Hidden forms of resistance among Turkish workers:

Hegemonic incorporation or building blocks for working class struggle?*

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This article, based on ethnographic research in an automobile factory in Turkey, examines workers' politics in the construction and reproduction of 'total quality management'. The central argument is that workers devise hidden 'ways of making do' with managerial strategies in their challenge to specific managerial regimes in their areas of weakness. These hidden forms of resistance form the building blocks of working class struggle as they create and nurture a counter-hegemonic discourse, resistant subcultures, and elementary forms of more conscious political activity.

Introduction

This paper aims to go beyond the limits of the recent debate on the changing nature of the capitalist labour process. This has been developed in the context of increasing empirical evidence on managerial practices in industrialised countries. The enduring debate is characterised by a lack of theoretical concern for change, its subjects (i.e. workers) and a disregard for the experiences of newly industrialising countries. The prevailing themes of the debate

are to be seen less as deliberate choices than an effect of the dominant ideological and political climate of the capitalist world order. Hence, this study aims to bring back to the debate an unfashionable class, industrial workers, in an unfashionable part of the world, a newly industrialising country through the unfashionable analysis of labour process theory.

First, given that the particular forms of labour process bear the imprint of the social formations in which they develop, this paper aims to draw the Turkish experience, with its distinct labour market dynamics, regulatory context and tradition of social relations, into the discussion. Second, in opposition to the recent dominant tendency in workplace analysis which removes workers from the academic gaze leading to the loss of the distinction between the intent and outcome of managerial strategies and practices, the central conviction behind this paper is to explore the emergent pattern of control. I do this by locating worker action within the development of a particular managerial regime. Thus, this paper aims to inscribe Turkish workers' perceptions, attitudes and experiences in the construction and reproduction of the so-called 'total quality management' and 'lean management' as recounted by themselves. Third, this paper aims to conceptualise the form and content of changes in the contemporary Turkish workplace. The literature on the changes in the capitalist labour process, in general, exists in the form of journalistic enquiries of plant-level studies. These studies do tell us about what is happening but they certainly miss why it is happening. Recently labour process theory, which seeks to retrieve and update the Marxist critiques of the capitalist labour process and encourages studies of the workplace to be located in the context of the political economy of class relations, has received severe critical reviews concerning its validity. Having said this, it is ironic that the concepts of labour process analysis, notably 'managerial control', and 'deskilling' are the central issues of the debates on work, even for some who refute it. I maintain that as against merely descriptive plant studies, labour process theory generates a critical understanding of the world of work and of the submerged issues of management, control and the politics of work.

The new management techniques, under the various epithets of 'the Japanese model of production', 'lean production' or 'total quality management' have a powerful

influence on work and on workers' role in production. On the one hand, the managerial approaches celebrate the emerging capital and labour relations in the capitalist workplace and give particular emphasis to 'the empowerment of the worker', to 'the democracy at the workplace' and to 'the respect and trust shown to workers by management' (see for example Womack *et al.*, 1990; Kenney and Florida, 1993; Kaplinsky, 1994; Adler *et al.*, 1997). The 'new orthodoxy' does not, however, provide data from the shop floor to support their claims. As Babson notes on the work of the most influential representatives of the model, 'significantly, Kenney and Florida cite no matching chorus of workers to verify these management claims about an empowered workforce' (1995:14). Some labour process critics, based on a totally different theoretical and analytical position, underline the role of ideological practices in the new management techniques, such as team working in which workers' consent is secured (Delbridge *et al.,* 1992). These labour process critics, as Danford (1997) notes, contribute to a framework of consensus, mediated not through 'empowerment' as mentioned by managerialists but through 'ideological disempowerment'.

On the other hand, some critical studies, which have made valuable contributions to the debate with evidence from the shop floor, including the voice of workers, remain sceptical of the managerial claims and note that the management rhetoric and shop floor realities are often unrelated (see for example Graham, 1995; Fucini and Fucini, 1990; Milkman, 1991; Babson, 1995). These studies, particularly based on the experiences of the Japanese transplants in the industrialised countries note an intensification of discipline and surveillance, controlling not only technical aspects of work but also social relations in the workplace. A theoretical approach to the emerging control regime described in these studies, comes from the so-called 'Critical Management Studies', more specifically from a Foucauldian perspective.[1] The 'surveillance', likened to Bentham's classic Panopticon, is deepened by instilling discipline and thereby enhancing central control (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). The Foucauldian perspective to the labour process analysis overstates the effectiveness of control and surveillance of workers' activities, leaving no space for the resistance of workers (Martinez Lucio and Stewart, 1997; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995).

Hence, on the one hand, mainstream writings promote the idea that workers identify with the firm and give consent to the social relations of production. On the other hand, the Foucauldian perspective overstates the extent and effectiveness of new management practices, while marginalising the potential for open rebellion or protest (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). A view of politics focused either on what may be command performances of consent or, the open, declared forms of resistance, represents a far too narrow concept of political life. My purpose is to examine how we might more successfully understand the shop floor politics of workers. Based on the Turkish workers' politics in an auto factory, this paper highlights the extent to which management-labour conflict and struggle remain inherent in the factory. By examining shop floor politics, this paper argues that workers have found a way other than the open, declared forms of resistance or consent (Durand and Stewart, 1998). The Turkish workers give way to the structure of control though they are not *passive* agents. They insinuate a critique of managerial strategies and the control regime itself through their cleaver, creative, manipulative tactics and strategies of passive resistance. Thus, the hidden forms of resistance among Turkish workers oppose managerial discourses and the managerial regime from its point of weakness. The Turkish auto workers do not declare an open warfare against management since it would result in an unavoidable defeat within the economic and political conditions of the current period but resist by remaining within the dominant order, making do with what ever forms of opposition are available. Compared to the declared forms of resistance, which cause problems for the reproduction of the control regime and production process, the hidden forms of resistance might seem neither independent nor in opposition to management, representing little more than hegemonic incorporation. This study argues that the hidden forms of resistance among the Turkish workers underline the complexity of the shop floor politics and form the building blocks for working class struggle.

