The Sociology of Work in the Post-War United States: A Theoretical Assessment*

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Abstract: This article explores the post-World War II interest in the problem of work in the United States. Liberal triumphalist approaches of the immediate post-war era reduced work to an element of management as the greater conflict between labor and capital, they argued, was overcome. However, starting from the late 1960s, this theoretical resolution started to dissolve due to the simultaneous emergence of political, social and economic crises in American society. This had direct repercussions in the ways in which work is perceived and studied. Marxian works made a comeback and moved the concept of labor process to the center of theoretical endeavors to study work primarily thanks to the work of Harry Braverman. This interest later evolved into the study of a more comprehensive study of labor movement. The changing place of work especially among critical literature deserves closer and theoretical attention. It is also an excellent entry point to understand wide-ranging social, political and economic transformations shaped American society since the 1970s. This article is an attempt to decode the dynamics of late industrialism in the U.S. via providing a theoretical assessment of key debates on work.

Keywords: Labor process, labor movements, United States, labor studies after World War II

Öz: Bu makale İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası ABD'de emek ve çalışma sorunsalı üzerine yoğunlaşan çalışmaların teorik bir değerlendirmesini yapmaktadır. Savaşın hemen ardından hâkim olan liberal muzaffercilik çalışma olgusunu yönetim biliminin bir öğesine indirgemiş ve bunu yaparken emek ile sermaye arasındaki büyük çelişkinin sona erdiği iddiasında bulunmuştu. Bu uzlaşı 1960'ların sonundan itibaren eşzamanlı olarak ortaya çıkan büyük çaplı sosyal, politik ve ekonomik krizle birlikte çöktü. Bu çöküşün çalışma ve emek sorunsalına bakışa doğrudan etkileri oldu. Marx'tan etkilenen çalışmalar tekrar ortaya çıktı ve Harry Braverman gibi öncü figürler aracılığıyla emek süreci kavramı tekrar akademik çalışmaların merkezine geldi. Bu ilgi daha

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sonraları emek sürecinden emek hareketlerine kaymıştır. Bu kayışın ve değişen çalışma ve emek süreci kavrayışlarının emek çalışmaları alanı açısından kuramsal analizi yapılması gerekmektedir. Bu tür bir kuramsal analiz ayrıca ABD'nin 1970'lerden bu yana geçirdiği geniş çaplı sosyal, siyasi ve ekonomik dönüşümleri anlamak için anahtar konumundadır. Bu makale ABD'deki geç sınai kültürün dinamiklerini çalışma sorunsalı üzerine temel tartışmaları analiz ederek deşifre etmeyi ve kuramsal bir perspektif sunmayı hedeflemektedir.
Anahtar Sözcükler: Emek süreci, emek hareketleri, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası emek çalışmaları

Introduction

Emerging triumphant from the World War II, United States appeared to most as a society beyond any class-based conflicts. Especially convinced by the idea of elimination of conflict between labor and capital, postwar thinkers in the United States focused their attention to another problem: the transition to post-industrialism. Reflecting on this moment, Moishe Postone provocatively argues that thinkers with politically opposite positions like Daniel Bell (anti-Marxist) and Ernest Mandel (Marxist) approached the problem of postwar capitalism from similar perspectives and problematized post-industrialism more than anything else (Brennan, 2009, p. 321). Liberal triumphalism announced the end of history via reducing the *C*onflict into a problem of management and regulation. Critical theorists, some of whom inspired the 1968 movements, reflected on the same period in a critical fashion and perceived it as another and more complex form of totalitarianism. The use of technology in extending and expanding domination, according to them, was the core feature of emerging totalitarianism. Despite their critical reprise, as Postone warns us, these two diverse approaches agreed upon the idea that conflict between labor and capital was surmounted by historical forces. This was a widely accepted axiom proven wrong not so long after.

