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Neoliberalism and Dilemmas of Trade Unions in Turkey, 1980-2010

Neoliberalizm ve Türkiye’de Sendikaların Çıkmazları, 1980-2010

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ÖZ

Bu makale neoliberal dönüşümün ilk 30 yılında Türkiye’de emek hareketi ve sendikalaşmanın durumuna odaklanmaktadır. 1980’lerle başlayan Türkiye ekonomisinin neoliberal dönüşümü ithal ikameci sanayi döneminden kalan emeğin tüm kazanımlarını yaklaşık 30 yıl içinde tamamen ortadan kaldırmıştır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma neoliberal küreselleşmenin yarattığı emeğin segmentasyonu ve esnek üretimin sendikaların zayıflamasındaki başat neden olarak görmektedir. Neoliberalizmin ciddi anlamda işsizlik ürettiğini iddia eden bu makale ekonomik genişleme dönemlerinde bile emeğin yaşadığı ciddi zorluklara değinmektedir. 2000’li yıllardaki büyüme dönemlerinde bile Türkiye’de ciddi anlamda işsizlik artmış, emek güvencesizleştirilmiş ve çalışanların çalışma saatleri ciddi oranda artmıştır. Tarım politikalarına desteğin azalmasıyla birlikte tarımda çalışan nüfus işsizlikle karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Örgütlü emeğin haklarını korumaya çalışan sendikaların üye sayıları ciddi ölçüde düşmüştür. Sendikalar varoluşsal bir krize girmiştir. Bu çalışma Sendikaların yaşadıkları sendikal krizden çıkması için enformel sektörde çalışan işçileri kapsayan bir stratejiye geçmeleri gerektiğini önermektedir. Bu makale Toplus hareket sendikacılığını, sendikaların yeniden yükselişe geçmeleri için bir alternatif olabileceğini önermektedir. Ancak bu süreç de kendi içinde zorluklar taşımaktadır.

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the situation of labour movement and unionization in Turkey in the first 30 years of neoliberal transformation. The neoliberal transformation of the Turkish economy, which started in the 1980s, completely eliminated all the gains of the labour left over from the import substitution industry period in about 30 years. Therefore, this study sees the segmentation of labour created by neoliberal globalization and flexible production as the main reason for the weakening of unions. Claiming that neoliberalism produces serious unemployment, this article touches upon the serious difficulties faced by labour even during periods of economic expansion. Even during the growth periods in the 2000s, unemployment has increased significantly, labour has become insecure and the working hours of employees have increased significantly. With the decrease in support for agricultural policies, the population working in agriculture faced unemployment. The number of members of the unions that attempt to protect the rights of organized labour has dropped significantly. The unions have entered an existential crisis. This study suggests that unions should adopt a strategy that includes workers working in the informal sector in order to get out of the union crisis they are experiencing. This article recommends that Collective movement unionism can be an alternative for unions to rise again. However, this process has its own difficulties.

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Introduction

Neoliberal transformation of the world resulted in the serious crisis of the trade unions. The membership and effects of the trade unions have been declining for more than four decades. The formal organizational structure of the trade unions could not stop the hegemony of the capital. Nevertheless, the entire crisis involves restoration and renovation opportunities. In this sense, the crisis of the trade unions argument may be revised as the crisis of the formal accumulation regime organizational style trade unions. The restoration of trade unions can achieve much more effective and radical status against the capital. This paper seeks to figure out the main reasons for the decline and dilemmas of the trade unions under the neoliberal transformation taking the case of Turkey into account between 1980 and 2010. This paper, which also to a large extent examines the first decade of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP (Justice and Development Party) rule, reveals economic success limits of the period between 2000 and 2010, which was supposedly labeled as economic growth and expansion. The research findings of this study show that there were serious unemployment and poverty problems even in the early years of the AKP rule. Moreover, there was a serious decline in trade union rights and unionization rates within this period. This study attempts to highlight the necessity of unified labour movements to struggle against the hegemony of the capital. The segmentation of the labour is one of the most significant cards of the capital to break the class solidarity. Hence, the paper mainly emphasizes this problem and attempts to seek solutions taking into account the case of Turkey.

The Trade union conditions in Turkey are consistent with the global neoliberal political economic world trend. Moreover, unionism in Turkey can be evaluated as much more complicated since labour market statistics and segmentation of labour and labour organizations prove that the conditions of labour in Turkey are much worse than in the OECD countries. Almost half of the economy is dominated by the informal sector in Turkey. Therefore, there is large segmentation between organized labour and non-organized ones. The segmented labour in Turkey can easily be abused by the right-wing populist discourses. Due to the neoliberal transformation of the economy there is a fragile solidarity among working class segments, which hinders the united struggle for labour rights. Therefore, to stop the wild capitalism attack against the labour in Turkey, there is a need for a radical transformation of the labour unions which aims to involve both formal and informal labour. If this transformation involves unification, resistance and solidarity taking the global perspectives into account since neoliberalism acts globally, the labour unions achieve important success.

