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INNER VOICE OF CAPITALISM: “EVERYTHING IS TEMPORARY FOR THE SAKE OF MY EXISTENCE...”

ABSTRACT. The main purpose of this study¹ is to explain the parallelism of transformation in labour market and social transformation with the concept of “temporariness” which is frequently used both in society and in economy. The central argument it is put forward in this article is that in this stage of capitalism, every technical policy change in economy brings transformation of social structure and reshapes interpersonal relations and system of values. Consequently, the contemporary global economy which is significantly based on temporariness not only forces individuals and society as a whole to adapt to fundamental economic changes, but gives also rise to a considerable number of social and psychological troubles.

Introduction

The concept of temporariness in the current stage of capitalism comes to the forefront as one of the principal features which is raising its effectiveness both in economic and in social sense. Neoliberal economy policies which has been put into practice under the leadership of Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s; did not remain only as an alteration economy policy with automation technologies and flexible manufacture models occurred in manufacture processes, but influenced social life deeply in the sense of consequences brought by it as well.

The most important and heavy field where economy and societal intersect is labour market. It is because the labour here, contrary to other manufacture factors, is a living being which is alive, mobile, has feelings and thoughts. On the other hand, employment is one of the most important conditions of social inclusion. In this sense, it is possible to state that new forms of employment which occurred with the flexibility of labour market put cultural modes of society through a new positioning. Regarding the labour only as a factor of financial manufacture and focusing on the maximization of profit to be obtained cause objectification

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of labour; in the last instance this leads to the subjection of all the dimensions of social life to the rules of economy. Therefore, the relationship between today's social life and economic processes is much more closely related to each other than ever before.

On this basis, concepts of temporariness and permanence will be mentioned in the first section of study; the process of flexibilisation in labour markets will be discussed in the sense of types of new employment which are created by this process and finally transformations formed in the social field by this process will be explained on the basis of temporariness.

The Term Temporariness

The state of being temporary is a feature frequently referred to in the 21st century. Temporariness, one of the most important concepts used to explain the transformations in the economic and social structure, is also a fact that embraces every field of our being and daily experiences (for an early diagnosis see Bennis and Slater, 1968; and lately see Bauman, 2000).

The Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of temporariness is “*the state or quality of lasting only for a short time.*” The concept of temporary is defined as “*intended to last, continue, or serve for a limited time;*” “*lasting only for a short time;*” “*serving in a position for the time being.*” The opposite of temporariness is permanence, which means “*the quality or state of being permanent.*” The concept of permanent is defined as “*continuing or enduring without fundamental or marked change.*” All these definitions actually indicate that whether it is to do with usage or to do with its meaning, everything associated to the term temporariness is that it has a short lifespan. Such meaning gives rise to a suggestion such as, if everything is temporary, nothing has any value in the long-term. The result reached in conclusion of this suggestion is that the individual should live today, not think about tomorrow, and capture the moment in its simplest form. However, another very important conclusion, as Hardt and Negri (2003, p. 22) pointed out, labour as an economic, philosophical, political, legal and sociological concept, and all the meanings it carries in capitalist societies are annihilated.

Nowadays, the fact that this concept is at the centre of cultural and social codes is relatively new. No doubt, when Marx said, “all that is solid melts into air” (Marx and Engels, 2008, p. 38), he was emphasising the temporariness within the modernism and capitalist system. However, modernism and planning, which create permanent structures (social, economic, political, and cultural) as a social project, incorporate a quality that controls intense temporariness and enables permanence within the capitalist system, an economic accumulation regime that adopts stability and organisation as a strategy. Nowadays, what is “new” is that the temporariness is incorporated in every field of mankind, and is a real situation imposed on people against their will, as stated by Bourdieu (2006, p. 70-75).

The Flexibilisation of Economy: Flexibilisation in Labour Market and New Employment Types

The flexibilisation of economy is a process thought to have started in the 1970s, which is still developing today. This process is generally analysed under the theory of Post-Fordism. Accordingly, the period that stretches from the 1970s to date is defined as post-fordism, just like the sense of economy is called fordism for the time interval between the 1920s and the 1970s. This periodisation expresses that there was a significant breaking point in terms of economic policy for the 1970s, and that the sense of economy changed radically in comparison to the old understanding after this date. At the same time, this transition is not just a transition in the field of economy as stated by the term fordism, it is a transition that

incorporates transitions in cultural, political, and social life (Hall, 1996; McRobbie, 1996; Gartman, 1998, pp. 120-121).

