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The shift of the work paradigm
(background study)

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The shift of the work paradigm

The aim of this paper is to investigate the relation of the change of the work concept with the change in norms of the examined period. Furthermore, it aims to verify that the polarization of society results in a dual work concept with two work notions of different content existing simultaneously. This is the reason for the paradox of work and the distribution of goods nowadays, and the crisis of wage-work-centred work paradigm that prevailed until the end of the 20th century.

1./The emergence of the social paradox of work and the distribution of goods

Modern states in the 20th century defined themselves as societies of capitalism and employment (Polányi 1997), although they could not cope with their risks and uncertainty. Full employment, being an essential keystone of modern welfare states, is undergoing a significant transition due to the economic and social changes at the end of 20th century. Caused by the result of changes, the validity of work serving as the primary organizing principle of society is frequently challenged in practice.

The routine of distribution based on work and performance is continuously effaced, eq. by goods gained with property, succession, citizenship. More and more people are sidelined from the division of labour, which serves as the basis for the division of labour and performance and has been seen as a significant force of social cohesion since Durkheim, and the everyday subsistence of these people is guaranteed only through goods ensured by social redistribution (Durkheim 1986).

Despite empirical evidence on the process of distributing social goods, the general theory and social role – members of society shall ensure goods necessary for living basically by work – of the work paradigm is widely supported. Its determining role prevails, despite the fact that it is not ensured fully even among those of working age (Bonţ 2000).

The paradox having emerged during the last decades is becoming more intensified nowadays. The greater extent work disappears from the society of work, the better members of society insist on the principle of division based on labour. The contradiction may be solved by two alternatives: on the one hand, the transformation of the content of the work concept, on the other, the emergence and acceptance of theories on the operation of society.

2./ The change in the content of the work concept

During the majority of the history of mankind, members of society ensured conditions of living with work or exchange of natural goods. Financial income and the market itself had been assigned a marginal role until the beginning of New Age. The central role of work cannot be extended to eras prior to industrial society. In non-work-intensive societies, there is
Discussions on the essentials, aim, social role, major characteristics of work have originated in the past, and – independent of age – the same reasons are listed most times. The difference is that which content element of work is emphasized in the given historical and economic period, **what is accepted as a norm by the majority of society**. By reviewing the changing content of the work concept, we wish to point out where we are and towards what kind of work-related norms we are heading now.

The transition of work into a dominant role and the transformation process of working and income conditions are divided into three phases by the majority of researchers: preindustrial, industrial and post-industrial phases. The phases are evaluated based on the way of life, dominant forms of work, and the amount of time spent with working, and working time is differentiated from free time, if possible. The basic characteristics of work in the given period are defined with the help of these criteria.

By having summarized the attempts to define the content of the work concept, we established the concept of “**decent work**” – as a canon – to help the interpretation and characterisation of work concepts of certain periods, which means a **volunteer activity that is socially recognized and that ensures the affected person and family’s living and social integration suitably to the style of living of the given era.**

Having analysed the three phases of the history of work and the lace of “decent work” in them, we can state that work and the relation to it have been transformed significantly several times. It was award, punishment, the part of collective action or individual obligation (Dahrendorf 1994., Castel 1998., Arendt 1995., Arendt 1999).

### 2.1. Preindustrial societies

The first phase of historical analyses is directed towards preindustrial societies, where a slow shift can be detected from in-kind incomes to financial incomes.

#### 2.1.1. Prehistorical era

Anthropologists describe hunter-gatherer societies as “ancient welfare societies” a bit idyllically. People’s needs at those times were exiguous, could be fulfilled with little work, thus spared much space for free time, resting and sleeping. People worked irregularly, they spent no more than 3-4 hours per day for gathering food and maintaining their environment.

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1 It is necessary to emphasize this as we tend to generalize our values and expectation related to work retroactively, even in the case of earlier centuries at the dawn of the 21st century.


3 Our definition of decent work – resulting from the analysis of a wider historical era – differs from the Decent Work concept and schedule of ILO (1999). The ILO definition includes security and social protection, guarantees the right to organize and participation in decision-making systems besides the possibility to work and income for a living.
According to Seibt, adults spent less time, 2-4 hours on activities that could be called work (Seibt 1990. 79., Sahlins 1974).\(^4\)

In preindustrial societies, social identity was not defined only through work. The individual was connected to society with multiple relations. **The concept of “decent work” here is concentrated around voluntarily performed, socially useful work within the community and for the community.** These societies are closed with a limited number of members and also interdependent significantly. “… the foundation of experienced solidarity ... is narrowed, ... the ability of manipulation solely depends on family and blood-relationships. Consequently, the system of >>direct product exchange<< emerges in the field of manipulation, which makes the establishment of wider partnerships impossible” (Alexander 1996. 98). The unified content of the work concept results from the mode of living and less differentiated nature of society.

