

RETHINKING THE IMPLICATIONS OF FLEXIBILISATION OF LABOUR
MARKETS: THE CASE OF HOME-BASED PRODUCTION IN TUZLUÇAYIR,
ANKARA

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ABSTRACT

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Flexibilisation of labour markets has been one of the significant outcomes of the neoliberal transformation processes in all over world. This development, which is indeed one of aims of the neoliberal reforms as well, has been comprehended differently by liberal Institutionalists and critical Marxist perspectives. According to the liberal Institutionalists, the flexibilisation of labour can generate positive results for labour, while for the scholars of Marxist tradition the flexibilisation of labouring processes has to be understood in relation to capitalist concerns to ensure better command of capital over labour.

This thesis investigates the validity of these approaches by focusing on the working conditions of one of the most flexible parts of world labour, the home-based women workers. On the basis of ten in-depth interviews conducted with the home-based women labourers living in the Tuzluçayır district of Ankara, it states that liberal Institutionalists arguments on the flexibilization of labour markets are hard to be approved. For the home-based woman labourers in Tuzluçayır in no way represent a group with autonomy and enhanced skills though their gender has provided their employers with ample opportunities for exploitation, opportunities which are not available in the case of the male workers. In dialogue with the feminist approaches to home-based woman labourers, this thesis shows how in home-based working women's exploitation as labourers has become articulated with their gender-based social subordination *vis-à-vis* their husbands, brothers and/or fathers in their families.

Keywords: Flexibilisation, home-based labour, Institutionalism, labour, Regulation School.

ÖZ

EMEK PİYASALARININ ESNEKLEŞMESİNİN SONUÇLARI ÜZERİNE YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK: ANKARA, TUZLUÇAYIR'DA EV-EKSENLİ ÇALIŞMA ÖRNEĞİ

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Emek piyasalarının esnekleşmesi, neo-liberal dönüşüm süreçlerinin dünya çapındaki en önemli sonuçlarından biridir. Neo-liberal reformların aynı zamanda hedeflerinden biri de olan bu gelişme, liberal kurumsalcı ve eleştirel Marksist yaklaşımlar tarafından farklı biçimlerde değerlendirilmiştir. Liberal kurumsalcı yaklaşıma göre, emeğin esnekleşmesi emek için olumlu sonuçları olan bir süreçken, Marksist gelenekten gelen akademisyenler için emek süreçlerinin esnekleşmesi sermayenin emek üzerinde daha iyi tahakküm kurma çabasının bir parçası olarak anlaşılmalıdır.

Bu tez, bu yaklaşımların geçerliliğini dünyada emeğin en esnek kısımlarından biri olan ev-eksenli kadın işçilerin çalışma koşullarına odaklanarak sorgulamaktadır. Ankara'nın Tuzluçayır Mahallesi'nde yaşayan on ev-eksenli kadın emekçiyle yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanarak, liberal kurumsalcı yaklaşımların emek piyasalarının esnekleşmesine ilişkin savlarının desteklenemez olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Zira Tuzluçayır'lı ev-eksenli kadın emekçiler özerk ve gelişmiş becerilere sahip bir grup olmadıkları gibi, cinsiyetleri nedeniyle işverenleri için erkek işçiler söz konusu olduğunda geçerli olmayan mükemmel sömürü imkânları sunmaktadırlar. Bu tez, ev-eksenli kadın emekçilere ilişkin feminist yaklaşımlarla da diyalog halinde, kadınların ev-eksenli çalışma koşulları içinde emekçi olarak sömürülme koşullarının, aileleri içinde kocaları, erkek kardeşleri ve/veya babaları karşısında yaşadıkları toplumsal cinsiyetçi tahakkümle nasıl iç içe geçtiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Düzenleme Okulu, emek, esnekleşme, ev-eksenli çalışma, Kurumsalcılık

To *the lions' own historians*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*“Until lions have their own historians,
hunting stories will always glorify the hunter.”*

(An African Proverb, F. Başkaya, 2006)

In a documentary film on nature, it is easy to decide who the lion and who the hunter is. It is also easy to decide who the victim and who the oppressor is. However, when we rethink on this African proverb within the context of human relations in the modern capitalist world, it would be difficult to decide who the lions or the hunters are. Although there are different explanations about the effects of capitalism on social relations, there is little doubt that inequalities and conflicts in contemporary times have been products of it. The effects of capitalism have been seen in all spheres of life, particularly in the lives of the lower classes. Social security systems have depreciated while the social benefits of workers and average wages have substantially decreased since the 1970s in all over the world (ILO, 2006). Thus, one of the major spheres of conflict today has been the labour markets. In modern times, many workers around the world have lost their jobs or have had to work for very little money. Nevertheless, one group of workers has stood out as being particularly negatively impacted by the tides of global

capitalism: the home-based workers, consisting mainly of women. Returning to the African proverb, it is possible to call home-based workers the victim, or the “lion”. However, finding the oppressive figure in this relationship, or the “hunter”, is not an easy task for finding the oppressor in the post-modern world is much harder than before.

This thesis will examine how “flexible” capitalism has turned labour, and especially the home-based women’s labour, into a “victim” in contemporary times. Thus, in this thesis, while labourers represent the “lions” of the flexibilisation processes, the flexible firms, or more generally the flexibilization processes, represent the “hunter”.

At this point, in order to display how home-based woman workers have turned into one of the most disadvantageous groups in the labour market, the fundamental changes in production systems and labour regimes of the last forty years must be examined. Since the 1970s, capitalist production and labour systems have experienced many prominent changes. First of all, they were faced with a crucial crisis in the 1970s. Many scholars have reiterated that capitalism has been in trouble since the 1970s (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Aglietta, 1979; Gorz, 1997 and 2006) For Gorz, the end of Fordist growth left companies with two ways in which to escape stagnation. “They could either (1) win additional market share or (2) renew their product range at a faster rate and increase its built-in obsolescence” (Gorz, 2006, p. 27). From that point, it was inevitable for capital to either

reformulate fundamental characteristics of the Fordist system or to replace it entirely with another system.

