

# COLONIALISM AND REVOLUTION: FANON MEETS BOURDIEU

Michael Burawoy

Fourth Conversation with Pierre  
Bourdieu, Havens Center, April 10, 2008

# OVERVIEW

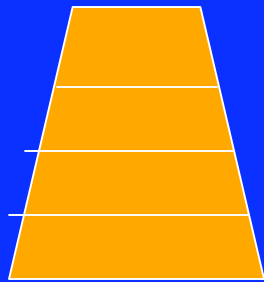
- I.Question of “Habitus”!
- II.Introduction: Bourdieu vs. Fanon
- III.Convergent views of Colonial Domination
- IV.Bourdieu: Between Tradition and Modernity
- V.Fanon: Between Capitalism and Socialism
- VI.Fanon vs. Bourdieu
- VII.Transverse Trajectories

# I: THE QUESTION OF “HABITUS”

- Is there such an entity as “habitus” the bodily incorporation of social structures?
- If it exists can we identify it other than through its effects?
- How adaptable, flexible is the habitus?
- If it exists does it matter? If so when?
- Is habitus a folk or a scientific concept?

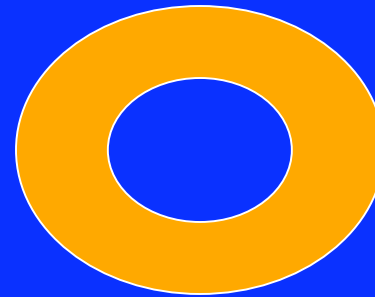
# Bourdieu vs. Burawoy

- Layered Habitus



- Misrecognition
- Situational Contradiction  
between disposition and  
structure

- Dual Consciousness



- Mystification
- Processual Contradiction  
between disposition and  
structure

THE QUESTION OF STATE SOCIALISM

## II: INTRODUCTION: BOURDIEU vs. FANON

- Bourdieu's animosity toward Fanon
- Convergent Biographies

# III. CONVERGENT VIEWS OF COLONIALISM

- Naked force prevails
- Segregation of colonizers and colonized
- Dehumanization of the colonized
- Dispossession of peasantry of land
- Necessity of violence to overthrow colonialism
- War generates dignity and self-respect, transformation of consciousness
- Socialism or Barbarism

# IV. BOURDIEU: BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

- Critic of Modernization Theory
- Orientation to the future

# BOURDIEU: BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

- Critic of Modernization Theory
- Orientation to the future

Working Class



Revolutionary  
Consciousness  
(Modernity)

Peasantry



Traditional  
Traditionalism



## **BOURDIEU AND REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE WORKING CLASS**

“To those who have the “privilege” of undergoing permanent and “rational” exploitation and of enjoying the corresponding advantages also belongs the privilege of a truly revolutionary consciousness. This realistic aiming at the future (*l’avenir*) is only accessible to those who have the means to confront the present and to look for ways of beginning to implement their hopes, instead of giving way to resigned surrender or to the magical impatience of those who are too crushed by the present to be able to look to anything other than a utopian future (*un futur*), an immediate, magical negation of the present.” (*Algeria 1960*, p.63)

# BOURDIEU: BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

- Critic of Modernization Theory
- Orientation to the future

Working Class



Revolutionary  
Consciousness  
(Modernity)

Uprooted

Subproletarians



Traditionalism of  
Despair

Peasantry



Traditional  
Traditionalism

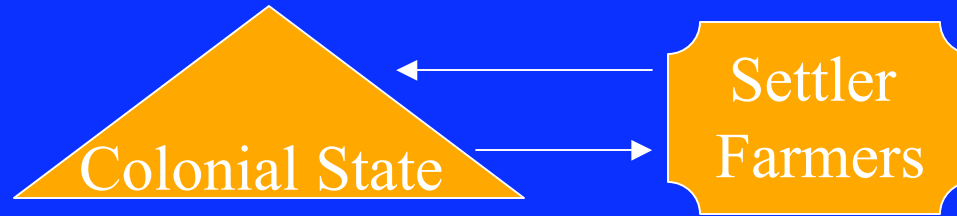
## BOURDIEU ON PROLETARIANS AND THE UPROOTED

On the one hand, there is the revolt of emotion, the uncertain and incoherent expression of a condition characterized by uncertainty and incoherence; on the other hand, there is revolutionary radicalism, springing from the systematic consideration of reality. These two attitudes correspond to two types of material conditions of existence: on the one hand the sub-proletarians of the towns and the uprooted peasants whose whole existence is constraint and arbitrariness; on the other hand the regular workers of the modern sector, provided with the minimum of security and guarantees which allow aspirations and opinions to be put into perspective. Disorganization of daily conduct prohibits the formation of the system of rational projects and forecasts of which the revolutionary consciousness is one aspect. (*Algeria 1960*, p.62)

# V. FANON: BETWEEN CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM

- Orientation to future, extrication from past
- Gramsci applied to anti-colonial struggles
- National Bourgeois vs National Liberation