2.1.2. Ancient historical societies

In Greek city-states, social status was not defined by work. Work – with the narrowed meaning of today’s wage-work – had no value in these societies. Goods originated not from work but their owners (oikos).\(^5\) The task of the citizens with full rights included practicing virtues and participation in the life of the city-state. Plato, in his utopistic state, strictly banned any kind of industrial or merchant activities for citizens. According to him, these activities had to undertaken by foreigners (metoikos)\(^6\) (Pais 1988: 343). Similarly, Aristotle states “… citizens cannot pursue the lives of handicraftsmen or merchants (such lives are ignoble and contrary to virtues); they cannot be even ploughmen (as they need free time for developing virtues as well as public work)”.\(^7\) **Consequently, the concept of work had a dual meaning,** which difference of content is seen in the philosophical analyses of work later.

Aristotle referred to the individual doing productive work as “**Animal laborans**” (working animal), where need and compulsion stood in the background for performing work, contrary to other types of work, where reason, political and artistic activities, work done for the sake of the community prevail (Márkus 1992a). Here, the emphasis is not put on the end product but the participation in the process. According to Aristotle, the activity done by this

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\(^4\) It is interesting not that – according to authors who know well the era – women spent more time on work even then.

\(^5\) Nowadays, it is generally quoted that not the work performed but succession, property gained by earlier generations constitute the basics of social status. The „generation of successors”” does not augment its wealth in the traditional – work-centred – way but it expands its capital with stock exchange, financial and trading affairs. Its profit – as compared to manufacturing businesses – is significantly larger.


\(^7\) Arisztotelész: Politika Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 1984. 290.
“Animal rational” (rational animal) is the privilege of free people, whereas the aforementioned activity is done by slaves at most.8

2.1.3. Societies of the Middle Ages

Even the societies in the Middle Ages did not appreciate productive work. At most, it was considered as day-labourers’ and servants’ tiring physical activity that does not call forth enduring results (Gorz 1994.13).

In the Bible, which fundamentally defined the value-system of the Middle Ages, work is assigned as a punishment following vacuous time spent in Paradise, thus work was regarded as a bitter activity throughout the period. Luther and even Kant considered work as a punishment. Thomas Aquinas, the most determining person of the early Middle Ages, differentiated four types of work:
1. contemplation, reasoning
2. ascetism, good deeds
3. honourable work
4. income-gaining activity.

He devalued physical work and considered wage-work as valueless. In such a value judgement, complete turn away from the secular world and the focus of transcendent sphere are dominant. According to Thomas Aquinas, only spiritual activities pleased God. Similarly to the Greek, welfare for people in the Middle Ages was a matter of good fortune or divine predestination and was independent of one’s ability or will to work for establishing welfare.

The basic meaning of work remained in the category of “necessary evil”, which can also be found in the writings of early utopists. Both Thomas More’s Utopia (1516) and Campanella’s The City of the Sun (1602) state that one cannot avoid work. It is treated as something necessary evil for living and as it is not a pleasurable thing, utopist societies shall distribute it equally among their members. Consequently, the depreciation of the value of “decent work” finished in the Middle Ages irrevocably. If work is assigned to the members of society as compulsory or punishment, those concerned aim to avoid it and save themselves from the “necessary evil”. According to James Mill, we are predestined to be born as hating work (Schroeder 2000). However, if voluntarism is absent from a socially useful activity, its prestige disappears irreversibly.

Besides the process described above, another work value is to emerge simultaneously. The protestant ethic presented a totally different image of work. According to Calvin, all

8 The duality of the concept can be seen in he attempts to define “decent work”. The duality can be exemplified by the wage-work definition of the 19th century, which concentrated on objective end products and was built up by routine activities by consuming minimal elements of human entity, reasoning. Its mechanized moves resemble rather instinct-driven than rational activities, besides, those served individual interests and not the public. In many respects, this is similar to Aristotle’s slave work rather than a free individual’s voluntarily undertaken activity (Arendt 1999. 102).
forms of work – and not merely contemplation – serve God. His principles assigned religious and moral values to work. Following him, work is not the punishment of sinners but recognized moral and religious value. Since then – contrary to the previous belief – work has been praised. According to the Victorian romanticists, including Jeremy Bentham’s moral philosophy, humans are valuable and fulfill their destinies if they work (Bentham 1970). The concept of “decent work” is again changing. It is not a useful activity performed for the community now but an activity that pleases God, establishes values, manages goods well and even accepts individual values. This concept leads us to the age of industrial societies and their value systems.

