más me gustaban, en donde habían estudiado, qué habían hecho, cuando yo empecé a ver finanzas entonces listo, los profes de finanzas, creo que sólo uno tenía doctorado, porque era 100% académico y los otros, eran un híbrido entre academia y ejercicio profesional en el sector privado entonces era, como, bueno ellos que han hecho, entonces era como, entonces era como, no, han hecho maestría en finanzas, han hecho maestría, un MBA, o no han hecho un MBA pero han hecho un CSA, entonces como listo, como entender cuál es la oferta disponible de posgrados en el exterior, pero, en la universidad era eso como la curiosidad de ver qué existe, o hubo una época en que tuve un crush muy profundo con el London School of Economics, entonces, el LSE tiene todas las maestrías, es como una heladería de finanzas, entonces tiene las maestrías de finanzas que tú te puedas imaginar, que la maestría de finanzas y políticas públicas.

The university brought people to give talks, people from Colfuturo, people from the London School of Economics, people from, Corner, from the universities when they go to visit, and I went to the talks to understand what programs they offered, so they always brought people from the master's in finance, from the master's in economics, from the doctoral programs in economics, and at that time I had no idea what I wanted to do, so it was like going to everything and seeing like, well, what universities exist and start looking at the rankings, and start looking at where the people that you are starting to admire professionally, studied. So, I don't know, the professors that I liked the most, where they had studied, what they had done, when I started to look at finance, the finance professors, I think only one had a PhD, because he was 100% academic and the others, they were a hybrid between academia and professional practice in the private sector. So it was, like, well what have they done? So, it was like, no, they have done a master's in finance, they have done masters, an MBA, or they haven't done an MBA, or they have done a CSA, like understanding what the available offer of postgraduate degrees abroad. But, in the university it was that

like curiosity to see what exists, or there was a time when I had a very deep crush with the London School of Economics, so, the LSE has all the masters, it's like an ice cream shop of finance, so it has the Master of Finance that you can imagine, that the Master of Finance and public policy.

6.8.7 Money

Money is the main enabler for many paths in life. It is clear from the interviewees in Colombia that low economic resources can be a big limitation due to the higher relative costs of education and the relative high share of the population with a low level of income.

Attitudes towards money are further influenced by the family and the conditions of the upbringing. Various respondents reported that generational problems and the instability of the country has affected the transfer of wealth through generations in Colombia. Saving and strategies to transfer wealth are part of the relationship with money of many respondents.

Money is seen as a reward for effort and experience at a job and talks of the employer. A few respondents reported very unstable payments from some employers and arguing that this lowered the importance of a higher offered wage. Learning how the labor and tax system works is basic to maximize income. For fighters in Colombia it is usual that many external factors have a big impact on income as there are not many institutions to protect employees.

Money is one of the main incentives to switch jobs. However, a lower salary can be tolerated in exchange for better professional outlook or stability. However, for many respondents, money can shape career choices. Some respondents are more flexible regarding their choices surrounding money than others that are very budget constrained. The decisions surrounding education and training are oriented towards higher wages, however, the desire for money is not unlimited. People come to terms with a certain income level at some point in their careers.

Entonces, ya tenía experiencia, había viajado un montón. Había estado en tres continentes dirigiendo proyectos de tecnología de Visa. Y pues... Juemadre, yo qué me iba a imaginar, pero pues Andrés sabía yo cuánto me ganaba y,

efectivamente yo fui y hablé, y este tipo me hizo una propuesta donde me incrementó el sueldo aún más.

So, I had experience, I had traveled a lot. I had been to three continents managing Visa technology projects. And well... Well, what could I have imagined, but Andrés knew how much I was earning, and, in fact, I went and talked, and this guy made me a proposal where he increased my salary even more.

Yo, empecé hace como 10 años a trabajar digamos, en esa empresa, y duré unos 3 años digamos, empecé con un sueldo bajito, luego, me subieron ya como a un sueldo más normal digamos, para un profesional, creo.

I started about 10 years ago to work, let's say, in that company, and I lasted about 3 years, let's say, I started with a low salary, then, they raised me to a more normal salary, let's say, for a professional, I think.

6.9 Instability as a Way of Life

The interviews reveal the similarities of the transformations made under the neoliberal logic in Colombia with those in Germany. While the economic and work conditions in Colombia are very different and usually worse than those in Germany, the respondents, both young and old, clearly report an increase in instability and the difficulty at finding a stable job. While in Colombia securing a stable job in the past was not a simple task, due to the low economic development and high share of labor informality, it was however more likely than today and, more importantly, it was also a key to financial stability. Today stable jobs are not only harder to find but staying in a job for a long time has become not very attractive due to the rise in the cost of living as well as the rising economic expectations of individuals and society.

More importantly, the dynamic behind the assumption of economic growth as a pathway to social mobility is more visible in Colombia than in Germany. This is mostly due to the bigger economic divide inside the working class that characterizes Colombia, but also due to the social class mentality that prevails among Colombians. The interviews equally provide very good examples against the established narrative of the close relation between income and social mobility by showing that a big jump in

income does not come associated with social mobility when this is defined beyond a quantitative approach based on income, education, or other quantitative criteria.

Although these elements were visible in all the interviews, the life stories of two of the interviewees provide remarkable elements that question the validity of this assumption. Both respondents have relatively modest backgrounds and come from working class families with average incomes and living conditions. Due to their high income and professional achievements today, being one a transport consultant and the other a software engineer, both interviewees would present perfect examples of social mobility from the quantitative viewpoint. However, the interviews reveal that both interviewees are still very much part of the fighter class and that a deeper review cast the assumption of social mobility in doubt.

The programmer started his life in a household with serious family issues that occasionally translated into big economic issues. Although part of the familiar influence is positive and in line with the working class, putting emphasis on education and following a dream to achieve a good job, the respondent was also affected by a long series of problems which played a significant role in his upbringing. They implied a period where he had to leave his home at a young age without nowhere to go and no real prospect for joining the labor market.

With the support of the extended family and friends the respondent was eventually able to complete a degree in software engineering which let him pursue a career in a high paying field. Although his income at the beginnings of his career was average for the country, his disposition for finding new opportunities, switching jobs, and committing to tasks that fall more under the neoliberal logic of work paid off and his income boomed. The instability of such jobs also encouraged the respondent to pursue being an entrepreneur. However, this still failed to turn into financial success and his main source remains his work as a software engineer.

