

New forms of work organization: the phenomenon of "McDonaldization"

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Summary: The article focuses on the impact of new technologies on the organization of work and the production process of the worker. Using the tradition of the Sociology of Work and through the example of a fast food restaurant, with on-site observation and an in-depth interview with a worker, all aspects of conflict and consent that constitute the forms of labor control in the new abstention of McDonaldization come to light.

Keywords: *Sociology of work, New forms of control at work, New technologies at work, Fast food restaurant, Field research, McDonaldization, Globalization, Capitalism, Conflict, Consent*

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Introduction

The problem that the article is called upon to investigate focuses on the question of *what are the impacts that the use of New Technologies brings to the work process* and the path towards the answers that may potentially arise will be purely research-based.

For this reason, the theoretical framework necessary for examining the research findings will be presented first. The main goal at this point is to form a brief, but sufficient, theoretical basis that will include the most important positions and research of sociological thought regarding contemporary labor phenomena, such as the transition from industrial capitalism to service capitalism, the development and use of New Information Technologies in the workplace, innovative labor relations and their models, modern management models and more generally what is considered to constitute the so-called post-industrial reality, always examined within the ways in which technology and labor are discussed.

In the next section, the example institution will be presented, namely the fast food restaurant from whose employees the necessary information on the relationship between technology and work in the production unit in question will be obtained. In this chapter, the purpose is to record the identity of the space under investigation (history, goals, workforce, structure, technological tools, etc.), with the intention of highlighting the objective conditions and the underlying ideological framework within which work and its organization take place there. The elements presented in the above theoretical framework and also identified in the institution under investigation will be listed in parentheses.

The research was carried out in one of the stores that carry the brand name of the global restaurant group McDonald's, through qualitative semi-structured interviews with three of the employees

of the restaurant under study, a manager and the owner. The responding employees were selected based on the criterion of different job positions - a man working in the kitchen (*grill*) and a man and a woman working in front of the kitchen (*cashier*) - with the aim of examining the impact of technology through the individual devices they use during the production process, but also through the different tasks they have been assigned to perform throughout the organization of work and therefore their interviews were used to examine the theoretical framework in question. On the contrary, the interviews with the manager and the owner were conducted with the aim of obtaining the appropriate information for the construction of the presentation of the entity under investigation, which is why excerpts from them will not be presented.

Methodologically, it should be noted from the outset that the above objective data - that is, the conduct of only three interviews, without the use of formal observation and other relevant technical tools that would provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under consideration - significantly reduce the reliability of the research and have as a direct consequence that its results cannot be subjected to any kind of abstract generalization. This fact, however, cannot be considered detrimental to the intention of the writer, which is none other than to give the subjects the opportunity to talk about their work and through this to attempt to understand their relationship with new technologies, within their broader working reality.

The present work is to be completed, on the one hand, by recording the most indicative points of the interviews conducted with the employees and, on the other hand, by presenting the final conclusions to which the present research process led.

Theoretical Framework

Sociology is par excellence the science that deals with the relationship between work and technology, and this is because it essentially developed simultaneously with the so-called industrial revolution, as a new field of research and study that attempts to observe and interpret the transition of man from feudal communities and their mode of production, to capitalist societies and wage labor.

However, as the years passed and as the industrial West crossed the threshold into the twentieth century, not only sociologists, but also social scientists more broadly concerned with labor issues, turned their attention to the development that was gradually marked by systematic models of administration and bureaucracy, in connection with increasingly modern technology. The new scientific challenge now lay in the analysis of the specific forms that the internal division of labor was taking, the new patterns of hierarchical structure and the novel systems of control, evaluation and increase in the efficiency of workers, which appeared - sometimes empirically and sometimes theoretically - as dominant models of management of factory reality and organization of work.

The gradual transition of the above industrial experience to the so-called post-industrial era of services and information systems, which began to take place gradually from the 1960s onwards, constituted the ultimate scientific challenge. The collapse of traditional constants in industry, the emergence of New Information and Communication Technologies and the compression - as Harvey called it - of space and time (time-space compression) in the emerging globalized environment (Demertzis 1996) resulted in the emergence of a new economic and cultural model in the West, where the traditional value of production was dethroned by the need for symbolic consumption and social recognition (Parsons 1984), provoking a rethinking of the classical ideological and scientific positions on the concept of work and its implications. New management models are emerging which, utilizing older work organization management models and newer technological achievements in information technology, challenge social scientists to investigate and question whether and to what extent these latest cases of work reality can constitute a postmodern Paradigm for work, and if so, with what impact on employees, their relationships, control and performance.

It is precisely on this question that the present theoretical framework will focus its attention, with the aim of clarifying the basic concepts required to understand the history of the relationship between work and technology, the applications of this relationship, its implications and its possible future.

The management models that dominated the industries of the first half of the 20th^{century} were Taylorism and Fordism. The first starts theoretically from Taylor's work *Principles of Scientific Management* and concerns the production division that takes place vertically (manual/mental work, planning/execution of the production process), while the second -following the principles of Taylorism- and developing its model more empirically, focuses its interest on a horizontal division of production, which will be more massive and technologically highly equipped (Petraki 2007 ◊ Taylor 2007).