All three periods described above have a common characteristic, which categorizes their work concepts into the same group despite their differences. A fundamental feature of these societies is that activities, which we call work, are not defined as separate concepts but are embedded in their social relations. Besides, another common characteristic is task-orientatedness. In the work concepts described above, work and task cannot be separated. “... among the diverse tasks that constitute activities to be done in communities, there is none that could serve as the separate category of >work< as there is none that could serve as a separate status of >worker<. Work is life itself and if there are any differences in career, those are not to be found in work and non-work but the different activity areas, such as farming, cooking, educating, weaving, etc... well, if time constitutes an elemental part of tasks in traditional societies and if tasks are considered as activities necessitating the professional experiences of special persons with special social identities, thus it concludes that there is no true difference between work and social life” (Ingold, 2000. 193).

With regard to the work concept of preindustrial societies and the uniformity of performed activities, Polányi says that these are embedded in social existence and are not different in terms of their goals or functions. The primary aim of activities done was to fulfill needs, be it any need that can be fulfilled by – according to our recent concepts – work or non-work activities (Polányi 1997).

2.2. Industrial societies

During this relatively short period, social allocation strictly depended on wage work and earnings. The concept of work here differentiated and became separate from social life. Thompson (1967) distinguished people’s relation to time and work in industrial societies. “… The distinction of life and work here lies in what we do and what we are made to do. One denotes activities, originating from ourselves, socially responsible persons, the other covers activities necessitating experienced physical skills for serving a program that is not our own but obeys an external force” (Thompson 1967. 197).

The separation of work and social production was formally induced by the logic of capitalist production. The fundamental principle of capitalism is the alienation of labour force (Márkus 1992). This means that some human groups cannot access directly the resources necessary for their subsistence, thus they have to sell or let their working capacity
to an employer owning means of production for monetary payment so that they can access the resources necessary for their subsistence. On the place, difficult identification or thinness of the boundary between wage work and social production, Thompson says: “... housewives – unlike industrial workers – formally preserved their command of their own workforce, and although their work was necessary and irreplaceable, it usually demanded extraordinarily much energy and stamina but was not done under external force” (Thompson 1967, 206).

In western societies, institutions that previously marked identities lost their values. The role of churches decreased, local communities split up and families got into crises, which all support this fact. Previously, social status was equally determined by the role held in local communities, tasks undertaken in religious life, the role-set in family matters that was controlled by communities and successful tradesmanship or businessmanship. Nowadays, this multi-dimensional measure is decreasing to ever less dimensions. Merely work and its product what remains as a primary measure for identifying a person’s place, role, and notability in society (Gorz 1983., Krafeld 2000). Consequently, if they lose their jobs, people lose the last handhold for their identities. There are no alternative identity-dimensions for work. This does not mean work in general but work that makes money and provides salaries, that is, wage work. Although non-paid work – domestic work, nurturing children, nursing the elderly or the ill, community work – consumes almost the same amount of time as paid work, it is not categorized as work most cases. Namely, industrial societies accept activities as work if it is remunerated, these are exclusively the socially recognised activities (Castel, 1998, Bonß 2000., Gorz 2000). The concept of “decent work” in industrial societies covers wage work. Contrary to the dual work concepts of previous periods, industrial societies are characterized by a uniform work concept: the majority of society works as wage workers, and proprietorship is the privilege of a minority of people.

Presumably this is the reason why all claimed new workplaces in this system and just a few mentioned the alternative of multi-dimensional identity (Ribolits 1997), the necessity of multi-faceted evaluation for determining status, the implementation of integration with multiple paths and the distribution of public goods – based not only on performance or work accomplished.

As the reestablishment of “multi-dimensional identity” would mean the modification of the value system, the entire system of the distribution of public goods, and this modification would oppose the currently ruling elite’s interests, groups currently in power do nothing but promise full employment and offer the reintroduction of wage work to society as the only possible vision for the future – according to social criticisms (Blanpain 1999., Kurz-Scherf 1998).

2.3. Post-industrial societies

The alliance of work and society that was outlined by Keynes in the 1950s became questionable by the 1980s, and universal by the postmodern era. Besides economic reasons, political ones also contributed to the split of the fragile balance. The crisis of the Soviet
Union terminated the competition between the two world-systems and thus it abolished the possibility of control. Social-democrats became ignored, there was nothing to limit the expansion of liberal economy. According to Dahrendorf, the century of social-democratism had come to an end with the transformation of economic and political systems (Dahrendorf-Merkel 1992). The loss of political space was also accelerated by many considering social-democratism as “a soft alternative of communism” (Hutton 1995. 16) and as such, it was undesirable. As a result of liberal economic expansion, the crisis of primary labour market has increased from the 1990s.

