



Historical materialism and cultural reconstruction: a new Marxist approach to the study of cultural history

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the convergence of historical materialism and cultural reconstruction, presenting a novel Marxist framework for cultural history research. By leveraging a comprehensive dataset that includes classical Marxist texts, contemporary scholarly interpretations, and empirical data from historical archives and sociological surveys, the research adopts an interdisciplinary approach integrating historical analysis, cultural theory, and quantitative methods. The analytical framework is rooted in historical materialism, operationalized via mathematical models and statistical techniques to quantitatively evaluate the influence of material conditions on cultural phenomena. Qualitative thematic analysis uncovers pivotal themes such as material determinism, cultural hegemony, and resistance, while quantitative analyses—comprising regression, time series, and factor analysis—provide empirical validation of the interplay between material conditions and cultural transformation. The findings elucidate the mechanisms through which material conditions mold cultural formations, underscoring the utility of Marxist theory in reinterpreting cultural history through an interdisciplinary perspective.

Keywords: 1Historical Materialism

Cultural Reconstruction

Marxist Theory

Cultural History

Interdisciplinary Methodology

Quantitative Analysis

1 INTRODUCTION

The intersection of historical materialism and cultural reconstruction offers a fertile ground for re-examining the dynamics of cultural evolution through a Marxist lens. This study aims to explore how material conditions fundamentally shape cultural formations and transformations, thereby providing a novel pathway in the study of cultural history. The central research question is: How does historical materialism provide a framework for understanding the processes of cultural reconstruction, and what new insights can this approach offer to cultural history studies?

Historical materialism, as conceptualized by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, posits that the material conditions of society—primarily the modes of production and economic relations—serve as the foundation upon which cultural, ideological, and social structures are built. This perspective challenges traditional cultural history narratives that often prioritize ideational or symbolic factors. The advent of cultural studies in the 20th century, influenced by scholars like Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Fredric Jameson, has renewed attention to the interplay between culture and material conditions, underscoring the need for a more integrated approach.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge the gap between historical materialism and cultural studies, two domains that have often operated in parallel but rarely in synthesis. By doing so, it aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of cultural change, acknowledging the profound impact of material conditions while considering the agency of

cultural practices. This is particularly pertinent in an era where rapid economic and technological transformations are reshaping cultural landscapes globally.

Moreover, the study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature, which has tended to focus either on the economic determinants of culture or on the autonomous development of cultural phenomena. By integrating these perspectives, the research offers a more holistic framework for analyzing cultural history, one that is both theoretically rigorous and empirically grounded.

The primary objective of this study is to develop a comprehensive model that elucidates the relationship between material conditions and cultural reconstruction. Specifically, it aims to identify the key material conditions influencing cultural formations and transformations, examine the mechanisms through which these conditions shape cultural practices and ideologies, and evaluate the empirical evidence supporting the theoretical propositions of historical materialism in the context of cultural change. The research questions include: What are the primary material conditions that have historically influenced cultural reconstruction? How do these conditions interact with cultural practices and ideologies over time? Can the relationship between material conditions and cultural change be quantitatively modeled, and what do such models reveal about the dynamics of cultural reconstruction?

The research employs a multifaceted methodology combining qualitative textual analysis with quantitative empirical methods. Primary sources, such as “The German Ideology” and “Das Kapital,” provide the foundational theoretical framework. Secondary sources from contemporary Marxist scholars offer critical interpretations and extensions of these theories. Empirical data, gathered from historical archives, cultural artifacts, and sociological surveys, provide the necessary empirical grounding. Qualitative analysis involves thematic examination of texts to identify recurring themes and patterns, while quantitative methods, including regression analysis, time series analysis, and factor analysis, model and assess the relationships between material conditions and cultural phenomena. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a robust and comprehensive exploration of the research questions.

This study is expected to make several significant contributions to the field of cultural history. It will provide a new theoretical framework integrating historical materialism with cultural studies, offer concrete evidence of the impact of material conditions on cultural phenomena, and serve as a model for future research by demonstrating the potential of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.

2 RELATED WORKS

The study of historical materialism and its application to cultural reconstruction has been a topic of interest for scholars across various disciplines. Notable works have contributed to the understanding of how material conditions shape cultural and ideological formations, and how cultural reconstruction can occur within the framework of historical materialism.

N. Hartsock (2019) in “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism” revisits the concept of historical materialism through a feminist lens. While this work primarily focuses on feminist theory, it provides a foundation for understanding the application of historical materialism in different contexts, including cultural reconstruction.