Despite the apparent story of success of the respondent, he is still far from belonging to the established class under the definition used in this thesis. On one side, despite high income throughout the last 10 years, so high that they would put him among the 1% of the higher earning individuals in the country, the respondent has failed at accumulating significant capital. On the economic side, this is due to various reasons: a predisposition for consumption; lacking the discipline for saving; a series of

misguided investments; and some factors outside his control like supporting his sister, who suffers a chronic illness. Similarly, the social connections of the individual are still linked to the background of his early upbringing and the ones made in recent years are professional in nature. The respondent is also not comfortable outside the programmer world. Despite having purchased luxury items and moved to a premium residential area in the past, he has abandoned that lifestyle for one that more suits the Colombian middle class.

Following the classification used in this thesis, this respondent belongs to the aspiring fighter class. Despite the clear intent of improving his life conditions, this has been limited mostly to the economic aspect. He has failed to achieve a substantial change of his social position regardless of his professional achievements and high income. Although part of the motivation to advance in life was pursuing a career and being good at it, the main motivation remained financial, especially consumption.

The other respondent also started life in middle class conditions although with a humbler background. Son of a single father and with three siblings, his upbringings was plagued with economic limitations. His father had no formal education, and their only source of income was a low qualified job. This job was on, however, a very stable position in a big company, which was an essential factor in the successful development of the family. In hindsight, the achievements of the father of the respondent are remarkable, especially for Colombia. Despite his low income, he was able to support the family throughout childhood and into higher education with an unskilled job.

Having finished a degree in economics, which he decided in doing based on the expected income with this profession, the career of the respondent has been shaped by opportunity rather than an established path or dream. Accepting one of the first offers he got out of financial need; he started working at the financial department of a transport company. With the experience he gathered there, he focused on progressing inside this field. Despite being recognized by his superiors, he quickly reached the maximum income possible for his academic level and decided then to pursue a master's degree in transportation economics.

This degree opened new better paying opportunities for him in the field as well as offers from different companies with better privileges. However, he quickly reached another point where he could not progress anymore. This is a trend reported across the board

in the Colombian interviews from the fighter class. Advancing inside the firms in Colombia is very difficult. The amount of good earning positions is very limited and usually reserved for the senior members of the company, or for those who reach them through social connections, or for individuals of more privileged backgrounds.

Although his income improved, it was still short of his expectations and the level needed to provide for his family as his father had provided for him. Pushed by this, he left the company and started working remotely for a consulting firm in a country of the global north while staying in Colombia. Due to the higher standard of living in the country the firm is based on and the favorable exchange rate, the respondent today is making around four times as much money as he earned before, despite working a junior position in comparison to his previous senior role. The difference is so high that he says he would not be able to find a position with comparable pay in this branch in Colombia outside the top senior positions of the best companies.

This respondent clearly presents a case of social mobility from the quantitative viewpoint and is however not a case of mobility from the defensive to the aspiring subgroup of the fighters. Having achieved more education and income than his father does not translate to mobility as his situation and social position has not changed much. On one side, despite achieving more education the impact of this in income is not as it used to be. He had to pursue a master's degree –for which he had to go in debt to pay– to access better paying jobs, but in the end the good positions remained equally unreachable. These positions are related to sorts of capital that he lacks like and that are associated with a privileged background. Then, faced with the prospects of a stagnating career, he took the opportunity of increasing his earnings to improve his life condition and not as a stage in his career development.

Furthermore, despite his higher earnings today, this position does not come as a social jump, but as him making use of the global system to his favor by sacrificing stability and legality. For the first three years that he worked there, he lacked any security other than a spoken agreement with the consulting company. Although today he finally has a contract in paper, the feasibility of protecting his rights as a worker remains weak. The company has no presence in Colombia, and it is unpractical for him to go to the country where the company is based in due to, among other things, he not speaking the language of this country.

Additionally, although his income in Colombia is high, the company pays him very little for the job he does taking in consideration what they would have to pay to a person with equivalent training and experience working there. The higher income also present challenges. It is very unlikely he will find another position with a level of income closer to this and were he to lose his job almost all alternatives would imply a serious pay downgrade. All these factors reflect make him a fit the definition of defensive fighter, due to the inherent instability of his privileged position on qualitative terms and the clear motivation behind his decisions of securing enough economic resources to sustain his life outside this sphere.

While these two respondents saw a positive development in terms of income, given that they could find jobs in high paying industries that despite their instability are worth taking, the story of a third respondent helps complement the picture from the perspective of someone who was negatively affected by the transition.

This respondent is a single daughter who was raised up by her mother who worked as a schoolteacher. Before the neoliberal reforms of the 90's, being a schoolteacher was a very popular job due to its stability, pay and relative ease to access. Although the first years the salary was not high, a series of bonuses that added up after certain years of service sensibly increased the income of teachers throughout their careers up to three to four times the starting salary. This added with stability that could be enjoyed after a handful of years working, long holidays, and the possibility of being employed while receiving the retirement pension, made teaching jobs very attractive.

With this in mind, the mother of the respondents registered the respondent at a school that prepares students to become schoolteachers and aligned her career towards this path. After doing the entire formation at this school and having started following the steps of the mother, the reforms quickly eliminated many of the advantages of schoolteacher jobs. Not only were the economic incentives eliminated for teachers in the early stages of the career but finding a stable spot as a schoolteacher became increasingly difficult.

In the case of this respondent, the reforms clearly undermined her position even in comparison to that of her mother. In terms of income, she had to do without the bonuses that were what made the job interesting. In terms of stability, not having secured a permanent position by the times of the reforms, the respondent was left with

temporary contracts. This led the respondent to leave the public sector and move to a private school. Although they don't provide a wage or job security comparable to that her mother had. At least the wage is significantly higher than that she could get in a public school. This however comes with a big pressure to perform that is not present in the public sector.

The life stories of the respondents not only show the problems of equalizing economic mobility with social mobility, but also the conditions inside job market in Colombia before and after the establishment of the neoliberal logic. This as the respondents see in money a key to stability and prefer unstable over stable jobs to secure a higher income.