According to Fordism, the most important point of the production process lies in the management of flowing production, that is, of simultaneous and continuous sequential actions. This is

because the systematicity of the continuous production flow in combination with the intended de-specialization of workers - through the subdivision even of their individual work itself - are the two core components that, according to this specific organizational model, can cause the intensification of work, the massification of production and therefore the maximization of profit (Petraki 2007).

On the other hand, the Taylorist position, starting from the belief that the worker, deep down, does not like to work, seeks to propose a specific model of work organization that will be based on the hierarchical structure of the industry, will seek the highest possible specialization of workers in the subject of employment and will invest its functionality in strict control. The goal here is to maximize the employee's incentives to produce efficient work and to eliminate what Taylor called "loofness". It is important to make it clear at this point that Taylorism had as its main priority the abandonment of the concept of art from work, with the aim of developing a flexible division that would not be based on experience - as was the case with older craftsmen - and would reproduce replaceable workers, who would accept these terms of employment because of their satisfactory wages. Non-formally recognized qualifications, such as discipline and adaptation, would constitute the main criteria for the retention of employees in the job, while the control of their productivity would be carried out hierarchically (Taylor 2007).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that both Fordism and Taylorism based the ways of structuring and organizing industrial work that they proposed on two basic components of their era: culture and technology. The bases of each organizational project - Taylorist or Fordist - presuppose the necessary awareness by its managers, on the one hand, that the worker is simultaneously a consumer of the same market¹ to which the company that employs him is addressed and, on the other hand, that it is now necessary to fully use and assimilate technological achievements in work. This point of convergence of the two aforementioned models of management of work reality essentially reveals the recognition by their proponents of both the transformation of Western societies from productive to consumer ones, and of the need to reduce technology to a concept identical to the production process.

Finally, it is necessary to underline at this point that both the cultural and technological dimensions of work were, at the birth of the subject of sociology, one of the most popular fields for negotiating important scientific thoughts and confrontations with corresponding theoretical positions and interpretations. A characteristic of the antiquity of these concerns is the classical approaches to the issues at hand. Marx (1989) introduced and developed the issues of alienation and de-specialization - inherent in capitalist production of the worker by the very nature of his work, as it is realized through technology in the wage capitalist organization of the production process, while Adam Smith (1999),

¹According to the American historical sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, capitalism is defined as that system where the objective purpose or 'law' that prevails or governs the main economic activity is the endless accumulation of capital. At the same time, however, despite the holistic dynamics of the capitalist system - as is evident from the above definition - the same theorist also identifies a significant intrasystemic dysfunction. Specifically, the 'eternal problem' of capitalism for Wallerstein is the fact that the worker is simultaneously a consumer in the same market society and the solution to this problem, he notes, was found in part by the West in the exploitation of the Third World (Wallerstein 1987).

on almost the same concern, had wondered where societies are headed that manufacture workers who - as industrial work is structured through technology and intensity - are paid not to think. Adam Smith, in fact, is the first to show that the technical division of labor is also influenced by social parameters - despite the rational project of neoclassical economists -, a position that will bring a century after Emil Durkheim (1984) went so far as to claim that the division of labor can be seen as fundamentally and exclusively social.

However, the rapid changes that capitalist societies - Western and non-capitalist- and their markets have experienced during the second half of the 20th century and continue to do so to this day, highlight the New Technologies (NT) of Information and Communication (ICT), if not as driving forces of the changes taking place in social relations (technological determinism), at least as core components for the restructuring of these relations. The term ICT refers to technologies that relate to the use of Information Technology and its interconnection with Communication and constitute, according to many scholars, the basis or even the material prerequisite of this emerging social formation that is usually called the knowledge society and/or globalization (Petraki, 2007). In fact, with regard to the organization of work within the enterprise, NTs can have an impact by reducing production costs, accelerating innovation in products and services, as well as in the way they are distributed, as well as contributing to increasing flexibility in production and service delivery methods (Watson 2005).

However, the most important feature of the intrusion of NTs into the organization of work, which concerns purely labor relations and the object of employment, has to do with what Zuboff defined as the informatization of work. According to this rather optimistic perspective, the position is developed that new technologies may constitute - like any technology - an extension of the human body, however, the characteristic of automation that they contain makes them, more specifically, a continuation of the human brain. Zuboff essentially comes to question the traditional industrial distinction between manual and intellectual workers through the imminent - according to her - deconstruction of labor alienation and routine that new labor tools can achieve, as their interactive nature can develop the subjectivity of the worker and bring him into contact with the broader production process. A position which, despite the significant criticisms it received from the wider scientific community for its research credibility and its realistic application, nevertheless seems to constitute - even as rhetoric - the potentially basic pursuit of postmodern management models. It is characteristic that even the rapporteur herself finds her approach not fully applicable due to the insecurity that characterizes - until now at least - the managers of companies in giving room to employees to take initiatives or to produce creative thinking (Watson 2005).