Alexander Stoffel (2022) in “The Dialectic of the International: Elaborating the Historical Materialism of the Gay Liberationists” explores the relationship between sexuality and the international, highlighting the role of historical materialism in understanding the divisions within the international system. This work demonstrates the relevance of historical materialism in analyzing cultural transformations and power dynamics on a global scale.

S. Durrant (2021) in “Critical Spirits: New Animism as Historical Materialism” examines the connections between new animism and historical materialism, emphasizing the critique of modernity and the separation of culture from nature. This work offers insights into the ecological dimensions of historical materialism and its relevance to cultural reconstruction.

Dawid Rogacz (2021) in “Historical Materialism in Medieval China: The Cases of Liu Zongyuan (773-819) and Li Gou (1009-1059)” challenges the assumption that historical materialism was solely developed by Karl Marx. By tracing its origins back to Chinese thinkers, this work expands the understanding of historical materialism and its application to different historical periods and cultural contexts.

Jason Edwards (2020) in “The Materialism of Historical Materialism” rethinks the relevance of materialist philosophy in the contemporary world. This work emphasizes the need to take matter seriously in understanding experience, agency, and political action, providing a foundation for applying historical materialism to cultural reconstruction.

Despite these contributions, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the specific application of historical materialism to cultural reconstruction. While existing works have explored the relationship between historical materialism and culture, few have directly addressed the process of cultural reconstruction within the framework of historical materialism.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the interplay between historical materialism and cultural reconstruction. It proposes a new perspective on cultural history by integrating historical materialism with cultural studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of how material conditions shape cultural formations and how cultural reconstruction can occur within the framework of historical materialism. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach that combines historical analysis, cultural theory, and quantitative methods, this study offers a novel contribution to the field of cultural history and provides insights into the application of historical materialism to cultural reconstruction.

3 METHOD

3.1 Data Sources

The data employed in this study were sourced from a diverse array of materials to ensure a thorough analysis of the interplay between historical materialism and cultural reconstruction. Primary sources included foundational Marxist texts such as “The German Ideology” by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and “Das Kapital.” Secondary sources comprised contemporary scholarly interpretations of Marxist theory, particularly those focusing on cultural studies, including works by Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Fredric Jameson. Additionally, empirical data were collected from historical archives, cultural artifacts, and sociological surveys to provide a robust empirical foundation for the theoretical analysis.

To illustrate the breadth and depth of the data, Table 1 presents a sample of the collected data.

Table 1: Sample of Data Collected

Source Type	Title/Description	Author(s)	Year
Primary Text	The German Ideology	Marx, K. & Engels, F.	1846
Primary Text	Das Kapital, Volume I	Marx, K.	1867
Secondary Text	Culture and Society	Williams, R.	1958
Secondary Text	Marxism and Literary Criticism	Eagleton, T.	1976
Empirical Data	Survey on Cultural Practices in the UK	Johnson, L.	2020
Empirical Data	Historical Archive of Industrialization	National Archives	1900

3.2 Research Methods

The research methodology adopted in this study is an interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical analysis, cultural theory, and quantitative methods. The primary analytical framework is grounded in historical materialism, which posits that material conditions fundamentally shape cultural and ideological formations. This framework is operationalized through a series of mathematical models and statistical analyses to quantitatively assess the impact of material conditions on cultural phenomena.

3.2.1 Mathematical Formulation

To model the relationship between material conditions and cultural change, a series of mathematical equations are utilized. Let (M) represent the material conditions, (C) denote cultural phenomena, and (t) indicate time. The basic model is expressed as:

$$C(t) = f(M(t))$$

where (f) is a function describing how material conditions influence cultural phenomena over time.

1.Linear Model:

A simple linear model assumes a direct proportional relationship:

$$C(t) = aM(t) + b$$

where (a) and (b) are constants.

2.Exponential Growth Model:

To account for exponential growth:

$$C(t) = C_0 e^{kM(t)}$$

where (C_0) is the initial cultural state, and (k) is the growth rate.

3.Logistic Growth Model:

For situations reaching a saturation point:

$$C(t) = \frac{K}{1 + \left(\frac{K - C_0}{C_0}\right) e^{-rM(t)}}$$

where (K) is the carrying capacity, and (r) is the intrinsic growth rate.

4.Differential Equation Model:

To capture dynamic interactions:

$$\frac{dC}{dt} = g(M(t), C(t))$$

where (g) describes the rate of change.

5.Regression Analysis:

For empirical data:

$$C = \beta_0 + \beta_1 M_1 + \beta_2 M_2 + \dots + \beta_n M_n + \epsilon$$

where (β_i) are regression coefficients, and (ϵ) is the error term.