In general, studies that address past transitions experienced from fordism to post-fordism in industrialized countries summarise these changes as follows (Kumar, 2005, p. 76):

a) In economy: Nation-state's entering into collapse period with the formation of a global market and the rise in transnational companies as a global actor; production and marketing's portraying a more flexible and decentralised structure as opposed to a centralised and popularised structure; adopting a communication-based team work understanding instead of hierarchical organisations; widespread usage of subcontractors, agencies, and small businesses in growth strategies; the increase in people working in temporary jobs, part time jobs, or working at home, and the decrease in job security.

b) In politics and industrial relationships: The borders between social classes becoming uncertain and class-based ideologies and parties losing their powers; "singular-problem focused" requests replacing the integrated system requests at the social movements and small groups becoming organised based on networks instead of mass movements; the fall in unionism and corporatism and the rise in the individual fight to stay alive and workshop-based marketing.

c) In culture and ideology: The decline of collective thought and the rise of individualisation; supporting entrepreneurialism and market-based teaching instead of universal standards in education; full-scale dissociation, variability, temporariness, and eclecticism in values and lifestyles.

Nearly one decade before the rise of post-fordist theory, lots of theories which tried to define this important milestone arose simultaneously. There are number of parallels between post-fordist theory and these theories, however, the latter distinctively place a great emphasis on technology. The developments of information and communication technologies had a huge effect on some theorists in the early 1960s and especially 1970s. During this period of time, many optimistic theories, which were very similar to each other, were put forward in order to explain the transformations in society and economy and predict the future prospect of these changes. Some of the most widely known theories are post-industrial society (Bell, 1973), the third wave (Toffler, 1980), knowledge society (Drucker, 1968), information society (Masuda, 1981) etc. The main arguments of these theories can be summarized in seven points (Dyer-Witthford, 1999, pp. 22-26):

- Technological developments in telecommunication and information systems lead to a new phase of civilisation. This is such a radical transition that it might be comparable to those which was made from agrarian to industrial society.
- Techno-scientific knowledge is the main resource of the new society. Accordingly, scientific research should be only aimed at improving technology in order to increase wealth and force.
- The main dynamics of new era are "computers, telecommunications, and biotechnology."
- The generation of wealth is closely related to an "information economy." In new economy "flexible production systems, electronic funds transfers, and global news and data flows" are increasingly dependent on information.
- These tecno-economic transformations trigger a lot of positive and important effects on society. The unwanted characteristics of industrial society, for instance "meaningless work, huge impersonal organizations, rigid routines and hierarchies, and alienating urban existence," fade away and replaced with "diversification, localism, flexibility, creativity, and equality."

- The information society is global. According to this idea, advanced economies and the Third World are eventually equalized with each other while the global economy is improving.
- With the information revolution and artificial intelligent, humanity will enter a new stage of its evolution.

Flexibility is one of the most important features of the contemporary economy. The concept of flexibility is used to express the change in the traditional bureaucratic and hierarchic structure of the workplace due to reasons such as “global competition, the transformation in customer preferences, and the demand of new information technologies,” ongoing since the early 1980’s (Vallas, 1999, p. 68). The basis of flexibilisation in economy is loosening the rules that regulate employing workers and increasing the amount of freedom employers have when using work force. International organisations such as the World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund) have considered that strictness in labour market related institutions and rules is the main reason behind insufficient employment experienced against economic growth and have supported this process by emphasising on necessity of flexibilisation in labour markets (Mütevellioglu and Işık, 2009, p. 182). While the globalisation process is increasing non-standard employment in developed countries, the informal sector is growing in developing countries. In flexible employment models, there is no standard type of worker that is employed under a certain service agreement, works certain days and hours in accordance with the law, comes to the workplace of the employer at certain hours during the day to work, and uses annual leave on certain days. As well as service relationships classified as classic or standard, together with these new employment types, a new employee type has arisen; the new type of employee works half days or on certain days of the week, is temporarily employed, works when called to do so, and under some circumstances does not even come to the workplace but works at home (Kocabaş, 2004, pp. 39-40). Although some research indicates that temporary or flexible employment might have a positive effect on employees (Farber, 1999; Kashefi, 2007), these employment types make them more vulnerable to job loss in times of macroeconomic decline (Wenger and Kalleberg, 2006).