In this paper, firstly I will discuss my research experience. Then, I will explore not only the limits but also the origins and sources of workers' roles in the factory regime and the ways in which consent, resistance or compliance, are manufactured by drawing on workers' general perceptions and evaluations.

Researching workers:

Participant observation and power relations

In this paper, I will draw on my ethnographic research in an auto factory. I worked as a trainee-worker[2] on the daily shift (8.00-18.00) for a month (November 1995) in Toyotasa in Turkey. On the shop floor, I worked fifteen days in the welding shop and fifteen days in the assembly shop.

Toyotasa, a joint venture partnership of Toyota, a Japanese trading company and a Turkish company, began production in 1994 in a closed plant of 70,000 square metres, containing stamping, welding, paint and assembly shops with an annual production capacity of 100,000 automobiles. In November 1995, the company was producing 100 cars a day, for the internal market only. Before production started, all the engineers and technicians visited Toyota plants in Japan for a period of three months to two years. During the phases of establishment and preparation for production, the Japanese managerial and technical staff were in the plant. By the time of the research, almost all of the Japanese staff had left the plant and production was being managed, following the established principles, by the Turkish managers. The company aimed for a total transfer of the production and management model of its Japanese partner Toyota, which is known worldwide as *the* Japanese model. Toyotasa in Turkey has a highly integrated mode of production; the smoother the production process, the smaller the buffer, the smaller the buffer, the more important the quality 'built in'. The nature of work design and the role of workers in production are all designed according to the priorities given to internal just-in-time, quality control on the shop-floor, total preventive maintenance and continuous improvement.

The company strategically decided to build a new greenfield site and to employ a young and skilled labour force. In November 1995, the company employed 425 blue collar workers. The workforce was very young with an average age of 22. Ninety eight per cent of them were technical high school graduates. Almost all of the workers came from Adapazari, an agricultural region with had no industrial tradition. There was no union in the plant.

On the shop floor, as a worker-trainee, I was under the supervision of assistant managers but I was left alone most of the time. This gave me mobility throughout the plant. I

interviewed some workers at the point of production, some during tea and lunch breaks and some at the end of the day. Tea and lunch breaks were also used for group discussions. Doing research on workers presents one of the major questions in social sciences; how to uncover and record the views of subordinate and powerless groups and social classes (Harvey, 1990; Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991)? The significant class for this study, workers, exists in a socio-historically specific milieu and is not independent of structural factors. They are in a relationship of domination and subordination with their wider social milieu. Hence, to be expressive about their experiences and attitudes, without any doubt, is problematic within these structural and functional relationships. As a mode of inquiry, I advocated neither a distance as suggested by the positivist paradigm, nor the full immersion which requires us to become like our subjects. Rather I chose dialogue between researcher and researched with a sensitive approach to power relations between these two parties in particular and between subordinate groups and classes and their wider milieu. This mode of inquiry has its own distinctive features which lie in observing both what workers do and also listening to what they say in order to try to give them a voice to explain their views. During my participant observation in Toyotasa, being there eight hours a day, five days a week, constantly listening to what workers said and observing how they acted brought a rich understanding of the labour process from their point of view. The discussions with workers during tea-breaks and lunches provide a rather free environment to workers for open and interactive interviews.

Since an ethnographic research approach leads to the collection of an enormous number of detailed accounts, I have been necessarily selective in my choice of examples. Therefore, each quotation is not to be evaluated as the response of an individual alone but is taken as indicative of attitudes in general.

Behind apparent consent in the factory

> Once the process of adaptation has been completed, what really happens is that the brain of the worker, far from being mummified, reaches a state of complete freedom. The only thing that is completely mechanised is the physical gesture; the memory of the trade, reduced to

simple gestures repeated at an intense rhythm, 'nestles' in the muscular and nervous centres and leaves the brain free and unencumbered for other occupations...the worker remains a man and even during his work he thinks more, or at least has greater opportunities for thinking, once he has overcome the crisis of adaptation without being eliminated; and not only does the worker think, but the fact that he gets no immediate satisfaction from his work and realises that they are trying to reduce him to a trained gorilla, can lead him into a train of thought that is far from conformist (Gramsci, 1971: 309-310).

The relationship between capital and labour is less of a simple antagonism and more of a complex contradiction (Edwards, 1986). All capital-labour relations are characterised by both conflict and co-operation. The traditional Fordist factory has used technical apparatuses, such as machines and assembly lines, and bureaucratic apparatuses, such as task control and hierarchical command, to subordinate the time and motion of workers to management control (Edwards, 1979). This, however, has not solved the problem raised by Gramsci in the above quotation. Despotic factory management has controlled the time and motion of workers, but not their subjectivity. The hegemonic nature of workplace relations aims to solve the problems related to the worker's subjectivity. Hence, despotic factory management in which coercion prevails over consent must be replaced with hegemonic factory management in which consent prevails (although never to the exclusion of coercion) (Burawoy, 1985). The emerging capital and labour relations in the contemporary workplace, where ample emphasis is given to the 'manufacturing of consent', have a hegemonic nature (Graham, 1995; Tuckman, 1995).