This article explores the post-World War II interest in the labor process in the United States. Starting from the late 1960s, this rising interest, as I will argue below, was mostly a response to the above-mentioned post-war liberal triumphalism that had begun falling apart with the simultaneous emergence of political, social and economic crises in American society. A theoretical discussion of the changing perceptions of work and labor process is an excellent entry point to understand wide-ranging social, political and economic transformations shaped American society since the 1970s. This article, in other words, is an attempt to decode the dynamics of late industrialism in the U.S. via providing a theoretical assessment of key debates.

I will also raise the question whether novel theories of labor process problematize the relationship in a political manner on the shop floor.[2] Scholars like Harry Braverman, Huw Beynon, Richard Edwards, Michael Burawoy, Richard Hyman, David Montgomery, and Katherine Stone were major figures of such revitalization of the interest on the shop floor in the U.S. These studies focused exclusively on advanced economies –mainly the U.S.— and often in isolation from other countries. In their exploration of workers' struggle over the control of the labor process, their primary goal was to explain how working classes lost the control over labor process. In other words, these studies were mainly interested on the decline of working classes as a class in post-war American social order. Despite their focus on work and labor process, the focus was less on the *process* than the deterioration of labor relations. This, I will argue below, represents a major transition on labor studies as it shifts the focus from work/labor process to the identity and other social roles associated with labor. Finally, I will argue, the U.S. is the center of advanced industrial economies representing such a shift.

The rising interest, which roughly started in the late 1960s and early 1970s, coincided with the first major recession of the late 1960s and the subsequent crisis of 1971-1973 post-war capitalism. More importantly, this interest coincided with –perhaps influenced by—the revitalization of rank and file militancy on the shop floor which appeared for the first time since the formation of the so-called pact between labor, capital and management (R. Brenner, 2010; Katz, 1987, pp. 42–43). This crisis, which facilitated the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism (Aglietta, 1979), clearly demonstrated that the capital-labor conflict was not overcome by the postwar triumphalism.

On the contrary, the dynamics of labor relations started to change in the "long 1970s," (A. Brenner, Brenner, & Winslow, 2010), was a key period when organized assault on labor and unions was accompanied by management's systematic search for outsourcing. For Katz, structural transformation of the industrial relations in 1970s meant the start of a new era for labor and unions: concessionary bargaining (Katz, 1987, p. 3). Thereafter, organized labor in the U.S. did gain very little from management and shifted its focus to safeguarding job

[2] Industrial shop floor was not the only focus of new studies on working classes. British Marxist historians, specifically E. P. Thompson, investigated the formation of working-class identity within communities. He argued that the experience of exploitation, not the structural aspects of class locations in the process of production, was key in the formation of proletarian identity. For him, exploitation was not a quantitative but a qualitative phenomenon, and the ways in which it is experienced lead to the formation of working class identity. Thompson explains the making of working class as a process as opposed to an automatic result of class locations with respect to the means of production. Those who critiqued Marx's voluntarism used Thompson's work extensively to reflect on how working classes form and act. See, (E. P. Thompson, 1963). In this paper, we will not get involved in this long discussion due to its extra-shop floor focus.

security (Gier, 2010). Rising interest in the labor process, thereby, is fueled by the deterioration of work conditions and labor's declining relevance in politics in the advanced industrial countries.[3]

"Structural Degradation": Braverman's Invitation to Revitalize Marx's *Capital*

The pioneering Marxist response was Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* and it invited us to go back to *the* original book (Braverman, 1974). As Michael Burawoy states, Braverman's book became a classic overnight and brought about a renewal of the sociology of work (Burawoy, 2008, p. 376). It was an update of the discussions on labor process in the first volume of the *Capital*. Yet, surprisingly, Braverman focused more on the service sector instead of manufacturing, which was the sector examined in *Capital* by Marx. Focus on the service sector aimed to critique two mainstream theoretical perspectives of the time: a) Affirmative reception of post-industrialism popularized by Daniel Bell's *the end of history* thesis; and b) Celebration of the end of class conflict with the big C as argued by Kerr and Dunlop (Braverman, 1974, p. 18).[4] Braverman structured his idea around a distinction between the *social division of labor* and the *detailed or manufacturing division of labor*: "[S]ocial division of labor subdivides society detailed social division of labor