The “psychological agreement” that materialises between the employees and the employer in flexible economy is completely different from its old content. A psychological agreement, which includes promises and obligations of both blocks emphasised in the employment relationship, and is based on mutual trust that all blocks will abide by agreement rules, is comprised of perceptions related to expectations and obligations perceived by both blocks in the employment relationship. Content of this agreement is subjective as it is based entirely on the perception of the blocks and there is no written agreement (Yılmaz, 2009, p. 32). Stability and foreseeability are the elements that characterise the old psychological agreement. While those working during the 1970s only changed jobs three or four times during their entire career, downsizing during the 1990s has become the determinant of modern employment agreements. As businesses madly re-structure their organisations in order to cope with increasing competition and decreasing market share, they have demolished the old core of paternalism. *Change* and *uncertainty* are the most important characteristics of the new psychological agreement. While those working during the 1970s only changed jobs three or four times during their entire career, it is reported that new employees will have at least 7-10 jobs throughout their career. Nowadays, job-hopping, which used to be frowned upon in the past, is considered a good thing (Yılmaz, 2009, pp. 33-34). *Table 1* demonstrates the main differences between the old psychological agreement and the new psychological agreement.

Table 1 Employee contracts: Old and new.

Old	New
The organization is “parent” to employee “child.”	The organization and employee enter into “adult” contracts focused on mutually beneficial work.
Employee’s identity and worth are defined by the organization.	Employee’s identity and worth are defined by the employee.
Those who stay are good and loyal; others are bad and disloyal.	The regular flow of people in and out is healthy and should be celebrated.
Employees who know what they are told will work until retirement.	Long-term employment is unlikely; expect and prepare for multiple relationships.
The primary route for growth is through promotion.	The primary route for growth is a sense of personal accomplishment.

Source: Kissler, 1994, p. 338.

Flexibility, the definitive characteristic of new capitalism, connects companies/individuals protecting and sustaining their being to their capability to change with changing market conditions. While those who can improve their organisational skills in line with market needs protect their profits, those who cannot develop such a skill lose both their positions and their profits. Therefore, becoming organised in a way that can keep up with instantaneous market changes carries vital importance for both organisations and individuals. This is the precise reason why organisations/businesses are constantly forced to restructure and as a result stability and long-termness, permanence is becoming a thing of the past. “Today, the new/late or flexible capitalism sustained with characteristics such as continuous and rapid change, short-termness, temporariness, focus on current moment, amphibiality and deterritorialisation replaces “*long-term mentality*” with “*short-term mentality*” in every field” (İlhan, 2008, p. 318). As a result, the consistent and constant structures of the past are rapidly being eroded. This situation is causing deep and extensive deformation in the social field and the entire work/career lifespan is being built on flexibility (İlhan, 2008, p. 318).

Sennett (2008a, p. 10) draws attention to the positive meanings incorporated in the term “flexibility.” Accordingly, flexibility is expressed as a rooted change in the capitalist system that releases individuals from strict bureaucracy and boring work routines, offers individuals an endless selection of variety, and gives individuals the chance to draw their own path. Whereas according to Sennett, this system “is a new regime that replaces rules abolished in the past with new control types.” While flexibilisation of economy criticises the alienating employment routines during the fordist era, it carries alienation in employment to even greater levels by establishing temporary, part-time, insecure works.

The Reflections of the New Economic Model on Society and the Souls of Individuals

The flexibilisation of the economy is a process that changes the structure of society, the value system, organisational models, and symbolic meanings. At the same time, this process also shapes the inner world and character of individuals. As stated by Funk (2007, p. 11), “every radical change that occurs in the economic and social structure gives rise to changes in personality.” In this respect, the fact of temporariness, one of the most important characteristic qualities of the economic flexibilisation process, is one of the leading important qualities that affect the way individuals perceive the world and social culture. Likewise, “a new character that forms as a result of new psychic tendencies indicates that a human soul is face to face with an issue. The thing causing this issue is the necessity that human-specific

needs must be compatible with the new demands of the economy, society, and culture” (Funk, 2007, p. 103). As well as being a reflection of the changing rules of the economy on society, this situation is supported by suggestions imposed on individuals by the system. For instance, a study conducted by Rassool (1993, p. 228) concluded that the school curriculum, occupational meanings, and employee awareness were established to satisfy the ideological and economic mission of neoliberalism. Taking into consideration that childhood establishes the most important era in socialisation and the process of internalising common value judgments, this restructuring process brings with it a restructuring process in social interaction. These fundamentally relay three important messages; “redefining work,” “dividing effort,” and “restructuring class relationships.” Rassool argues that this situation serves to shape the cultural hegemony of the neoliberal system by creating a void and inconsistency between political meanings and social reality.