Together with the implications of the crisis, the concept of “working” and “worker” was reviewed or transformed. The worker of the post-1970s era was no longer the same as the worker in Jack London’s *The Iron Heel* or Gorki’s *Mother*. From the beginning of the 1900s until the end of the 1960s, workers would labour together with thousands of other workers in a huge factory, but this has changed since the 1970s. “Time and space” concepts in capitalism transformed and expanded; factories were no longer dependent on definite areas, but rather they pervaded around the world. Production was based mainly on workers throughout the Fordist era, and particular goods were being produced in a particular factory. Such a system made the production process very fragile and vulnerable against any working class attack. However, new production techniques ensured that firms could escape from being dependent on workers. Factories could then be transferred to any other country in the case of significant worker uprising. Also, the importance of computers and high-tech methods within the production process has increased. Instead of the mass production and mass consumption system of the 1940s and 1950s, semi-customised goods have become more common.

Contrary to the full-time employment model of Fordism, which was the dominant production system until the 1970s, many different employment models, such as temporary working, part-time working, tele-working and home-based working, have emerged. Even though some scholars, like Gorz (1991), refuse to accept these

labour types as “typical works”, new working forms have grown significantly since the 1970s. For instance, almost two-thirds of total employment in France consists of these “non-typical” works. Similarly, in the UK, 50% of women and 25% of men, thus 36% of the overall labour force, work in these atypical jobs. The same situation is also extant in Germany and the US. Hence, it can be said that the flexibilisation process has caused many changes in society and a resulting “dual-society” has emerged (Gorz, 1991, p. 39).

While these crucial developments were occurring in production systems, one concept loomed large and never lost its importance. This was *flexibility*. The term ‘flexibility’ represents diverse positive meanings in daily life. It is offered to all humanity as a virtue, and all people are expected to be “flexible” in social relations. Therefore, the concept of “flexibility” has a heavily legitimised foundation. Nevertheless, ‘flexibility’ has controversial meanings for production systems and labour regimes. Sennett urges that flexibility causes anxiety, and, for him, it is quite natural. Due to flexibility, “people do not know what risks will pay off, what paths to pursue”. Also, flexibility is welcomed as a magical concept in order to escape from the disturbing expressions of capitalism. Sennett emphasises this point as follows:

To take the curse off the phrase “capitalist system” there developed in the past many circumlocutions, such as the “free enterprise” or “private enterprise” system. Flexibility is used today as another way to lift the curse of oppression from capitalism. In attacking rigid bureaucracy and emphasizing risk, it is claimed, flexibility gives people more freedom to shape their lives. In fact, the new order substitutes new controls rather than simply

abolishing the rules of past-but these new controls are also hard to understand. The new capitalism is an often illegible regime of power (1998, p. 9-10).

Even though capitalism encourages flexibility, it is difficult to say that capitalism rid itself of the more disturbing effects of its order. On one hand, people are motivated to take more risks; clinging to a particular job for a long time is scorned and equated with foolishness or ineptitude. Mobilisation is fetishised in the modern capitalist era. Thus, very high circulation occurs within labour markets. However, on the other hand, such a relation also causes instable and artificial social relations and low levels of job satisfaction among employees. At that point, Sennett appropriately asks these questions: “How do we decide what is of lasting value in ourselves in a society which is impatient, which focuses on the immediate moment? How can long-term goals be pursued in an economy devoted to the short term? How can mutual loyalties and commitments be sustained in institutions which are constantly breaking apart or continually being redesigned? These are the questions about character posed by the new, flexible capitalism” (Sennett, 1998, p. 10).

When the emergence of the crisis of capitalism and Fordism and the subsequent emergence of the Post-Fordist flexibility debates are analysed in general, it can be seen that there are two fundamental perspectives at hand. One arises from the liberal stance and is mainly represented by *Institutionalism*. This approach is important because it not only conceptualised the reasons for the crisis of Fordism and capitalism in the 1970s, but it also built a theory which claimed a solution for

this crisis of capitalism and Fordism. The solution of Institutionalism for the crisis was the flexibilisation of production systems and labour regimes.

The second approach is provided by the Marxist theory. Nevertheless, it must be added that there are many different Marxist groups. Even though all of these groups are identified with a common name, 'Marxism', there are fundamental differences among them. Among these different Marxist groups, one has retained its importance since the 1970s and, more or less, its theory has remained constant since then. This is the *French Regulation School*. This approach comes from the Marxist tradition. Like in other Marxist theories, concepts such as class struggle, revolution and the crisis of capitalism are important for this school. However, it must also be added that there are different theoretical positions among theorists of this approach. Although they are all identified as belonging to the French Regulation School, Aglietta and Lipietz and Leborgne explain the flexibilisation process differently. While the flexibilisation of labour is detrimental according to Aglietta (1979), it might generate beneficial outcomes for labour according to Lipietz and Leborgne. Thus, Lipietz and Leborgne are closer to Institutionalism in terms of the implications of flexibilisation on labour.

In contrast, there are many Marxist views rejecting the beneficial outcomes of the flexibilisation process in general. However, it is difficult to assume that all of these views stem from the same group or sect of Marxism. They come from different backgrounds. Nevertheless, these scholars, like Sennett (1999), Gorz (1999), Aglietta (1979) and Clarke (1990), come together in assuming that the

flexibilisation process belongs to a particular era of capitalist production and that the flexibilisation process therefore causes more detrimental results for labour. While these scholars emphasise the detrimental implications of flexibility on labour, the Institutionalists and Lipietz assume that flexibilisation of labour is a major instrument which ensures more autonomy, humanisation, multi-skilling, polyvalence and less alienation for labour. If the assumptions of the latter are accepted, different flexible labour types, such as part-time work, teleworking, subcontracting and home-based work, should also ensure more autonomy, more training and more humanisation for labour. However, while these theories analyse the Fordist and flexible production/labour regimes together, they assume that the working class is an entity, all affected by the flexibilisation process in the same way. Also, both Institutionalism and French Regulationists Leborgne and Lipietz regard the flexibilisation of labour as a technical process. They assume that labour would be affected by this process as a whole; they focus on the possible effects of flexibilisation on labour. However, neither Institutionalism nor the French Regulationist, Lipietz, adequately considers how different segments of labour, such as women's labour, would be affected by the flexibilisation process. For instance, the question of whether women's labour affected by the flexibilisation process in the same way as male labour is overlooked or ignored by both of them.