[3] Before analyzing the revitalization in detail, we should note that not all contemporary studies on capitalism did focus on labor process. In fact, majority of them did not. For instance, scholars from the world-system perspective, led by Immanuel Wallerstein, explicitly rejected to focus exclusively on the labor process that privileges wage labor. For Wallerstein, capitalism was a system of endless accumulation of capital that encompasses several labor control mechanisms as long as the purpose of capital accumulation is secured. Instead of focusing on labor control mechanism in isolation, Wallerstein suggests that different sources of income of households should be researched. For Wallerstein, besides wage income, subsistence activity, petty commodity production, rent, or transfer payments constitute main sources of income. More importantly these are not archaic forms that are supposed to cease to exist with the rise of wage income. On the contrary, they continue to persist in modern capitalism. See, (Wallerstein, 2004, pp. 33–35) More importantly, producing goods –specifically goods used daily—to be exchanged in the market is more of a concern for Wallerstein, thus he and his followers focused on the interaction on the market represented best by their geographical positions –core, semi-periphery and periphery. In other words, Wallerstein's approach is an example of how the relations of exchange are prioritized to relations of production, which represents the common sense of the time.

[4] See also, (Bell, 1973; Kerr, 1960). Bell welcomed the transition to post-industrialism and perceived it as a universal path for all societies in the world. Stagism, inherent to the argument, also explained Kerr's schematic explanation for the future trajectory of global industrialism. For Kerr, as system wide conflict is resolved by liberal capitalism, scholars should focus more on specifics of new industrialism instead of fading class conflict.

subdivides humans (Braverman, 1974, p. 51)." He aspired to unravel the mechanisms of oppression that is embedded in the processes of detailed division of labor, the hegemonic mode of production at the time.

Braverman tells the history of labor-process in three main *objective* stages: scientific management; scientific-technical revolution; monopoly capital. "No attempt will be made to deal with the modern working class on the level of its consciousness, organization, or activities. This is a book about the working class as a class *in itself*, not as a class *for itself* (Braverman, 1974, p. 18)."[5] Tendencies of the capitalist division of labor were already evident in the nineteenth century; however it was not until the maturation of monopoly capitalism in the twentieth century that they came to be applied systematically. Thus, for Braverman, monopoly capitalism is the unfolding of the processes that are innate to the system. Monopolization is presented as the essence and final destination of this process. Simply put: 1) Family firms oriented economy in the early 19th century. 2) Large enterprises towards the end of the 19th century. This yielded Taylorism in the early 20th century. Taylorism had three basic principles: A) the dissociation of labor process from the skills (so perpetual deskilling) and job dissatisfaction, B) the separation of conception from execution, C) the use of this monopoly over knowledge (attained via separation of conception from execution) to control each step of the labor process and its mode of execution. All these three moments were present in Marx's *Capital*, but according to Braverman, they have become hegemonic historically with the rise of Taylorism. In a sense, Marx projected the basics of an emerging system rather than simply describing an already existing one (Braverman, 1974, pp. 6–7, 107).

Job dissatisfaction is probably the most outstanding theme of the book.[6] Braverman later discusses the system-wide dissatisfaction in relation to HR policies in the service sector. In later sections of the book, he argues that job dissatisfaction cannot be reconciled by new human resource-management problems simply because the discourse of technological advancement and the increasing job dissatisfaction are two faces of the same problem. For him, new personnel policies did not address the problem but only acknowledged it. Hence, they were more ideological than practical and/or efficient (Braverman, 1974, p. 26). He also refuted the idea of "new working class" as defined by the opposition between mental and manual labor (Braverman, 1974, p. 18). This divide indicates nothing but the separation of execution from conception; but it does not designate a

[5] Braverman's study's main objective is to take the historical picture of working classes in a given moment. His point of view represents a particular trend in Marxism and clearly conflict with others like E. P. Thompson, who was a major figure promoting studying working classes as cultural communities. See, (E. P. Thompson, 1963).