One of the most important social perception changes brought on by the flexibilisation of the economy is “the temporariness of work.” According to Bauman (1999, p. 55-56), “a flexible labour market” does not allow an individual to form any kind of loyal tie with their work. This privilege is only offered to a selected minority; however, a large proportion of the labour force is forced to comply with a continuous process of job-hopping. Due to the temporary nature of work in a flexible economy, changing jobs is not just an obligation, but at the same time “the only sensible option.” Perception towards the nature of the job has changed so much that when an individual wants to pursue their own occupation and turns their back on alternatives other than their occupation it is seen as “a symptom of a psychological and emotional illness” (İlhan, 2008, p. 325). The radical change in perception towards job/career has stripped all historical, cultural, and social contents and reduced the concepts of “job” and “career,” which used to be important functions in the social world and the personal life of individuals, to only work done in order to earn money. Whereas, “as well as generating income for the individual, it is a status source, it affects the attitude, behaviour, and view on life of the individual, it shapes the identity of the individual, it allocates the social environment of the individual and it provides individual to involve in the society; this separates it from being an income-based, daily jobs/work” (İlhan, 2008, p. 325). In his study titled *The Craftsman*, Sennett (2008b) argues that the word “craft” means a lot more than just an activity conducted to earn money. According to Sennett, craft does not just mean carpentry, ironworking, etc. A technician, a biologist, a software programmer, or any artist conducting their art can also be defined as a craftsman. Before anything else, craft gives people a work that they can dedicate their lives to, and a life philosophy that suits their work. An individual expresses themselves with the work they do, and they constantly work towards becoming better because they get stuck with their work for life, and their works become their sole purpose for living. However, new capitalism has changed the career perception of individuals; it has broken the internal unity of individuals, and large scale splits in social structure.

Today, temporariness has come to a point where it has penetrated into every area of social life. Even the “identities” formed from answers given by individuals to the question “who are you?” are not excluded from this impact area. Temporariness of identity is seen as the reflection of consumer tendencies in flexible capitalism on individuals. The constant change and temporariness in fashion, life styles, and values makes the process of shaping their personality and maintaining it difficult for individuals. The need to fill this formed gap brings with another increase in consumer tendencies; however, temporariness and rapid change give rise to a vicious circle. As a result, today, searching for an identity and belonging to a group are vitally important for individuals. Within this context, it becomes evident that temporariness is the main element that identifies a career. With the need for individuals to constantly renew themselves with the increase in competition on the one hand, and

establishing new employment relationships on uncertainty on the other hand, both lead to a constant state of anxiety.

Gorz (1999, p. 36-39) draws attention to the importance of “corporate identity,” which corporates offer their employees, in a society where identities have entered a dissolution period, and where a quest for social entirety constantly falls short. This enables young employees, in particular, to free themselves from the sense of insecurity that is surrounding them and the thought of being a “loser;” being accepted as a “corporate employee” on a global platform, means having a social belonging and identity. Gorz compares this relationship to the congregational relationships on monastic communities during the middle ages. Gorz argues that in return for being accepted by society the employee is asked to give up their personal and class benefits, as well as their life and personality. As a result, intra-group pressure, self-pressure, and control mechanisms are added to the social pressure on the individual. Producing ideological and cultural conditions for these control mechanisms is possible with temporariness, volatility, instability, flexibility, and variability, all dominant in every field of post-fordism; whether financial or spiritual. According to Groz, if such a thing can be said, nowadays, corporates do not buy the labour of employees, they buy their “self-being” and “personal devotion” as a whole. Deleuze (1992, p. 4) expresses this situation in corporations as, “... of course the factory was already familiar with the system of bonuses, but the corporation works more deeply to impose a modulation of each salary, in states of perpetual metastability that operate through challenges, contests, and highly comic group sessions. If the most idiotic television game shows are so successful, it is because they express the corporate situation with great precision.” As a result, not only are employees provoked against each other, but they become distance from themselves and their self-being.