When the implications of flexibilisation of labour are reviewed in the light of the developments in the last forty years, it becomes doubtful that flexibilisation would provide the same positive and beneficial outcomes for all labour groups. While, on one hand, flexibility ensures many positive outcomes for a very limited number of

employees, who are mainly male and generally work for high-tech firms or exchange markets, on the other hand, it causes undesirable outcomes for very large employee groups. And in these large employee groups, women's labour is the one that suffers most. Due to gender roles, traditional values and historical/cultural factors, woman labourers are confronted with many difficulties in labour markets and it can be argued that they are exploited twice. Here, their difficulties are two-fold. Women are exploited due to their gender, but they are exploited also due to their position as workers. Therefore, these two points must be taken into account when women's labour issues are analysed. The main point here is how flexibilisation of women's labour ensures continuance of capitalist exploitation; and the key focus to make sense of this question is the home-based labour system. Thanks to this system, capitalism benefits from the gender-based subordination of women who spend most of their time at home in the reproduction of labour. Also, these women constitute one of the most compliant worker groups. Because they are disorganized, they lack social security and work for very low wages. All these characteristics of home-based women's labour further encourage capitalist entities to focus their attention on it.

At this point, it becomes important to understand how Institutionalism and French Regulationists explain the characteristics of the Fordist era and the emergence of the Post-Fordist flexibilisation process. By considering the characteristics of the home-based labour system, it can be understood whether or not the home-based system ensures more autonomy, more occupational training and multi-skill development for labour, as these approaches claimed. It can also be realised, by

analysing the home-based labour system, how women's labour is victimised and overlooked during the flexibilisation process. Thus, it would be possible to understand how home-based woman labourers become "lions" while the flexible capitalists become "hunters" in the flexibilisation era.

As mentioned above, two fundamental defects will be taken into account throughout this thesis. One of these defects is related to the approaches of Institutionalism and the French Regulation School. Both of these theories regard all flexibilisation processes as a technical matter and assume that all labour would be affected by the flexibilisation process in the same way. However, it is difficult to suppose this to be true for home-based women's labour.

Mutari and Figart (1997) mention that the majority of the literature on the flexibilisation process is silent on the gender impact within the restructuring of production. Although there has been some progress, much of the restructuring analysis remains gender blind. Thus, "many commentators fail to use gender neutral language, with workers often referred to as 'he' and when women are cited; they are still portrayed as different, peripheral and not like 'real' workers" (Wigfield, 2001, p. 50).

Another problem is related to the views of some feminist scholars who regard the flexibilisation process and home-based woman labour as an issue of "women studies" only (Toksöz, 2007; Acar et al. 1999). Here, it must be added that there are many different feminist stances in the literature, but only a limited number focuses

on class, exploitation and flexibilisation issues side by side with feminist concerns. While they try to explain the exploitation of women's labour, they assume that women are confronted with exploitation and inequality due to their gender only. Thus, these scholars do not consider the fact that the flexible capitalist production exploits male workers as well besides the female ones.

Why should scholars focus on home-based women's labour? The answer to this question might be found in the fundamental characteristics of this type of labour. If this type were analysed, it would be possible to reveal that flexibilisation of labour does not generate positive results for all labour segments. Also, through the analysis of home-based women's labour, it can be understood that the flexibilisation of labour could not ensure occupational autonomy, multi-skilling and polyvalence for labour. It could be also understood that home-based labour is a victim of the flexibilisation process. For, it is mostly women who work in the home-based labour system, and they lack social security benefits while working under harsh conditions with very low wages. Due possibly to those advantages, it has provided to capital, the home-based labour system has become very pervasive around the world, and also in Turkey, since the 1980s. Hence, home-based labour is not peculiar to underdeveloped or developing countries, but has expanded to some developed countries, such as the UK, Germany, Australia and Norway, though the home-based labour system has had differing features in the former in comparison to the latter. Although woman workers are generally the ones to work in the home-based labour system both in developed and underdeveloped countries, conditions are totally different between these categories of countries.

In Turkey, it can be stated that home-based women's labour constitutes the most vulnerable and insecure component of the labour force. Through the home-based labour system, a great majority of women provide cheap and unorganised home-based labour for manufacturing firms. In the Turkish legislation system, the issues related to labour are regulated through Labour Law No. 4857. In the Exceptions-Article 4/d, it is defined that "the provisions of this Act shall not apply to the works and handicrafts performed at home by the help of the members of the family or close relatives up to 3rd degree (3rd degree included)". Thus, thousands of women are excluded from formal employment and the social security system. Due to that exclusion, home-based women's labour is further excluded from trade union membership, and thus such labourers are not able to commit to an organization which defends their rights against employers.

In order to highlight the flexibilisation process and its relation with home-based women's labour, theoretical approaches will first be analysed in this thesis. Thus, in Chapter Two, basic assumptions of Institutionalism with regard to flexibilisation will be presented besides the arguments of Marxism in general and the French Regulation School in particular on this issue. Here, Lipietz's affirmative analysis on Fordism, post-Fordism and the flexibilisation processes will be evaluated which are in sharp contrast to other critical Marxist assumptions of Clarke (1990), Sennett (1998), Gorz (1997), Foster (1988) and S. Wood (1993).

In Chapter Three, the home-based labour system will be analysed on a general basis with reference to its source and main characteristics. Also in this chapter, the question of how woman's labour is conceptualized within "women studies" will be answered. To this end, the assumptions of some "women studies" scholars, like Hakim (2004), Toksöz (2007) and Acar et al. (1999) will be overviewed.

In order to evaluate the validity of the assumptions of Institutionalism and Lipietz on the beneficial outcomes of flexibility for women's labour, ten interviews were conducted with home-based women workers who live in Tuzluçayır, a district of Ankara. Chapter Four will critically outline the findings to be drawn from these interviews.

The conclusion will underline that contrary to the assumptions of Institutional as well as Leborgne and Lipietz, the home-based woman labourers in Tuzluçayır hardly represent a group with autonomy and enhanced skills while their gender has provided their employers with ample opportunities for exploitation, opportunities which are not available in the case of the male workers. It will be argued that this argument which refines the feminist approach to home-based woman labourers as well, would help one understand better how in this category of labour the women's exploitation as labourers has become articulated with their gender-based subordination in the society and *vis-à-vis* their husbands, brothers and/or fathers.

CHAPTER II

FORDISM, POST-FORDISM AND FLEXIBILITY

2.1. Overview of Changes in the Production Processes

There is a widespread belief that the 1980s marked a period of transition to new production relations. For some, this era refers to fundamental *changes* in the forms of capitalist production; however, there is little agreement over the question of how to make sense of these *changes* or the *new epoch of capitalism* (Clarke, 1992, p. 13; Burrows *et al.* 1992, p. 1)

It has been argued that every “new epoch of capitalism”, or every fundamental transformation, coincides with a particular crisis of the system (Dağdelen, 2005, p. 1). And after capitalist crises, production systems and labour regimes are confronted with structural transformations.