New management models, as Korias explains, do not appear out of thin air, but can be seen - under the conceivable prism of a Hegelian abstraction - as the transcendental continuation of the dialectical synthesis of the two dominant models that pre-existed, the Taylorist and the Fordist (Korias 1987). And if this conception is considered valid, then, possibly, technological development can be placed as the driving component of said transcendence and the new work ethic as its emerging result or even the reverse.

Specifically, in the 1950s, the so-called *managers' movement developed in the U.S.*, which gradually formed a specific post-Taylorist management model, also known as the American Human Resources Model. Following in the footsteps of classical Taylorism, Human Resources Management (HRM) introduced a management model for the organization of work in which the desired increase in productivity was achieved through the creation of incentives for employees (stimulation of the individual motivation to actively participate in the production process with positive rewards in cases of increased efficiency), the development of a new form of communication (direct communication with the aim of reducing friction) and the rotation-variety of work tasks. Although it does not differ substantially from the Taylorist model in organizational philosophy, the changes of this new model are found in that the salary is decided individually - without the presence of collective agreements - and the division of labor that is introduced appears much more flexible, while the most important element is that control is now not only exercised repressively - as in Taylorism - but also through the development of consensus mechanisms. The DAP was mainly applied in the 1960s and 1970s in developing industrial areas of the American continent, whose workers did not show particular union activity. This characteristic of these specific production units cannot be considered accidental, as the supporters of the model attributed its efficiency - in addition to the reduction in labor costs it brought, the savings in resources it helped to achieve, and the flexibility it gave managers for utilizing the workforce - to the lack of unionization. On the other hand, critics of the DAP focus their attention on the fact that research has not confirmed the desired reduction in conflicts heralded by the newly introduced communication model, nor - much more so - the intended identification between job satisfaction, increased production and development of motivation, as the transformation of increased motivation into improved labor efficiency presupposes an upgrade of employees' skills and their actual participation in the production process, a condition that, according to the model's critics, is not empirically verified (Petraki 2007).

In the 1980s, as a result of both the crisis that Western mass production began to experience and the criticism leveled at the Human Resources Movement, the gradual adoption of a late post-Taylorist model, the so-called Japanese or Lean Production Model (Lean) developed. Production), which will first appear empirically, to be theorized later by Japanese engineers. The most important components that constitute the so-called Japanization of production (Japanisation) are adaptability, decentralization in decision-making and the commitment of personnel to production goals (Petraki 2007). The purpose of this specific work organization model is to improve product quality while simultaneously reducing the company's costs, combined with the pursuit of innovation. To achieve this goal, innovative strategies for managing business reality are developed, such as Total Quality Management (Total Quality Management / DOL) and the proposal

²The term *movement* has been questioned by the American sociologist C. W. Mills, as in his work *Paperboys - The New Middle Class in America* he argues - through a historical-social analysis of the emergence of Managers - that the latter do not constitute a specific group with common goals and collective aspirations, but a multitude of people who, carrying a constructed identity from traditional American myths of personal self-reliance, roam in the fever of competition chasing a groundless recognition, as they derive their false prestige from the owner-entrepreneurs who preside over them, while in essence their financial earnings do not far exceed those of their subordinates, that is, the working class (Mills c.x.).

that the production of the product quantity be determined based on the order (Just - In - Time / J I T).

Although the DOL is also basically - in the footsteps of the Taylorist tradition - an attempt to standardize work as a whole, the companies that embrace it also seek the continuous improvement of both production processes and the quality of the product produced, a fact that automatically highlights that despite any standardization, at the same time, the degree to which each industry depends on the efficiency of its employees is rapidly increasing for the first time (Watson 2005). Therefore, what is important in this organizational model is the multi-specialization of the employees and their development within work groups, while their duties are not limited only to their traditional executive character, but are also expanded to issues of maintaining the quality of their work and their direct and frequent contact with customers. As an extension of classical Taylorism, in DOL work incentives do not only concern financial rewards, but are also combined with issues of expanding the education and specialization of personnel, as it aims at the voluntary participation of the latter in any activity that may concern the improvement of production (Petraki 2007). Finally, the hierarchy of this post-Taylorist model is enriched by the so-called quality cycles (quality circles) in which all employees participate in an advisory capacity, offering their knowledge and experience to increase and improve production, while its efficiency as a system for reducing friction is largely based on the working relationships that develop between employees and their supervisors closest to the production process (Watson 2005).

These methods, which structure Total Quality Management, in combination with the economic philosophy of JIT - that is , production based on orders aiming at reducing inventory costs - have intensified the production process more than ever, but, in addition, they have also cultivated a new work ethic. The so-called *service ethic* is developed in employees who are under this management regime, as a sense of duty, love for work and self-evident participation in the pursuit of personal success through competitiveness, always in connection with the dominant goal of customer service (Watson 2005).

This is precisely what makes this particular management model so popular in the Western business environment, as on the one hand it favors the apparent de-specialization of highly specialized skills for the service era - such as smiling, communication, patience, politeness, and so on - and on the other hand it constructs an unprecedented corporate identification for the employee. And if the first component of this appropriation of the Japanese model by the West is mainly economic in nature - since by not recognizing the skills that a company really requires from an employee, it essentially manages to have them but without paying for them -, the second, that of dynamic corporate identification, updates the concerns of the neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian tradition regarding labor relations - but also broader social reproduction - that develop within the framework of a consensus whose parties seem to be less and less reflecting on its socially constructed nature and the latent conditions of exploitation that it may contain.