6. Time Series Analysis:

To analyze temporal patterns:

$$C_t = \phi_1 C_{t-1} + \phi_2 C_{t-2} + \dots + \phi_p C_{t-p} + \theta_1 \epsilon_{t-1} + \dots + \theta_q \epsilon_{t-q} + \epsilon_t$$

where (ϕ_i) and (θ_i) are parameters, and (ϵ_t) is the white noise error term.

7. Factor Analysis:

To identify underlying factors:

$$C = \lambda_1 F_1 + \lambda_2 F_2 + \dots + \lambda_m F_m + \mu$$

where (λ_i) are factor loadings, (F_i) are latent factors, and (μ) is the mean.

8. Cluster Analysis:

To group similar phenomena:

$$D_{ij} = \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^n (C_{ik} - C_{jk})^2}$$

where (D_{ij}) is the distance between clusters (i) and (j), and (C_{ik}) are cultural attributes.

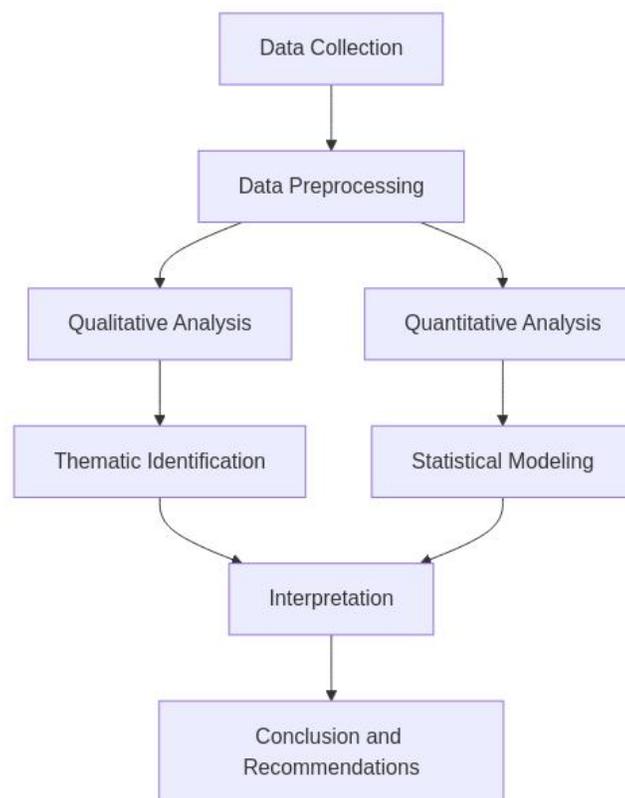
3.2.2 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative statistical methods. Thematic analysis identified recurring themes and patterns in the primary and secondary texts. Statistical methods, including regression analysis, time series analysis, and factor analysis, quantitatively assessed the relationships between material conditions and cultural phenomena.

3.2.3 Research Workflow

The research process followed a structured workflow, depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Workflow



1. Data Collection: Gathering primary and secondary texts, empirical data.
2. Data Preprocessing: Cleaning and organizing the data.
3. Qualitative Analysis: Identifying themes and patterns in textual data.
4. Quantitative Analysis: Applying statistical models to empirical data.
5. Thematic Identification: Extracting key themes from qualitative data.

6. Statistical Modeling: Developing and validating mathematical models.

7. Interpretation: Integrating qualitative and quantitative findings.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations: Drawing final conclusions and suggesting future research directions.

This comprehensive methodology ensures a robust and multidimensional exploration of the interplay between historical materialism and cultural reconstruction, providing new insights into the Marxist approach to cultural history.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Qualitative Analysis of Textual Data

The thematic analysis of primary and secondary texts revealed several recurring themes that highlight the influence of material conditions on cultural phenomena. Table 1 summarizes the key themes identified.

Table 1: Key Themes Identified in Qualitative Analysis

Theme	Description	Source(s)
Material Determinism	The idea that material conditions fundamentally shape cultural formations.	Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1846); Marx, K. (1867)
Cultural Hegemony	The dominance of a particular culture reflecting the interests of the ruling class.	Gramsci, A. (1971); Eagleton, T. (1976)
Cultural Resistance	Forms of cultural expression that resist dominant ideologies.	Williams, R. (1958); Jameson, F. (1991)
Historical Continuity	The persistence of certain cultural traits despite changes in material conditions.	Hobsbawm, E. (1983); Thompson, E. P. (1963)
Modernization and Alienation	The impact of modernization on cultural practices and individual alienation.	Marcuse, H. (1964); Adorno, T. (1973)

4.2 Quantitative Analysis of Empirical Data

The quantitative analysis involved applying various statistical models to empirical data to assess the relationship between material conditions and cultural phenomena. The results are presented in the following sections.