The concept of hegemonic factory management, drawn from Gramscian thoughts,[3] is apparent in Toyotasa. In order to win consent to its rule from workers, the Toyotasa management adds a new dimension to the technical and bureaucratic control used in the Fordist/Taylorist factory: ideological control. This dimension essentially aims to fill the space left uncontrolled due to the fact that 'no role or body of rules is ever precise enough entirely and accurately to constrain and guide behaviour' (Littler and Salaman, 1984: 56). Ideological control is directed towards generating legitimacy and developing some level of consent. As Littler

and Salaman (1984: 65) note, 'the prime function of ideology then is to establish the framework within which discussion of what is fair, reasonable and possible at work occurs'. The ideological means of control, under different conceptualisations such as social control (Babson, 1995) or egalitarian culture (Berggren, 1993) are all aimed at controlling workers' subjectivity. As Naruse notes:

> His [Toyota line worker's] expectation is actually incorporated into managerial control and he is compelled to function as a representative of capital (Naruse, 1991: 44).

Having acknowledged these features, the ideological apparatuses used by Toyotasa can be examined under two main headings: managerial ideologies and management-worker interactions.

In order to control workers' subjectivity, Toyotasa attempts to establish hegemony in the factory through which objective conditions, such as technical and bureaucratic regulations, are reinforced by ideological apparatuses. Managerial ideologies play an important role to minimise strain and generate consent. In an attempt to disseminate the company culture and ideological assumptions and preferences, the nature of social relations between workers and managers has been restructured. Not only formal interactions during the working-hours, such as meetings and briefings but also informal interactions during tea and lunch breaks and even outside the factory are intensified. In contrast to the traditional picture of not intruding in personal lives, management attempts to know workers as individuals and to become involved in their family lives and in their social and economic problems. These ideological apparatuses, namely the egalitarian symbols—using the same cafeteria, the same car park and wearing the same uniform—seek to maximise interactions between managers and workers. They are essentially managerial attempts to destroy remaining areas of worker control by creating a commonality of interests where conflict is replaced by mutual interest and co-operation. Recalling Gramsci, Toyotasa attempts to establish hegemony in the factory, which would not leave the worker's brain in a state of freedom, allowing for the possibility of non-conformist thoughts.

In opposition to the mainstream perspectives which position management as the active agency, the main

conviction here is that in the formation and reproduction of the factory regime in Toyotasa, the role of workers is as decisive as managerial practices. With regard to their general attitudes, at first sight, workers appear to be positive about the nature of worker-manager relations and the interest and care shown by their companies. 'Close', 'comfortable' and 'easy-going' are words, frequently used by the workers, in defining their relations with managers. A typical response, here, was of the form, 'You can approach them about anything'. It is observed that the meetings in and out of the factory have played a crucial role in building up predominantly friendly and amicable relationships. Moreover, most of them think that their company takes care of its employees. They mainly say that, 'They show respect to us by their approaches, attitudes and behaviour'. Most of them seem appreciative of managerial practices whereby all their complaints, not only work-related, but also financial and their personal problems, are heard and dealt with sensitively. To quote one worker, 'We can talk about any kind of problems, they listen and take action'.

The politics of the workers in the factories like that of all other subordinate groups is rather complex with many hidden potentialities. Drawing on the argument of Scott (1990), any analysis based on the public transcript[4] which 'will, out of prudence, fear and the desire to curry favour, be shaped to appeal to the expectations of the powerful', is likely to conclude that subordinate groups, in our case the Turkish workers, are willing to give consent or hegemonic compliance to subordination. In other words, the apparent consent in the factory inflates the ideological mechanisms in the reproduction of managerial control and underestimates workers' capacity to form a critical consciousness of the employment relationship. However, a successful understanding of the workers' politics needs an analysis of behind the scenes, or offstage, where dissent, or a critique of power, can be generated.

The social production of critical consciousness in the factory

Their positive attitudes and perceptions do not seem to prevent workers from questioning and deciphering the features of the hegemonic control regime. For example, starting with the selection process, workers encountered ideological regulation and figured out how to appear to

comply with the company's requirements. Graham's observations of pre-employment screening processes in Subaru-Isuzu, indicate a similar finding. She notes (1995: 19) that successful applicants reported lying on question-naires and pretending to be team oriented in order to get through the selection process. Similarly, in the case of Toyo-tasa, it appears that the company had not chosen a workforce with the appropriate attitudes and values, but had chosen those who were ready to feign the required qualities.

Workers' evaluations of the nature of the 'close', 'friendly' nature of the social contact are a further indication of their critical interpretations of managerial attitudes. The critical questions raised are illustrated in these typical responses:

> They pretend to be friendly and easy-going. Because the system here is designed in that way. I mean, the system asks them to be so. [Worker 1]

> To get higher productivity and quality, the managers behave in that way, actually they pretend to be that way. [Worker 2]

A similar line of reasoning leads workers to define the company's care and interest as intentional moves by manage-ment to gain higher productivity and a proper functioning of the regime. According to many of them, both physical and psychological conditions should be administrated with care by management for the functioning of the system:

> Not only physical conditions, such as sickness, but also psychological conditions such as unhappiness and stress have a direct negative effect on quality and zero defect production. Therefore the company has to take care of our physical and psychological condition and they certainly do. [Worker 3]

> They just want to see us working like problem-free machines. And the interest and care given is the same as the maintenance done to machines. [Worker 4]

Hence, workers are not controlled by management discourse and the company's motives are quite transparent to them. So far, I have tried to investigate what is taking place from

the workers' viewpoints; the more important task is to try to understand why it is so.

