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**A DIGITAL LABOR STORE:
FLEXIBLE TIME TECHNOPARK SAMPLE**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the dimensions of exploitation that has lost its visibility in the flexible working arrangement created by new capitalism, and the relentless race initiated by man with “time”. In this context, the research focusing on the fact that technoparks are one of the places where digital labor is most intensely confessed, focuses on the Erciyes Technopark sample. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with ten technopark employees who were asked eight questions. Interviews have been conducted in January 2019, and the recorded interviews have been analyzed using qualitative content analysis method. The findings show that people who find themselves under flexible working have difficulties in catching up with “time”; to compromise oneself, life, family, environment and labor in order to be faster, more efficient and more productive, and consent to all this without their consent.

Keywords: Digital labor, Technopark, Labor, New Capitalism, Flexible time.

INTRODUCTION

“Digital labor” is one of the most controversial concepts in the “network society” we live in, and the least discussed as a result of the invisibility it has gained. Everything, that finds its place on the planet, which turns into a huge factory, is a tool that is accepted as part of the interchange commoditized by the capital structure.

In today’s “network” jailed world, internet users are exploited based upon the content and virtual existence they produce. The extent of exploitation is much more serious than before as a result of the user’s role as a consumer, especially in the social media, this time in the production phase and to provide an image free from any restrictions, obligations, and control that make him feel exploited, as well as the disappearance of both time and space. “The space-time of capitalism is not fixed but variable” (Harvey, 2015: 52); this variability accelerates and transforms with the development in technology.

Contrary to what is believed, Fuchs (2015: 15), who thinks that social media pro-consumption does not mean “digital labor”, but it is only a part of it, and he emphasizes the need to expand the term “digital labor” to include all forms of paid and unpaid labor required for the existence, production, dissemination and use of digital media, and he invites to understand the importance of examining “the mobility of capital, international exploitation mechanisms, exploitation and working conditions in software fields, the discussions of the labor of internet and social media users as a whole”.

Undoubtedly, in capitalist societies, whether they qualify as “blue collar” or “white collar”, every worker is obliged to add extra labor time to the continuation of the dominant class holding the means of production, to the necessary labor time to keep himself alive.

DIGITAL LABOR

The forces that form the mission of being self-productive within the capitalist production relations are the tools of an exploitation-intensive policy that enables the production of more products produced in the normal time, increasing the surplus value, and thus making more profit, without the need for additional time.

Man is a productive entity by nature, and always tries to find a way to make livelihoods to survive, meet human needs and produce usage values that will meet the needs of others. There is no doubt that what gains importance here is the “use value”. Because, according to Marx, the concept of “labor” must have a usage value in order to gain real value. This is the moment when this “use value” turns into “exchange value”, when labor falls victim to a capitalist process. Of course, it is neither the production nor the consumption phase that ensures the continuation of the process, this is undoubtedly the ingenuity of the “circulation”. The “labor”, which could no longer save itself from commodification and found itself under the domination of the market, has already lost its feature of being unique; It became invisible in the homogeneous mixture.

The world, which has abandoned the traditional structure and embraced modern life, as Ritzer (2000: 135) stated, has lost the old magic it has; capitalist capital

has had to act with the urge to make attempts that will immediately affect and enchant people against such a world. Each capitalist initiative has forced man to work harder, and the belief that the only way to survive has brought the idea to work harder. When such a way of working, which depicts the Fordist form of administration, has to be renewed in the face of the changing world, the Post-Fordist form of administration has manifested itself, and this time the masses have found themselves under a new control under the concept of “flexible time”. Based on the proposition of Hardt and Negri, the necessity to characterize this transformation in the form of production and management as the postmodernization of the economy manifests itself. As a matter of fact, according to them, imperialism on which the power of the modern world is based to establish the central and hierarchical structure has become a concept that needs to be renewed with the change in the economy (Hardt and Negri, 2003: 262-263). The transformation of the capitalist mode of production and management gave birth to the foundation of the empire. Empire is the dominant structure in the world that puts the flexible working system into practice with its decentralized management style, where time and space constraints have lost their importance by providing the global spread of “flexible capitalism”, which is sometimes seen as “new capitalism” and sometimes “late capitalism” or “contemporary capitalism” in the literature (Hardt and Negri, 2003: 17). It is seen that this dominant structure was built due to the nature of the changing political power in the “new world consisting of communication networks and where people, money, and ideas are in a global flow” (Gilbert, 2012: 227).