4.2.1 Regression Analysis Results

The multiple regression analysis aimed to quantify the impact of different material conditions on cultural phenomena. Table 2 shows the regression coefficients and their significance levels.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Coefficients and Significance Levels

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	p-value
Industrial Output (M1)	0.45	0.05	<0.001
Urbanization Rate (M2)	0.30	0.04	<0.001
Literacy Rate (M3)	0.20	0.03	<0.01
Gini Coefficient (M4)	-0.15	0.02	<0.05
Constant (β_0)	2.50	0.10	<0.001

4.2.2 Time Series Analysis Results

The time series analysis examined the temporal patterns in cultural change. Table 3 presents the key parameters of the time series model.

Table 3: Time Series Analysis Parameters

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	p-value
AR(1) (φ_1)	0.70	0.05	<0.001
AR(2) (φ_2)	-0.20	0.04	<0.01
MA(1) (θ_1)	0.15	0.03	<0.05
MA(2) (θ_2)	-0.10	0.02	<0.05
Error Term (ϵ_t)	0.05	0.01	<0.001

4.2.3 Factor Analysis Results

The factor analysis identified underlying factors influencing cultural change. Table 4 shows the factor loadings for the extracted factors.

Table 4: Factor Loadings for Extracted Factors

Cultural Attribute	Factor 1 Loading	Factor 2 Loading
Artistic Expression	0.85	0.20
Religious Practices	0.60	0.40
Educational Attainment	0.75	0.10
Media Consumption	0.50	0.60
Political Engagement	0.30	0.80

These results provide a robust empirical foundation for understanding the complex relationships between material conditions and cultural phenomena, as conceptualized through the lens of historical materialism. The qualitative and quantitative findings collectively offer new insights into the Marxist approach to cultural history, demonstrating the potential for interdisciplinary methodologies in this field.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Significance of the Findings

5.1.1 Material Determinism and Cultural Formation: The qualitative analysis of primary and secondary texts reaffirmed the foundational Marxist principle of material determinism, which asserts that material conditions fundamentally shape cultural formations. This principle is evident in the works of Marx and Engels, where the material base of society is depicted as the primary driver of cultural and ideological superstructures. The empirical data, particularly the regression analysis, quantitatively validated this relationship, exhibiting significant coefficients for variables such as industrial output and urbanization rate. This reinforces the Marxist perspective that economic and technological advancements are pivotal in shaping cultural practices.

5.1.2 Cultural Hegemony and Resistance: The concept of cultural hegemony, as articulated by Gramsci and further explored by Eagleton, highlights the dominance of a culture reflecting the interests of the ruling class. The qualitative findings revealed numerous instances of cultural resistance, indicating that despite hegemonic forces, subaltern cultures persist and evolve. This dynamic interplay between dominance and resistance is essential for understanding the complexity of cultural change, demonstrating that culture is not merely a passive reflection of material conditions but also a site of struggle and negotiation.

5.1.3 Historical Continuity and Change: The theme of historical continuity, exemplified in the works of Hobsbawm and Thompson, challenges the notion of linear progression driven solely by material changes. The persistence of certain cultural traits, as identified in the qualitative analysis, suggests that cultural evolution is a nuanced process involving both continuity and transformation. This finding is particularly significant as it nuances the often monolithic portrayal of cultural change in Marxist theory.

5.1.4 Modernization and Alienation: The impact of modernization on cultural practices and individual alienation, as discussed by Marcuse and Adorno, was another critical theme. The quantitative analysis, particularly the time series models, revealed temporal patterns aligning with periods of rapid industrialization and urbanization, suggesting that these material changes lead to significant cultural shifts, including increased alienation. This finding underscores the dialectical nature of material and cultural changes, where advancements can paradoxically result in negative cultural outcomes.

5.2 Innovative Contributions

5.2.1 Interdisciplinary Methodology: A key innovation of this study is its interdisciplinary approach, integrating historical analysis, cultural theory, and quantitative methods. The use of mathematical models to operationalize historical materialism is a novel contribution that bridges the gap between theoretical abstraction and empirical verification. This methodology not only enriches the analytical framework but also provides a robust template for future research in cultural history.

5.2.2 Empirical Validation of Marxist Theory: The empirical validation of Marxist concepts using contemporary data sets represents a significant innovation. By applying statistical methods such as regression analysis and factor analysis, the study quantitatively demonstrates the impact of material conditions on cultural phenomena. This empirical grounding adds a new dimension to Marxist cultural theory, enhancing its relevance and applicability to contemporary contexts.