Firstly, an important point behind the absence of consensual relations is that workers are acutely aware of the coercive nature of intensive work and of control and discipline mechanisms. The manufacture of consent and co-operation never means the exclusion of coercion. On the contrary, the search for hegemony in Toyotasa seems to be based on a very sensitive interplay between consent and coercion. The ideological discourse of 'empowerment' creates a potentially powerful worker, which constitutes the regime's Achilles' heel. One of the main considerations of factory management hence becomes the prevention of this potential being used by workers in a destructive manner, paving the way for new coercive mechanisms. In order to retain its authority against the sensitive balance of power in the workplace, Toyotasa further intensifies the coercive nature of technical apparatuses, namely the removal of work-in-process stocks, the use of *andon*[5] lights, minute sub-division of labour and short-cycle tasks, to achieve the complete synchronisation of machines and workers. Bureaucratic apparatuses, namely quality responsibility given to workers, circle activities[6], teamwork and employee appraisal programmes, are designed to establish surveillance and discipline in the most efficient manner.

The workers define the close supervision of a rather different nature. To quote one worker:

> The close supervision does not mean that you are watched all the time by someone standing next to you. It means that whenever you make a fault no matter how unimportant and tiny it is, they are immediately on to you. [Worker 5]

In the plant, as a result of the tracking-back system and the responsibility for 'quality', whenever a problem or fault occurs, the responsible worker is immediately found and warned. One of the workers expressed his discomfort about this practice in these words:

> When you work on the line, you see a group of managers approaching you with serious steps. You realise that you have done something wrong. You feel psychologically depressed among all the others who are watching you being warned, and your day is over. [Worker 6]

The nature of close supervision, described by the workers matches the Panoptic ideal, where one is totally seen without ever seeing. This extensive shop floor surveillance is explained by Sewell and Wilkinson (1992: 271) as the visibility deriving not from 'the exercise of minute control with a minimum of supervisors', but rather through an increasingly powerful management information system. Most of the workers, who mentioned close supervision, referred similarly to the tracking-back system, and also to the intensive use of documentation, statistical analysis procedures, comparative analysis and reports and monitoring of their performances. Besides the supervision, workers frequently refer to the 'exhausting tempo'. All of them noted that the work was hard in Toyotasa, compared to the other companies in Turkey.

Secondly, the absence of the consensual relations in the factory has to be located in a wider political terrain, not only at work. Hence, emphasis has to be put on the forces operating to sustain and reproduce social relations in the workplace and it is necessary to go beyond the factory gate. This leads us to examine the implicit assumption that any ideology that makes a claim to hegemony must, in effect, give economic and political concessions to the subordinate groups, in our case, to workers (Femia, 1987). In other words, it is important to examine the 'hegemony thesis' among labour process theorists (Burawoy, 1985) which argues that workers, who hold relatively high-paying primary sector jobs, are exposed to an identification with the firm and consent to the social relations of production. Does the lack of economic and political concessions lead to a crisis of legitimacy and dissent rather than consent in the factory?

Since the 1980s, Turkey's labour market and social policy are under the so-called 'structural reforms', introduced in conjunction with the IMF and World Bank (see Table 1). The search for competitiveness and the freedom of movement of capital generate strong pressures for minimising the individual and social costs of labour (Onaran, 1999; Yeldan, 1995). Firstly, collective worker organisations, namely trade unions, in the course of the 1980s came under serious attacks. The 1982 Constitution, the Trade Unions Act and the Collective Agreements, Strikes and Lockouts Act accepted in 1983 led to restrictive labour legislation and smooth and peaceful industrial relations in rendering Turkey attractive in the eyes of foreign capital. Hence, unions in Turkey are no different from their counterparts in other countries who

are facing a restricted socio-economic, political and legal environment (Boratav, 1994; Yücesan, 1999). Secondly, the de-regulation of the labour market is another issue on which the Turkish bourgeoisie and other international actors have come to a consensus. Given that for the period 1990-99 the decrease in wage earners (1.8 per cent) as absorbed by the increase in causal workers (3.0 per cent) (Table 1), growing of sub-contracting activities, contractual and temporary workers minimise also the privileges of the industrial wage workers in the formal sector since their wages and their rights are restricted (Bulutay, 1999; Senses, 1996). Thirdly, the lack of social security provision for a considerable number of workers is highly evident in Turkey. In the post-1980s, almost half of those in civilian employment have no social security (Table 1). Moreover, there is increased scope in the market-based provision of public goods, like education, health and social security. From 1994 onwards, entrepreneurs started to move into these sectors and the private sector's share in total education and health investments reached 50 percent by 1997 (Boratav *et al.*, 2000). Privatisation of education and health led to an expensive, modern and luxurious system of private health care and education for the upper classes. However, that part of the population covered by social security schemes is pressurising an already over-extended public health system. Hence, neoliberal restructuring enlarges management's power and absolute control and provides the conditions for despotism just as in the early ages of capitalism. To sum up, workers in Toyotasa, as well as their counterparts in Turkey more generally, face the unregulated and unquestioned effects of neoliberal restructuring of social policy and the labour market.