Global Decline of Trade Unions: Structural Reasons of the Neoliberal Transformation

The Trade Unions lived their golden age from the end of the Second World War to the global economic crisis of the early 1970s. The reconciliation of Labour and capital can be traced back to the 1929 economic crisis. One of the main reasons for the 1929 economic crisis was overproduction and the lack of demand for commodities. To solve this overproduction crisis of capital Keynesian policies triggered the reconciliation between capital and labour. Hence, the rising status of trade unions is consistent with the Keynesian accumulation regime. Except for fascist regimes during the Second World War, the number of trade unions as well as their activities profoundly increased in the core countries until the beginning of the 1980s. In this context, trade unions became part of the capitalist paradigm; moreover, they legitimized and sustained the capitalist social relations. It can ostensibly seem weird, but indeed coherently with the former accumulation regime of capitalism, trade unions became one of the agents of the capitalist structure. Particularly, the Keynesian economic policies in the West were the kiss of life to capitalism. There are some arguments which claim that If Keynesian policies had not

reached the help of the sinking world system, capitalism could have disappeared (Hardt & Negri, 2003, pp. 23-53). Nevertheless, the gains of a social resistance to the market were manifested in various dimensions. In Polanyi's words, after 1914, the market was somehow not completely disembedded from social relations, but social relations had resistance and important gains to embed the market. The market was constantly expanding and society was showing reflexes to protect itself. In this sense, Keynesian policies can also be thought of as the acquisition of embedding the market in social relations (Polanyi, 1944). However, post-1945 world order of capitalism after three decades began to enter into crisis during 1970s. In other words, Keynesian Welfare state in the North and Developmental State in the South created new challenges for the capitalist system. The capitalist system while giving concessions to organized labour of the North and postcolonial states of the South achieved to keep state socialism or communism at bay after the Second World War (Radice, 2005, pp. 91-98). However, the economic and political problems that had accumulated seriously in three decades began to strain the system.

The golden era of Capitalism had been finished with low-profit rates and high inflation ratios in the second half of the 1970s. The Arab-Israeli war and the increase of petrol prices worsened the crisis of the Keynesian accumulation regime in the West and import-led developmental model in the underdeveloped world. Therefore, neoliberal policies which had indeed an intellectual background stems from the 1930s gained popularity. Hayek and Friedman were demonstrated as the golden intellectual figures that would stabilize the system. The Bretton Woods system set up to regulate international trade and finance was finally abandoned in favour of floating exchange rates in 1973”(Radice, 2005, p. 94). Privatization, financial liberation, deregulations remained the key concepts of the neoliberal policies which were initially implemented in Chile via the strong fist of the military regime to create a free market. The technocrats who were educated in Chicago University became the key figures in implementation of the neoliberal policies under the ultra-suppressive Pinochet regime (Öniş & Şenses, 2009, p. 713). Soon after the adaptation of Great Britain and the USA, neoliberalism expanded to the core countries. Everything was changed and reconciliation of labour and capital was broken. Thatcher one of the pioneer implementers of neoliberalism took the ‘iron lady’ nickname because of her hostile policies against the strikes and trade unions in England (Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 114). All the gains of labour in the 30 years after the Second World War were liquidated under the Reagan and Thatcher administrations (Levitt, 2009, p. 76). Washington Consensus provided global institutional support to enhance the hegemony of Neoliberal capitalism during the 1980s and 1990s. Washington Consensus reflected the convergence of three institutions located in Washington D.C. concerning the new economic policies in the post-Keynesian period. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the US Treasury Department provided neoliberal prescriptions which were based on neoclassical economic theory for poor countries. The neoliberal premises of Washington Consensus recommended that states should roll back and focus on three policy areas to provide the functioning of the market economy: defense against foreign aggression, provision of legal and economic infrastructure for the functioning of markets, and mediation between social groups in order to preserve and expand market relations (Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 114). Neoliberalism also requires fiscal and monetary policy discipline to control inflation and eliminate budget deficits. Public expenditure cuts and tax reforms were the two of the most important state tools to discipline the economy within the framework of the neoliberal logic. Furthermore, neoliberalism recommends devaluation of the foreign currency or exchange rates to facilitate foreign investment follows. The more crucial point directly related to our article is ‘flexibilisation’ of the labour market, supposedly in order to increase employment and labour productivity. As Alfredo Saad-Filho states that flexibilisation of the labour market includes:

“the simplification of hiring-and-firing regulations, the decentralisation of labour relations, the curtailment of trade union rights, the elimination of collective agreements and protective regulation, and the reduction of social security benefits (Ibid.).