[6] It is also a major theme of contemporary studies on labor. Arne Kalleberg is a leading scholar working on job dissatisfaction for decades now. For his most recent and historical account, see, (Kalleberg, 2013).

transition to a new class structure: "In one location, the physical processes of production are executed. In another are concentrated design, planning, calculation, and record-keeping (Braverman, 1974, p. 86)."[7] Every activity in the production line has a parallel activity in the management room, which is called a process of separation within a unity by Braverman (Braverman, 1974, p. 87).

The methods of scientific management did come into the picture to *manage* the tension created by the separation of execution and separation. Capitalist mode of production requires the transformation of the working humanity (which is best represented by crafts according to Braverman)[8] into a labor force (Braverman, 1974, p. 96). The mentality of scientific management spilled over the workplace and plagued all other societal institutions. Universities and other para-academic institutions instigated the rise of industrial sociology which is the study of the workplace as a system of discipline. However, for Braverman, the trend to worker-ization did not develop smoothly as Mayo and other industrial psychologists argued. Rather than a peaceful process, it is responded by resistance and reaction (Braverman, 1974, p. 102). Braverman demonstrates the resistance to assembly line in Ford plants as an example. However, Ford's success to implement his competitive assembly line created a void in which others had to imitate and impose on workers, suggesting that the reason of success was force rather than the market. Petty manipulations of the institutions mentioned above had an impact, too, but, in general, the process is governed by the *inherent* tendencies of capitalism not rational choices of the labor experts like Mayo (Braverman, 1974, p. 103).

For Braverman, mechanization and management techniques did not eliminate labor but displace the subjective element of it. In other words, labor is objectified (Braverman, 1974, pp. 119–124). Albeit critical, Braverman is not dismissive of technology and mechanization in principle. He distinguishes social engineering from technical engineering and argues that the former could be emancipatory; however, under capitalism, the latter rules. Technical engineering is destructive because it is owned by capitalists, who use it to deepen the division between mental and manual labor to increase control over the labor process. They also use it to boost productivity, which, for Braverman, is an inherently destructive force of capitalism (Braverman, 1974, pp. 141–143). The efficiency discourse is a myth since there is no necessary link between skills and automation (Braverman,

[7] A decade after Braverman's work, Piore and Sabel –leading theorists of post-industrialism—argued that new technologies and flexible specialization did indeed unify the formerly separated conception and execution. See, (Piore & Sabel, 1984).

[8] Because of his appreciation of craftsmanship, Braverman is criticized for being craft romanticist. Stanley Aronowitz highlighted this aspect of Marxist studies on work more consistently than others. See, (Aronowitz & DiFazio, 2010). Arguably, craft romanticism was a common element of this generation, as David Montgomery, another major labor historian in post-war U.S. academia, continued to promote crafts and guilds as ideal organizations for workers.

1974, pp. 154–155). In the system of technical engineering, the growth of mechanization would be sustained by the growing scale of the production which will create nothing but systemic production of surplus labor (Braverman, 1974, p. 171).[9]

Degradation versus Hegemony: Burawoy's Corrective

Whether it is possible to understand the objective conditions of work and class without reflecting on the subjective position of workers and the interaction between classes is a significant question. Braverman has often been critiqued for the absence of such relational analysis. Michael Burawoy, for instance, finds his approach functionalist and one sided (Burawoy, 1979, pp. 239–240). Elsewhere, he argues that Braverman misses the production of consent altogether (Burawoy, 1982, p. 84). Thus, one should ask the question whether Braverman offers any tools to think the dynamics on the shop floor in a political framework. Or, is the domination and suppression during the labor process a political question or a technical one? The answer is technical.