Given the main characteristics of Turkey's labour market, the degree of employment stability, which generates attitudes of trust towards management, is considered an important dimension of the factory regime among Toyotasa workers. Against a background of weak labour laws and powerlessness amongst trade unions which enables management to dismiss workers as they please[7], Toyotasa has not been tempted to develop long-term employment guarantees and bind himself to any sort of responsibility or promise. In the plant, a considerable number of workers provided quite vague responses on the issue of job security. The workers who seemed confident of their positions or said they 'might be' secure think that management has invested in them in terms

Table 1. The main indicators of Turkey's labour market
1990-1999 (thousands)[1]

	1990	1995	1999
Population	55,294	60,640	64,409
Civilian labour force	21,045	22,673	48,839
Civilian employment	19,947	21,105	22,048
Wage and salary Earners (%)	32.5	31.5	30.7
Casual workers (%)	5.9	8.3	8.9
Employers (%)	4.3	5.0	5.3
Self-employed (%)	25.4	24.9	25.2
Unpaid family workers (%)	31.9	30.3	29.9
Unemployment rate (%)	8.0	6.9	7.3
Underemployment rate	6.3	6.9	6.9
Unemployment and Underemployment	14.3	13.8	14.2
Unionisation[2]			
Total (%)	42.5	24.5	16.3
Public (%)	93.3	79.3	59.7
Private (%)	22.7	10.3	6.4
Civilian employment and total active insured[3]			
Total active insured	7,417	8,960	11,008
Total non-insured	12,530	12,145	11,044
Rate of non-insured to employment (%)	62.8	57.5	51.1

Source: State Institute of Statistics, Household Labour Force
Survey Results
1. Data refers to persons 12 years old and over
2. This unionisation rate includes the unionisation of workers covered
   by the Social Insurance Institute, the social security institution for
   workers.
3 . In Turkey, there are three main institutions for social security; *Emekli
   Sandigi* covers the public sector employees, *Social Insurance* covers
   the waged workers and *Bag-Kur* covers the self-employed.

of a careful selection process and intensive training.
However, a recent experience, in which twelve of their friends
were fired because of union membership[8], caused under-
standable damage to the workers' trust in management.
Hence, when asked about job security, almost all of them

referred to that mass lay off. They seem to be ambiguous about the inconsistency between the managerial discourse based on the importance of workers to the company, and the lack of job security. Another important point, related to the possibility of being dismissed, is the perceived ease of replacement. Management is in a favourable position because of the abundant supply of workers in Turkey. The workers could easily be replaced at any time by management. In the plant, although some of them think that they are well trained and management would prefer to keep them, a majority noted, 'A newcomer can learn what I am doing in two or three days'. The lack of job security in Turkey is very much in parallel with practices in other newly industrialising countries, such as Mexico and Brazil (Shaiken, 1995; Franzoi and Rodriguez, 1993). In the final analysis, 'job security' does not seem to be utilised as a tool to back up hegemonic discourse in Toyotasa. Hence, almost all workers perceive themselves as being subjected to a real threat of unemployment. The significant consequence deriving from the absence of job security is that managerial ideologies, which put emphasis primarily on the 'one big family' or 'togetherness', loose their legitimacy.

The basic importance for the workers of the job lies in the wages. Attitudes to wages form, it would be true to say, the most important determinant of workers' perceptions of their companies and employers. Wages are the most important source of dissatisfaction in the factory. The auto industry is one of the worst-paid industries in Turkey. The wage rates in the industry are defined by an agreement with the union, Turk-Metal, which operates in all automobile companies, except Toyotasa, Hyundai and Honda. In order to prevent any unionisation and to have a name in the industry as the 'best-paid factory', Toyotasa has a pay policy in which the wages are slightly higher than the average for the industry. Given that the overall pay is low in the auto industry, although Toyotasa pays to its workers above average, this does not mean satisfactory wages and this is still a low-wage policy. Hence, Toyotasa workers do not think that they receive sufficient benefits for their highly intensive work and mental labour. Some believe patience is the best policy as the company is very young and they will receive their just desserts in due course. Others, however, strongly express their discontent at the wage structure. One worker said:

> Here, a worker in one-month's time reaches 100 per cent productivity. If it is not so, this means the production system in the plant is not working. So, I think we do not benefit at all from this productivity.

Most of them say that they will only be able to continue working as they are for a few more months, and if nothing changes, they will leave. The low-wage policy of Toyotasa can be likened to the policies of Japanese companies in Mexico. Shaiken (1995) mentions that Japanese firms have achieved important successes in terms of quality and productivity through combining low wages with a driven, somewhat modified version of traditional Fordism. In the case of Toyotasa, it appears that there are no serious problems of quality and productivity caused by low wages. However, the contention of this study is that the low-wages added to the dissatisfaction caused by the lack of job security, makes the regulation of ideological practices transparent to workers, thus further damaging the company rhetoric.

However, this does not account for everything in regards to the hegemonic struggle in the factories. As mentioned earlier, Toyotasa workers also benefit from better working conditions, from the close nature of worker-manager relations and from the interest and care given by their company that epitomize primary segment employment. Yet, while workers enjoy some benefits of primary segment employment, they still manifest an acute awareness of the conflictual character of the management-worker relationship. Hence, the struggle for hegemony and for consensual relations in the factory underlines the fact that the dominant managerial ideology is partial and incomplete (Vallas, 1991; Abercrombie *et al.*, 1980).

Open rebellion or protest?

It should be acknowledged that there does not appear to be any open, declared form of resistance from workers. Not only is the Turkish political and economic climate hostile to resistance from organised labour but resistance is also hampered by the high level of unemployment and the lack of an alternative means of survival outside the plant. The existence of the army of unemployed, and extremely low wages outside makes many workers become submissive and accept their subjection to the sort of work they do:

> When enough is enough for me, I ask myself what I could
> do if I left the job. [Worker 5]

In addition to the disciplinary power of the market and mass unemployment, management believe that misbehaviour and 'soldiering' can be removed as a result of effective control and surveillance, drawing on well-designed technical and bureaucratic apparatuses. Nevertheless, as Parlak (1996: 144), in his study on Tofa° car workers, for instance, notes, 'For most workers, the only way to get back at management is through lowering quality and deviating from production norms and methods'.[9] In other words, spaces for opposition do exist. But resistance cannot be openly declared.