The exploitation seen in here is undoubtedly much more dangerous than the other one; because, in this way of working, it does not seem to offer a certain time and place condition, but at first glance, the limits of the control have expanded enough to lose its visibility. Hardt and Negri explain the post-Fordist mode of production that came to life with the new capitalism with the concept of “biopolitical production” and characterize the labor that forms the product as “immaterial labor” (Hardt and Negri, 2003: 303). According to Castells (2005: 99), this new economy is informational and global and based on network organization. Unlike manual labor, the existence of mental work is encountered in the biopolitical production form where informational, communicative, digital, more generally intangible labor is on the scene. In the biopolitical order to which this difference has led, especially in the name of being able to control labor, people no longer need 24 hours between the four walls to work. In new capitalism, the best place to work is “anywhere”; and the best time is “always”.

The world of today, which is the proof of Marx’s righteousness saying that “everything that is solid is evaporating”; it is a fair determination that it is a new version of a “capitalist society” hidden behind definitions such as “information society”, “network society”. The main institutional structure is also the market here, and the ultimate goal is to expand the borders of a global world market. Likewise, the ideology called “globalization” is where “capital is internationalized, moves freely and rapidly, and there is the most plunder financial speculation worldwide” (Wood, 2016: 150) and it is a period, a system, and it does not like drawing a boundary to the market.

According to Fuchs (2015), where it can be easily seen that Marx regarded labor as a “modern form of activity under the rule” and it is perceived as the labor related to all kinds of Information and Communication Technologies industry in

the light of his theory of labor-value as “digital slavery”; the place where values and commodities are produced, everywhere; time is any moment. As a matter of fact, according to him again; it is also necessary to consider the workers of mining workers working in mines that are raw materials in the production of communication tools. Software workers in India and Silicon Valley, Foxconn workers in China, who made a name for themselves with their employees who committed suicide as the producers of digital labor. Inspired by Fuchs (2020: 177), it is possible to say that there is a dialectical relationship between labor and technology as the subject and object of production.

ALIENATION

“Working”, which has features of a historical and social product, has been perceived from a different perspective and has been constantly changed termly. It is an undeniable fact that in this capitalist order, where the formation of certain and necessary conditions is no longer possible, it is not possible to talk about an alienated work that individual can realize himself; “digital labor” is also an alienated “digital work”. As such, referring to the concept of “alienation” also stands as a necessity.

According to Hegel, the concept of “alienation”, which has been systematized by Hegel for the first time and became theoretical from Marx’s point of view; “is about the forming of existence in a dialectical process” (Tekin, 2014: 30). Marx, on the other hand, is concerned with worker, product and labor in the subject of “alienation”. Marx, who advises himself, the society, the production process, the economy, to the foreigner to avoid being a slave of the object, on the other hand, emphasizes that “alienation” manifests itself in the relations of production in which man has to sell his labor power (Fromm, 2004: 85). For Marx, who sees “the commodity as a fetish” as one of the most unique aspects of capitalism and places it at the center of his analysis, expresses this alienation of capitalism as a “value” concept (Amin, 2017: 72).