Presentation of the Entity under investigation

International Dimension

According to the official data of the Multinational Corporation McDonald's , the history of the group begins with a

classic example of the American Dream: in 1948, in San Bernardino, California, the brothers Dick and Maurice McDonald opened the first restaurant, under the idea that accompanies the so-called fast food restaurants to this day, that is, offering fast food at a low price. In fact, from them begins the expansion policy that the company in question has implemented worldwide, namely the franchising system. Today, sixty years later, this huge business group owns 30,000 restaurants in 118 countries around the world, serving about 45 million customers, while its most important advertising activity is the official sponsorship of the Olympic Games.

As already mentioned, this expansion was achieved through financial agreements between this international group and individual owners through the so-called franchising. This specific activity lies in a relationship of dependence between the owner and the parent company with specific characteristics. This relationship includes, on the one hand, the rental of the brand name by the owner, the control of the store's efficiency by the international group and the provision of percentages of the profits to it and, on the other hand, the provision of the logistical infrastructure and the knowledge of the use of specific technology. Finally, it is also necessary to adopt the management systems and the broader aesthetics and philosophy that the parent company wants all stores that bear its name to contain. This process requires a nine-month learning program for the prospective buyer, while it assumes that the latter has proven the financial ability to pay the initial amounts required to carry out the agreement. These amounts range for Greek franchising at 300,000 euros and the contracts signed are usually for a twenty-year period.

The stores with this brand name select their raw material suppliers in each region they are located in, and with criteria according to the parent company. The only exception is the supply of meat, which comes from specific production units of the McDonald 's International Group , which supply all the stores of the same name worldwide .

The Greek Case

The first McDonald's restaurant opened in November 1991 opposite Syntagma Square. Since then, there have been 51 restaurants with the same name in various cities in Greece, while the official McDonald 's data Hellas , report that its stores currently employ 1,500 workers nationwide. A characteristic of the group's business development in Greece is that these 51 stores do not correspond to 51 owners, since 18 franchisees (owners through franchising) manage 76% of Greek McDonald 's restaurants .

With regard to store staff, the company's job advertisements typically state that the intention of each Greek McDonald's restaurant is to hire individuals from the local population, capable of offering excellent quality, service and cleanliness, to ensure the objective evaluation of employees and candidates, to offer a clean, safe, healthy and pleasant work environment, to recognize and reward performance and to maintain effective communication with all employees through staff meetings, personal discussions, etc. (Human Resources Management). The only required qualifications sought from the candidate employee are team spirit, the appetite for work and initiative and the rapid absorption of new applied knowledge, while it is typically stated that the company offers flexible and rolling hours mainly for those who intend to work on a part-time basis and a dynamic, youthful work environment with continuous training for all (Japanese model). According to the official statute, the staff

structure in the internal hierarchy of each restaurant includes hourly employees, staff trainers, shift managers, assistant managers and managers, while it is stated that in the context of creating a learning environment that facilitates the development of employees' skills to the maximum extent, employee training initially begins with a broader orientation and continues with a structured development program, which includes training in all areas of the business with particular emphasis on those related to hygiene and safety (Japanese Model). Officially, the basic training of full-time employees lasts about six months, while part-time employees can last up to twelve. Furthermore, in the context of developing incentives for employee efficiency, employees at Greek McDonald's automatically participate in the "International Employee Motivation Program" of the McDonald's Global Group, according to which the best employees from each country are selected, with the prize of traveling to the city hosting the respective Olympic Games and working in the company's Olympic restaurants (Taylorist Model).

Finally, within the framework of the so-called corporate social responsibility, McDonald's Hellas periodically develops action on social issues related to children, sports and healthy eating, through informational events and financial contributions.

The production unit under investigation

McDonald's store whose employees will be interviewed to examine the relationship between technology and work in this research is one of the 51 restaurants in Greece with the brand in question and is located in a suburb of Athens.

The store opened in 1997, under the franchising system. It started as the only store of its kind in the wider area, initially employing 25 employees, while today, as a competitive market for ready-to-eat food, beverage and coffee products gradually developed around it, it has come to employ just 18, as a result of the need to reduce the overall labor costs for the business.

The company hierarchy from the Store Manager (store manager), who is generally responsible for the effective operation of all operations and continues with the general assistant managers (first and second assistant managers) who carry out almost the same duties as the first. Below them are the ordinary managers who -alternating in shifts- must always be in the store during its opening hours and supervise their subordinates, that is, the employees who are at the end of the hierarchical structure (Japanese Friction Elimination Model). According to the company, these -ordinary employees- may be employed either in the kitchen, or at the cash register, or at the drive-thru (serving customers who order from their car), or even in the lobby (cleaning tables and the wider dining area), depending on the needs that arise at any given time (Total Quality Management). This is why the company claims that all its employees are trained in all positions, so that when necessary, based on the demands of each day, a rotation of jobs and work tasks can be carried out.