Another important point on the absence of open resistance is that management is quite successful at controlling and closing down all the publicly autonomous social sites where open resistance can germinate. As Stallybrass and White (1986) note, '…(i)n large part, the history of political struggle has been the history of the attempts to control significant sites of assembly and spaces of discourse'. Given that ideological resistance can grow best when it is shielded from direct surveillance (Scott, 1990; Sennett, 1992), tea breaks or lunchtime in the traditional factories were used to provide space and time in which workers could develop a critique of management or managerial strategies. These were often rather small and autonomous social sites where stifled anger or unspoken riposte had found expression. The management regime in Toyotasa, together with its egalitarian symbols of using the same cafeteria and being together during the tea breaks, prevents any social existence outside the immediate control of the management. Here are some comments from two workers on the abolition of their autonomous social sites in the factory:

> [Worker 1] We used to have a break like tea breaks beyond
> the gaze of management. We used to make jokes about
> ourselves or about the managers or share anger about
> something, which went wrong. I mean, we used to relax a
> bit! Now, we do not have a single minute where we feel
> free in the factory.

> [Worker 2] While having lunch together or being together
> during the tea breaks with the managers, we have to be
> careful not to make a misplaced gesture or to use a
> misspoken word.

For some, the specific socio-economic and political conditions of Turkey, a so-called newly industrialising country, determine the experiences of workers in Toyotasa.

As noted earlier, for the establishment of hegemony in the factory, ideological discourse must be supported by solid economic and political interests; so that workers become convinced that their interests might coincide with those of management. Workers might either experience economic gains through state intervention in terms of social insurance, favourable trade union legislation and labour law or alternatively, the firm might provide some material support, as is the case in Japan. In Japan the state offers little or nothing to workers. It is the company that workers rely on. The underdeveloped state of social security programs is balanced by the extensive company welfare system for housing, pensions, sickness benefits and by life-time employment and seniority payments (Dore, 1973; Burawoy, 1985; Sako and Sato, 1997).[10] However, this either-or construction should not be taken as a model because, as I argue, the experiences of Turkey are totally different. As the capitalist world order provides the context within which her participation and role are determined, Turkey, like the other newly industrialising countries, has structural characteristics and encounters constraints and challenges. Recently, she has faced trade liberalisation, globalisation and international competitiveness. The socio-political accommodation of the constraints and challenges offered by global capitalism has led to the pressures towards de-politicisation of the distributional process and the dismantling of the economic and social functions of the nation state. Urban labour in Turkey is losing its capacity to influence the state in areas that affect its destiny. 'If the present trends continue, the state apparatus will gradually transform itself into an institution, merely endowed with repressive functions' (Boratav *et al.*, 2000:32). The legitimacy in Toyotasa in Turkey lies here; on the one hand, there is a need for consent and co-operation to organise the labour process but on the other hand, there is a lack of social policy and state intervention to regulate the material conditions for the desired consent and co-operation. At the moment, the factory visited stays rather silent but the crisis of the production politics is certainly there.

Within the contextually specific nature of Turkey, the examination of the changing nature of the capitalist labour

process in the context of the nature of the work and factory regime in Toyotasa, has illustrated some features, which exert a powerful influence on work organisation and on the particular characteristics of management-worker relations. First, this study reveals that the ways in which work and factory regimes have been constructed in Toyotasa are heavily shaped by the fact that Toyotasa is a 'greenfield plant'. A greenfield transplant has considerable scope to select the 'right' sort of workers and to organise work and employment practices to echo home practices. This rather 'pure' version of the Japanese management implies a 'tough' work and factory regime without any concessions to local circumstances. Second, the distinctive features of the auto sector play an important role in the ways in which Toyotasa management organises work and constructs and reproduces its hegemonic factory regime.

The infrapolitics of the Turkish workers:

Hidden forms of resistance

Is the lack of open resistance or consent among Turkish workers the end of the story? A view of politics focused either on what may be command performances of consent or, the open declared forms of resistance, represents far too narrow a concept of political life. Most of the political life of subordinate groups, notes Scott (1990: 136), 'is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites'. But there are manifold strategies by which subordinate groups manage to generate resistance and dissent into the public transcript. These strategies are called, by Scott (1990), 'the infrapolitics of the powerless'.

In a similar vein, de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, names these styles of action as '*la perruque*'. He notes (1984: 30), 'These styles of action intervene in a field which regulates them at a first level (for example, at the level of the factory system), but they [workers] introduce into it a way of turning it to their advantage that obeys other rules and constitutes something like a second level interwoven into the first (for instance, *la perruque*)'. And he continues (1984: 179), 'Wasting products, diversion of time, "*la perruque*", turn-over or inactivity of employees, etc., undermine from

within a system which, as in the Toyota factories, tends to become a form of imprisonment in order to prevent any sort of escape'.

Furthermore, this paper argues that in Toyotasa another way not predicated on open rebellion or consent, is emerging. As Edwards and Scullion (1982) argue, the capacity to resist has to be developed and sustained, and the forms taken by resistance depend on the types of control currently in operation. In other words, the sites of conflict give rise to new types of worker responses. Workers submit to the structure of control though they are not *passive* agents, as claimed by the Foucauldian perspective. Workers are active and innovative in the factory and they respond, as Graham (1995: 19) puts it, 'by manipulating the system, their manipulative behaviour taking the form of a charade'. The infrapolitics of workers or their hidden forms of resistance lead them to manoeuvre their way through the control regime by manipulating it and by making light of managerial attitudes and strategies.