As far as the history of working and earnings-conditions in the given periods is concerned, the third era is characterized by a part of society being excluded from income generating activities, the world of paid and wage work while another part ensures its living with mutually complementary income mixes. Only one third of society (according to others, only 20% of it) is able to preserve their previous employment forms. Only these people are able to fulfil the expectations of “decent work” of industrial societies (Gorz 1980., Offe 1984., Dahrendorf 1994., Almási 1995., Forrester 1998).

By moving from industrial societies to post-industrial societies, the number of those excluded from the formal system of labour market is growing. During the period of transition, a dual value system was established, which produced a special living situation. “… in developed countries, only one part of society has to work to achieve a high level of GRP/capita and to produce the output for serving the global market... The developed industrial society allows only a part of –its employees – Judit Csoba – it to work so that it remains compatible... there is no need for such a huge amount of workforce” (Almási 1995. 192).

The promise of full employment in such a transitional phase seems false from multiple viewpoints and the crisis of wage work becomes general for a number of reasons. Hannah Arendt pointed as early as 1958 („La Condition de l’homme moderne”) to the questionable status of work as a central paradigm in modern societies. “The sudden, spectacularly emerging career of work, pointing from the lowest, most despised position to the place of honour, making it to the most appreciated human activity, began when Locke found the resource of all properties in work. Its triumph continued when Adam Smith named work as the resource of every economy. It reached its zenith in Marx’s system, when work became the resource of all productive activities and even more, the expression of human essence” (Arendt 1983. 114-115). Arendt posed that this is not true for all work forms. Routine, monotonously repeated activities that concentrate on the produced outcomes and the quantity of end products are not necessarily the expressions of human essence. This is notable as experts show interest in the questionable state of the work paradigm since labour wealth has decreased, and thus it seems unreal for all of working age to partake in the decreasing labour wealth and it also seems incredible that it can serve as “the expression of human essence” and the basis for subsistence.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the join of Central- and Eastern European countries, and then India and China to the world market, the open system of world economy
included a surplus of 3 billion people by the 1990s. Money, information, goods and services could be transferred freely in such an expanded area, which lead to a process nowadays that has started in the 1980s, namely, **the gradual transformation of the work concept, and the renewal and reinterpretation of its value-content**. The proposal of the problem is connected to Ralf Dahrendorf (Im Entschwinden der Arbeitsgesellschaft 1980) and Andre Gorz (Abschied vom Proletariat 1980). A year later, Jürgen Habermas published his book “The theory of communicative action”, in which he proposes the need for a change of approach: he emphasized communicative structures as factors establishing social relations as more important than labour. Claus Offe raised the question of labour being the key concept for sociologists and he pointed to the possibility and need to **differentiate labour, production, income and occupation** at the 21st conference of sociologists in Bamberg, 1982. He indicated that differentiation was necessary as labour was continuously disappearing from the society of labour (Dahrendorf 1980., Gorz 1980., Offe 1984., Beck 1986).

Vobruba introduced the concept of complex crisis with the definition of “the dual crisis of wage work” in his volume “Arbeit und Essen” (1989). His fundamental principle – “labour is insufficient in quantity and inadequate in its quality” (1989.71) – states that wage work, besides its quantitative lack, is adequate neither in health-related, nor in social or environmental terms in the 21st century. **It does not meet the criteria of decent work.**

The crisis of the work concept peaked in the period when the Lisbon Congress of the European Union (March 2000) set full employment in the member states as a goal for 2010. However, the document does not specify which one of the existing work concepts is to be applied when aiming for full employment. Work as a fight for survival, which is part of God’s punishment or work as the goal for life, pleasuring God? Or is that work as a primary means for exploitation or work as a resource of income or as the tool for self-expression and the condition for social integration?

**It is necessary to redefine work in the 21st century** as we “catapulted from an industrial society” to the society of informatics and networks, a “network society” (Blanpain 1999. 43). Is there a difference – and if yes, what – between the concept of decent work in the industrial society and the “network society”?

Besides, it is necessary to find the 21st century definition for “decent work” as a **significant proportion of employees does not fit the conceptual framework of wage work that became dominant in the 20th century**. The number of contract for indefinite term is decreasing in every EU member country and employment forms are under change. The difference of unemployment and those doing “decent work” is continuously vanishing, for example, as far as marginal employees’ income situation, standard of living and social integration are concerned. The amount of social expenditure on “decent work” nowadays – from which employers aim to unburden themselves – raises the number and proportion of those excluded from “decent work” while the number of those who undertake alternative forms of living increases. The length of work time, the quality of work and/or the stable of real income value decays among the majority of those who stayed within the limits of
“decent work” in the traditional sense. This entire process not only decreases the possibility of full employment but also endangers the operation of a “wage work-centred” society.

In the period of the crisis of “decent work” and the space loss of the work paradigm, the acceptance of a new, alternative paradigm against work is rendered more difficult as the decrease in social demand for wage work occurs when the model is still generally accepted and the – economic, social, value-system-related – conditions to substitute it are not yet given. In such situation, there is no other solution left than reshaping the content of the “decent work” concept.