The issue of sovereignty in the global era has also transformed dramatically. Though a global state still seems as a utopia, it is evident that nation states are an indispensable component of globalization, and the unequal development and expansion of capitalism continued on the basis of the nation states (Dinç, 2020, p. 99). Under these conditions the crisis of capitalism occurred as the crisis of trade unions as well. The change of information technologies and new transformation facilities accompanied the radical change of societies after the 1980s. In this sense, trade unions that adapted to the conditions of the former accumulation regime could not produce successful policies during the neoliberal transformation. Trade Unions gradually have been vanishing in the global level. The ratio of unionized workers has been marginalized for more than four decades (Mütevellioğlu & Işık, 2009, pp. 159-204). Aziz Çelik (2006) identifies neoliberal transformation as climate change in which the trade unions should adopt the new circumstances to reorganize themselves and resist the inequalities of the transformation.

The transformation of the neoliberal paradigm seems just like climate change which is much more structural and long-lasting than the daily change of weather conditions. Therefore, trade unions also need to change their former organizational paradigms (Ibid., p. 18).

Economic liberalization, flexible production and segmentation of labour can be considered as the main reasons for the decline of trade unions in the era of globalization. Indeed, these above-stated reasons are the sub-groups of globalization. Hence, to reveal the crisis of trade unions, this study will highlight the economic aspects of globalization closer. First of all ‘privatization’, has one of the significant impacts of the crisis of labour unions. For instance, unionization ratios in public sectors were generally superior to the private sector. Therefore, the immense privatization policies of neoliberalism undermined the ground of the labour unions on which they can flourish more comfortable.

Another important structural hardship is ‘the rise of the service sector’. Traditionally trade unions are overwhelmingly organized in the industrial sectors. However, the rising shift from industrial to service sectors also undermined the organizational base of trade unions. The table also reveals the shift in western European countries. This shift is not limited to the core countries. This is a trend encompassing underdeveloped or developing countries as well (Table 1: shows the change over time between industry and service sectors.). Atypical production also enhanced the deteriorated conditions of the trade unions. Subcontracting and outsourcing lead to the downsizing of firms. Therefore, it became difficult to organize union activities in small scale firms. Most of the small scale firms can easily run away from the formal market. Informal market and atypical production relations severely damaged the organizational capabilities of the labour organizations (Adaman, Buğra, & İnel, 2009, pp. 168-188). Adaman, Buğra, & İnel (2009) highlight the prevalent increase of atypical jobs in this context. What is significant is that, in the neoliberal era, informal market and atypical production are embedded in formal and typical production. Hence, the differentiation of them even became very complicated. As Adaman, Buğra, & İnel state:

What is worth noting is the increasing significance of atypical forms of employment. The transition from "Fordism" to "flexible production" has not only led to the replacement of full-time, permanent jobs with part-time, temporary ones but has also brought along a novel significance of informal employment. Notwithstanding the obvious difficulty of statistically assessing the size of the informal sector, available estimates indicate that we are far from dealing with a marginal phenomenon (Ibid.).

Table 1: The Changes of Employment between Industry and Service Sectors

Country	Industry 1967	Industry 1996	Service 1967	Service 1996
Austria	41	33	42	60
Belgium	44	27	50	70
Denmark	37	27	49	69
Finland	34	28	40	65
France	39	27	45	72
German	47	37	43	60
Italy	37	32	38	61
Norway	37	32	47	72

Source: *Jeremy Waddington and Reiner Hoffman, Trade Unions in Europe*. Brussels: ETUI

Unemployment is also another significant problem for trade unions. Neoliberalism could not achieve the economic growth rates of the former Keynesian accumulation regime (Harvey, 2006, pp. 145-158). Even in the economic expansion periods in neoliberalism unemployment rates could not be diminished. Hence, widespread unemployment entails threats to workers and trade unions since labour prices could easily be suppressed by the capital. Adaptation of flexible law regulations to ease the change of labour space in favour of capital also impoverishes the bargaining power of the trade unions. Formerly trade unions were organized on a national basis and the alteration of nation-state sovereignty via globalization paralyzed the bargaining power of the trade unions. Particularly, in the core countries, the companies threaten the trade unions by shifting the factories to third world countries. Hence, trade unions have one more dilemma in terms of national-international context. Micro nationalism is enhanced in the core countries, and the solidarity of labour movements is profoundly damaged by the flexible production processes.¹