A very important and telling fact is that for the respondents, improving the working conditions is associated with switching jobs and not with demanding more from the current employer. The growing breach inside the fighter class is also notable in the interviews. While the respondent on the aspiring side was able to pursue a career with higher returns due to the high demand of his profession and his preference for high-risk high paying jobs, the one from a defensive background had to give up stability to maximize his income even if it is only temporary. The third respondent had no positive development, and her situation was worse than that of her mother. Being channeled into the private sector over from the public sector by a marginally better paying job without a major consideration regarding working conditions.

It is necessary to mention that these findings do not reject the possibility of social mobility happening. Instead, want to show the problems of a direct correlation between income and education with social mobility and how neoliberalism has affected this process in recent years. Furthermore, they also show that there are elements that individuals can hardly change and play an essential role in discouraging social mobility which are not easily quantifiable. In general it shows that some individuals indeed benefited from the neoliberal reforms but that the impact for others was very negative.

6.10 Summary

Retaining colonial structures until the XX Century, achieving only a mild industrialization at its peak in the middle of the Century, and remaining on the periphery of the global economic system, the process that gave way to workers' rights in Colombia was influenced by a very different economic dynamic to the one in Germany.

The geopolitical outlook that surrounded the construction of the modern Colombian state was also very different to the one that surrounded the rise of the welfare state in Germany. Nevertheless, since the last decades of the XX Century the rise of neoliberalism has impacted the realities of the working class in both countries.

Despite of the significant differences between Germany and Colombia, the transformations of the labor market in Colombia presents a dynamic like the one in Germany and reflect on the increasing popularity of instability, the role of money in the social dynamics for the middle class and a push for a diminished role of institutions and regulation. The empirical material revealed that this process has increased the separation inside the fighter class by encouraging traits that benefit the aspiring fighters and undermining the traits that gave security to the defensive fighters. It also revealed that the established relation between income or education and social mobility is not so clear, as extreme examples of social mobility under this approach do not qualify as such under the framework of this thesis.

However, it would be false to argue that neoliberalism has had the same effects in both countries or suggest that it is a program that fits all problems or that it entails only a limited selection of problems and solutions. As was also evident from the empirical material obtained in both countries, despite the similarities, the dynamics in both countries are significantly different and the mechanisms by which the fighter class is being transformed into a more segregated one also differ. In this sense, the neoliberal transformation is having a similar outcome, increased inequality inside the fighter class, despite the different economic and social backgrounds of both countries and the different shapes that the neoliberal transformation took in them.

In the next chapter the results from both countries will be contrasted. Narrowing down the similarities and differences of the neoliberal reforms in both countries will allow to uncover the of the transformation and how the different local negotiation processes created different policies with similar results.

7. Chapter 7: Comparison Germany and Colombia

The previous chapters briefly referenced and compared the empirical results in Germany and Colombia. To complete this picture, this chapter presents a structured comparison of the empirical material collected in both countries. The objective of this chapter is not limited to comparing the results and establishing the similarities and differences, but it also aims at identifying the underlying dynamic behind the observed transformations resulting from the neoliberal reforms.

The chapter begins with a comparison of the findings on both the aspiring and defensive fighters and continues by comparing the general findings in each country's fighter class. The chapter then presents a general image from the findings, based on the theoretical framework and the socio-economic as well as historic characteristics of each country. The chapter ends with some preliminary conclusions that are developed in the final chapter of this dissertation.

7.1 Cluster 1 – Aspiring fighters

The general finding of the empirical part supports the argument that aspiring fighters profited from the transformations of the labor market during recent years. However, it is also clear that the mechanisms are not entirely similar as the characteristics in both countries are different.

7.1.1 Initiative

Pursuing a career or a plan out of the determination was a clear characteristic of the aspiring fighters in both countries. However, the reasons behind this were slightly different. While in Germany the main motives behind this decision were the expected reputation or fulfilling a specific desire or dream in life, something closer to the logic of the established class, in Colombia the guiding principle was closely associated with income. For Colombian respondents, fulfilling a professional call was often put on second place by the respondents. In contrast, aspiring fighters in Germany would often put fulfilling their goal or dream as the main motivation, however not disregarding money completely. In Colombia, income shapes initiative to the point that a specific career or profession can be pursued so long it guarantees a satisfactory income or has good prospects of doing it.

Initiative is supported and motivated by the family in both countries, this is done with diverse sorts of capital like financial capital but also with social connections. In this sense. However, there is also a downside of the influence of family at encouraging this trait by limiting the scope of a person or overemphasizing a single aspect, i.e., success, stability, or income, over others.

In general, aspiring fighters and their disposition for initiative tend to benefit from the neoliberal logic in the labor market. Not only are they more prepared to pursue goals and objectives on the long run, but the relative high capital intensities allow them not only to pursue these goals but also clearly differentiate themselves from the other fighters.

7.1.2 Opportunity Oriented

Due to the rigidities of many career paths in Germany, maximizing opportunities in life requires careful planning. Being opportunity oriented in Germany includes learning to work within the system and bureaucracy for finding more options. This is reflected in the importance given to the Abitur and recognized qualifications or the skills for finding a way inside the diverse bureaucratic system. Due to this, a wrong decision can have long lasting consequences in life. Although being opportunity oriented during the career also plays a role, this is not as transcendental as during the early formative years.

In contrast to Germany, opportunity oriented in Colombia was associated with having an entrepreneurial motivation and a flexible mentality towards switching jobs or becoming independent. Both traits have the aim of securing enough resources to live a certain life standard and play a bigger role during the professional life as during the early childhood.

Being opportunity oriented is supported by diverse sorts of capital. For example, cultural and symbolic capital play a big role in the case of both countries, as academic qualifications and social skills are of great use at being opportunity oriented. Similarly, economic capital facilitates being opportunity oriented by lowering the dependency on income. In this sense, individuals with more capital also stand to win from being opportunity oriented and to profit from the transformation of the labor market.

In both countries, the changing dynamics of work also moved the respondents with this trait to be open to opportunities outside the traditional, like new qualifications that give

access to better jobs or completely new job opportunities. This is also more in line with new dynamics of work and deregulation.