3. Fordism, Gatesism

3.1. Fordism

The special relation to work in the 20th century is often called “Fordism”. Fordism could occur in the framework of such an economic-social formation that emerged in the 1930s’ USA, following the great economic crisis and flourished in Europe after World War II. This the concept of work narrowed to wage work in Europe too, independent of social formation, of the socialist or capitalist history of the given country. This form of work has become exclusive from the middle of the 20th century, when sources other than wage work for income generation were almost negligible. Although there was an interesting difference of socialist and capitalist Fordism in the second half of the 20th century – in the former, “moral factors were to substitute financial motivation” (Csepeli 2001.40) – the essence was the same in both forms.

Henry Ford did not lend his name deliberately to this economic-social system – as the period has only been called Fordism from the middle of the 1990s – but his name and what it symbolizes was rightly hired to express the phenomenon. Henry Ford – during the short period of 1903-1926 – achieved to develop his small factory with 8 employees to a syndicate of 88 firms with 600,000 employees and produced 2 million cars per year (Hirsch-Roth 1986). This unbelievable improvement was achieved with a definite way of production- and labour-management, which means mass production, production line and the Taylorian work concept. The father or scientific labour-management emphasized the fact that employees are rational beings that can be motivated through the fulfilment of their economic needs. The key to efficiency and productivity lies in the special, pre-determined way employees conduct their work, and their wage to be dependent on the quality of their work. This labour-management method that emerged in the FORD Motor Company 1910-1914 is the best example of technology-driven division of labour. 55% of employees were specially trained semiskilled workers, 15% were unskilled cleaners with their wage could top 5 dollars per day (today, this could mean 140 dollars) (Sennet 2000. 49). On the other hand, the example also illustrates that this was the period of low-educated, heavy physical skilled workers, which

9 Arendt describes the situation as the emergence of a social formation at the dawn of post-industrial society, from which labour, the only activity that society is good at, diminishes (Arendt 1999).
provided workplaces in the automobile, steel and other heavy industries as well as light industries with a low demand of technology, and ensured acceptable salaries.

Fordism was not only a production model but a mode for social control and an expression for consumer norm as well. Collective agreement, a special form of unions, was also part of it as an organized mechanism for solving conflicts and antagonisms. Besides, the development of the welfare state, the management of economic prosperity and recession and the framework for pointing out needs and social demands all constitute it. Franklin Roosevelt’s “New Deal” institutionalized this way of organization not only in economic but in social and political terms, too (Tremblay 1995).

The limits to Fordism could be detected as early as the 1970s in Europe (especially after the economic crisis of 1973) but it flourished between 1950-1980. It can be characterized by a Taylorian work organization, a gradual increase in labour productivity, a constant increase of GNP, mass production of consumer goods, a conspicuous increase of mass consumption and the seemingly endless expansion of production. These optimist characteristics, rooted in a belief of endless growth, described the entire period and influenced the formulation of general work conditions in labour law definitions, too. “Decent work”, according to the value system of Fordism, could be described by the following:

1. Everyone who wanted /was able to work could work, even if it was Taylorian work, as the economic expansion after the war offered the possibility for full employment.

2. **Employee status, full-time employment (8-hour/day) and contracts for indefinite term** all belonged to the standards of “decent work”. Employees and employers entered into contracts for indefinite term. **Employee loyalty, accountability as well as production security** were important. **Experiences gained within the company** were significant for these reasons. Product-structure and technology changed relatively slowly in this period, knowledge and experience, which accumulated during the years of human resourcing, could be applied well.

3. Acceptable payment was general, which established a **balanced income distribution** with the help of welfare state regulations. This ensured a sufficient amount of consumption as well.

4. The third characteristic, beside the standard of income, is the **security and long-term predictability of income**. This means that if employees had worked fairly at a given company for years, their income was not only stable but increased predictably and linearly.

5. Social security is an unalienable element of the typical employment model. A **compulsory security mechanism** was always connected to contracts for indefinite term. Compulsory security element is an unalienable part of the European employment model. If this general security principle vanishes, the primary paradigm of European existence disappears, namely, **society built on solidarity and based on this, social cohesion**.

6. A further characteristic of the employment model of Fordism is **linear career**
Employees start at the bottom of occupational hierarchies during their professional lives – as apprentices, servants – and then gradually process upwards to higher positions with the increase of experiences and the number of years so as to retire, for example as heads of department or foremen. Linear career path is connected to income available at the different stages of professional lives: employers retire from the highest employment and income categories, which also means the highest available and stable pension.

7. Finally, prestige criteria are also important. At the end of professional lives, employees always move ahead, which gives them attitude, self-esteem, internal harmony, concrete aims, negotiable paths, predictable and achievable visions for the future together with social appreciation.