Throughout the history of the capitalist production system, many economic crises have been experienced. Crises at the outset of the 1900s were managed, or delayed, by the Taylorist model in the US. Then when the effects of the 1929 crisis were felt all around the world, people again searched for new responses, and Fordism was adopted as a solution first in the US in the 1930s, and then in Europe after the World War II. The Fordist production system and labour regime continued

seamlessly until the end of the 1960s; however, in the 1970s, another crisis emerged and the Fordist system was assumed to be the main reason for the crisis. Two fundamental approaches, Regulation theory and Institutional theory, then claimed that *neo/post-Fordist* or *flexible* production and labour systems emerged as a solution to Fordism's crisis. Nevertheless, neither post-Fordist reformulations nor flexible regulations of economies could fully ameliorate the effects of the crisis. It is argued that the crisis of the 1970s could not have been solved until today; rather, it has accumulated all causes of other crises over the years (Boratav, 2000; Yeldan, 2008).

The reproduction of capitalism itself through crises and its arguable transition from one production system to another has been popular topics in political science. This chapter will examine the Institutional and Regulationist approaches to this question in sequence. Having said this, it has to be warned that while the transition from the Fordist to the post-Fordist/flexible era is a fact for Institutionalists and Regulationists, some others are still suspicious about the validity of such arguments. According to Clarke, for instance, the emergence of post-Fordism or flexibility is "neither a reality, nor even a coherent vision of the future, but it is merely an expression of hope that the tendencies of capitalist development will prove to be the salvation of social democracy" (Clarke, 1990, p. 133) due to the assumed autonomy the labour has arguably started enjoying within the production process.

2.2. Institutionalism

Institutionalism in production processes has been associated with the American sociologists, such as Charles Sables, Michael Piore, Jonathan Zeitlin and Paul Hirst. The most influential proponents of this theory in relation to “flexibilisation” have been Piore and Sabel, who constituted the “Flexible Specialisation Theory” in 1984. Institutionalism has a liberal and non-determinist theoretical framework about the motion of history. They are non-determinist because they explain the changes and transformations within capitalism in relation to contingent technological innovations that take place by change. Hence, “they argue that range of new technological paradigms is possible and that whichever emerges can be explained by a number of chance decisions taken at certain historical conjunctures” (Wigfield, 2001, p. 43).

2.2.1. Basic Assumptions of the Theory

For the Institutionalists, technological changes and improvements within the production process has a determinant role on the motion of the history. In order to examine the recent transformations and changes in the capitalist economy, Institutionalism takes the 1970s’ crisis as a turning point. Institutionalists have argued that capitalism was confronted with a destructive crisis in these years as the dominant production system, the Fordism, was not able to answer the changing character of the markets because of its inflexible character.

For Piore and Sabel (1984, p.4), the deterioration in economic performance was a result of the exhaustion of the type of industrial development that was founded on mass production. The assembly line in Fordist production was the heart of the production process, and increasing or decreasing the production levels, though not the quality of the products, could be ensured by regulating the speed of the assembly line.

In the Fordist production systems, huge machines, machine systems and factories were essential. Such a production system entails a high standardisation and a tendency for the emergence of huge stocks. Flexible firms of our contemporary times, however, produce small batches of commodities. The main aim here is to adapt the products to the changing demands in the markets more quickly. Thus, one of the most important problems of the firms, the volatility of consumer demands, could be reduced through flexibility.

In the Fordist production process, each machine and worker group used to be allocated to a particular mission. This led to a deep division of labour, dissatisfaction among workers and, alienation¹ and deskilling of the labour force. Therefore, for the Institutionalists, decrease in productivity was inevitable in Fordism. Instead of such a rigid system, their theory has favoured more flexible

¹ Here it must be added that the “alienation” issue in Piore and Sabel does not refer to the Marxist conception of the term, which regards alienation as the main characteristic of the capitalist system, which refers to the ever expanding exchange of labour power in the markets as “things”. According to Clarke, the alienation of labour does not only arise from such a division of labour. Rather, it is an obligatory result of capitalist production relations, and it cannot be solved via technological or occupational regulations (Clarke, 1992).

production and labour regimes. Piore and Sabel's model has proposed "flexible specialisation" for escaping the detrimental implications of the Fordist system.

Nielsen (1991, p.12) compares Piore and Sabel's assumptions on the difference between the mass production and flexible specialization as follows:

Piore and Sabel (1984) base their arguments on a simple conceptual distinction between two opposites of industrial production: mass production and flexible specialisation. 'Mass production' involves the use of special purpose (product specific) machines and of semi-skilled workers to produce standardized goods while 'flexible specialisation', or craft production, is based on skilled workers who produce a variety of customised goods.

Hence, for the Institutional theory, the main solution of the crisis in the 1970s was to abolish the previous system to answer the demands of the markets. In Sabel's work, 'flexible specialisation' denotes a new phase of capitalist production characterised by craft labour, small-scale industry using the latest technology and diversified world markets and consumer tastes (Murray, 1983, p. 74). Improvements in communication technologies and transportation as well as the use of advanced technologies within the production processes have ensured the firms to control their production size. These have paved the way for the development of Just-in-Time system and the rise of industrial districts in some geographically competitive regions.

2.2.1.1. Just-in Time System and the Industrial Districts

The fundamental problems of the Fordist production system were the employment of too many workers, high payment burdens for firms and the uncertainty of the markets. Uncertainty or unreliability of suppliers and problems of inventory management have forced the firms to adopt a different production method: *Just-in-Time* (JIT). This technique was generally associated with *Toyotatism* as the pioneer of JIT was the Japanese, and this method was first conceptualised by Taichi Ohno, who was the president of the Toyota Company in the 1940s. After the 1970s crisis, the JIT method has been adopted in many industrialised countries (Emre, 1995, p. 2).

In the JIT system, every component of a particular commodity is produced only if it is demanded by the next stage of production. This system is also called the “Kanban” system. Thanks to this system, it is assumed that the inventory problem or the aggregation of production has been reduced. Minimisation of intermediate stores and a JIT supply of ‘perfect’ parts help increase the process yield and improve quality without additional costs. It is also argued that this system require workers more in oversight and monitoring, and involve managers themselves to the execution of the production process (Wood, 1993, p. 541).