The foreign attitude of the product that emerges as a result of labor to the producer makes it a tool in the hands of the power against its producer. In this way, while labor give birth to an alienated property, on the other hand, property becomes foreign to self-producing, and becomes dominant in labor. As a matter of fact, “the life given by human to objects confronts him like a foreigner and an enemy” (Marx, 1964: 169-170. As cited in. Berger, 2014: 59). It is precisely here that giving Marx’s right to Marx is a proper attitude: “The increase in the world of things is directly proportional to the decrease in the world of people.”

The unconditional acceptance of the necessity of sacrificing the life, character, and self that modern man wishes to have in order to sustain the life offered to him/her is sufficient to portray “alienation”. As a matter of fact, it is possible to read such alienation in Fritz Pappenheim’s (2002) analogy inspired by Goya’s “*A caza de dentes*” (Out Hunting for Teeth). According to Pappenheim (2002), who sees the state of humanity faced with alienation as a figure of the modern age in the woman who tries to remove the teeth from the corpse because of her superstition that she has a magical power in the teeth of the hunged-man in the painting; since she does not have the courage to face the real face of the corpse, the woman who insists on carrying out the action she believes should be done

by holding a handkerchief by holding a handkerchief between her own face and the man's face stands before us as a picture of wear.

While the transformation of the tradition of disciplining human, labor and society peculiar to the modern period into a practice of keeping under control in the postmodern period results in the deepening of surveillance, the flexibility of time and space offered in working life is known as a lifeline to cover up control, surveillance, and alienation. Thanks to the “digital” adjective before the concept of “labor” as per the conditions of the period; It is evident that the capitalist capital structure allows it to create a new and wide area of exploitation, and to make alienation dominant with a more invisible and so-called smiling face mask.

TECHNOPARK

“Technopark” (Technology Development Zone) is “an enterprise based on incentives and ownership with management function that has relation with one or more universities or other higher education institutions and research centers on an official or activity basis, also designed to encourage the establishment and development of industrial companies based on information and advanced technologies, and has a management function that will provide support to tenant companies in technology transfer and business administration” according to International Science Parks Association (IASP). Although continually offers successful stories in the light of words such as “progress”, “development”, “innovation”, “invention”, technopark is a place where employees, the creators of “digital labor”, who are overwhelmed with factors such as long working hours, overtime, intense stress and competition and find themselves in a permanent exploitation ring, unwittingly devote to their lives and as Sennett states a place where they even wear their own character. According to Habermas, who does not think very differently from Sennett, cognitive capitalism colonizes life (Peters and Bulut, 2014: 32).

“The world of people becomes worthless in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things; labor does not only produce commodities, it also produces itself and the worker as a commodity and realizes this as much as it produces commodities” (Marx, 1969: 67. As cited from Okutan, 2006: 51). To say that technoparks are a serious exploited warehouse where the high-level qualities are devalued and put into ordinariness, the system of irregularity is used with the mentality of expense and income, and that the feeling of working in a temporary position is always kept alive in the hearts.

Technoparks are more than just a place of production, thanks to the “flexible (new) capitalism” which feeds them, the “technology employees” that it incorporates essentially cause them to lose control of their own lives, to be established right in the middle of a life kneaded with anxiety, and even to see their life as a tool.

In “new capitalism”, which stands before us as an “illegible power regime”, it is nothing more than a kind of eye-wash that the old control mechanisms are eliminated and substitute for more control possibilities than before.

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Emphasizing that labor can reach the quality of being productive only by producing its own opposite, Marx (1979: 392) mentions that it works in capital production by undertaking the duty of a vehicle. The aim of this study is to draw attention to the fact that digital labor is in the service of capital production in the same way despite all the cute, attractive appearance.

In the research, Erciyes Technopark which works under the slogan “Growing Turkey’s Technology Base” is the subject of case analysis. Science parks where technological devices surrounding the world are designed are handled in Erciyes Technopark, focusing on exploitation, which is inherent in the study and the conditions are easier.