By suggesting an analysis of labor process without examining subjective aspects or the historical transformation of capitalism since Marx's time, Braverman misses the chance to address the problem as a political problem. In this regard, Braverman's work is a failure to update Marx's *Capital* since Marx's sole purpose was to define and describe the problem as a political problem in order to investigate the ways to transcend it. In Braverman's account, capitalist labor process is nothing but a process of constant and structural degradation. From another perspective, it is a major accomplishment which invites us to redirect our attention to the conflict shop floor –whether it is in a factory or an office— which are not overcome by postwar pact.

Michael Burawoy's work is probably the most ambitious study that aims to relate the relations in the process of production to the politics of work in general. Since Marx, he was possibly the first one who put the mystification of the process of surplus production at the center of his argument: "The defining essence of the capitalist labor process is the simultaneous obscuring and securing of surplus value (Burawoy, 1982, p. 30)."[10] Burawoy's ethnography is known for its ethnography of

[9] Braverman was not the only figure who did rely on such a dichotomy. Richard Edwards also made a distinction between simple control (direct personal control) and structural control (expanded control) and more less questioned the same dynamic under capitalism. See, (Edwards, 1975). Braverman also inspired a range of young scholars who continue to produce extensively on the labor process: (P. Thompson & Smith, 2010).

[10] Burawoy himself cites Gramsci as a theoretical source of inspiration. Even though Gramsci wrote on Fordism and production of hegemony on the shop floor, his legacy on the subject remains limited and compartmentalized.

the shop floor which demonstrates the ways in which workers interact with each other, *play the game* of production and more importantly, thanks to the character of the game, compete with each other voluntarily in order make out more. That game played by workers, translates the vertical conflict between workers and management into a conflict between fellow workers. The shift to horizontal conflict replaces solidarity with individualism which normalizes the idea of competition. Capitalist class secures the consent of the workers, who simultaneously reproduce the capitalist system when they reproduce themselves based on competition and individualism.

Thus, consent is manufactured on the shop floor, which has major implications for the society in general as individualism becomes natural and normal motivation of conduct. The ways in which the consent via inversion from vertical conflict to horizontal one is created thus constitute the essence of Burawoy's ethnography (Burawoy, 1982, pp. 71–73). Furthermore, the transition from vertical to horizontal conflict conceals the process of exploitation and production of inequality on the shop floor. This concealment intensifies the labor process while at the same time makes it easier to increase the production and extraction of surplus value. Competitive individualism becomes the central element of the process (Burawoy, 1982, pp. 106–107). However, workers have a margin of negotiation; in fact the intensification of labor process gives workers possibilities to negotiate on. Management exerts force when necessary, yet workers' consent is secured only when they appropriate the rules of the game and are willing to play the game of making out (Burawoy, 1982, p. 107). For Burawoy, consumption, a dynamic outside of the shop floor, and workers' willingness to participate in new consumptive patterns –in other words the making of a consumption culture— shows us the extent of hegemony. For Burawoy, system, via unions and management, identifies the interests of the workers with the company. Thus, profit becomes the co-target of both groups. In a novel context, "the capitalist relations of production are obscured and thus the surplus production is secured (Burawoy, 1982, p. 119)."

Burawoy embeds his ethnography of workers playing the game in a larger context. In the fifth and last part of his book, which is called *The Motors of Change*, Burawoy alludes to the discussion of class struggle and capitalist competition and their impact on the shop floor. As he argues: "Changes in the labor process at Geer and Allied over the past thirty years are the product of a combination of class struggle and capitalist competition, themselves shaped by broader forces (Burawoy, 1982, p. 180)." His identification of external factors as *the motors of change* contradicts with his presentation of consent formation on the shop floor in earlier chapters. But, we will avoid that discussion for the moment. For us, this discussion is important for two reasons: the definition of labor process as a political process that is inherently related to wider class struggle, and the transformation of capitalist system under monopoly capitalism. Burawoy identifies firms as actors in the

market who can respond to the rising competition in four different ways: 1) introducing new technologies; 2) cutting costs through lowering wages; 3) speeding-up; 4) specialization and/or expansion (Burawoy, 1982, p. 183). Burawoy, who first argued that the capitalist labor process as a quintessential political problem and where consent is produced, later introduced capitalist competition as a major force in the relation. He concludes as follows: "Class struggle is *also* affected by forces that come from beyond the shop floor (Burawoy, 1982, p. 191 italics are mine)." Burawoy's dilemma, which remains unresolved in his book, is the famous dilemma between agency and structure. For us, it is important to see how his work makes a convincing case for the political nature of labor process that is simultaneously a manifestation of class struggle.