7.1.3 Social Connections

Social connections are an important element of career development in both countries. They create opportunities for new positions as well as other development opportunities. While some social connections relate to specific contexts relevant to employment like a former employer or teacher, some other relevant connections for employment come from contexts different to work but have equally important influence such as friends, or even mere acquaintances.

In each country there are boundaries to social connections that are not easy to overcome. In Germany, origin plays a very significant role in social connections in the working class. This can be seen in the case of migrants who are judged by their assimilation in German society and other racial concepts. Although this used not to be a problem in Colombia, due to the lack of a significantly migrant pool, this kind of discrimination is increasingly present in the case of Venezuelan migrants.

The interviewees showed that socio-economic factors also play an important role in social connections in both countries although this is more marked in the Colombian case with the concept of *estrato*. Originally a strategy for taxation and redistribution, it is popularly used as a proxy to describe the relative position of someone in society. Although this is not as clear in Germany, forms of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital like academic titles, professional experience, voluntary work, and political engagement that are fundamental at building social connections are also related to career development.

In both countries, aspiring fighters have what's necessary for profiting from social connections. For this reason, the aspiring fighters stand more to win under the new labor market than the defensive fighters.

7.2 Cluster 2 – Defensive fighters

7.2.1 Life Quality

Life quality is one of the main forces behind the decisions of persons in the fighter class. While aspiring fighters are willing to make sacrifices out of their initiative for pursuing their dreams or chasing a high-risk opportunity, defensive fighters put life

quality above. This remained valid in both countries, where a basic characteristic of the defensive fighters was living according to a standard which they deemed adequate. The expectations surrounding this standard starts forming since the childhood and can include lifestyle ideals acquired from the parents as well as elements that a person gets accustomed to throughout their life like the work life balance.

Being limited to a particular conception of life quality limits the career potential of an individual under a labor market oriented by a neoliberal approach. Given the expected flexibility and innovation in the job market, little flexibility comes at the cost of limited job offers and lower wages.

The responses in Colombia and in Germany differ mainly in the nature of the expectations and the attainability of them. In Germany the concepts associated with life quality are in first place free time and quality of the job, while having a high enough income comes in a second place. A normal response was that a high stress or high demanding job might not be worth it at any price. In contrast, life quality in Colombia is more associated with income and having disposable income, helping the family, and playing inside the established traditions. Although not the only relevant variable, money is more important for the Colombian defensive fighters than for the aspiring fighters.

7.2.2 Social Pressure

Social pressure plays a significant role in the labor life in both countries as there are clear societal expectations of what comes associated with certain professions and jobs regarding diverse criteria like reputation, income, and social standing. The influence of this expectations is felt since the formative years and continues throughout the professional life. Social pressure plays a very important role in shaping the career of individuals, even if they follow them without full conviction. Societal expectations changes to adapt to the new circumstances in both countries, such is the case regarding new jobs or new working modalities.

The effects of social pressure are much more present on the defensive than on the aspiring fighters. For defensive fighters, social pressure is a reminder of the minimum expectation or a borderline of what they should accomplish, closely relating to the worthiness that divides fighters and marginalized.

Social pressure under the fast-changing logic of the modern labor market can negatively impact defensive fighters' career and social position. Not only can careers

lose their social standing with relative ease but this often comes associated with an economic loss. Pursuing a career without motivation and mostly due to social pressure leaves a lot of exposure in the case of some technological change.

Social expectations can often embody prejudices and misconceptions regarding certain population groups or jobs. Among the respondents, the biggest differences between the studied countries were here, as jobs have a different social standing in Colombia and Germany, to the point that a well-regarded technical formation in Germany has a very low stance in Colombia. This is partially due the bigger wage differential between professions in Colombia and the bad reputation of certain jobs.

7.2.3 Lack of a Plan

While present in respondents from both groups, lacking a plan in life is a much more prevailing characteristic in the interviews of the defensive fighters. While respondents from both groups changed their plans midway or have doubts about their career choices, defensive fighters often reported periods of their life where they had no plan on what to do with their lives.

This trait was seen in both countries and has different repercussions accordingly. In Germany lacking a plan even at a young age can have bigger repercussions due to the rigid structure of the educative system and can lead to life changing consequences. In comparison, the repercussions of lacking a plan in Colombia manifest more after the early formation years. Accordingly, the impact of family decisions has longer lasting effects in Germany than in Colombia.

Although lacking a plan in general seen as problematic, the tolerance for it has changed in recent years with the changes in the job market and the new forms of work. While in the past lacking a plan use to have great repercussions, especially in Germany where changing jobs was not positively seen, nowadays not having a structured path can allow for evaluating better opportunities and career paths.

However, this is only useful to cope with increasing instability. As presented previously, careers and jobs require sorts of capital that are not trivial to obtain. In this sense, although lacking a plan allows for stability by increasing flexibility, it does not allow for the meaningful capital accumulation that comes associated with pursuing a career. Lacking a general plan then also limits the possibilities of career development

necessaries on the labor market guided by neoliberal principles. Putting defensive fighters at disadvantage in comparison with aspiring fighters.

7.2.4 Destiny

Differently to the respondents of the aspiring fighters, defensive fighters consistently named destiny as one of the key forces during their work life. This is not only a reflection of lacking a plan, but also of recognizing the lack of control over moments in life that were determinant for current success. For contrast, aspiring fighters are more inclined to think that they have more control over their lives and plans.

In Germany this process is associated with securing good opportunities, like finding a job through coincidence or being at a right time in the right place. In Colombia the take on destiny was distributed between positive and negative outcomes. Failures are categorized as the result of something the individual had no control over, and success are seen rather as the result of luck, however unlikely it was.

In both scenarios, destiny can be seen as a proxy for dealing with increasing uncertainty that the neoliberal reforms have brought to the labor market of both countries.

7.3 Cluster 3 -- Fighter traits

Outside the elements that are strongly associated with one or other specific group of the fighters, there are also elements that relate to both groups and that form the backbone of belonging to the fighter class.

7.3.1 Barriers – difficulties

Facing barriers and limitations are a characteristic of the fighter class and they often relate to other traits and capital. Although they differ between both countries, they allow to see the effects of neoliberalism.