The ideological hegemony of neoliberalism also obstructs the organizational space of trade unions. People are more individualistic and refrain from various kinds of decision processes. It seems that rational choice premises are inherited by most people, and atomistic individuals have been running for interest maximization. Therefore, the risks of trade union activities are engendered with the rising deviation from the trade unions. Finally, I should also emphasize the failure and diminish of the leftist movements throughout the world, particularly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the era of the former accumulation regime, leftist movements were very powerful all around the world. The failure of Soviet-style state socialism also resulted retreat of the people from the radical leftist policies. In this sense, with the lack of political support, the bargaining power of labour against capital weakened.

Briefly, taking into account the structural reasons that engender the decline of the trade unions can be listed as follows: privatization, sectoral alteration, atypical production, rising unemployment, segmentation of labour, the change of labour space, neoliberal hegemony that promotes individualistic thinking and weak radical leftist opposition. In this context, the trade unions' reaction to the structural adversity is the defence of the gains of the Keynesian

¹ One of the examples of the core-periphery division within the trade union context is the article of Yıldırım Koç. However, his article neglects the solidarity and unification attempts of the labour movements both in the core and periphery countries. See the nationalist perspective at Koç, 2006, pp. 157-207.

accumulation regime. However, the defensive strategy could not achieve any success. The trade unions could not stop the centralization and concentration of the capital. Indeed, the defensive strategy could be seen to some extent beneficial in the short run. However, concerning the long run, meltdown of the trade unions has been continued. In this sense, trade unions should change their organizational strategies as soon as possible (Adaman, Buğra, & İnel, pp. 168-188). The best defence is a good offence; the crisis of the trade unions could not be solved by trying to defend the former organizational structures of the trade unions. In fact, the crisis in itself has opportunities as well. Formerly trade unions were supplementary tools of the capitalist system, but now there is a base for revolutionary restoration of the trade unions. In this sense, the crisis has the seeds of opportunities to radicalize the labour movements (Beşeli, 2006, pp. 237-279). The weakest stomach of the trade unions nowadays are the segmentation of labour, the segmented labour paralyzes the labour solidarity, consistently, enhance the legitimization of the capital. Therefore, the primary target of the trade unions must be producing solutions on the issue of the segmentation of labour. In this sense, in the last section of the paper, I will discuss the possibilities of the revival of the labour organizations.

Labour Market, State and Trade Unions in Turkey after the 1980s

According to the World Bank reports the working-age population between 1980 and 2004 grew by 23 million people, however, the available job only reached 6 million jobs. Moreover, Turkey with a 44 per cent employment rate became the worst country concerning the employment ratios. Most of the countries have above 50 per cent employment rates, the EU-15 ratio even passes the 65 per cent ratio (World Bank Report, 2006, pp. 1-13). The World Bank labour market study mirrors the failure of the neoliberal policies as well. Educated people suffer from high unemployment rates in Turkey. “Unemployment is extremely high among educated young people, averaging 39 per cent for university graduates between 20-24 years old and 15 per cent for those ages 25-29” (Ibid.). Furthermore, Turkey also involves a large informal economy. The World Bank report estimates that one in three urban workers and three in four rural workers are not registered in social security institutions (Ibid.). The results are very severe and also can be seen as proof of the neoliberal policies which exercises against the interest of labour. There is an important overbalance between men and women as well. Women participation in the workforce merely equals below the level of half of the EU-15 countries. Buğra (2018, p. 9) based on OECD statistics highlights that there is an enormous difference between the female labour force participation rate in Turkey (33.6) and in the OECD overall (62.8). Working hour rates are also one of the worst of the world ratios in Turkey. 52 hours working hour ratios of Turkish workers prove how *rational* the neoliberal economic policies are.

Working hours in Turkey are the highest of any country for which data are available. High working hours suggest that severance requirements and favourable tax treatment of overtime work are discouraging the creation of new jobs. Firms find it more advantageous to use existing workers even by paying higher overtime rates rather than hiring new ones. In 2004, for example, if workers in Turkish manufacturing had worked 45 hours on average instead of 52, another 500,000 workers would have been needed (World Bank Report, 2006, pp. 1-13).