So how can we contextualize the revitalization of the interest on the shop floor as a political relation?[11] For us, the major contribution of these studies is that they reject the post-war assumption about the end of the conflict between labor and capital. In addition, scholars interpreted the conflict during the labor process in a political way which assumes larger implications for the social reproduction. In other words, the failure of capitalism to represent the interests of all revitalized the interest in the labor process. However, scholars not only revitalized the interest but went beyond and revolutionized the definition of work, labor process and the implications for the social reproduction. Scholars of work enhanced the scope of analysis by contesting the original framework offered by Braverman. Studies exploring the dynamics of post-Fordism focused on a range of issues from informal work to structural unemployment,[12] from the introduction of women into labor force and gender's role on control (Feldman, 2009; Lee, 1998) to the redefinition of work in a way that includes unpaid domestic work (Burawoy, 2008, pp. 377–378). In addition, the rise of *the rest* as a manufacturing center also invoked new interest on other forms of control and their relation to political structures (McKay, 2006).[13] Despite their centers of focus, majority of these studies explored

[11] By revitalization in the late 1960s I mean studies focusing on the political aspect of the relation. Otherwise, American sociology was quite advanced in terms of studies on the shop floor. Industrial sociology tradition, under the leadership of Elton Mayo, commenced in the late 1920s as a policy science and concerned about the relation between worker productivity and job satisfaction. See, (Burawoy, 2008, pp. 374–376).

[12] Braverman does touch upon the problem of structural unemployment, yet it remains unexplored. Rather than debating it as a consequence of class struggle in the particular historical moment, he presents it as an unfolding of inexorable laws of capitalism. For a more historical account, see, (Smith, 2001).

[13] Industrialization of the non-West is a multi-layered and complex story. Early industrialization of East Asia, for instance, cannot be understood without the Cold War context and American support –both institutionally and politically. However, mainstream studies do perceive the process in a normative way without delineating political undercurrents. For two such examples, see, (Amsden, 2004; Chang, 2002).

the labor process in the context of social and political reproduction. Inspired from Marxian sensitivities, these studies approached the problem of labor process as a process of domination and control which had wider implications for the capitalist mode of production at the system level. The abundance of works indicated the misery of the conditions of work.

Beyond Degradation and Hegemony: Tripartism Making a Comeback

Labor process occupied a key position in other studies even though it was not as central as it was in studies discussed thus far. American institutionalism and emerging literature on labor movement revitalization are two important currents which focus on the ways in which labor relations are institutionalized. Postwar institutionalism has its origins in prewar institutionalism. Especially in the U.S., institutional approach is influenced by classical figures like John Commons, who problematized the ways in which labor relations are institutionally framed. From this perspective: "Work plays such a central role in our lives and in society that the study of relations between employee and employer cannot be ignored (Katz, Kochan, & Colvin, 2017, p. 3)." This relationship does consist more than just the employee and employer. The act of employment can only be understood in an industrial relations framework which is guided by a three-tiered strategic choice framework, whose key participants are management, labor and government (Katz et al., 2017, pp. 3–4).

Management, which is composed of three layers, owners and shareholders, top executives and HR staff, and labor, which is sometimes represented by union, get involved in a relationship to achieve their own objectives. Government, which is a set of institutions ranging from local to national level, represent the public interest and regulates the relationship between the two. This framework relies on a set of assumptions about the concepts of labor and conflict: a) labor is more than just a commodity and cannot be exchanged in the market as an ordinary commodity; b) there are multiple interests represented by different sides; c) conflict is natural, not pathological; d) interests may conflict and/or coalesce depending on the situation; e) conflict of interests requires a mechanism to accommodate each other's interests (Katz et al., 2017, p. 4). All these assumptions and actors form an institutional structure where labor process is key but not central. The motor of institutional change, on the other hand, is located outside the system which is often called external environment. External environment, Turner argues, often means the competition from the market (Turner, 2005).