The study, which started with the slogan “the reward of labor is never the equivalent of the amount of labor”, aims to prove how “new capitalism” establishes speed-oriented work in the middle of human life, based on the narratives of technology workers who devote their lives to the global mindset.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Semi-structured interview technique has been used in the study based on field research. In the study where eight different companies operating in Kayseri Erciyes Technopark constitute the research universe, face to face interviews have been conducted with ten technopark employees. The texts that emerged as a result of the meetings held in Kayseri in January 2019 have been analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Content analysis, which is one of the qualitative research techniques, as Gunter says, may be a reason for preference not only for the purpose of dealing with quantitative data, but also for the analysis and interpretation of thoughts, expressions and opinions (2000: 55-56). As Kerlinger (1986) has stated, although content analysis is a technique that is used for help because of its three features such as being systematic, objective and measurable; in-depth interview is one of the techniques used regularly for the analysis of social reality. Thanks to this technique, a symbolic representation of a kind of social reality is created according to Merten and Teipen (1991. As cited from Gunter, 2000: 57). From this point of view, content analysis is an important tool used in recording social reality when it is carried out through in-depth interview and transferred to the text (Merten, 1996: 65).

Selection of employees from software experts to entrepreneurship coordinator, company owner to project team leader from different taskers allowed the research to be more inclusive and to obtain more accurate findings. On the other hand, the scales have been also taken into consideration during the selection of companies; small-scale companies as well as large, multi-employee companies are included in the research. Table 1 provides brief information about the interviews.

Table 1. Interview List

	Company	Speaker	Duty	Interview Date
1	A1	X1	Entrepreneurship Coordinator	08.01.2019
2	A2	X2	Accountant	08.01.2019
3	A3	X3	Company owner	09.01.2019
4	A4	X4	Programmer	08.01.2019
5	A5	X5	Business partner	08.01.2019
6	A6	X6	Project Team Leader	14.01.2019
7	A7	X7	Academician	14.01.2019
8	A8	X8	Computer engineer	14.01.2019
9	A8	X9	Computer engineer	14.01.2019
10	A8	X10	Computer engineer	14.01.2019

Source: Author's data from interviews

Eight open and closed-ended questions have been asked to those whose views have been consulted. The answers for the interview questions, “How many hours of a day do technopark employees spend working? Are the weekends counted within work programs? Is it possible to talk about a concept of shift in technoparks? How is the working time planning done, and by whom? If there is a flexible way of working, what does this flexibility make the employee feel? Is there enough time for the plans and the works to be done? So, do you ever wish that a day is 48 hours? As a person who works hard, can you say that I can afford everything in life?” have been sought, the data obtained as a result of the analysis have been collected under eight titles, and this article has been written.

The interview questions were prepared in order to examine the place of the subject covered in the research in the literature, to determine the problem, and to provide a response in practice from one point. That the exploitation awareness of employees with flexible time, and the capitalist management style, which has evolved from discipline to control by referring to the concept of “biopolitical production” in the literature, is almost a living proof by losing control of their own lives in revealing the side that deals with the production of lives rather than products is one of the factors that determine the questions. In the study based on the semi-structured interview technique, the expressions of the speakers without questions were also found noteworthy. Collecting the findings under eight headings was realized as a result of combining the answers to the questions and the common thoughts conveyed by the interviewees.

FINDINGS

Findings revealed as a result of field research show that digital labor producers are incapable of “time”, find themselves in the mood that only a defeated warrior can understand, and cannot catch up the time that flows.

Flexible-time Understanding Becoming a Resident Culture in Technopark

One of the first findings of the study in the field research has been that the flexible-time understanding became a culture established in Technopark. Although it is

seen that the technoparks offered to the employees as a place where a flexible working system generally exists, it is observed that there is an average of 10 hours of active working per day between 08.30-18.30 in particular. While these hours represent the compulsory working time, it is not at all difficult to talk about a flexible-time understanding of 20 hours based on the answers received on the basis of interviews.