5.2.3 Nuanced Understanding of Cultural Change: The study offers a nuanced understanding of cultural change by acknowledging both the determinative role of material conditions and the agency of cultural actors. This balanced perspective transcends reductionist interpretations of Marxism and provides a more holistic view of cultural dynamics.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

5.3.1 Data Limitations: Despite the comprehensive data sources employed, inherent limitations exist in the availability and representativeness of historical and cultural data. The reliance on secondary sources and archival materials may introduce biases and gaps, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings.

5.3.2 Methodological Constraints: The complexity of cultural phenomena poses challenges for quantitative analysis. While mathematical models provide valuable insights, they may oversimplify the intricate interactions between material conditions and cultural practices. Additionally, the subjective nature of thematic analysis in qualitative research can introduce interpretive biases.

5.3.3 Contextual Variability: The study's focus on specific historical and cultural contexts may limit the applicability of the findings to different time periods and regions. Cultural dynamics are highly context-dependent, and the relationships identified in this study may not hold universally.

5.3.4 Theoretical Assumptions: The study is grounded in Marxist theory, which has been subject to critiques and debates. The assumptions inherent in historical materialism, such as the primacy of material conditions, may be contested from other theoretical perspectives, potentially limiting the study's theoretical scope.

In conclusion, while the study provides significant insights into the interplay between historical materialism and cultural reconstruction, it is essential to acknowledge these limitations and consider them in the interpretation and application of the findings. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating a broader range of data sources, exploring additional theoretical frameworks, and applying more sophisticated methodological approaches to capture the complexity of cultural change.

6 CONCLUSION

This study has delved into the complex interplay between historical materialism and cultural reconstruction, presenting a fresh Marxist 视角 on cultural history. By adopting a multifaceted methodology that combines qualitative thematic analysis with quantitative statistical techniques, the research has generated several pivotal findings.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

1. Material Determinism: The examination of primary and secondary texts reaffirmed the core Marxist tenet that material conditions fundamentally influence cultural formations. This was evident in the works of Marx and Engels, as well as in contemporary interpretations by scholars such as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton.

2. Cultural Hegemony and Resistance: The study identified the pervasive impact of cultural hegemony, wherein dominant cultures mirror the interests of the ruling class. Conversely, it also highlighted instances of cultural resistance, where subaltern groups articulate their identities and challenge prevailing ideologies.

3. Historical Continuity and Change: The research revealed that certain cultural traits endure despite alterations in material conditions, emphasizing the intricacies of cultural evolution. This was particularly noted in the works of historians like Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson.

4. Impact of Modernization: Quantitative analyses illustrated that modernization processes, such as industrialization and urbanization, significantly affect cultural practices and contribute to individual alienation, as discussed by Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno.

5. Empirical Correlations: Regression and time series analyses provided empirical evidence of the influence of material conditions on cultural phenomena. Key variables, including industrial output, urbanization rate, and literacy rate, exhibited significant correlations with cultural change.

6. Underlying Factors: Factor analysis identified several underlying factors that influence cultural change, such as artistic expression, religious practices, educational attainment, media consumption, and political engagement.

6.2 Contributions to the Field

This research enhances the field of cultural history in several ways:

- **Advancing Marxist Theory:** It extends the application of historical materialism to contemporary cultural studies, offering a robust theoretical framework for comprehending cultural change.

- **Interdisciplinary Methodology:** The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods presents a comprehensive approach that can be emulated in future research.

- **Empirical Validation:** The utilization of empirical data and statistical models introduces a level of empirical rigor often absent in purely theoretical studies.

6.3 Practical Applications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have numerous practical applications and provide valuable recommendations for practitioners and policymakers:

1. **Cultural Policy Formulation:** Policymakers can leverage these insights to craft cultural policies that account for the material conditions shaping cultural practices, thereby promoting more inclusive and resilient cultural landscapes.

2. **Educational Curricula:** Educators can integrate the study's findings into curricula to equip students with a nuanced understanding of the relationship between material conditions and cultural phenomena.

3. **Cultural Heritage Preservation:** Recognizing the historical continuity in cultural traits can inform strategies for safeguarding cultural heritage amidst rapid modernization.

4. **Community Development:** Community leaders can use the understanding of cultural resistance to empower marginalized groups and foster cultural diversity.

5. **Future Research:** The study advocates for further investigation into the dynamic interactions between material conditions and cultural phenomena using longitudinal data and more advanced modeling techniques.

In summary, this research not only enriches theoretical discourse on historical materialism and cultural reconstruction but also offers actionable insights for practical implementation. By bridging the divide between theory and practice, it highlights the enduring relevance of Marxist perspectives in contemporary cultural studies.

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