Harry Katz and Owen Darbishire discuss the impact of external environment in the form of competition on the dissolution of traditional bargaining system in the U.S. as well as in other advanced industrial countries (Katz & Darbishire, 2000). Focusing on the auto industry, Katz argues that the

traditional bargaining system was characterized by strict wage determination scales, connective bargaining structures that connect plant level and national level, and job control focus (Katz & Darbishire, 2000, pp. 1–3). And due to the rising international competition it is transformed into a decentralized system where the types of employment increase vastly (Katz, 2004). Tripartism, which was the essence of the postwar pact, dissolved over time mainly because of the rising international competition and the introduction of new countries into competition. This transformation weakens the reach and ability of institutional-protective structures and increases the vulnerability of labor worldwide. Scholars focusing on structural transformation do not debate the impact of labor movements or revitalization extensively. Instead they are quite cautious about its dynamics as well as its future (Katz, 2001). This brings us to another contemporary school focusing on labor today: labor movement revitalization.

Labor "Movement" Revitalization

Hannah Arendt once boldly claimed that the political significance of the labor movement is not different from that of any other pressure group. She added and told us that the time is past when it could represent the people as a whole (Arendt, 1958, p. 227). This point of view is best represented today –perhaps unintentionally—by a group of scholars celebrating the revitalization of labor movements in the U.S.[14] Turner argues that: "There are two central arguments in the revitalization literature. The first is that contemporary circumstances provide openings for, and in some cases are driving, innovative, proactive, and quite promising union strategies for renewal of influence in changing world, national, and local conditions. The second is that such strategies matter (Turner, 2005, p. 384)." Scholars criticize business unionism, which reduces the relationship between the worker and the management into an economic relationship where fights for wages and job conditions occupy a central role. Instead they propose social movement unionism which enables unions to address larger political issues such as immigration, living wage, race and gender equality, equality of opportunity etc. Voss and Fantasia underline the need for urban coalitions including diverse actors such as church, students, activists, immigrants etc. Building coalitions which are spatially grounded is vital to generate a synergy and increase the political relevance of the movement. (Voss & Fantasia, 2004). In doing so, the first obstacle to beat is the oligarchic structures within unions in order to open up new space for the new mentality with innovative strategies (Voss & Sherman, 2000).

Invoking Arendt, revitalization literature aims to reassure labor's position as a pressure group if not a major actor in politics. Business unionism, which had

[14] For major studies in this field, see, (Evans, 2010; Milkman, 2006; Milkman, Bloom, & Narro, 2010; Milkman & Voss, 2004; Turner, 2005; Turner & Cornfield, 2007; Voss & Fantasia, 2004).

become hegemonic in the immediate post war era,[15] had been progressively eliminated from the politics and finally lost its relevance and became a tool of Democratic Party in the U.S. The lost spirit of solidarity can only be reestablished via embedding labor movements in an urban framework. Colin Gordon asserts that American labor movement had such spirit of urban solidarity before the rise of institutional unionism which reduced work relation to a debate over wages (Gordon, 1999). Ruth Milkman, also critical of business unionism, critiques CIO type of mass organizing and calls unions to build alliances with other social forces seeking social justice and solidarity. In her account, this means AFL type of organizing, which is basically craft based organizing model (Milkman, 2006). Workers are members of communities and thus they should act within a community.