**COLONIZERS**

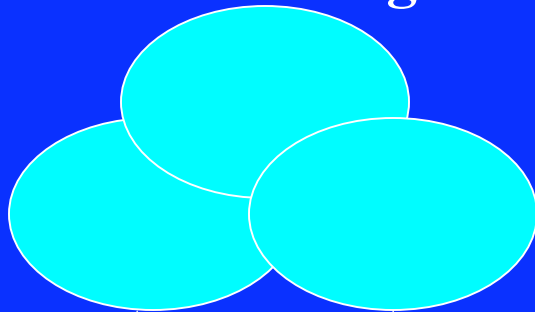


**COLONIZED**

**COLONIZERS**



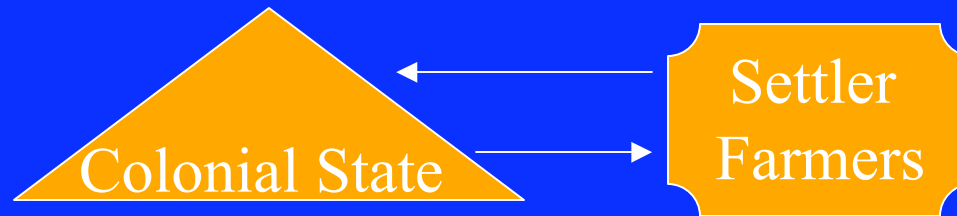
**National Bourgeoisie**



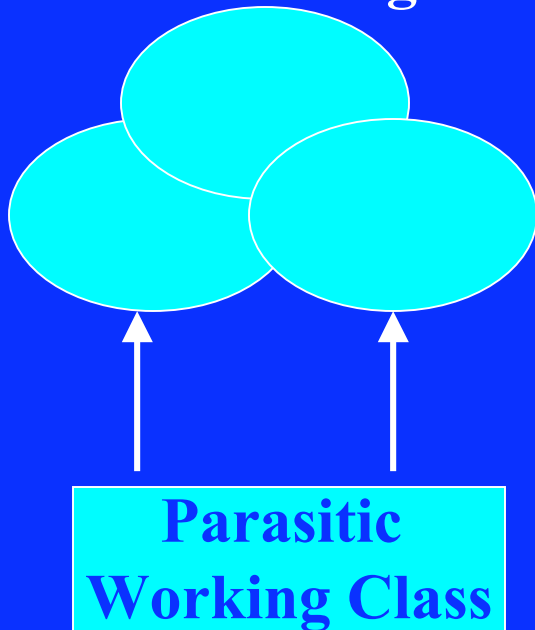
**COLONIZED**



**COLONIZERS**



**National Bourgeoisie**



**Traditional Leaders**

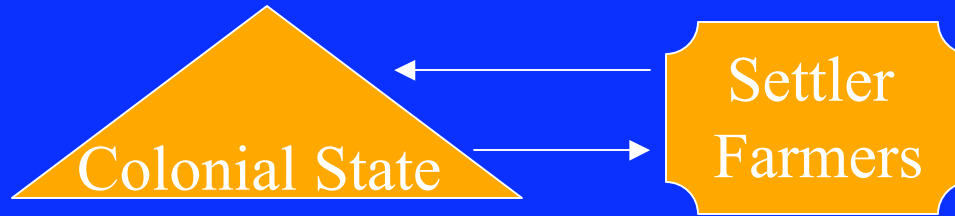


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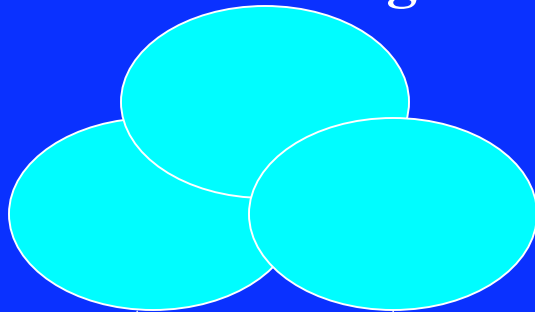
**URBAN BLOC**

**RURAL BLOC**

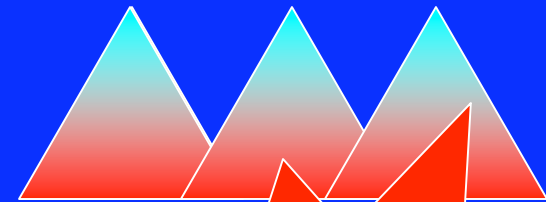
**COLONIZERS**



**National Bourgeoisie**



**Traditional Leaders**



*Radical Intellectuals*

A red lightning bolt shape with the text 'Radical Intellectuals' written across it in white, slanted font.

**Volcanic Peasantry**

A large red starburst shape with the text 'Volcanic Peasantry' written inside in blue.