The recruitment process begins with the publication of an advertisement by the store and then -after evaluating the applications of interested parties- those who are deemed most suitable are invited to undergo a three-day training (a trial period for learning the job). At the end of this three-day training period and if the company decides that the employee has the qualifications to work in the store, the employee is hired, with a dependent employee status and a full-time or part-time contract. However, the employee's training does not stop upon hiring, as the detailed

issues on which the specific production process is based require a longer training time. It is characteristic that in the kitchen position, the baking, construction and delivery of a burger (minced meat with bread and other garnishes) require specific doses of ingredients, a defined sequence of their placement, as well as strictly defined product completion times, while in the cashier position - as a more communicative position - the employee is obliged to be pleasant when ordering and to make clearly defined hand movements both during the monetary transaction process and when placing the products on the customer's tray (Ford Model). Finally, the criteria that the company states are required of the employee for hiring and retaining him/her do not correspond to the usual characteristics of specialization, such as degrees, training or previous work experience, but concern more formally de-specialized qualifications, such as decent appearance, youth, adaptability, flexibility, good behavior towards colleagues and customers and the possession of a spirit of cooperation and teamwork (Total Quality Management). For the highest positions in the hierarchy (managers), the recruitment process differs greatly, as there it is customary to promote within the framework of intra-company development, under the regime of a philosophy that seeks to increase the efficiency of its superiors through their corporate identification (Total Quality Management).

Of the eighteen employees in total, six are in managerial positions (managers), while the remaining twelve are employed as ordinary employees. Among the latter, who are all young, there are five women (all with a position at the cash register) and seven men (four at the cash register and three roasters), while among them there are four immigrants (two first-generation men and one man and one woman from the second generation). None of the employees in this hierarchical position take part in councils or in making any decisions, nor do they evaluate the productivity of the company or put forward proposals for its increase (Taylorist Model). This lack of unionization or even consultative participation of employees in management meetings is compensated by the relaxed, non-electronic, control of their efficiency by the managers. In fact, given the small workplace, this control is carried out mainly through on-site verbal observations and rarely through official evaluation forms (Human Resources Management).

The most important feature, however, of the store under investigation is that which is identical to the entire development that characterizes the global McDonald's group: technology and in particular the use of New Information Technologies. As in every McDonald's restaurant, so in this case, the entire production process is based from beginning to end on the use of new technologies, something that is immediately apparent from the criteria with which the store is evaluated by the "spy" of the parent company, who appears as a customer and checks the efficiency of each franchise store, in relation to customer service (the evaluation form is in the appendix). Every technological construction that the employee uses during his work is constructed in such a way that no special knowledge is required from him before his employment, nor any special time to be trained for its use (Informatization of Work). The automated structures found in the store in question are the grill where meats are grilled, the oven where food is heated, the refrigerator that preserves vegetables, the deep fryer that fries potatoes, the soft drink, coffee and ice cream machines, the cash registers, the vegetable buffet (salad bar) and the illuminated signs that depict photos of the products and their prices and frame the wider area of the store. The employee who is placed in the

roaster position is responsible for and uses the grill, the oven, the fryer and the vegetable refrigerator, the cashier uses the soft drink, coffee and ice cream machines and the cash registers, while the customer serves himself from the salad bar. Through the cash registers, the parent company controls the profitability of the business, while raw material orders are made by sending faxes to the respective suppliers. Each employee is also responsible for the cleanliness of the machines they use (Total Quality Management), while it is important to note that the store orders its raw materials based on consumption and therefore does not store "stock" quantities (Just model in Time). Finally, in the event of a breakdown, the manager of each shift calls the technical company of the supplier of the broken machine to examine and resolve the problem. It is worth noting that the suppliers of all the aforementioned machines are three in total, who usually repair the breakdown without introducing new technology into the store. After all, since the establishment of the company, newer technology has never been introduced to replace the original one - despite minimal complementary cases - and neither are issues raised in its boards of directors regarding any technological renewal.

This last note does not simply lie in the store's official position that the Greek market is too small to invest in newer technologies beyond the initial one, but also brings to light the core component of this particular production unit. As already mentioned, the use of new technologies is identical to all the activity and development of McDonald's restaurants worldwide, which is why it is found in their genesis. An identification that is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the initial design of a McDonald's store is based on new technologies and, on the other hand, appears to be so assimilated by the company itself, to the point that the term technology is not even mentioned in any text on the official website of the Greek McDonald's. The use of New Technologies is responsible for not requiring knowledge of the employee before hiring, the one that causes the immediate understanding of the content of the employee's job and the one that reduces production costs, increases the speed of product delivery and intensifies work. A McDonald's store is essentially a store of new technologies, and both its management model and the labor relations that take place within it are structured on their use and results.

This is precisely the importance of choosing this specific research paradigm, with the aim of investigating the relationship between new technologies and work. To serve this purpose, the following is the presentation and analysis of the information obtained from the interviews with the employees of the unit in question.