The JIT model is juxtaposed with the Total Quality (TQ) method. In this method, instead of controlling the product at the end of the process as it used to be in the

Fordist system, production is controlled at every successive stage. Thus, the aim is to prevent production of faulty products from the earlier stages.

In addition to *Just-in Time* systems in the flexible production, the emergence of *industrial districts* has also been a central question in Institutional debates. Piore and Sabel (1984) emphasise that firms not only compete with each other, but they also cooperate among themselves. Moreover, they assume that the state, small firms and unions cooperate among themselves while leading the economy. For them, such cooperation between the firms and the workers had arisen due to the struggle against fascism in the Third Italy including the Emilia and Romagna regions. According to Sabel (1982:228-30) innovative proprietors *intertwined* by common political ideas. (emphasis added) And this has pointed to the emergence of a sort of “symbiotic” relation between labour and capital.

In the Third Italy, many small- or medium-sized firms were producing specialised commodities. Sabel (1994, p. 107) states that in this region, many commodities have been produced, from knitted goods (Carpi) to special machines (Parma, Bologna), ceramic tiles (Sassuolo), textiles (Como, Prato), agricultural implements (Reggio Emilia), hydraulic devices (Modena), shoes, domestic appliances, plastic tableware and electronic musical instruments (Ancona).

In these regions, the emergence of a post-Fordist production regime has based on small-scale, high-technology cottage industry that has returned to labour some of the creativity of work that Fordism had eliminated. Also, Sabel emphasises the

praises of Emilia's small firms, because here the strict division between the "conception" and "execution" as well as the minute fragmentation of work typical to Fordism have all been absent. However, according to Murray, who is critical of Institutionalist claims, the emergence of these firms is, in fact, based on two main reasons: the diversification of world markets and the strengthening of the Italian workers *vis-à-vis* the capital (Murray, 1983, p. 75).

For Sabel, similar regions like Third Italy can be found in the "*Silicon Valley*" in the US; in the "*Second Denmark*" in Denmark, in "*Sakaki*" in Japan, and in "Baden-Württemberg" in Germany. Then, Sabel presents this development as the "renaissance of regional economies" (Sabel, 1994, p. 106). When the basic features of these regions are examined, Brusco finds the following pattern:

A set of companies located in a relatively small geographical area: That the said companies work, either directly or indirectly for the same end of the market; that they share a series of values and knowledge so important that they define a cultural environment and they are linked to one another by very specific relations in a complex mix of cooperation and competition (1992, p. 1).

In addition to the characteristics of industrial districts, Brusco (1992) identifies three categories of "industrial district" companies which are interlinked and define the structure of labour regimes and employment types: companies that manufacture finished products and deliver them to the retailer or to the manufacturer; 'stage firms' which carry out one or more of the production phases; and companies that operate outside the sector, to which the finished product belongs.

2.2.1.2. Flexible Arrangements of Labour

The main relationship between flexible firms is the subcontracting method and Amin (1989) argues that a large proportion of the industrial district firms are 'stage firms'. They perform just one particular phase of the production process. For instance, in the clothing sector, some companies just weave, some just cut, some just embroider and some just iron. Depending on firm differentiation and subcontracting in the production process, the wage policy, social security system and benefits of workers differ according to the role of firms in this process. If employees work in stage firms rather than in final product firms, they might be confronted with low wage problems, might lose their jobs and have to work more hours relative to employees in the final product firms.

Amin (1989) assumes that subcontracting firms often subcontract again to even smaller family firms or to domestic outworkers. It is assumed that this complex system of subcontracting allows for a high degree of flexibility in production; thus, costs and risks can be spread between diverse firms and short term contracts can be adjusted to meet the changes in market conditions. This is ensured by switching subcontractors when a particular product is required or by raising or lowering the level of subcontracting due to the demand fluctuations. The subcontracting is one of the most fundamental aspects of flexibilisation in the production processes. Through subcontracting, huge firms distribute the majority of their production to many small size firms. This helps huge firms escape from employing lots of

workers while forcing subcontractors to employ workers informally and with very low wages to cope with the uncertainties of the subcontracting markets.

In addition to subcontracting system, team-working is also a prominent element of the flexibilisation process. Cannell (1991) asserts that in an ideal team, optimum flexibility is achieved if every member becomes capable of completing every stage in the production so that absence can be covered by each team member. That's why the workers should become multi-skilled. Thanks to such production and labour processes, each worker understands every phase of the production, and thus the dependency of the firm on individual workers disappears. This is one the most important changes in the labour regimes in comparison to the Fordist system. Due to the highly fragmented structure of production and tasks within Fordism, division of labour had become very strict, making the production process highly fragile and vulnerable to worker strikes or other such 'problems'.

In order to stabilise the team labour and encourage optimum team flexibility, a change in payment systems is needed and duly incorporated. As an example, piecework is one of the most pervasive payment systems in the flexible production processes. Piecework is based on individual pay incentives; it is usually replaced by fixed wages, with group bonuses for either productivity or skill levels. "These both act as incentives for team members to become multi-skilled, facilitating flexibility. Bonuses paid in relation to productivity require operatives to gain as many skills as possible, thus speeding up the performance of the team. Similarly,

bonuses paid in relation to skill levels mean that individual team members are encouraged to learn a greater number of tasks” (Wigfield, 2001, p. 26).

Contrary to the separation of *conception* and *execution* in Fordism, it is supposed that division among these two elements decreases through flexibility. Buchanan (1994) argues that teamwork and the autonomous structure of each unit reduces the division between conception and execution; it enables workers to avoid the tyranny of fixed work tasks experienced under mass production particularly by the managers, provides extended choice and freedom in the daily working routine, and offers an opportunity for mental and physical relaxation through job variety.

As mentioned in previous sections, all these transformations in production relations entailed or demanded a transformation in the labour force and the emergence of a *dual labour regime*. And implications of the dual character of the labour regimes cause different results for each labour groups. Such a process constituted a tendency for more “flexible labour forces” for the firms. Flexible labour can refer to the skills utilised by a small proportion of the workforce and the extended division of the labour market into the core and periphery. As Kenny and Florida (1988) argue, “the Toyota system developed a core of multi-skilled workers able to undertake a number of tasks and whose shopfloor knowledge is utilized by management to promote continuous improvement in the production process. These core workers are granted a job for life, are continuously trained, and paid according to seniority” (Kenney & Florida, 1988).