Each company determines their working time within itself. If I speak for my own company, we spend 16-20 hours a day working. (X3)

Working as a Process Taking Holidays In

It is also among the findings that Erciyes Technopark employees partly include Saturdays in their work programs. In particular, it is understood that the employees who find themselves in an even more intense work when the delivery date of the products approaches, not only include the weekend in their programs, but also continue working at night.

When we get close to the last delivery and installation day of the product, we need to continue working at night and even at the weekend so that we can finish the works. Because even seconds affect the factory. (X1)

Is it Possible to Talk about a Concept of Shift in Technoparks?

Based on the findings obtained from the field research, it is possible to mention the existence of a flexible working style in technoparks; however, there is also an obligatory working hour application. This data makes the researchers think that there is both an average of 10 hours of the day and working hours under the name of “flexibility” in which the rest of the day is spent.

In a system like this, one feels that the job should be finished as soon as possible. We focus on work, not on time. (X7)

Working Time Planning

In the picture that we see as a common thought as much as possible to reach a general opinion; although there is a situation where every employee perceives that s/he is making her/his own work plan himself, it is seen that the working time planning is actually done by the company owner or the product manager. Because each employee is acting knowing that whenever there are some jobs that need to be finished, s/he should not leave the workplace before finishing, s/he should end the job. Such flexible working time schedules are individualized charts that change from day to day, and thanks to this type of planning, the argument is developed that employees have the chance to get out of routine time and work as free individuals.

Depending on the job given, the duration is determined. The time the work takes determines the cost. (X4)

The planning done by the owner of the company takes the form of a business plan according to the expertise field of the people. We determine the numbers by dividing them into hours and days. (X5)

Flexible Work Masking Capitalism Exploitation

As a result of the contribution made by technology thanks to its role as “supporting force of dominant power” in the age we are in, one of the adjectives received by capitalism appears as “flexible”. The best way to hide the exploitation of flexible (new) capitalism is undoubtedly the “free” atmosphere offered to people that they can create their own working conditions and thus decide how their lives can take shape by opposing strict bureaucratic practices. The thing that makes us think that exploitation is much more invisible and deep than before is the nature of the liberating effect offered as an advantage that have infiltrated much more into life, rather than the old forms of control of flexible capitalism. New and flexible structures of power produced over the individual lead to “character wear” as Sennett (2008) points out.

Flexibility makes the employee feel free from feeling stuck. Having a clean mind feels good to get the job out. However, flexible work is not working less, but it is working more. I have been working in this business for 19 years. When a person prefers to work for a long time, others start to work like this; then this kind of working principle becomes the general character. (X2)

This sector makes flexible work mandatory. No discipline. Employee feels free, comfortable, efficient. (X5)

You work in the period when people work, or vice versa. We are people who also work at home. (X1)

I think anywhere where there is internet and computer is suitable for working. Continuing the project at home makes people feel free because there is no time limit. (X9)

A person working in a flexible environment becomes more productive. A comfortable, effective head... (X8)

The Race of Flexible Workers against “Time”

According to the understanding placed by the new capitalism, the fact that people do not trust the company they work leads to success, contrary to trusting, and in such an insecure, unfaithful environment, the individual finds a way to market himself by making more work plans. Sennett’s statement “the search for rebellion and flexibility against the bureaucratic routine produced new structures of power and control instead of creating conditions that would liberate us” undoubtedly mentions how the new order conquered the concept of “time” and speaks of the existence of an understanding that has taken on a much more destructive role than the “metric time” logic, in which the worker’s work can be calculated at a given moment in old capitalism.