Regarding Germany, education plays a kind of double-edged sword. While it is a pathway to high paying jobs and opportunities, especially qualifications like the abitur, its configuration starts since a young age and decisions taken early in life can have a big influence later. In Colombia education plays an equally important role, but it acquires a higher importance in the later part of the formation period.

While persons with migration background in Germany must face additional barriers and discrimination, in Colombia the more relevant barriers are income and socio-economic background. This does not mean that there is no discrimination in Colombia on racial or migration grounds. Indeed, they can play a role in specific contexts and with determined populations, as is the case of Venezuelan migrants in recent years.

The competitiveness of the labor market today is a barrier present in both countries: ideal positions and good jobs are hard to get and require diverse sorts of capital that can be equally hard to get. The same can be said of the expected flexibility in many positions today. They require individuals with high aspirations to give up certain established protections of the labor market. For example, invest extra time and their private resources on their job as a way of advancing their career. Jobs with very stable conditions tend to offer little chances of advancing, this was observed by respondents in both countries.

Something characteristic of Colombia is seeing the family as a barrier. While in Germany family was usually described as enablers or at least as basic support, in Colombia it is normal to see the family as a source of stress, financial demands, or limitations. It was also often that a single individual inside Colombian family plays such a significant role that they have an exaggerated power over the destinies of all the members of the family, be it positively or negatively. This exposes the family to higher risk in comparison to Germany, mostly thanks to the social protection network present in Germany.

Although in Germany schools with bad academic performance are also present, the variability of academic quality in Colombia is exceptional and assimilated by the population. While in Germany most of the population attends public schools and universities, in Colombia it is normal for private schools to provide better education than public schools.

Barriers to education are normal and well established in both countries. In Germany access to university is limited by the abitur, which is the conclusion of a chain of academic demanding formation that is also determined by a series of administrative processes through a person's early formative years. Access to higher education in Colombia is limited by the national exam for entering the university. This exam measures academic performance after finishing the last high school year and is the

main criteria at the applications of many universities. As private schools consistently outperform public schools at this exam, they are usually more attractive for parents invested in the academic performance of their children.

Company dynamics are also different. While in Germany education or training usually include practical experience that can lead to a job, in Colombia even internships or traineeships often do not conduce to a job. There is also the feeling that most jobs are reserved and assigned outside the meritocratic process, through private favoritism, so many careers face stagnation of reach “glass ceilings”. The legal illiteracy and economic needs of many Colombians allows companies to exploit them early on during their careers. Although Germany this is not entirely absent in Germany, policing of labor legislation in Germany is stricter and companies usually refrain from doing this. Exploitative practices in Germany operate usually inside the legal framework.

7.3.2 Education

Education is seen by fighters in both countries as essential for maintaining their role in society and increasing the chances of advancing socially. Education is then a fundamental element in being above the dignity line. While higher education and apprenticeships tends to be more formal in Germany –where many jobs require a specific training–, in both societies’ individuals value having skills to perform a certain job and see in a rather negative light an individual that lacks them.

The importance of this trait is transmitted inside the family, which plays a central role in the formation of an individual. The role of the family in the early years of education is more important in Germany due to the nature of their educative system. This shows that family and personal motivation play a significant role in academic performance. However, monetary incentives are increasingly influencing the actions of both groups, those who take education seriously and those who do it out of social pressure.

The motivation of the fighters of both countries for studying could be split in two groups: some are motivated and take education seriously; while others pursue education without much interest, just to fulfill their obligations. Although these groups do not exactly overlap with the defensive and aspiring fighters, aspiring fighters tended to belong to the first group and defensive fighters to the second.

In both countries it is hard to be admitted into good schools, which is a desire that is present throughout the fighter class. However, economic capital plays a bigger role in

school admission in Colombia due to the advantage that private schools have over public schools. The rise of private universities and monetization of education has had a similarly unequal impact when it comes to opportunities in the labor market, being high paying jobs and opportunities reserved for graduates of the more exclusive private institutions.

In Germany in contrast, finishing an Abitur with a good enough grade to enter University remains the biggest limitation, which often relates to contexts like migration and socio-economic conditions, but remains relatively independent from financial economic capital. Outside the affiliation of some universities with certain career paths in the government or the industry, in General German Universities are enablers of accessing the job market in equal terms independent of the university. In this sense, the labor market in Colombia has been more affected by the market rational in the education sector.

7.3.3 Work

The responses of the fighters were in line with the theoretical framework of this dissertation, as they validated the great role of work in their lives. In both countries work is an essential part of an individual's standing in society, and many see in it the most valuable opportunity for social mobility. In both countries, respondents felt a big pressure of finding a job that not only supports them financially, but also one that has desirable characteristics from their point of view. This stance divides aspiring, and defensive fighters as was in line with the results of the cluster 1 – aspiring traits— and cluster 2 –Defensive traits—.

In both countries respondents also mentioned standard career or jobs that are available in case of need or not finding an alternative. This is remarkable, as it suggests many available jobs are only interesting for both aspiring and defensive fighters when they must take them. Jobs under this description include various career alternatives that do not have a good social regard and jobs that are unstable or have no professional future due to automatization or the transformation of the job market. This transformation is felt by all respondents and approached with negativity from the defensive side and cautious optimism from the aspiring side.

The German labor market is more structured and bureaucratized when compared with Colombia, due to the qualifications required for jobs and the difficulty of applying.

However, comparing the responses from both countries reveals that the Colombian faces more rigidities, even if they are non-explicit. While in Germany finding a new position was possible, in Colombia switching jobs is difficult and even finding any alternative is difficult. The perception of unfairness is reinforced by good positions being reserved and awarded out of exclusive criteria such as social connections.

7.3.4 Stability

Stability is a core element of the fighter class in both countries. Many of the uncontested elements of the responses of the interviewees in both countries relate to stability. The desire of belonging to the social group and fulfilling the required parameters by pursuing education and finding a job is itself a sign of the importance of stability for this class.

Stability is being redefined by the transformation of the job market and is one of the elements that portray the separation inside the fighter class. While aspiring fighters look for stability by maximizing their income and pursuing reputable careers, defensive fighters must face a reduced availability of stable jobs and the growing instability of the labor market.

