

07. Mobility of Productive Forces

The mobility of productive forces refers to the capacity of labor, technology, and capital to move between industries or regions, adapting to, and driving, rapid structural, functional, and technological changes in the economy. Modern productive forces, particularly through digital technologies, AI, and automation, enable enhanced resource allocation and industrial adaptability, significantly speeding up production shifts.

Key aspects of the mobility of productive forces include:

- ❖ **Labor and Capital Mobility:** The ability to relocate labor (human skill/knowledge) and capital to areas with higher productivity or different production processes.
- ❖ **Technological Shift:** The evolution from manual or mechanical tools to intelligent tools, such as 3D printing and AI, allows for faster, more flexible production.
- ❖ **Modern "New Quality" Productive Forces:** These are characterized by the integration of science, technology, and industry, which compresses the time between scientific innovation and mass application, boosting economic adaptability.
- ❖ **Structural Transformation:** Productive forces are constantly changing, transforming the way people interact with nature to create wealth, thus necessitating changes in production relations, as discussed in Marxian theory.

This mobility is crucial for maintaining industrial resilience and enabling swift, strategic changes in production in response to market shifts or technological advances.

Factor mobility refers to the ability to move factors of production—labor, capital, or land—out of one production process into another. Factor mobility may involve the movement of factors between firms within an industry, as when one steel plant closes but sells its production equipment to another steel firm.

Since Engels stated 'and history has shown it! – that the historic mission of capitalism is to develop the productive forces, because capital is increased as productivity increases, should we not consider that the production relations are also a part of the productive forces? It could be tempting to answer yes to this question, and Yaroshenko felt that, under socialism, production relations are indeed part of the productive forces. Other people, in opposition to Yaroshenko, feel however that under socialism the production relations are no longer dominated by the productive forces. They say the opposite is true. They believe that socialist revolution has led to the domination of the subjective factors over the objective ones.

We should examine these positions more closely. But first, let us return to the question of the confusion between "productive forces" and "production relations". We feel that this confusion is due to a non-dialectical understanding of the entire question of the development of the productive forces.

The central thesis of Marxism is that there is a necessary correspondence in the relation between the production relations which characterize a given society and the level or the development of the productive forces in that same society. In other words, the type of social organization which humans give themselves at a given time is not the product of their will alone, but it is a product of the state of development of their capacity to produce the goods needed for their survival. What is important to understand is that it is not so much what the productive forces are composed of which is important, but rather the reality of their historic development.

So, rather than trying to add together all the machines, techniques and social relations to have a so-called concrete representation of the productive forces, we should consider that the concept (notion, mental representation) of the “development of the productive forces” designates the empirically observable fact according to which, throughout the different ages, human beings have developed their capacity to produce and that they have reduced the work time needed for their own reproduction.