Coherently with the neoliberal agenda the World Bank recommends liberalizing labour regulations, particularly for severance and other hiring and firing regulations. According to World Bank, facilitating the severance requirements can provide more jobs for the young generations. Although late neoliberal stage policies of the World Bank sometimes refer to the worker rights, what is ironic is that the World Bank as an important agent of the neoliberal accumulation regime recommended Turkey to protect its workers. Like many countries, Turkey is implementing both approaches: protecting jobs and protecting workers. However the balance

is currently strongly biased towards protecting jobs, and the report recommends shifting towards protecting workers (Ibid.).

It is generally agreed that the Turkish economy has been undergoing neoliberal transformation since the IMF guided structural adjustment policies started in the 1980s. The historical background of all these macroeconomic developments points to neoliberalism with structural adjustment policies that started in 1980. The prior system before 1980s exhibited all characteristics of financial repression, including negative real interest rates and high liquidity and reserve requirements in Turkey. Before 1980s fiscal deficits were mostly financed by direct monetization through the Central Bank. Beginning in 1984 the foreign exchange regime was liberalized. Due to the full liberalization of capital account as well as full recognition of convertibility of lira in 1989, there has been a massive inflow of short term capital into the economy (Köse&Yeldan, 1998, p. 53). In other words, international speculative capital flows are principally responsible for the rise in real interest rates as well as currency appreciation. The Turkish economy, which could not get out of the instability, crisis, growth spiral during the post-1990 decade, had to face a serious external debt problem at the beginning of the 2000s. (Yeldan, 2004, p. 1) With the AKP years, external debt indicators in the 1990s increased exponentially. As Yeldan (2016, p. 11) highlights post-2003 period Turkey continued to specialize in low labour cost production and export based growth strategy. As for macroeconomic policy, the shift to speculative-led growth continued to grow stronger. Macroeconomics equaled to the monetary policy at the expense of fiscal policy. During the post-2001 period cheapened foreign exchange rate triggered an import boom. Still in this period or in the first decade of the AKP rule, decreasing inflation, rising unemployment, jobless growth and high interest rates became the main characteristics of the economy. High real interest rates during the 2000s, in fact resulted in restrictions in health, education, social infrastructure services. The IMF programme adopted after February 2001 banking crisis became the official targets of the both governments between 2002 and 2006 (Yeldan, 2016, p. 15). Table 2 shows targets of the IMF program during this period. The real and nominal interest rates shown in the Table 2 was one of the significant reasons of the jobless growth, which paralyzed the production based investments.

Table 2: Macroeconomic Targets of the post-2001 IMF Programme

IMF Targets	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
GDP Real Growth rate	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Public Sector Non-Interest Budget Balance/GDP (%)	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.3
Inflation Rate	35.0	20.0	12.0	8.0	5.0
Nominal Rate of Interest on Domestic Debt	69.6	46.0	32.4	27.4	23.9
Real Rate of Interest on Domestic Debt	25.6	21.7	18.2	18.0	18.0

Source: Erinç Yeldan and Burcu Ünüvar, An Assessment of the Turkish Economy in the AKP Era, Research and Policy on Turkey, vol. 1:1,p. 11.

Liquidation of Agricultural Policies in Turkey

One of the important dimensions of the Turkish labour market is the decrease in agricultural employment. The liquidation of agricultural policies has been fastened at the end of the 1990s. Especially, the World Bank and IMF policy directions insisted on reducing the state subsidies on agriculture. As a result of these policies, the employment ratios profoundly decreased. In 2007 the employment rates embodied as 26,4% agriculture, 19,8% Industry, 5,8% construction, and 48% service sector. On the other hand, the employment rates in 1999 were embodied as 40,2% agriculture, 17,2% industry and 42,7% service sector respectively (Mütevellioglu & Işık, 2009, pp. 159-204).

Oyan (2004, pp. 44-67) points out that Turkey was forced to remain the worst country in terms of agricultural subvention among the OECD countries. The social results were so destructive since the overwhelming population of Turkey was earning to live via agriculture and animal husbandry. Turkey as an important agricultural product exporter is converted to an importer country. At the beginning of the 2000s, the subsidies of agriculture were reaching 3% of the national income. However; this ratio dropped to under 1% in 2006. The IMF and the World Bank dictated direct assistance to the producers. However, direct assistance could cover only 35-40% of the loss of the producers (Ibid.). The dispossession and poverty of the producers entailed migrations to the urban areas. However, the dispossessed of agricultural population could not find employment opportunities in the urban areas as well. People began to seek employment opportunities in the informal market's insecure, temporary jobs. Needless to mention, even in the informal sector who can find jobs feel themselves lucky under the high unemployment conditions. As it was already stated the economic growth without employment as well as eradication of agriculture resulted in total social destruction. Mütevellioğlu and Işık (2009, p. 163-164) state that between the years of 1995-1999, 1 point increase in GDP provided 0,38 increase in employment. Conditions have even become worse in recent years. Between the years 1999-2003, the employment ratio dropped to the level of 0,30.