Stability does not have a single face and many of the traits presented in the clusters corresponding to aspiring and defensive fighters relate to stability. The observed transformations in both countries are also a reflection of the lowered stability. While the German middle class is losing its use as a concept due to the change in mentality of work and the reduction of stable jobs, in Colombia the reforms have reorganized the market around neoliberal principles that don't favor stability or that see it in economic resources rather than in institutions.

7.3.5 Family Support and Influence

Family plays a very significant role in both studied countries as it is one of the fundamental forces in shaping education and career preferences. Support includes a diverse array of sorts of capital that shape the prospects of a person from early in life.

The transformation inside the fighter class and rising inequality plays a major role in the reproduction of inequalities as these are transmitted or even amplified through generations. This as aspiring fighters tend to concentrate more of the available sorts of capital and defensive are left with less, this was observed in both countries. Families

can passively provide advantage due to their social standing or disadvantage by being subject of discrimination.

Nevertheless, there remain substantial differences between both countries. In Colombia the family, or even some individuals, play a very important role and the absence of this family member presents a bigger challenge in Colombia than in Germany. In Germany social institutions provide a safety net that although not able to completely replace the family member, it provides some alternatives in its absence, something that does not happen in Colombia.

7.3.6 Dream, Plans, Careers

Dreams or plans play a defining role in the lives of fighters. Similarly, to the preference for stability, individuals learn to follow a path or identify some characteristics they like at a young age, and this continues to shape their actions through life. Although this was evidence in both countries, the importance on planning in Germany is bigger, as planning needs to be more specific and done since a young age.

Dreams and plans can have very different motivations and take different shapes. For this reason, they do not align specifically with any of the two first clusters but are an integral part of belonging to the fighter class due to the importance of work.

7.3.7 Money

Money is equally important in the life of fighters and is a criterion that relates with many other traits, this was observed in both countries. However, the importance of money is not enough to overcome the role of other factors, and no single fighter described money as their only motivation in their professional life or formative years. Then, money is one of the major elements that are balanced by individuals according to their expectations goal and dreams.

However, the importance of money in both countries is significantly different. In Germany money plays a role at planning life, as individuals have different possibilities according to their income and wealth, and in the career where potential income is one of the most important variables at consideration. In Colombia, however, the marketization of many basic services and the differential outcomes that investment has in life gives money a bigger role in life outcome and accordingly plays a bigger role in decisions making that in Germany.

What is consistent in both countries is the increasing role of money. To the point that it is clear from the responses that individuals are reevaluating their choices and putting a bigger weight on income. Switching to a mentality where most things in life are monetized a change in line with the transformation of the labor market and the marketization of more aspects of life.

7.4 Summary

This chapter presented summarized the results from both countries and allowed to give a more complete picture of neoliberalism as a force outside the theoretical ideas that sustain it. While not equal, each country has suffered transformations due to the rise in popularity of the neo liberal logic. An increased role of money, lessened stability, a life of changing jobs in the hopes of higher living standard has become a valid proposition in many countries to the point that the new form of neo liberalism has become a major force in modern capitalism and the observed effects in both countries allow for some conclusions regarding its nature.

In first place, although the transformations in both countries clearly follow the neoliberal logic, it is impossible to say that the effects are completely similar in them. However, it is remarkable how flexible neoliberalism is. The transformation in both countries, despite not being entirely similar, follows the neoliberal logic and adapts to the institutions and socio-economic conditions. The economic conditions as well as the social structures play a major role on the effects of the neoliberal push in society. The same can be said of the political structures, as they clearly play a role in allowing reforms that have big impact regarding.

This point is perhaps one of the most relevant findings of this chapter, as the findings show that neoliberalism is not an uncontrollable or unstoppable force that will eventually take over all aspects of life by its virtue of allowing more economic growth. Even this assumption is challenged by the respondents, more does not mean better. Also, although a re-definition of stability as financial stability is present, stability as a way of rights, regulation, policies, and social institutions is still present and popular for many.

The increase in the separation inside the fighter class was also clear. Neoliberalism encourages traits and capital types that closely relate to the aspiring fighter group and undermine those that relate to the defensive fighters. The aspiring side has enough

capital and useful traits to profit from the neoliberal labor market while the defensive fighters have to do with capital that is not so valuable inside this logic and traits that do not match well with the neoliberal labor market.

A further reason to worry is the diverging opinions on the transformation. On the aspiring side, it is regarded positively. In best case scenarios, there is some empathy for individuals more affected for the transformation, but not a real disposition to reverse some of its more important affectations. On the defensive side, the changes are approached with disillusion and pessimistic takes on the future and government.

Following the hypothesis of this dissertation, the economic or purely quantitative measurement of inequality fails at portraying a comprehensive picture of inequality and social reproduction. Many scenarios of apparent social mobility revealed the difficulties inside this process and provide for the rising discontent even in scenarios that should be seen with more positive outlooks. The final chapter will further go into the conclusions from the thesis and will open the discussion regarding the findings and its diverse implications.

8. Chapter 8: Conclusions and Discussion

This dissertation provides some significant contributions to the understanding of inequality and pushes for a reconnection of the diverse fields of thought on the issue. As expected for a research project based on extensive qualitative in two countries, the findings presented in this dissertation are extensive and include very elements with very diverse characters. Chart 4 presents a stylized summary of the most important and relevant findings of this doctoral research:

Chart 4

Summary of findings

Aspiring fighters stand more to win under the neoliberal logic of the labor market
Money is increasingly used to provide security in a time of increasingly weakened social institutions.
Money is a priority for aspiring fighters in Colombia. For aspiring fighters in Germany money is also important but they also pursue other non-monetary goals.
Money plays a bigger role for defensive fighters than aspiring fighters in both countries.
Families enable aspiring fighters in both countries thanks to the diverse sorts of capital as well as traits that they have and transfer across generations.
Defensive fighters are more likely to be negatively affected by the neo liberal ruled labor market.
Families are likely to limit defensive fighters, especially in the case of Colombia.
Not having a plan affects the ability of defensive fighters of allowing for a meaningful accumulation of capital necessary for career building.
Expectations are not only shaped inside family or social circle, but society also plays a big role in it as well as the economy.
Being flexible is a great advantage in neoliberal labor market and the fast-changing societal expectations.
Traits come in conjunction to aid career building or favor stability.
Racial stereotypes and migration background still have a big role in the labor market.
Planning for life plays a big role in Germany and a small one in Colombia.
The quality of education in Germany is more homogenous than in Colombia where a big divide between public and private education is observed.
The German labor market remains more structured than Colombia.
Liberalization of labor regulation and lack of education allows for exploitation in Colombia.