Interview Presentation

As already stated in the introductory note, the interviews conducted in this qualitative research are semi-structured. This means that the *interview plan* (interview schedule) that was established should begin with structured questions through which the basic demographic requirements for the respondent will be derived and then the construction of central thematic units is recommended, based on the theoretical framework that has preceded, accompanied by sub-questions of a specific or clarifying type, to which the corresponding responses will be requested from the subject of the research.

The special feature of this type of interview is that the interviewer, while starting the discussion from an initial topic, is

then guided by the respondent's answers, always taking care to bring the latter back, with discretion, within the interests of the research, when it is observed that his words begin to deviate from them (Robson 2007). Finally, the researcher must, on the one hand, gain the trust of the subject under investigation and guarantee his anonymity from the outset and, on the other hand, during the interview, develop a relationship with the respondent in which he will speak little and encourage him to answer until the topic in question is exhausted (Thompson 2002).

In accordance with the above instructions, the interview begins by asking the respondent to state his/her pseudonym, age, place of origin, place of permanent residence, level and type of studies, and family status. After these demographic data, the interview guide includes general thematic sections, with subcategories of questions, corresponding to specific requirements.

The three subjects of this research - Mirkos, Giannis and Tonia - are then presented, through the most important points of their interviews and mainly based on what they mentioned and which tend to concern the theoretical framework that has already been established. The interviews that follow were carried out in January 2008, within their workplace and lasted 40 minutes each. No pauses, hesitations or other points of the subjects' non-verbal speech that are worth noting were observed.

a) Mirko is 32 years old, originally from Bulgaria and currently lives with his family in Pefkakia, Attica. He has been in Greece since 1997. He has been working at the restaurant under investigation for the last 5 years, exclusively in the kitchen, as a griller. His previous morning job was in construction, while in the evenings he worked as a waiter in a tavern. Today he only works afternoon and evening hours, which makes it easier for him in his personal life to share the time he needs with his wife to take care of their children. He started working at McDonald's almost by chance. "I was spending a day outside, during a period when I was looking for work. I went in and asked for a job. I applied and that was it. They hired me," he says.

Asked why he hasn't changed his job duties over the years, he replies: "I don't know why I've never worked at the cash register. Maybe they needed me more in the kitchen. I was already speaking very good Greek since 2001. That wasn't his fault. I don't know. They never asked me to change positions, though," and he continues, "Anyway, I like my kitchen. It's like having it all to myself. All this space. That's why I come in earlier, clean it, mop it, put the things I need where I want them."

"The only thing this job requires is that I don't forget the grilling time. Each product has a piece of paper that says how long it needs to be on the grill. This is the most important thing, after the garnish. But even that, after a day or two, I learned how to do it. You have to know all the products and how they are made. And the machines were very easy. There was nothing I couldn't learn to use. From the moment I arrived, everything in here worked with some buttons that you had to press and it was easy to learn. My only worry is when there are too many people, not to be late and for everything to be done on time," he says regarding what his position requires, while he believes that "it is logical" to work "at a fast pace, since the store's opening time is within three minutes of the customer entering, and leaving with their food. This intensity makes me stronger. You start, you run, you do it! I like that. My work should be fast. And I can tell you that the same is true for all the staff, and our hard work is recognized. Well, now, they gave us gift certificates to shop at Hondos, because we came out first in

service last month", while he also sees technology very positively, stating: "I think, okay, that everything is good here. We have the good machines to do your job quickly and easily! Everything is a habit and since I came here, nothing has changed. I haven't learned anything new".

Mirko's relations with the other employees are excellent, regardless of hierarchical position, while in general he seems to enjoy his job: "Everyone here is very good, I've never had a problem with anyone from here. Either during the break, or before work or after work, we talk, we get to know each other, because during the shift we don't talk, during the shift of course everyone does their job. And I haven't felt any racism here at all. I feel good here and everything is a habit after so many years. I believe my work is recognized. They don't even say well done to me, but that's visible even without the other person talking to you. If you know your job, your position, you don't worry about anything. I think, in principle, that if a person doesn't like a job, they can't do it. Just so you understand, I went to kindergarten when I was little and made burgers with plasticine. Nothing happens by force. "I like to cook, that's why I'm here. In fact, that's my dream: to return to my homeland in two or three years from now and open a restaurant. Besides, things are getting difficult financially here, just like they were in Bulgaria when I left."

And he concludes: "Me, I hate the store. I've been here for many years. I'm not having a great time, okay, work is work, but I definitely have a good time here compared to other jobs. This job may not teach you to do something that you'll do elsewhere, in another job later, but what this job teaches you is to work quickly and organize your time. Yes, you learn that. The only thing that would be better would be if the salary went up a little. But okay, you ask for that everywhere. At least here they don't steal from you and they pay for everything. No, I'm very happy here and sometimes I get mad at my friends because when I tell them that I work at McDonalds they always ask me if it's clean and if I eat their food. I, who am in the kitchen, can confirm that everything is very clean here. You know, how many checks are done every day. People have no idea and think otherwise."

b) Giannis is 19 years old, born and lives in Greece and this year he is taking the national exams again. Like Mirko, he started working at McDonalds one random day when he was outside the store, went inside and said "I'm interested in a job", while after eight months, he can express his obvious satisfaction: "I like it here very much. One of the few phases of my life that I like so much". He works exclusively at the cashier position.