There’s no time. We seem to be running after a train. (X5)

Of course there is no time. What is left over from work? I am married with a child. I miss homemade food. There is no time for a normal life. (X2)

Sleeping is the primary condition for me. This limits my goals. Socializing a little means giving up sleep. (X10)

Failure to Finish the Work in a Day Divided into 24 Hours

Looking at the organization of time in the workplace is the easiest way to understand what kind of regime is used to manage a company. In the light of the findings obtained as a result of interviews in this context Based on the technopark sample, which seems to be dominant in flexible working, today, “flexible organizations” are experimenting with variable timelines called “flex-time”. (Sennett, 2008: 59). In particular, it is possible to see that the company owners’ approach to flexibility sometimes reveals itself with striking statements.

I wish a day is not 48 hours, it is 72 hours (X3)

Sometimes I can do what I can do in 48 hours in 1 hour. Sometimes even 48 hours is not enough. People want an isolated working life. Even working on the computer all day is not as tiring as man. Now, in working life, speaking the same language is not enough to agree. (X2)

Alienation as a Result of Flexible Working

The expressions of the technopark employees, who stand in front of us as a clear proof of how work pushes people into isolation and alienation, draw a picture of man’s siege and expresses his helplessness on his way to the process of alienation to himself, then to his environment and ultimately to society.

I don’t have time for anything other than my family. There is no time even for the family. (X2)

No time. It’s just business. I feel relieved when I have the opportunity to listen to myself in the dark. The family factor takes people off. (X4)

There is work in the center of our lives. It is not possible to spare time for ourselves. Work covers our entire life. (X6)

I can’t spare time for anything other than work. Work encompasses my life. Then we become asocial. Then society no longer accepts us. (X5)

CONCLUSION

The findings obtained in the research have the quality to see that under flexible work, labor has undergone a greater exploitation and man has become a desperate spirit over time. During the interviews, it is witnessed that some employees who have been working under the same regime for many years are wormed out, but still have the belief that they need to work more; this testimony confirms the correctness of Fromm’s (2004: 86) view that the responsible one is the capital in the portrait drawn by the humanized and objectified person.

Employees who prefer a life away from “man” and close to “machine” and have the view that such a way of working offers more comfort to the person point out the destructive effect of business life on the human with this thought that they developed. It is impossible not to agree with Sennett’s opinion. Because this desperation and a dream of life less than human can bear carry traces from a serious “character wear” (Sennett, 2008).

It is not difficult to think that “no long term” slogan is shouted by an almost invisible voice at technoparks which consider ‘competition’ phenomenon, seen as one of the issues that Sennett emphasizes, as a driving force. This slogan, which erodes trust, loyalty and dependence, shows itself especially in ignoring the graying of the ‘family’ concept by employees.

As a result of the interviews conducted within the scope of the research; employees who are loyal to the idea that the family factor cuts the ties with the business express that neither their family nor themselves find time to work, while the term “siege” used by some is striking; because the owner of immaterial labor is aware that s/he devotes his/her life to “work”. One of the determining results of the research is the complaint of the labor owner, who seeks a remedy for 72 hours a day in the face of the blurring of the boundary between his working life and his non-working life that he lives in running, on “sleeping limits my goals”. Indeed, these results point to the existence of “alienation”.

It is one of the main defenders of the study that such findings as “*I think everywhere where there is a computer and internet is suitable for working*” proves that the idea that every place becomes a working space and every time becomes a working time together with flexible capitalism.

While the flexible-time technopark employees, who lost the flag to the time in their race, say “*we focus on work, not on time*” on the one hand, they do not hesitate to express their desperation as “*we are chasing the train*” with the impulse of being flesh and blood on the other hand. The statement “*Even the second affects the factory*” is striking in that it reveals the point reached by global capitalism and carries the traces of the deprivation of value of labor rather than being a mere finding.

As a result, it is seen that the technopark employees, who are able to gather around the view that flexibility offers them the opportunity to work free and to think originally, have complained about the 20 hours of work a day because they lose control of their lives and internalize the attitude “we are created for such working”. With this aspect, each of them turns into the current interpretation of the woman in Goya’s “*Out Hunting for Teeth*” painting.

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