Instead of dealing with the bulk of the labour mass, it is enough to employ a few workers who are very high skilled and capable of understanding all processes of the production. There is a marked shift away from the rigid division of labour in Fordism, as “it is characteristic of the flexible labour process that the same labourers who are involved in operating the machine will also be responsible for changing the settings of machines and for routine functions of maintenance and repair” (Kaplinsky, 1989, p. 15).

On one hand, there has emerged a labour hierarchy between workers through the maintenance of a core privileged workers, and the need for a secondary, and relatively cheaper, labour market, on the other. Murray states that “the cost of employing life-time workers means an incentive to subcontract all jobs not essential to the core” (Murray, 1989, p. 46). The other side of the Japanese jobs-for-life system is a majority of low-paid, fragmented peripheral workers, facing an underfunded and inadequate welfare state (Kiely, 1998, p. 99).

2.2.2. Flexibilisation of Labour

It has been mentioned that the Fordist production system was based on mass production or economies of scale. And, in this system, every phase of production, the function of labour and machines, was defined. Every machine and worker was allocated to a particular aim in the production process; thus, a rigid fragmentation of tasks and standardisation of components emerged. In addition to these, there was a high fragmentation between conception and execution processes in the Fordist

production system. Such a system entailed also a particular labour regime and in this regime, dominant employment method was full-time employment. When the capitalist production confronted with, low demand or changing market structures, it had to review the full-time employment system that was identical with the Fordism.

Until the 1970s, manual control of machines was the common characteristic of the Fordist production system, but there was a limited computer-based production system, too. Besides the dominance of manual labour in production, full-time employment, collective bargaining, relatively high wages for manual labour and an effective social benefit system were important features of the Fordist labour regime system. All these acquisitions of the working class were reviewed with the capitalism's crisis in the 1970s and the reasons of this crisis were regarded as inflexibility in production and particularly in the labour regimes. Therefore, more flexible labour systems were suggested as solution for the crisis. Nevertheless, scope and meaning of the flexibility has entailed an ambiguity since its emergence.

2.2.2.1. What is Flexibility?

According to Sennett (1999), the word "flexibility" entered the English language in the fifteenth century. For him, this word was derived from a simple observation. "Flexibility names the tree's capacity both to yield and recover, both the testing and restoration of its form" (Sennett, 1999, p. 46). When the use of the concept of flexibility is reviewed in the social world, it can be said that the concept itself is perceived positively by almost all people. The opposite of flexibility refers to

rigidity, intolerance and insensitiveness, and no one wants to have such characteristics. However, flexibility refers to adaptability skills in changing circumstances. Therefore, it would be difficult to oppose such a 'moderate' and 'nice' concept. Nevertheless, when this concept is applied to production and labour relations, it acquires more ideological and political characteristics. It is seen that the flexibility concept has been in intensive use in the last forty years. One of the most common usages of the concept is seen in production relations and labour regimes. The concept of flexibility refers to a flexibilisation, moderation and transformation of rigid Fordist regulations in the volume and types of employment; composition of commodities, labour markets and technology; and the forms of organisations (Sayer, 1989, p. 667-8). The flexibility concept is assumed to be the antithesis of the routinisation of the Fordist work understanding. Sennett states that society today is searching for ways to destroy the evils of routine by creating more flexible institutions. Thus, "the practices of flexibility, however, focus mostly on the forces bending people" (Sennett, 1999, p. 46).

2.2.2.2. Components of Flexible Labour Regimes

Piore and Sabel (1984) state that semi-customised products caused the decline of mass production and mass consumption systems, due to changing consumer demands and needs arising from a willingness to try different tastes and an unwillingness to accept standard goods. Such a change has also brought new, flexible technologies, such as Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM), to meet diverse consumer demands in small batches but

with high quality. According to Piore and Sabel, this process has reversed the motion of history and flexible specialisation, or craft production, has become widespread again throughout the world.

When the concept of flexibility is evaluated, it becomes possible to separate it into two basic forms: *internal* and *external*. However, it is seen also that internal flexibility is analysed in the framework of “functional flexibility”, while the external is taken into account in light of “numerical flexibility”. Internal flexibility is related to relations and situations in the factory, and it means that the workers are able to use all machines as polyvalent workers. External flexibility refers to new forms of the labour force and new forms of relation among firms. The subcontracting system is the most common example of the flexibility form (Storper & Scott, 1990, p. 576).

Atkinson and Meager (1986), and Burrows et al. (1992) propose a more detailed definition of flexibility as follows: first, *numerical flexibility*, the ability to change the size of the work force quickly and easily in response to changes in demand; second, *functional flexibility*, the ability to redeploy workers to different tasks to meet changes in market demand, technological changes and company policy; third, *flexibility in working hours*, which contains full-time or part-time labour types; fourth, *flexibility in wage*, which is also called elasticity of wages. It is worthwhile to examine these four components of flexibility more deeply.

2.2.2.2.1. Functional Flexibility

Functional flexibility is also called “internal flexibility” and it refers to the ability of labour to work and to have responsibility in all phases of the production process (Gladstone, 1991, p. 25). In other words, “functional flexibility is the adaptability skill of workers to changing technological conditions, burden of works and production methods” (Atkinson & Meager, 1986, p. 4). It, in fact, constitutes the basic characteristic of flexibility in a firm, and thus other components of flexibility arise from it.

Functional flexibility requires all workers to understand all phases of the work. This component of the flexibility refers to the reverse of fragmentation of production and work organisation. As was seen in Fordist production and work organisation, there were rigid segmentations in production phases and labour organisation. The basic aims here are to develop the workers’ skills, foster expansion and enrichment of work, and decrease the fragmentation in jobs. In order to implement these aims, training programs and performance criteria are developed, new communication techniques are implemented and the “total quality circle” is adopted. The fundamental aim of functional flexibility is to provide workers with the ability to become polyvalent, multi-skilled labourers, thus capable of involving themselves in all phases of the job. Thanks to such a process, the dependency of firms on individual workers would be decreased. This was important because it had been realised that the Fordist labour system was very

fragile because of the lack of skilled workers and relatively higher possibility for worker attacks in the form of strikes.