Briefly, concerning the recent financial boom in Turkey, the living conditions of the paid labourers and jobless people have not been changing because of the lack of job-creating. Labour force participation in the economy is very poor in Turkey, so obviously, the economic growth during the first decade of the 2000s did not produce employment. Additionally to the employment deficiencies, the liquidation of agriculture enhanced the dispossession and poverty in Turkey.

Labour Union Activities in Turkey after the 1980s

Trade Union activities in Turkey was historically subordinated to the state. Hence, in the framework of the policies of statism and populism, the trade unions were forced to be controlled by the state before the 1980s. Trade unions' functioning were always limited and precluded by the state through leaving them limited autonomy with the exception of 1919 whereby trade unions were already part of a deal between workers and employees. For instance, Turkey as a member of ILO (International Labour Organisation) approved the ILO convention 87, namely *Freedom of association and protection of the right to organize the convention*, 44 years later in 1992 (Çelik, 2006, pp. 17-74). The developmental and import substitution model policies engendered some gains in favour of trade unions without performing class struggle. As it was stated in the first part of the paper, coherently with the world trend, the Turkish state's approach to the trade unions was instrumental in a sense to legitimize and reproduce the system and the former accumulation regime. The late modernization heritage of Turkey strengthened this instrumental and subordinated position of the trade unions in Turkey.

With regard to the Military regime, trade unions encountered strict pressures. All the trade unions and strikes are banned by the junta authority. For instance, DİSK, Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions, was banned up to 1992. The military regime also abolished the ground of unionism via several labour law changes. In this context, Çelik points out The laws of 2821, 2822, which was prepared by the military regime, were not altered and they remained not fitting the standards of ILO and the EU currently. Moreover, the law of 4688, which remove the rights of collective contracts and strikes for public servants still being in force (Ibid.).

In 1989, the government of Anavatan Partisi, ANAP, (Motherland Party) weakened and lost local elections. The rising impoverishment of the years 1983 and 1989 caused rising worker activities. Spring protests of the workers followed by strikes and, out-strike legitimized worker

actions, between 1990 and 1991. The rising labour activities between 1989 and 1991 resulted in some law changes in favour of labour. Real prices of the workers also increased, however, after 1991, the labour movement constantly lost fronts (Koç, 2006, pp. 157-207). Public unionism also activated at the beginning of the 1990s, and finally, in 1995 KESK, Confederation of Public Employee's Trade Unions was founded. At this point, Özüğurlu claims that the spring demonstrations of the workers at the end of the 1980s and public workers activities, as well as more recently organized Labour Platform, were the pioneers of a unified trade union activity (Özüğurlu, 2009, pp. 159-204). Nevertheless, these three events also could not stop the decline of the trade unions in Turkey.

Although Turkey got the EU membership candidate status in 1999, the labour movement activities fastly continued to decline. In 2004, Turkey approved the superiority of international agreements with the change of article 90 of the constitution. Therefore, labour movements gained the ILO agreements card to play against the state. However, there is no significant endeavour to use this opportunity (Ibid.).

Beyond the use of ILO agreements, the right of the strike of the workers has constantly been violated despite the judiciary decisions. Çelik emphasizes that after the 2000s nine strikes were postponed with the excuse of national security and general health. The strikes were against the big capital groups and could have gained success. Constitution article number 54 gives the right to the governments to postpone the strikes with the justification of national security and public-general health. However, the AKP government even abuses this anti-democratic constitution article and postpones several kinds of strikes which is unrelated to the above-mentioned justifications. In the years between 1985 and 2000 47,534 workers, the annual average went on strikes, and the working days under strikes reached the annual average of 1,736,821. On the other hand, between 2001-2005 annual participation of workers in the strikes decreased to 1158 and the annual working days under strikes decreased to 37,233 (Çelik, 2006, 17-74).

Concerning the ratios of trade union memberships in Turkey, several disputed ratios could be seen. As for the ÇGSB (Ministry of Labour and Social Security) statistics the ratio of unionization even increased from %55.89 to %56.88 from 1984 to 2001, and the number of unionized workers also increased from 1,427,271 people to 2,580,927 in the same years. It is obviously seen that the statistics are inconsistent with the declining trend of trade unions. At this point, Mahiroğulları (2001, pp. 161-189) points out the number of deviations of the ÇGSB statistic. However, taking into account the corrected official number deviations of ÇGSB, the statistics are still very high in favour of trade unions. Therefore, Aziz Çelik claims that methodologically different kinds of approaches must be needed to understand the real position of trade unions (Çelik, 2004).