In general, these findings presented support the articulating hypothesis of this dissertation. Departing from the growing trend of labor insecurity and the enduring life of precarious work that renewed neoliberalism envisions, this dissertation shows the connection between political and economic transformations and their repercussions on inequality and social replication.

In line with the research question, the findings of this dissertation contradict the assumptions of established narratives like the capability approach, meritocracy, and the implicit assumption of social mobility that quantitative studies on income inequality often portray. These models are valid inside a quantitative setting with arbitrary definitions of class and can be used to associate social success with economic and academic performance. However, the close inspection allowed by an empirical work like this dissertation shows that social mobility becomes very unlikely when defined outside a purely quantitative realm.

Furthermore, this dissertation shows that the effects of the neoliberal reforms in the two studies countries encouraged a bigger divide inside society and reverted some of the advances that social and labor movements had achieved. This articulates the elements that are more impacted by the findings of this dissertation: insecurity, social mobility, the role of institutions and neoliberalism as a global movement.

It is worth noting that the main aim of this dissertation was not disproving or disregarding the contributions done to the study of inequality from a purely quantitative approach, as this is beyond the scope of such a small project. Rather, this dissertation proposes an inclusion of a broader take on inequality that can consider the diverging narratives of the socio-economic conditions that purely quantitative measures cannot capture. This thesis shows that a political discourse based solely on a quantitative or qualitative approach would be ignoring significant findings regarding the issue.

8.1 Insecurity

Very different countries with different positions in the global economic system are experiencing the transformation of the labor market due to neoliberalism. More importantly, the interviews show that the life experiences of people with insecure work conditions bear a striking resemblance throughout the fighter classes of different countries.

The findings reveal the negative effects of the rule of the market and deregulation despite the increased efficiency and wealth growth in society. Allowing a connection between two apparently opposite narratives, as rising income and consumption can be paired with higher dissatisfaction with the economic and political system and inequality.

The empirical material collected gives good examples of the negative aspects of the transformations of the job market motivated by neoliberalism, being the most relevant increasing insecurity and its ramifications in life. The increasing insecurity is not limited to the marginalized but is a transformation that applies to all sectors of society. Although those in the higher part of the fighter class can benefit from this process, the members of the aspiring fighters, they also experience the negative effects of rising insecurity that are however compensated by increased income, new opportunities, and flexibility. For the defensive fighters, rising insecurity is a clear worsening of conditions as their traits and capitals leave them with the least desirable jobs.

The desire and various strategies for securing a higher income can be seen as a strategy for compensating the increasing insecurity. Rising neoliberalism makes individuals increasingly prefer a higher income over other sources of security to factor in the rising costs of living, times of economic need or unexpected events. However, the role of money is limited by the traits of the individual as these build a boundary after which it loses its appeal.

8.2 Social Mobility

The increasing separation between the groups inside the fighter class is also clear. Increased insecurity favors those with traits and capital that are better adjusted for the transformed labor market and harms those who lack traits as well as economic, cultural, and symbolic capital to pursue a career inside the neoliberal labor market. The neoliberal dynamic of work requires traits that are not present homogeneously through the fighter class. Although some can be learned, individuals may even approach them without passion just out of the necessity to perform in the system.

These problems are intensified by the reproducing nature of capital and traits. An individual brought up with the traits and capital associated with a privileged environment would very likely be able to remain in a better off position. Conversely, an individual without the relevant traits would most likely not perform equally well and be limited by some of the traits or capital.

Education systems play a big role in the formation of traits that are fundamental at adapting to the changing climate of the labor market. However, these systems also play an equally important role in the reproduction of inequality. The German educative limits by design the chances a person has and events at a young age have the potential of leaving long lasting consequences. Although in Colombia the system is less segregated by design, the advantage of private over public schools in academic performance and university acceptance clearly favors those with enough economic and social capital to be accepted in them.

The role of family also reveals further boundaries to social mobility, as it permeates the habitus of an individual as well as it shapes the diverse traits. As shown in this dissertation, these elements play a very important role at many aspects that relate to the job market, not only in granting access to it but also in shaping the decision-making process of a person. This is additional to the established role of family as the most basic unit of support of an individual hence its importance.

8.3 A Global Movement

Neoliberalism is clearly seen in the two studied countries. Although it can be argued that the same trend can be present in many countries around the world, this dissertation also shows that this process takes local forms according to the conditions of the country. Similarly, many reforms made around the world clearly follow neoliberal principles, but it would be erroneous to suggest that they are closely related or that it is reasonable to expect neoliberal reforms to take very similar shapes in different countries.

This dissertation showed instead that neoliberalism permeates structures in significantly different countries and, although this was not the goal of this dissertation, it could be argued that most countries have experienced a transformation motivated by neoliberalism to a certain degree. However, it is also clear that these transformations, contrary for example to policies surrounding public health which are implemented without major transformations from country to country, are shaped around the established structures and depend on the political and socio-economic feasibility of the local context.

For this reason, the transformations motivated by neoliberalism differ significantly in shape and scope from country to country. For example, although the German labor

market went through major reforms during the early 2000's it is still very regulated, and employees still enjoy many protections in comparison with many other countries. The policies that spur out of it can be clearly different, although the push of neoliberalism follows a clear narrative in most countries.

8.4 The Role of Institutions

The historic recounts of the development of welfare states and the conditions of the labor market show the importance of institutions in social structures and social cohesion. They also show the preparedness and effectiveness of the neoliberal reforms at adapting them in a relative short time in comparison to the long and arduous process of setting them in the first place.

The historic context of the studied countries shows that multiple reforms of neoliberal character and even the effects of these reforms, not only adapt to the local characteristics of each country but are a result of a process of negotiation. The success of the negotiation relies on the attractiveness of the portrayed advantages of the reforms as well as the prevailing social problems as well as the economic and political climate.