**Lumpenproletariat**

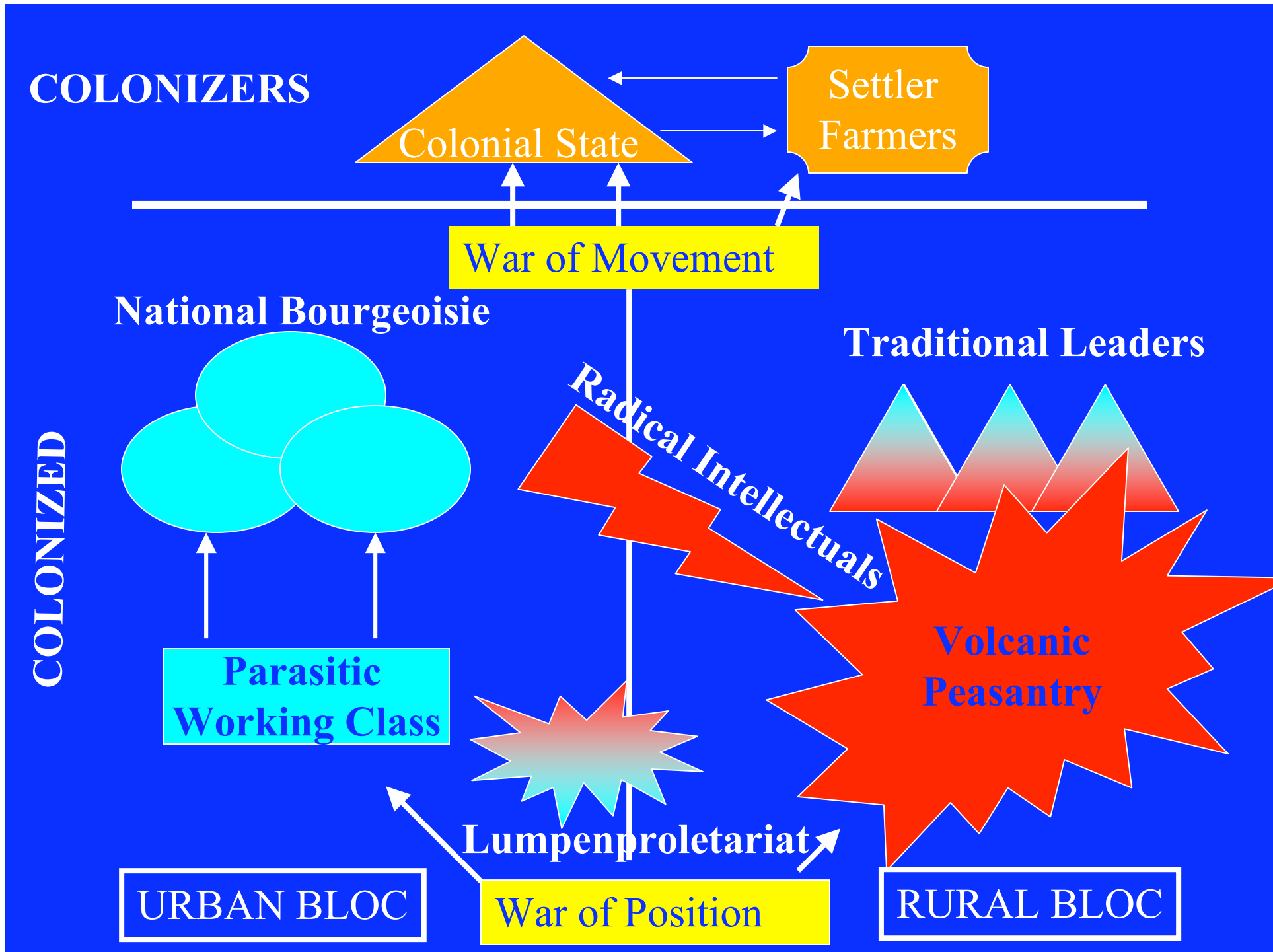
A small red-to-cyan gradient starburst shape with the text 'Lumpenproletariat' written below it in white.

**COLONIZED**

**URBAN BLOC**

**RURAL BLOC**





## VI. BOURDIEU vs. FANON

- Revolutionary Class
- Intellectuals
- Decolonization Roads
- Violence

# VII. TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

*Black Skins,  
White Masks*

# TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

*Black Skins,  
White Masks*



*The Wretched  
of the Earth*

# TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

BOURDIEU

*Black Skins,  
White Masks*

*Distinction*



*The Wretched  
of the Earth*

# TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

*Black Skins,  
White Masks*



*The Wretched  
of the Earth*

BOURDIEU

*Distinction*



*Revolution  
within the  
Revolution*

# TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON

BOURDIEU

SOCIAL  
REPRODUCTION

*Black Skins,  
White Masks*

*Distinction*



SOCIAL  
TRANSFORMATION

*The Wretched  
of the Earth*

*Revolution  
within the  
Revolution*

# TRANSVERSE TRAJECTORIES

FANON  
(1925-1961)

BOURDIEU  
(1930-2002)

SOCIAL  
REPRODUCTION

*Black Skins,  
White Masks*  
(1952)



SOCIAL  
TRANSFORMATION

*The Wretched  
of the Earth*  
(1961)

*Revolution within  
the Revolution*  
(1961)



SOCIAL  
REPRODUCTION

*Distinction*  
(1979)



# FINAL THOUGHTS

- Two Bourdieu's
- From Kabylia to French Society
- Racial Domination
- Class Analysis
- Intellectual