Çelik (2004) states that the methodology of ÇGSB in terms of statistics of trade unions have unique characteristics which are not accepted by ILO and other international standards. ÇGSB merely proportions the unionized worker numbers to the workers belonging to the SSK (Social Security Institution) Hence, the numbers are distorted in order to mask the opponent policies against the trade unions. Most of the unionized workers lack collective bargaining rights in Turkey. The number of workers with collective bargaining rights is under that of unionized workers. On the other hand, taking into account the OECD countries the number of workers with collective bargaining rights is much above the number of unionized workers. For instance, the unionization ratio in England is 34 per cent and the number of workers under the scope of collective bargaining is 47 per cent. The same ratios in France are 9 to 95 per cent, Germany 29 to 92, Italy 39 to 82, Netherlands 26 to 81, Sweden 91 to 89, Switzerland 27 to 50, Australia 35 to 80, the USA 16 to 18, and Japan 24 to 21 per cent respectively.

Briefly, there is a methodological contradiction in terms of membership and other related ratio statistics of labour organizations. ÇGSB statistics are evaluated suspiciously worldwide and not approved by the ILO. Aziz Çelik attempted to make another statistical analysis of membership numbers of the trade unions. In his research, Çelik used the number of workers under the scope of collective bargaining and reached an important decline regarding the membership status of the trade unions. Çelik (2004) claims that unionization of trade unions decreased 44.7% to 21.6% between 1985 and 2001.

Segmentation of Labour in Turkey

The research project which was conducted by Bosphorus University Social Policy Forum reveals the segmentation of the workers of Turkey. The project is conducted on the basis of questionnaires that are directed to the workers who are differentiated as *unionized, formal but not unionized, and informal*. There are important wage differences between unionized and the other workers. For instance, the average monthly net income of the unionized is 469, 9 euros. However; formal but non-unionized and informal workers earn 247, 3 and 223, 7 euros respectively in 2004 (Buğra, Adaman, & İnsel, 2004).

Survey results also show that a larger percentage of unionized workers (17 per cent) receive in-kind or in cash support from their families in the village of origin than others (10 per cent), indicating, probably, the way reciprocity relations work with those who are less well-off, unable to help their relatives to any significant degree and therefore getting less in return compared to better-off workers. Unionized workers seem a privileged group in the labour force, and they do not want to lose their current jobs. On the other side, the informal workers seem to find a similar job more easily because their current job quality is already at the bottom of the labour market. The survey shows the unemployment experience for more than 6 months: unionized 39%, formal but not unionized 51% and informal 54,2%. As for the question 'finding a job in 3 months in case of unemployment' the ratios resulted in 84%, 70% and 55% respectively. Another fragmentation among the workers can be seen in the field of working hours. The average working hour of the unionized is 49 hours weekly. In the survey, formal but not unionized and informal are seen as 55 and 59 weekly hours respectively. Coherently 88% of unionized workers state that their wages are paid on time. As for formal but not unionized and informal the paying of the wages at the proper time decreases to 60 and 57 per cent respectively (Ibid.).

What is obvious from the research project is that levels of general life, as well as work satisfaction for unionized workers, are higher than those of remaining workers. In this context, Çelik emphasizes that rather than blue and white-collar workers, a new orange collar worker that symbolizes atypical, temporary, insecure working conditions has emerged. These new orange collar workers also symbolize the peripheral labour that works via subcontracting. The fragmented labour also produces hierarchies within the class. Even in some extreme cases, the high paid workers rent low-paid workers to do their jobs. Seat arrangements in the service vehicles remind the racist regimes via the differentiation of formal and informal workers' seats (Çelik, 2006, pp. 17-74).

Can Agents Break the Structural Obstacles?

As Munck (2002, p. 60) highlights the end of the cold war provides new possibilities to reach a new international which can be similar to the line of the first international in contend. As it was stated earlier the crisis of the trade unions is the crisis of the former organizational structure of the trade unions. I argue that If the trade unions renew their organizational structure they can rise quickly with a radical face. The former organizational structure of trade unions was narrow-interest base organizations that symbolize the industrial workers overwhelmingly.