Institutionalists assume that if all workers understand every stage of production, they might be replaced more easily, and thus it would be possible for firms to perform very flexibly. Such a system brings profitable outcomes not only for firms but also for workers. According to Institutionalists, development of training levels and effective communication ensure that workers have more time for relaxation and are more willing to work; most importantly, flexibilisation of the production system makes them more responsible and autonomous on the job. This is in contrast to the Fordist system where the workers used to work in one phase of production in a rather routine, mechanized and alienated production process. Hence, through flexible production technology, workers have arguably become more autonomous and less alienated. In addition to these developments, according to Atkinson and Meager (1986, p. 38), because of the increasing costs and uncertainty in markets, the application of functional flexibility is necessary rather than optional.

Institutionalism urges that functional flexibility characterises the “core” of the industry. Here, the “core” is depicted by multi-skilling, polyvalency, highly skilled tasks, full-time work, job security, promotion prospects, reskilling and retraining, and the availability of pension and insurance schemes.

Another fundamental characteristic of the functional flexibility is its relations with technological improvements and advancements in computer-based production techniques. As mentioned before, Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) methods have become pervasive since the 1970s. Through technological improvements in the production techniques, a new type of worker, who has multi-skills and polyvalence, has been demanded by the firms. Contrary to less trained and relatively less skilful worker of the Fordist system, “new workers” are adaptable to apply new techniques into the production process. Nevertheless, this process causes to the emergence of fragmentation within the labour markets. Through the increasing importance of computer-based machines in production processes, there is no need to employ too many workers in factories. Then, new technological innovations provide firms with savings from labour, which directly causes the number of employees to decrease. Thus, there occur two separate labour markets. One of them consists of core workers who are very limited, highly skilled and trained, and have high wages and proper social security benefits. The other group consists of workers who have very low wages, less training and fewer skills, and are thus easily dismissed. This group is called “McDonald’s labour” by some theorists (Yentürk, 1993, p. 48).

2.2.2.2.2. Numerical Flexibility

Numerical flexibility is also expressed as “external flexibility” and it refers to firm owners’ ability to change the number of employees when required. In other words, it provides firms with the ability to hire and fire workers easily. Numerical

flexibility is associated with atypical working practices, which can be defined as any form of employment that lies outside the traditional full-time employment model. Therefore, it includes shift work, weekend work, self-employment, temporary work, home-based work and part-time work (Wigfield, 2001; Meulders et al., 1997). Hence, the employment types that have emerged from numerical flexibility are precarious and legally unprotected, enabling employers to hire and fire workers at their discretion (Mazey, 1988).

McDowell (1991) and Meulders et al. (1997) emphasise the increase in numerically flexible work practices; they argue that part-time work, temporary contracts and home-based work have been expanding and are mainly performed by women with domestic responsibilities. This has also meant that many women have become part of the “peripheral” workforce (Wigfield, 2001). As will be discussed more in the succeeding chapters, there are fundamental differences between core and peripheral labour in terms of pay policy, social security benefits, work guarantee, job enrichment and training opportunities.

Numerical flexibility is assumed as an obligatory element of an ideal flexible firm. Due to changing conditions in the economy, it is arguably difficult to adopt archaic applications of Fordism such as full-time employment. In order to establish numerical flexibility, a reconsideration of the social security system and legal restrictions in the employment policy are inevitable, for there are rather strict regulations to control the employing and firing workers, particularly in European countries.

Numerical flexibility juxtaposes with the functional flexibility. Technological improvements in communication and production processes ensured firms to build their factories in diverse regions of the world. Thus, production processes have escaped from depending on particular areas. Such a development has made it possible for firms to employ lots of workers. And thanks to flexible arrangements within the production processes, many fundamental changes have been experienced in labour regimes. For instance, it has become possible for workers to work at their homes. This process has also brought about atypical employment types instead of the full-time employment system of the Fordist era. One of the important results of this process has been an increase in the size of the informal economy (see Table 1), and another result is the emergence of different employment types in the periphery.

The implications of numerical flexibility are also examined by the OECD. An OECD report (1986) mentions that relaxation in employment regulations has been advantageous particularly for small-sized firms. Contractual and part-time employment has become very common, and social security regulations have deteriorated within these employment types. Governments have also supported these applications; thus, numerical flexibility has gradually become state policy (OECD, 1986, p. 90-114).

One of the most important characteristics of numerical flexibility is its impacts on the home-based employment system. Numerical flexibility canalises firms to employ people in their homes. Thus, these firms avoid social security payments, the burdens of stable costs such as electricity or other inputs as well as uncertain

market conditions. Thanks to this method, while, on the one hand, firms have escaped from the burden of social security payments; on the other hand, they have been able to decide how many workers they will employ. Thus, the use of home-based labour has become one of the most important components of the JIT system. The home-based labour will be analysed in detail in the Chapter Three of this thesis.

Table 1: A Comparison of Flexible Specialisation and Post-Fordism

<u>Flexible Specialisation</u>	<u>Post-Fordism</u>
<p>Production Flexibility Production flexibility is analysed in detail, looking at the small batch production of semi-customised commodities as a result of new technologies, i.e., Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC), Flexible Manufacturing Systems (FMS), Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing.</p>	<p>Fails to analyse production flexibility in any detail.</p>
<p>Labour Flexibility Fails to provide an analysis of the effect of the search for production flexibility on labour relations. Assumes that flexible specialisation is beneficial to labour via functional flexibility, failing to acknowledge that workers may be adversely affected by either numerical or job enlargement.</p>	<p>Provides a good analysis of the implications of production flexibility on labour relations, revealing that workers may be affected by flexible production in a variety of ways, principally by functional and numerical flexibility. However, fails to explore an additional possibility in the form of job enlargement.</p>
<p>Regulation Despite the fact that regulation is not at the centre of the theory, research has been undertaken into the regional regulatory structures of industrial districts.</p>	<p>Claims that regulation is the backbone of the theory but only looks at the regulatory mechanism of the state, failing to examine wider regulatory institutions such as media.</p>
<p>Empirical Evidence Provides empirical evidence to support the theory of flexible specialisation, i.e., evidence of industrial districts in Italy or the reorganisation of multinational corporations in Germany.</p>	<p>Fails to provide empirical evidence to support the theory of post-Fordism, i.e., no evidence from the USA, the UK, France, Japan, Germany or Sweden to support their location on the diagram with respect to the position of Neo-Taylorism, Toyotism or Kalmarism (the type of team-working in Sweden model).</p>

Gender	
Totally ignores gender relations or feminisation of work.	Skirts around the issue of gender relations but often fails to elaborate in any detail.