About his job, he says: "The skills that this job requires are speed, being polite to the customer, obeying the manager and smiling. When you're at the cash register and you're in a bad mood, you have to laugh. It makes sense, you're the storefront. You have to take care of the customer to the fullest. That's our goal. And there are specific instructions for achieving this. First of all, I always have to say thank you, please and everything related to it. I have to give the change to the customer's right hand, put the soft drink on the left of the tray, always serve the fries last so they don't get cold, and so many other very calculated things. Even how many grams of lettuce each sandwich gets. Great precision! Since at first, I say, are they crazy? Why are they studying everything so much! But, no, it matters, I figured it out along the way. It has to be like that. The only thing that bothers me a little about all this is that I sometimes catch myself operating like a robot. You'll do this, then that, you'll get this order, then the other, and all this cycle,

cycle, cycle. I work like a mechanism. I don't have time to think. Coca-Cola? Coca-Cola! But, I believe that in our time you have to do everything mechanically in your work. Only when you operate like a machine do you do well. And I don't mean that negatively. Besides, the standards that the company asks of you to hire you are to be fast, polite and not make mistakes. The issue here is that the result of the production be fast and I think that all of us kids generally manage to do it."

He does not face any problems with customers, "unless they are paranoid", as he characteristically states, while at the same time recognizing a necessity in hierarchical authority: "I understand both the strictness and the control from the managers, because they have the greatest responsibility for what happens and they have a lot of experience. You can't help but listen to them". However, the most important part of your job seems to be the way in which relationships develop with the other employees: "I have made friends here and if you exclude one manager, who is simply out of her depth and doesn't even want to come to work if I find out that she is in charge of my shift, otherwise I get along well with everyone. Look, I'll tell you something that people don't know, but don't write this anywhere: McDonalds is the most gossipy job there is! You have no idea what happens when a customer leaves the cash register! There is no way it won't be commented on! Positive or negative! And we laugh a lot about it, commenting on customers! You know, what he ordered, how he asked for it, how many products from another company they asked for today and other things like that, that wouldn't make you laugh if someone outside of work heard it, they wouldn't understand. And in the dead times, when work relaxes, you can see what gossip happens. And this fun brings us together. Because at work, in customer service, you don't talk to each other, nor do you joke. But for all of this to work out, at this pace, it takes good relations between us," and he continues, "there is no friction between us, unless a problem of misunderstanding arises at work, which is overcome. There is no competitiveness either, because you have nothing to gain! Even though I've graduated, I might sit down for a while to help if I see someone who needs it. In general, we all help to get the job done. We like it," while he concludes by saying, "I can't stand two things: first, the one who doesn't respect his job. Let's say a kid came in - now he's fortunately recovered - who was working the cash register and was drinking water with a glass in his hand as the customer came in. At that moment, I wanted to take the glass out of his hand and smash it. It's unsightly. And for me if I were a customer. Have mercy, man! The other thing that pisses me off is the customer who curses McDonalds, without having a clue. You know, sometimes kids come in and when ordering they say "mice, mice". And I ask them why you come since there are mice? But what can they say? They take their food and stuff it. Okay, let me tell you something, there is a big prejudice against McDonalds. To anyone I tell that I work here: first question 'is it clean?'; second question 'do you eat?'. Hey man, of course I eat, it's possible. It's a very slanderous business."

Finally, regarding technology, Giannis said: "Technology plays a big role in my job. Just think, they just brought in a coffee machine that does everything by itself and I've fallen in love with it, because I don't do anything, I just press a button! For me, it's good that everything works easily and electronically. It makes it easier for me. Our work as a job is directly connected to technology. Basically, without technology there wouldn't even be something called McDonalds."

c) Tonia is 22 years old. She was born in Albania and came to Greece in 1996. She is married and has an 18-month-old child. Her husband works as a delivery driver and she met him when she was fifteen. She stopped her studies when she finished high school, because she had to work to make ends meet. She has worked as a cashier in a pastry shop, a souvlaki shop and a pizzeria, something she also does at McDonald's, where she has been working for four months. The difference, she tells us, with her previous jobs is that "*there I was sitting, while here we are moving. Also, there I didn't do laundry, they had other staff for mopping, for example, but here when the shop is closed for customers you have to do laundry for a while, especially if you are a girl. And that's right, I can't leave the boat to a boy, he won't do it as well as I can.*"

"*The first thing they wanted to know was if I was legal, then if I had worked before, that is, you know, if I had experience and if I knew English. But the most important thing was that I live next door, and if, if I get stuck, something happens and I have to come, they will call me. And they know that I can come, because I have my mother under my wing to leave the child with if necessary,*" she says about her hiring criteria, while, in general, she seems to enjoy her job: "*I like to run, to be in the thick of it. It's the type, my, because if you don't like it, why should the other person hire you? In all the jobs I was in, there wasn't this coordination, this bond between us, this teamwork. Here it's not 'oh, I work at my post, I don't help you.' Here things are in order and the fun only happens during breaks. Not like in my other jobs where we were 'hahahaha' during work hours,*" she continues, "*They told me they hired me because, first of all, I'm very kind, I have a beautiful smile that attracts customers and I 'get them' very quickly. Let me tell you, it was all very easy. You press something and what you want happens. In everything. And I think the job here is great. It's what I wanted to do, and I would like to have a future here. The purpose of the job is mine too: for the customer to be happy. And I like communicating with customers. Apart from that, here I'm learning to be disciplined with my time, fast, communicative, I'm learning to make friends and most importantly, I'm independent. I get these five euros and they're mine, not my husband's or my mother's. There really isn't anything I don't like about it here that I would, you know, like to change.*"