Thus, revitalization scholars do not address labor process as a separate problematic. Politicization of labor movements is significant to the extent that it is articulated to the larger social movement framework. Labor movement does not only address the conflict between workers and employers but demand rights – especially civil rights—from the state as well. Michael Burawoy first celebrated this aspect of labor movement studies. He argued that their interest in political movement represented a transition from labor process to labor movement, which also meant a transition from Marx to Polanyi (Burawoy, 2008). In other words, revitalization scholars scrutinized the long-forgotten relation between class in itself and class for itself. However, Burawoy changed his affirmative position shortly after and argued that revitalization scholars collapsed the difference between politics and science (Burawoy, 2010). Perhaps this was a call to go back to Marx and investigate labor process instead of growing a false optimism about the condition of labor today. Burawoy argued that scholars of revitalization collapsed the difference between science (he means Marxism and the systematic study of labor process) and politics. Whether his identification of Marxism as a scientific study of labor process is another matter, but his critique of labor revitalization scholars' negligence of the study of labor process is important. Ironically, in this tradition manufacturing sector is not even studied. There is an exclusive interest on service and public sectors. The justification for that is the fact that manufacturing jobs can be relocated while service and public sector jobs are geographically bounded (Turner & Cornfield, 2007). This illustrates the controversial definition of the labor process.

Fantasia and Voss' study of the trajectory of American unionism from business unionism to revitalization presents a great example to show the extent of such narrow understanding. They suggest that we witness a move towards a new

[15] According to Voss and Fantasia, the unification of AFL and CIO, which hitherto represented two completely different groups of workers and had quite distinct strategic structures, in 1955 proves the centralization of business unionism in the U.S.

labor metaphysic which is –or should be—characterized by foundational myth of solidarity: "[T]he very strength and efficacy of the labor movement's embodied forms depends (…) on its capacity to invoke something larger than itself. In other words, a successful labor movement must have the capacity to rise above its corporeal or institutional form through a kind of sacred narrative, or myth, and solidarity has been a cornerstone of the foundational myth of labor movements everywhere (Voss & Fantasia, 2004, p. 107)." Against the foundational myth of individualism of the free market capitalism, Voss and Fantasia suggest that labor should create and embrace its own foundational myth. Apart from its serious theoretical problems, this approach rejects the connection between politics and labor process by reducing the relation of production into a vague relation. Not surprisingly, some members of the revitalization promote alternative methods of development such as smart growth as part of revitalization. More importantly they draw strong parallels between the trajectories and fates of revitalizing urban economies and labor movements (Turner & Cornfield, 2007).[16] Social movement unionism, with its quite vague understanding of capitalism and narrow understanding of labor movement, misses the complexity of global relations of production. However, the persistence on the relation between labor and politics deserves positive attention.

Conclusion

This paper presented a critical assessment of major studies problematizing work and labor process in the post-war U.S. Emerging in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the liberal triumphalism of the immediate post-war era, studies focusing on work and labor process first problematized the relations on the shop floor. Even though they were informed by different branches of Marxism, both Braverman and Burawoy's pioneering studies were urgent calls for focusing on actual conflict between labor and management on the shop floor and workplace. Reacting to a multitude of crises presented themselves in the 1970s, such studies were critical of simplistic post-industrialism that assumed the elimination of conflict between labor and capital in post-war U.S.

Despite their wide-ranging impact on the literature to come, both Braverman and Burawoy's impact receded as the focus of labor scholarship shifted towards labor movements from labor process. Invoking Hannah Arendt's argument that laboring classes in modern societies are nothing but a pressure group (Arendt, 1958, p. 227), these new studies perceived labor as an identity derived from the fact that one works. The actual relationship between worker and his/her work were trivialized as the worker identity and fight for social justice

[16] Individual chapters promote concerted action of all local forces ranging from churches to local development agencies, from unions to NGOs in order to revitalize economy and labor simultaneously.

characterized their social status and being. It is argued in this paper that such transition from labor process to the identity of being a worker is crucial to understand the trajectory of labor studies in the U.S. today. As work is considered a natural aspect of social life, studies on work distanced themselves from studying the actual process of work (hence the labor process). Labor process is then replaced by a quasi-political understanding of work, where work/ers are considered as elements of social movements (Voss & Sherman, 2000). This major transition does still dominate the field of labor studies in the U.S. today.

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