A prime example is the case of Colombia, where neoliberal reforms were implemented alongside the formal establishment of a welfare state. The push for neoliberal reforms was supported by the government but had to adapt to the manifested wish of the constitutional assembly surrounding the universal protection of rights. As a result, areas that were heavily regulated by the 1991 constitution such as healthcare, were designed around a private for-profit model but the universality required mechanism that would guarantee healthcare provision as an undeniable right.

In contrast, other less delineated fields like foreign trade experienced quick deregulations and the resulting policies with a more neoliberal character had a great impact in the labor market. In what appears paradoxical at first, the evident problems of deregulating the healthcare sector were clear for policy makers but those of free trade and deregulating the labor market were somehow not.

The introduction of labor protections like the minimum wage and the political call to re-evaluate and modify the labor legislation in Germany further show that the reforms done in the name of neoliberalism are not final and can be reversed. The case of

Colombia is similar where the new government is aiming at undoing some reforms of neoliberal character and bring back lost protections for employees.

Finally, failed stories of privatization have also shown that neoliberalism, free market, and deregulation is far from being the better solution in many contexts and actual policies should take in account results like those of this study.

8.5 Final Remarks

Instead of proving the aspired final character that the narrative of the end of history entails, which portrays a developmental progression of mankind where neoliberal economics reign supreme and can disregard alternative models and evidence, this dissertation shows the multiple problems of following this logic.

This dissertation shows how increasing neoliberalism translates into insecurity and a labor market that unequally benefits and harms individuals in the fighter class.

Modern neoliberalism embodies the desire for a return to a primordial form of capitalism that clearly favored the established classes over the working classes. A historical review would lead to foresee the outcome of the rise of such a model, as the incipient form of capitalism was transformed in a long process that included social, political movements where either side was not foreign to the use of force and violence.

It is unlikely that the current push for neoliberalism that started in the late XX Century would lead to a full return to this primordial status of capitalism. The increasing popularity and mainstream awareness of movements that criticize it as well as the re-evaluation of policies based on its principles already show significant momentum at controlling this process and reversing some of its most polemic elements. However, it is undeniable that its effects are very well established, and that neoliberalism will continue to shape states for a long time.

Returning to the opening of this thesis, a Maya today would most likely not be prophesizing the end of times by calling that mankind had achieve its ultimate form and should only focus on pursuing neoliberalism. Instead, a modern Maya would most likely be foreseeing an increasing role of politics social movements and studies like the one performed in this dissertation at the policy making trying to balance the negative effects of the neoliberal reforms, as they joined in balancing the effects of early industrial capitalism.

Perhaps the most important question is if social-sciences and economics can overcome the current quantitative craze and move to closely cooperate on such fundamental issues like socioeconomic inequality with a variety of techniques and theories. This dissertation has not only shown the advantages of such an approach, but that it is an obligation that cannot be ignored much longer.

Annex 1: Questionnaires

Gesprächsverfahren Deutschland

Einleitung

Ich will Sie interviewen in Rahmen meiner Dissertation an der HU Berlin. Ich recherchiere um das Thema Ungleichheit in Deutschland und mein Heimatland Kolumbien. Besonders interessiert mich die Rolle der Persönliche Beziehungen und Ausbildung im Berufsleben.

Erster Teil: Erziehung, Familienleben und Ausbildung

Können Sie mir ein Blick in Ihrer Kindheit und Ausbildung geben?

Können Sie mir Ihre berufliche Ausbildung erzählen?

-Aufpassen auf: Erziehungsstil und Eigenschaften wie: Erziehungsort, Berufe der Eltern, Herkunft der Eltern, gelernter Beruf.

Zweiter Teil: Jugendzeit und Berufliche Leben

Wie haben Sie Ihr Berufsleben angefangen?

Was machen Sie momentan beruflich?

Wie finden Sie Ihr Berufsleben bis heute?

Wie sind Sie in Ihrem aktuellen Job gelandet?

Wurden Sie sagen, dass Sie an eine Karriere anstreben?

Ggf. Können Sie mir beschreiben, was Sie beruflich vor haben?

-Aufpassen auf: Art der Arbeit, Nettoeinkommen, Selbstbewertung der Arbeitsmöglichkeiten, Häufigste Probleme bei der Arbeit,

Dritter Teil: Sozialisierung Während der Erziehung und Ausbildung

Was denken Sie von den Beziehungen, die Sie während seiner Kindheit erworben haben?

Meinen Sie, dass Ihnen diese Beziehungen in dem Berufsleben geholfen haben?

Spielten bestimmte Personen eine Wichtige Rolle in Ihrer Karriere Entscheidungen?

Ganz am Ende: Denken Sie, dass sie mit der Hilfe

-Aufpassen auf: Wichtige Personen im Leben, Idealer Paar.

Proceso para la entrevista Español

Introducción

Quiero entrevistarle en el marco de mi trabajo doctoral en la universidad Humboldt de Berlín. Se trata de un estudio sobre la desigualdad en Alemania y Colombia. Mi interés en particular es el rol de las relaciones personales y su formación en la vida laboral.

Primera parte: crianza, vida laboral y formación

¿Puede darme un resumen de cómo fue su infancia y su formación escolar?

¿Qué puede contarme de su formación profesional?

-Anotar: Tipo de crianza y características como: lugar de nacimiento y dónde pasó la primera infancia, profesión de los padres, inclinación profesional desde joven

Segunda Parte: Juventud y vida profesional

¿Cómo comenzó su vida profesional?

¿Cuál es su ocupación actual?

¿Cómo encuentra su vida profesional hasta ahora?

¿Cómo llegó a su trabajo actual?

¿Diría usted que aspira a una carrera?

¿Dado el caso, que espera profesionalmente?

Cree usted que la educación es

-Anotar: tipo de trabajo, ingresos, valoración de la capacidad para trabajar, problemas más frecuentes en el trabajo.

Tercera Parte: Socialización durante la crianza y la formación

¿Qué considera usted de las relaciones que forjó durante su infancia?

¿Considera usted que estas relaciones personales lo han ayudado en su vida laboral?

¿Jugaron algunas personas un rol importante en sus decisiones por una carrera u otra?

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