Regarding her relationships with the other employees, she said: "*I get along very well with the children here and I'm thinking of staying for a long time. They've never treated me like an immigrant, we work as a team and we talk a little before or after work. It's great! I've even made friends here!*" while, finally, she mentioned the importance of technology as follows: "*We all know that technology has advanced and I'm one of the people who likes this, because it makes it easier for me. I consider technology good. I sometimes talk to older people and see how good we are now. And at work, of course! Technology is good for the customer, because they'll eat quickly, and for us, because we'll do everything simply. Nothing here has made it as difficult for me as technology. Only when I first arrived, I remember panicking because my cash register got stuck. But I called the person in charge and she told me to go to another cash register until they fixed it, and so fortunately, work didn't stop.*"

Final Conclusions

Having now presented the most important points of the three interviews conducted for the needs of the research, as well as the establishment of the production unit in question, and arriving at the present chapter, where a brief evaluation of the data collected

will be presented, the immediate conclusion that can be stated from the outset is that the overall information largely highlighted the central concerns of the previous theoretical framework, while also bringing to light new interesting dimensions for the questions of the present study.

Specifically, it was observed, first of all, that the production unit under investigation carries out an appropriation of various models of work organization, adapted to its needs, the market and its size. Production flows *Fordist*, control is *Taylorist*, employee motivation starts from *Human Resources Management*, while the goal of the final product resembles *Total Quality Management* and the production calculation process is *Just in Time*.

Furthermore, the use of electronic and automatic technology at every level and action of the production process is a positive element by the workers themselves in facilitating their employment, but without this essentially upgrading their qualifications or the content of their work and therefore without confirming Zuboff's position that the informatization of work would make workers take initiatives and produce creative thinking. On the contrary, the examples used show the tacit acceptance of a repeated intensification, without the slightest margin for personal management of the work reality.

A first important result of this very reality is basically economic in nature, and confirms our initial concern: the company, while claiming to hire unskilled workers, in fact, in order to proceed with hiring someone, it asks for very specialized qualifications, which it does not recognize as such, and therefore does not pay for them as separate. The constant smile, teamwork and adaptability are just a few of the many unrecognized qualifications that appeared in this study. Technology also helps in the reproduction and acceptance of this phenomenon, the very easy use of which makes the employees themselves believe that they do not need special skills for the work they do.

Following this last suggestion, comes the second conclusion that can be drawn from the research at hand and has to do with the high corporate identification of the employees and the high degree of satisfaction with their work, as observed. A common characteristic of all the subjects of the research is that they like working within the rhythms of intensification, they feel pleasant to work there and, above all, they have identified their personal goals with those of the company, namely with the speed of product production and customer satisfaction. This consensus, whether it is a result of the success of a specific model of work organization or not, raises, if nothing else, concerns about the danger of the emergence of a broader social reproduction of backward labor markets, in which the contracting parties to an employment relationship so automatically consent to the terms of its exploitation, to such an extent, that this relationship is not even recognized as exploitation – but, much more, as creation and satisfaction. Something that in any case works to the benefit of the employer mechanism, ensuring the discipline and obedience of the workers.

Finally, it is interesting to note the constant search of employees for communication and a break from the routine that surrounds them, inventing ways to joke and connect, despite the intensive pace of the production process. However, even here, there is a feigned flexibility from hierarchical control, as employees are allowed, during the hours when production is at a low intensity, to indulge in teasing and joking, since, in any case, they have acquired the corporate conscience on their own to return

willingly and happily to their duties in order to serve the one and only goal they have in common with the company: the customer.

Epilogue

Concluding this work, it must be emphasized that the examples used cannot serve as a springboard for general conclusions about the specific cases in question, not only because the research interviews were only three in number, but also because of the particularities that accompany both the research process and the subjects under study in particular.

Taking into account that the present study constitutes a semester-long performance assessment project with time and technical limitations and since its conclusions are based exclusively on the responses of three subjects, young in age, with a low to medium educational level and all of whom work in a production unit, it is deemed necessary that, in order to achieve in the future with reliability and validity a broader discussion on the issue developed in the previous pages, a series of studies is, at the very least, necessary that will potentially include a larger range of subjects and entities under investigation, both at a quantitative level and at the level of qualitative characteristics.

The need for a more thorough investigation, beyond the narrow limits of the present, arises from the very nature of the more general question that is left open for future approaches and which is none other than what new forms of work organization are emerging today, what characteristics they bear, how they use technology to achieve the final result and through what consensus mechanisms they reproduce their legitimation.

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