The conditions of “decent work” – according to the norms of Fordism – were completeness, which helps the establishment of norms; regularity, which ensures the maintenance of norms the balance of incomes, which legitimates a system ont he long run; and linearity, which guarantees positive attitude and identification.

Until the middle 1980s, 80-85% of men of working age and 30-40% of women of working age in Europe had worked under such conditions. From then on, the criteria of “decent work” have undergone slow changes and new characteristics of work organization forms have emerged. Data on the improvement of employment forms 1988-1998 in Europe show the degree of transition.

During the ten years examined, the number and rate of individual entrepreneurs and related family members in Mediterranean countries significantly decreased (by 6% in Greece and Spain and 2.7% in Portugal). In the same time, the rate of part-time employees (from 6.5% to 11.1% in Portugal) and those working with contracts for definite term (from 15.8% to 25.3% in Spain) increased. Luxemburg, Denmark and Germany were the last to show still a high proportion of employees. While the exclusion from the employee community and gaining independence slowly but statistically measurably increased in other countries, in the latter ones, the rate of self-employed and assisting family members decreased in the period examined. Instead, the rate of part-time employment grew rapidly (from 13.2% to 20% in Germany, from 6.6% to 9.4% in Luxemburg).

As far as contracts for definite term are concerned, Spain (25.3%), France (17%), Finland (15.1%) and Portugal (12.4%) are the first ones between 1988-1998, and Luxembourg (2.4%), Ireland (6.1%), Italy (6.1%) and the UK (6.1%) are the last ones.

Employment in the sense of Fordism fell back in 9 countries between 1988-1998, in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany (especially in the western provinces) to the greatest extent. Employment in the sense of Fordism grew only in two countries by some percent: Greece (with the breakup of family economies and the emergence of family members as wage workers) and Denmark (with the aim to reduce the 67% rate of part-time employment). In 1998, more than 5% of employees out of 15 EU member states 11 worked under the employment conditions of Fordism. At the millennium, this rate was only 53.3% in Sweden, 56.5% in the UK and 55.4% in the European Union and in ten years, it decreased by 4.5%. The rate of employment under
Fordism conditions was under 50% as early as 1998 in four countries: the Netherlands (38.4%), Greece (43.2%), Spain (43.6%) and Portugal (48.3) (Hoffmann-Walwei 2000. 2).

From then on, we search for the traditional forms of production and income generation, which were considered as normal during the last decade (20th century) and are still considered as the only valid condition for social integration in vain. Wage worker condition that is regarded as “decent work” has narrowed down significantly. Changes were not temporary, showed long-lasting effect and questioned the fundamental basis of the employment paradigm of Fordism. Labor productivity cannot be increased endlessly with the Taylorian work organization, the market of mass consumption is not limitless, and thus the continuous increase of GNP cannot be guaranteed so that it means an automatic growth of workplaces. The directions and pace of economic sector-specific structure changes (especially the prosperity of services with its prevalent flexible employment forms), the emergence of groups with special employment and labor relations, and the changes of legal background that made these possible, the debates and modifications on the amount of social expenditures of wages all indicate that accommodation to the new environmental challenges continuously strains the limits of “decent work” and the employment norms of Fordism. The norms of Fordism – completeness, regularity, balanced income and linearity – that are defined as the conditions for “decent work” are about to disappear. New norms are being established.

3.2. Gatesism

Henry Ford – without his consent – gave his name to a form of production and consumption that became the symbol of capitalism in the 20th century. Bill Gates has happily undertaken the role of being the 21st century Henry Ford for informatics and new communication technologies. The period called “Gatesism” following Bill Gates has brought significant and fundamental changes in the world of work from the middle 1990s.

Entrepreneurs in the 21st century can only achieve the compulsory expectation for growth in Fordism by two ways. Either new markets are conquered, where they can sell their products to a wide range of consumers or they can raise the speed of changing their product structure and thus enhance innovation. The first way was feasible when world market was less formulated. That is why innovation and the reduction of production costs seem the only answer to be given to the challenge nowadays: producing ever less series under less time with less piece rate. The consequence of this was the termination of Fordian production mode. The price-reducing effect of mass production cannot be achieved. The emphasis shifts from quantity product to quality, “immaterial” production. One can stay alive with image, novelty, symbolic value. Entrepreneurs do not have to fulfil customers’ needs but they have to induce needs until they

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10 Is his name to become the symbol of the new form of production and consumption, the new characteristic in the development of capitalism similarly – asks G. Tremblay, Professor of Montreal University (Tremblay 1995). During the last 15 years, the emerging model of the new employment form has been called either “Gatesism” or – similarly to the symbol of the previous model – “Toyotism”.
reach the limits of normality or even trespass those for survival. **Normality is the moment of solidification that limits demand.** Only unforeseeable supply, surprise can raise demand. Each fixed phenomenon is a barrier that has to be removed (Gorz 2000).