According to Sennett (2008a), the “team-mates” motto of the contemporary economy is equivalent to “there is no authority, simply a team leader, who, just like you works for the team; you are not competitors but team-mates” in power relations. However, the real situation is the complete opposite. The manager introduced as the team leader is a figure with absolute authority over the team, and in actual fact employees are not team-mates but arch rivals. Everyone is fully aware of this real situation. However, employees are forced to play their given role due to the fear of losing their job, and managers are forced to play their given role in order to avoid taking responsibility and increase the performance of employees by motivating them. Sennett claims that being forced to fulfil this role creates a new type of person, known as an “ironic man.” The term irony, as defined by Rorty (1989), means the state in which individuals do not take themselves or events seriously. No doubt, the most important consequence of this situation is the fact that it becomes impossible to identify the class positions between employees, and makes the lines between classes fuzzy. According to Sennett, it has become extremely difficult for individuals to position themselves in a certain class in today’s societies. The fact that individuals are forced to go with the flow and the uncertainty they feel due to working in temporary or insecure jobs restricts individuals from realising which class they belong to. Apart from extreme situations, in general, nobody defines themselves as poor, they constantly believe that they will become rich one day; in other words everybody is living the “American Dream.” Sennett (2008a, pp. 72-73) interviewed individuals working in a bakery, during the interviews, Sennett heard statements such as, “it does not matter whether it is working in a bakery, a shoemaker, or printing house, I can do anything,” and “obviously, I am not going to do this job until I die.” Sennett only extracted one meaning from these statements: “I am not an employee of a bakery.” When asked “What class do you belong to?” all employees gave the same answer, “middle class.” However, employees’ perception of themselves and their class status does not abolish social inequalities and discriminations. Therefore, in Sennett’s words, new capitalism on a personal level gives rise to “the corrosion of character” makes identities and classes cloudy with the

promise of a common dream on a social level, and stops people from acting in unison by reducing potential.

According to Bauman (2005, pp. 68-71), people in today's society are completely open to the direct effect of "mysterious powers" such as "competitiveness," "economic recession," "rationalisation," "decrease in market demand," and "downsizing." In conclusion of the effects these uncontrollable external factors have, individuals are constantly faced with the threat of unexpectedly losing their respectability and source of income. In other words, the ground individuals stand on could easily slip away at any given moment. As well as being an open hazard, this is also an open threat to those that have yet to experience the consequences of such effects, or those that believe they are immune to such effects. Consequently, everyone is "dispensable," and "replaceable." This situation causes an increase in the level of "cynicism" and "nihilism" in individuals. It drags individuals to processes such as complacency, superficiality, selfishness, and standardised desires. Bauman argues that modern societies, fighting a two-century battle in order to prevent the unforeseen effects of natural powers, are in danger of the economic effects that are yet unforeseen.

Within this context, the most significant thing that constantly pesters an individual when trying to obtain a status is the "sense of uncertainty" due to the variable and slippery structure of the economy. Even if an individual acquires a place in social hierarchy during such a process, there is no guarantee that the place acquired will be long-lasting (De Botton, 2010, pp. 109-110). The fact that every individual is replaceable is in compliance with the logic of market economy. According to Funk (2007, pp. 31-43), in an economy based on market logic individuals are forced to market themselves to other individuals; this is the only way they can succeed and draw attention. At this point, the important thing is not what is authentic or what is artificial because even individuals are not aware as to whether the qualities they possess are authentic or artificial.

Conclusion

The new form of economy and the new types of employment that are shaped with new capitalism require new cultural codes and value systems that will help continuation of accumulating capital. According to this basis, we are witnessing the fact that "temporariness" is the centre of our entire being. New capitalism, developed based on the continuity and sustainability of consuming, expands the consumption society it has created based on the term temporariness. The system in place at present is creating individuals with increasing expectations; these expectations must be lulled with temporary purchases, but must never end. It is understandable that employment is gradually becoming temporary since temporariness has become the centre of society. During this period, when the value system is being rearranged, class structures are becoming vague, social solidarity is gradually diminishing, individuals are becoming alienated, and isolated. The togetherness of temporariness and new capitalism, whose main motto is "ownership," seen as contradictory, is in actual fact the fundamental element that maintains its continuity. The fact that people of today are prone to "the corrosion of character," cannot establish a complete life, and are captured in a world gradually distancing itself from the real world, proves that flexible capitalism brings with social and psychological troubles, as much as the trouble it occurs in the economic system.

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