However, this kind of organization could not fulfill the needs of the labour in the era of information technologies and flexibility of labour. The most mortal attack of the capital on the labour is the fragmentation of the working class. In the era of neoliberalism, dispossession and proletarianization are enhancing, on the other hand; the segmentation of the labour is also increasing as well. The highly segmented labour via the dominance of the informal market breaks the working-class solidarity. Hence, the working classes main aim must be the defence of the general interest of all the segments of the labour. Accordingly, I believe that Trade Unions should not operate by defending the rights of the relatively privileged groups. The unification strategy of the segmented labour must be the primary target of the labour organizations.

The trade unions should also give voice to the rights of the all exploited and suppressed beyond the scope of a class issue. For example, the trade unions can also defend the ethnic rights of minorities and religious groups on the basis of social, democratic citizenship rights (Özüğurlu, 2009, pp. 335-356). Therefore, the trade unions should be politicized and they should struggle for expanding and deepening of democracy. The lacking struggle for democracy can cause the damage of the class policies by the ethnic, religious and other super-structural issues as well. Therefore, instead of closing their eyes to the super-structural problems, the trade unions should adopt the voice of all the exploited and suppressed through combining them with the class policies. In this sense, Özüğurlu implies this combination or articulation by suggesting the politicized and unified class movement as the solution to the crisis of the trade unions (Ibid.).

It seems that this study caught the lion from its tail and diagnosed the mortal problems of the trade unions. Some significant points should be touched upon regarding the restoration of the labour unions. In this sense, democracy inside trade unions and transparency is an important dimension for the restructuration of the labour organizations. Former, industrial labour base trade unions were overwhelmingly organized in the public sector and also they were easily keen to be bureaucratized. The bureaucracy of the trade unions delegitimizes the trust of the public opinion against the trade unions (TÜSİAD, 1991). Hence, democracy and transparency must be indispensable dimensions of the new trade unions.

As Çelik (2004) emphasizes that former trade unions by organizing overwhelmingly in the public sectors lose their strength to adopt the more harsh unionization conditions of the private sector. Therefore, trade unions must be more radicalized to cope with the private sector. If the leadership of trade unions could not adopt the new policies the informal tactics, can be implemented to bypass the trade union bureaucracy. Akkaya (2006, pp. 209-235) reminds the Ludist movement as a radical heritage for the new restructuration of the trade unions. Indeed, the unification of trade unions has been materializing. Different kinds of confederations in the west were unified. ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and WCL (World Confederation of Labour) abolished themselves and unified under ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) (Çelik, 2006, pp. 17-74). Hence, one big trade union issue is materializing in the West. However, particularly in Turkey labour unions and confederations are highly segmented. The reunification strategies should be operated and infant attempts such as the Labour Platform must be strengthened if the trade unions want to gain success.

It is seen while capital is globalizing the trade unions could not be organized on national grounds. Labour movements should adopt the strategy of global attack-global resistance. Closing the eyes to the global issues could make the trade unions nationalist and narrow interest-based institutions. Therefore, as Adaman, Buğra and İnel (2009, p. 175) emphasize trade unions should not work for the membership expansion, instead they should renew their organizational structure radically to cope with the organized capital in the era of neoliberal policies despite the fact that there are legal constraints against the membership expansions of the trade unions.

Conclusion

Unemployment and lack of available jobs particularly for young generations are serious deficiencies of the Turkish labour market. The neoliberal policies could not gain any success in terms of employment. Despite the fact that Turkish economic growth has been increased during 2000s, economic growth did not affect employment. The labour became much more fractionated as a result of neoliberal transformation. Hence, the bargaining power of the labour against the capital is very low. Trade Unions in Turkey attempts to defend their privileged rights. However, the defensive strategy is not enough to stop the eradication of the trade unions. In this sense, trade unions have several dilemmas. One of the main dilemmas is that whether to continue the defensive strategy and consent to the small defensive successes in the short run, and the other is that thinking the long run and swiftly initiating a radical organizational transformation. The defensive strategy sometimes can gain local success what is witnessed in TEKEL resistance. However, these local disconnected resistance strategies are not successful in the long run. The decline of trade unions is still continuing. Hence, a unified social movement unionization strategy should be implemented to change the ongoing decline of the trade unions. There are several examples in Latin America that can inspire Turkish Labour unionism. For instance, newly emerged agricultural product based trade unions could be combined with organized and non-organized workers. The labour Platform can be expanded with the involvement of all the segments of labour. If the trade unions do not only operate in the class reductionist direction, they can initiate a democracy struggle via articulating exploited and suppressed groups other than class dimensions. The legal constraints that prevent the union membership of atypical labour can be tried to be removed through various political campaigns. Briefly, a politicized and unified social movement unionism can easily change the world trend that goes against labour in the Turkish case as well.

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