The essence of Fordism is a series of fixed activities: standardized mass production, endless production lines, products generated with hundreds of repeated actions, military hierarchy, little latitude, inflexible series of movements prescribed to millimetres, huge storage capacity, a lot of non-productive instructors, organizers, coordinators, controllers. Taylor himself said once that workers had been stupid and lazy since they were born. Hence, scientific instruction is no more than forming the system of constraints with which workers can be made to show the greatest achievement possible. Complete mastery over work. Uneducated workers acquired never-met routines, learned mechanic series of movements and thus achieved notable speed when generating products. However, as the result of these, they made mistakes. The average amount of wastrel was about 20% in this system. Thus, it was not a surprise when the workforce making a lot of mistakes was substituted with machines at the first time possible.

Contrary to this Taylorian work organization, another production mode evolved in Japan in the middle of the century. Matsushita from the Motorola company, who undertook a telecommunication company in Chicago, was among the first forerunners. He assigned instruction to the workers. He argued that in American companies, there are workers who work and there are workers who only think. There, workers thought, too. Thus, half staff is sufficient for production. In two years, he doubled the production with the same headcount and reduced the rate of wastrel to 2%. However, he then established the origins of modern unemployment. The new production system – similarly to Ford – was perfectioned at an automobile company, Toyota. Kosuke Ikebuchy, the director of Toyota and the Fremont and California companies of General Motors, stated the new production philosophy with the following: “our 2100 workers work 8 hours per day at our production units but our 30 engineers work only 2 hours per day. Engineers’ most important task is to support workers’ ideas and not to tell them what they should do. Every other form of behaviour leads to an unbelievable wastage of resources” (Gorz 2000. 44).

The expansion of the system, the universalization of technological systems in production, the substitution of human resources with machines, semi-automated or automatic equipments where possible, the employment of well-trained, specifically skilled experts in development and system maintenance would be the ideal solution for western industries in the 21st century. Its expansion means the beginning of a cultural revolution, not simply a change in production structure.

Semi-skilled workers operating as machines are substituted with machines working as excellent skilled workers. The self-instructive, self-managing system of the production process cannot be figured without workers controlling the automatic systems. While every form of self-instruction was related to danger, rebellion and disorder in Taylorism and Fordism, and employees had to perform specifically defined tasks under strict control, the employment of human resource is to serve the solution of emerging problems, the improvement of instruction or products in Gatesism/Toyotism. Thus work is a space for creativity and innovativity. Employee
expectations have also changed fundamentally: mobility instead of loyalty, innovativeness, creativity and proactivity instead of routine and experience. A part of workers have transferred to a non-material and intellectual activity from production activities due to market challenges. They understand the production process, they are responsible for it and think through tools and solution. They cooperate, work in teams and care for others. They are designers, technicians, instructors and workers at the same time. What proportion of workers is capable for doing such work? What is going to be the role of those that are not able to work in this way? What is the place of those at the primary labour market that are less flexible, slower, less innovative than that is expected by the proprietor at the private sector? The model does not answer such questions. To sum up the above mentioned, how does the criteria of normality in Fordism employment change in the era of Gatesism? What is the content of “decent work” in this model?

1. Gatesism does not aim to achieve full employment formally. With the reduction of working capital (technical modernization, removal of markets, etc.), only the bests are to enter the world of work. Thus the system guarantees to continuous oversupply of workforce, the key for economic flexibility and rapid structural changes.

2. Based on the above mentioned, employment for definite term has become general in the model instead of contracts for indefinite term. In Gatesism, employers contract employees for performing tasks, specific jobs and does not finance positions. From 1993, the principle of “just in time” has been expanded to human resources besides stock, transport or services. Human resources is applied if it is needed. Outsourcing has established good conditions to the “just in time” system. The majority of workforce is outsourced as it is not needed 8 hours, only two hours per day. Consequently, the core staff in European production companies has been reduced by at least 40% but together with suppliers, by 80% in the 1990s. The re-organization of workforce meant a shock for all branches. Since 1993, the 500 largest American companies employ 10% of workforce full-time permanently. In France and the UK, even a part of public affairs is outsourced for minimal wage. People undertake tasks as standby workforce: they are informed about the work the night before or in the morning that day (Gorz 2000. 70-71., Rifkin 1995., Sennet 2000). What is specifically cost-effective from employers’ viewpoint is a concrete loss for employees.