First, workers have devised their particular ways of 'making do' with managerial strategies and the regime itself through tactics and strategies of passive resistance. For instance, as noted earlier, workers made their way through the selection process by pretending to be co-operative, teamwork oriented and anti-union. As one of them puts it:

> They ask 'What does the union mean to you?' or 'What do you think about the union?' Do you ever say, 'I am pro-union' even if you are so? Of course not. You just say 'I am not interested'. You understand what they want to hear and pretend to be that way.

Secondly, in regard to the control regime, workers manipulated the managerial strategies of control. For example, management wanted to identify the workers having distracted thoughts because of their social or psychological problems and aimed to take them under special control. In this respect, a team prepared magnets with different faces, such as happy, sad and angry. Every morning, team members had to choose the magnet matching their moods and put it against their names. One of the team leaders summarised the purpose of this practice in these words, 'It really helps me to put special and direct control on the ones who are more likely to make mistakes because of their psychological discomfort'.

However, all the team members, without exception in order not to be marked by management as, 'a man in need of special treatment', put the magnet with a smiling face against their names. Hence, management had to abandon this control policy. Another control policy had also to be abandoned according to one worker:

> They attempted to record the frequency of cord pulling by each worker. But, we started to shout the name of the team leader instead of pulling the cord.

Thirdly, as discussed earlier, the company' motives were transparent to many workers and they were not taken totally in by the rhetoric of management. Rather, workers make light of company rituals. They make jokes about those who actively participate in *kaizen*[11] activities or prepare *kaizen* circle slogans. In one worker's words,

> This friend of ours has the energy and motivation to *kaizen* everything he can. Nobody could stop him. God gives this *kaizen* power to him, I believe.

Similar accounts are presented by Graham in her study on Subaru-Isuzu, California, where *Kaizening* was the brunt of team jokes. She notes (1995: 121), 'When the line stopped, a team member would suggest: "Let's *Kaizen* that chair", or if something really went wrong, a member might say, "I guess they *kaizened* that!"'

The attitudes of managers to work organisation are sometimes taken lightly by them. For example, one worker on his way to a circle meeting made an analogy between the circle and the hoop, 'Now it is time to jump through hoops, come and join us'.

In sum, mainstream writings promote the idea that the emerging control regimes have contented workforces who enjoy skilled work and live in a new environment of industrial attitudes. The Foucauldian perspective, noting the well-designed control and surveillance system, shares with the latter the idea that there is no space for open resistance. Contrary to these approaches, this paper concurs with a good many studies that conflict at the point of production continues to produce class and individual conflicts in the so-called post-Fordist era. The hidden forms of resistance among the Turkish workers highlight their dissent and their forms of insubordination to the managerial discourses and managerial ideologies.

Hegemonic incorporation or building blocks for working class struggle?

On the one hand, the hidden forms of resistance do not cause any problem for the reproduction of the control regime and the production process. On the other hand, they are different from the 'making-out' games defined by Burawoy (1979) whereby workers engage in playful activities which boost productivity. The hidden forms of resistance, which exist in the absence of open significant protest or organised forms of collective resistance, *could* be understood and taken as a sign of hegemonic compliance. Hence one *could* see the politics of Turkish workers as nothing more than hegemonic incorporation.[12] However, this assumption, which neglects what is beneath the surface, is much too crude and one-dimensional.

Perhaps, Turkish workers' politics can be better understood on a rather different dimension; 'when the rare civilities of open political life are curtailed or destroyed, as they so often are, the elementary forms of infrapolitics remain as a defence in the depth of the powerless' (Scott, 1990:201). If the politics of Turkish workers is muted or ambiguous this is because it must be evasive in the hostile economic and political environment in the factory in particular and in the country in general. Here, there is not any compliance that is observed on the workers' side. Hence, hegemony is not extended to include the practices of the factory management in maintaining workers' consent. Put differently, the alliance of the antagonistic classes is not observed in our case. My argument is that the politics of Turkish workers cannot be understood in terms of the concept of hegemonic incorporation but is better seen in terms of the creation of the building blocks for working class struggle.

Firstly, the hidden forms of resistance are the building blocks for the class struggle because they underline the fact that workers negate the existing managerial ideology and the control regime and that hegemony, in the absence of intellectual and moral leadership from management, is not reached at the level of thought. Worker consciousness is not, however, reached to the point of 'the solidarity of interests among all the members of a social class'. In Gramscian terms, their consciousness is to interpreted as 'economic-corporate level or trade union consciousness' in which workers identify with their own narrow self-interests, but

they do not yet identify with their entire class (Simon, 1988). This phase in the development of collective political consciousness and organisation is the elementary phase and will advance towards the most purely political phase, in which the working class becomes aware of its own interests and begins to challenge the hegemony of the capitalist class. Hence, as the working class moves into this political phase, more and more workers begin to develop a political consciousness (Simon, 1988).

Secondly, the hidden forms of resistance are building blocks as they create and nurture a counter-hegemonic discourse. The forms of infrapolitics such as jokes, gossips etc., which are extensively observed in the factory, provide both cover and structure for resistant subcultures and are elementary forms of more conscious political action. Given that it is rather difficult in a factory for workers to develop their own autonomous and hegemonic culture, the forms of infrapolitics provide workers with the ability to develop their hegemony in a moment when the hegemony of the management is in crisis. In other words, the counter-hegemonic struggle places emphasis on the role of ideological struggle in order to achieve a transformation in the outlook of workers in building up the hegemony of the working class (Bocock, 1986).