3. Consumption pattern does not change fundamentally in Gatesism as compared to Fordism. If possible, the significance of consumption in indentifying status and prestige has increased during the last period. However, the standard of income necessary to ensure this is not that stable. The continuous decrease of real wages could be detected among a significant part of Western-European and American societies since the middle 1980s. The causes of the decrease of expendable income in households are to be found in the increasing level of unemployment, the decreasing amount of goods ensured through public redistribution and the
decreasing standard of income that can be gained through work.

The phenomenon of the “working poor” is becoming a generally accepted event by politics as well. Employment for wages below the subsistence minimum, which is known as the British model for securing market competitiveness due to economic pressure, is applied as an experimental model and is having attention in numerous European Union member states. Employees undertake positions in the private sector that does not secure their living but with the contribution of welfare systems, they acquire sufficient resources for reproducing workforce. This model is advantageous for the state as well as it has to provide only a part of the cost of living for employees contrary to the unemployed’ income demand that reject suppressed wages and rely on the support of the social care system. However, the motivation level in this model is low, thus the driving force for voluntary work decreases, which had been a determining factor of “decent work” during the past centuries.

4. To enhance employment flexibility, the essence of Gatesism, costs and liabilities associated with employment are gradually decreased. This is usually the result of decreasing the costs of compulsory social insurance and loosening the system of social security. While in Fordism, systems of compulsory social insurance are in the background in case of risks, their role is undertaken by private systems of social security in Gatesism.

5. Instead of the linear career path in Fordism, the career pattern in Gatesism is bell-like. Employees here reach the top of their career at the age of 34-40. After then, it is more difficult to compete with younger candidates. Employees’ performance and the available income declines, their positions at the labour market are less advantageous. The pressure of rapid career influences the development of personality as well. Employment in Gatesism requires stable self-consciousness, this is the only way employees are able to exist in the network of possibilities. To achieve this, they have to develop a high level of independence and the ability to adapt to the permanent presence of competitors.

Two norms, two contents of the work concept exist simultaneously in societies: one that is associated with Fordian categories and the other that belongs to Gatesism, which fundamentally denies the framework of Fordian employment and adapts to the new economic context. This duality in the content of the work concept contributes significantly the paradox, and dual social perception indicated earlier.

Framing the content of “decent work” in post-industrial societies is not an easy task as the result of the above, as expectations for completeness, regularity, security, linearity and balanced income according to Fordian norms simultaneously exist with the norms of Gatesism, that is, competitiveness, flexibility, freedom and performance-based principles. Although it is present at the level of values and expectations, positions organized around Fordian categories play a gradually decreasing role in reality. As a result of this, a broad social group is evolving whose living and access to labour are ensured by neither the Fordian
model, nor Gatesism. For them, two elements of the concept of “decent work” fail: voluntary work and a socially recognized activity ensuring an average standard of living in that society.

Some think that by moving from Fordian employment forms to the norms of Gatesism, atypical employment forms under 21st century conditions are able to integrate excluded social groups and to achieve full employment. With the withdrawal of welfare systems, employees have no other chance than continuously developing their skills and thus being constantly present as active actors at the labour market. With the shift of the concept of “decent work” from Fordian criteria to the model of Gatesism, the work paradigm is sustainable as being the basic principle for organizing societies and distributing goods.

Others state that the work paradigm of Gatesism is not able to ensure reproduction at the given level of social average, undertake the role of consumers, and thus social integration for a wide range of social groups. Thus, ambitions for achieving full employment according to the norms of Gatesism lead to full employment, weekly or daily income generating activities only formally but do not lead to the complete fulfilment of social roles (breadwinner, consumer, tax-payer, civic status serving the public) and do not satisfy the traditional criteria of the concept of “decent work”. Goods that are distributed based on work and activities necessary for social integration are distributed so unequally among the different groups of employees that this makes the basic elements of current society questionable.

**Summary**

The dual work paradigm of societies in the Ancient era and the Middle Ages seems to get unified in the wage work concept of industrial societies. Due to the crisis of wage work in post-industrial societies, the work paradigm becomes dual once more. The redoubling process occurs the similar way that it happened during the last phase of Feudalism. The loosening of earlier norms associated with work and the new interpretation of the work concept is emerging simultaneously. Besides the Lutheran work concept, a Calvinist work concept, the protestant work orientation, is established and becomes dominant with the change of economic conditions. Similary to this, the transition of Fordism, which concentrated on wage work as the tradition of industrial societies, to the employment form of post-industrial societies, Gatesism evolves, which denies inflexibilities and does not ensure the formal guarantees of Fordism, and thus it establishes a new value system, framework for employment and an old/novel work concept. It is a question whether the duality of the work concept becomes permanent in the future and – similarly to the antique era – two, easily separable labour markets and social lifestyles are going to exist stably and simultaneously; or this is again a temporary duality with a “jammed society” in the status of “not now - not yet”, which direction points towards Gatesism in the long run.
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