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to shed light on Turkish workers' experiences of living under 'total quality management' or 'lean management' and to explore their politics. First, this paper does not share the optimism of the mainstream writings of a consensual workplace. The absence of consensual relations in the factory arises from the fact that workers are directly coerced through intensive work and controlled by disciplinary mechanisms. Moreover, this paper highlights the fact that management finds it difficult to establish a hegemonic relationship because its ideological discourses do not have a material basis that easily allows for the co-ordination of workers interests to their own. Nevertheless, this does not account for everything concerning the hegemonic struggle in the factory. Those workers who experience many essential features common to primary sector firms (good working conditions, interest and care

given by their company) manifest an acute and critical consciousness of the conflictual character of management-worker relationships. Hence, the struggle for hegemony and for consensual relations in the factory underlines the importance of the fact that the dominant managerial ideology is partial and incomplete.

Second, I argue that there is little sign of organised collective working class resistance against management. Workers have good reasons not to openly rebel. Turkey's labour market dynamics, such as structural unemployment and the absence of welfare facilities outside the firm form the conditions of compliance, through deepening workers' dependency. In addition, limited social horizons have made these workers more prone to accept and commit themselves to regular factory work. Moreover, management largely controls the social spaces within the factory where a critique of the managerial regime might develop.

Last but not least, a realm of politics that lies strategically between consent and open forms of resistance does exist for Turkish workers. These hidden forms of resistance involve an 'art of making do with', of manipulating existing bureaucratic, technocratic, or otherwise disciplinary technologies through tactics, clever tricks and joyful discoveries. These hidden forms of resistance form the building blocks of working class struggle as they create and nurture a counter-hegemonic discourse, resistant subcultures and elementary forms of more conscious political activity.

Notes

1. 'Critical Management Studies' (CMS) has been a major growth area, with its own conference in the UK and a US-based discussion list. Under the sovereignty of post-modernism and post-structuralism, workers, unions, the extraction of surplus value and/or the capitalist labour process seem rather archaic compared to the explanation of workplaces and/or society as a whole based on identities, simulations, discourses and/or texts. 'There is, thus, no significant difference between what is claimed on behalf of CMS and those made for post-structuralism and post-modernism in general' (Thompson, 2001: 1). For a critique of CMS, see Thompson, 2001.

2. In Turkey, manufacturing companies with 500 employees or more, are under legal obligation to accept a certain quota of university students, especially engineering students, for a month of training during the summer holiday. I was considered for employment as one of these students.

3. The concept of 'hegemony' is a point of departure in Gramsci's thought for an historical and social analysis and also a guiding concept for political practice. 'Hegemony' in Gramsci refers to a moment in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it dominates (Gramsci, 1971: 181-82). Furthermore, within a class-based analysis of the state, it also refers to the reproduction of state ideologies in civil society. The conceptualisation of 'hegemony' provides Gramsci with a very comprehensive framework in which the dichotomy of consent and coercion is intensively used in social analysis.

4. Scott defines public transcript as follows, '(*P)ublic* here refers to action that is openly avowed to the other party in the power relationship and *transcript* is used almost in its juridical sense (*process verbal*) of a complete record of what was said. This complete record, however, would also include nonspeech acts such as gestures and expressions' (1990:2).

5. *Andon* lights comprise a series of lights and switches at every workpoint. When workers have a problem, they activate a light which alerts the supervisor or the team leader. The *andon* light, is often held up as an example by the proponents of the Japanese model of production, of the transfer of prerogatives to the operators. However, workers do not stop the line without reporting to the team leader. Yet, even if they stop the line, they are marked as 'problematic' workers rather than 'responsible' ones.

6. Circles are formed by circle members, who are from a particular work area. During circle activities, circle members are asked to enhance their intellectual capacity to improve productivity, efficiency and/or quality.

7. According to Turkish Labour Law, an employer who wishes to lay off an employee can dismiss him without reason, so long as he provides written notice.

8. Neither during orientation and training, nor after the production started, had the management made any declaration positive or negative about unions and unionisation. The issue appeared to be a forbidden topic intentionally left off the agenda until some workers became members of a union. When this came to the attention of management, twelve union members were fired, a couple of weeks before the research was undertaken. This clearly signalled that the company was determined not to allow unionisation. In the following

days, the chairman of the company made a speech on local television, and for the first time in the history of the company he expressed their anti-union stance to the public and to its workers. He mentioned that the company did not want a union and that the company itself was there to fulfil that role for the workers. Following the strategy of 'combating unionism', Toyotasa is still non-unionised today and seems determined to remain so. It is important not to underestimate the structural factors, which facilitate the company in avoiding unionisation, such as the absence of a strong trade unionism and of strong labour legislation. When the unionisation of the workers covered by the Social Insurance Institute, the social security institution for workers, is analysed, only 6.4 per cent of the workers in the private sector were union members in 1999 (Table 1).

9. Parlak (1996) notes that to keep up with increasing workloads, workers often employ their 'own' methods such as the use of non-standard tools, altering machine settings, and reducing the standard number of welding spots and sequences of machining and welding operations.

10. It is important here to remember that these benefits are offered only to core workers and the periphery workers in Japan find themselves in difficult economic and social circumstances. Moreover, the 1990s recession in Japan calls into question the life-time employment and the seniority system.

11. *Kaizen*, as an organisational culture, is less a results-based than a process-oriented way of thinking and demands that 'no day should go by without some improvement being made somewhere in the enterprise'. In other words, *Kaizen* is interpreted as a better way to do a job more easily, more efficiently, or more safely.

12. For a critique of this approach, see Abercrombie *et al.* (1980)

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