Source: Wigfield (2001, p. 47). Post-Fordism is drawn from the work of Leborgne and Lipietz (1988)

2.2.2.2.3. Flexibility of Working Hours

As often mentioned, the Fordist employment system was based on an eight-hour working day and full employment. Since the 1970s, many regulations have been implemented in terms of employment types, and workers, who are adaptable to work under “flexible working conditions”, have been preferred. This might be explained in relation to the weakening of the unions and the working class *vis-a-vis* capital. For a long time, trade unions have struggled to shorten the work day. However, since the 1970s, with the hazardous effects of the crisis, firms have forced the trade unions to accept regulations in terms of work time flexibility (Treu, 1992, p. 503-504). This flexibility ensures that firms use labour effectively without employing new workers. New flexible work types, such as part-time work, shift work and home-based work, have emerged in this era. Besides this, when the demographic characteristics of part-time and home-based work is analysed, it can be seen that this kind of work consists mainly of women workers (Belek, 1997, p. 75). Part-time and home-based work is assumed to be an opportunity for women to participate in the labour market, even though they earn less than their male counterparts. It is also seen that employers explain the low earnings of women in home-based labour with the fact that they work at their own home regardless of any

time limitations (Lordođlu, 1990, p. 12). Thus, home-based work is also assumed to reconcile the work life with family life.

In addition, it is argued that through the increase of flexibility in work hours, the full-time employment rate has fallen. For instance, the number of workers employed on a full-time basis in Britain fell from 85% in 1971 (Office of Population, Census and Surveys, 1971) to 65% in 1993 (Office of Population, Census and Surveys, 1993; Wigfield, 2001, p. 55). The decrease in full-time employment has mainly affected women, because as Meulders et al. (1997) state, non-standard work, particularly part-time jobs, are frequently held by female employees throughout Europe.

2.2.2.2.4. Pay Flexibility

Pay flexibility is the determination of wages according to both individual and institutional performance. It is argued that this is also a necessity of international competition (Treu, 1992, p. 507). According to Atkinson and Meager, pay flexibility complements the functional and numerical flexibility, and it also increases the productivity of labour by rewarding the highly skilled workers (Atkinson & Meager, 1986, p. 9). Atkinson and Meager agree that pay flexibility is also a preferable solution in the event of economic crisis. Then, if demand falls crucially in a crisis situation, firms can rearrange their production levels and employment positions without firing any workers. For instance, they can employ workers without any payment via this flexibility. Otherwise, workers might lose

their jobs. All these applications ensure that unemployment problems are kept under control (Atkinson & Meager, 1986, p. 59).

Such flexible regulations in payment systems make all workers dependent on each other for premiums. For instance, if one worker becomes ill and production is confronted with a delay, the other workers cannot gain their premiums. This is a very well thought and effective method to control workers. Thanks to this method, every worker starts overwatching the work of others to ensure higher team productivity to be transferred into premiums.

2.3. Critical Approaches to the Flexibilisation Process

Contrary to liberal perspectives that view flexibility as an improvement for labour, there are other views that are suspicious of that assumption. As mentioned before, emergence of the flexibilisation debates have coexisted with the debates on the crisis of capitalism in the 1970s. Literature on the crisis has expanded since the 1970s, and many different theoretical approaches have contributed to this literature. However, within these approaches, the Marxist tradition had a prominent position as it brings theoretically strong explanations about how capitalism works, how it reproduces itself and why it is confronted with crises.

Flexibilisation of labour regimes has been evaluated by Marxists as the response of capital to the 1970s crisis. While majority of Marxist traditions –among which the Regulation School attracts particular attention- bring prominent criticisms to the

process of flexibilisation of labour, some Marxist scholars, like Leborgne and Lipietz, assume that the flexibilisation process might generate some possible beneficial outcomes for labour. While the former assumes that flexibilisation of labour intensifies the exploitation of workers, the latter claims that flexible rearrangements of the production systems ensure workers more involvement into the production processes.

Next section will first examine the premises of the Regulation School and then of Lipietz on labour flexibility from a critical perspective.

2.3.1. Regulation School

The roots of the Regulation School go back to the post World War II period. In the 1960s, some French political economists engaged in analysing the restructuring processes of capitalism and the crisis of the Fordist production system. They attempted to explain how capitalism developed after World War II, how it attained prosperity and then how it was confronted with the crisis. The main motivation behind this theory has been to explain the inherent contradictions of capitalism and also relate them to define the structure of capital accumulation in the capitalist system.

It must be stated that there is no one version of the Regulation theory; rather, there are different versions, such as those of the French Regulationists (such as Aglietta and Leborgne and Lipietz) and the German Regulationists (such as Hirsch and

Esser). In addition to these, there are also some Regulationists who can be included in neither the French nor the German Regulation School, such as Jessop and Harvey. According to Jessop (1992a) there are seven different Regulation Schools. Nevertheless, it should also be recognised that even among the French Regulationists themselves, there are divergences, like the one between Aglietta and Lipietz.

Even though there are different versions of the Regulation School, according to Hirst and Zeitlin (1990, p.18) the most important and developed representative of this approach is the French Regulation School in its “Parisian” variant, which is represented by Aglietta, Leborgne and Lipietz. According to Jessop, Parisian Regulationists have tried to answer the question of “how capitalism could survive even though the capital relation itself inevitably generated antagonisms and crises which made continuing accumulation improbable” (Jessop, 1988, p. 149).

Similar to Institutionalism, Regulation School has also focused on the crisis of capitalism in the 1970s. And while they analyze the fundamental reasons of the crisis in the 1970s, they have emphasized the basic characteristics of the Fordist production and labour system as their starting point.

2.3.1.1. Basic Assumptions of Regulation Theory

2.3.1.1.1. Characteristics of Fordism

The term 'Fordism' was used by Regulationists to depict the post-war era, the period from 1945 to the 1970s. This era was called the period of "intensive capital accumulation" by Aglietta (1979). The driving force of this Fordist "intensive accumulation" was the mass production dynamic, the intensification of work, the detailed division of tasks and mechanisation to raise productivity, and various forms of "monopolistic" regulation to maintain this dynamic (Amin, 1994, p.9).

According to Sennett (1999, p. 41), the General Motors Willow Run plant in Michigan was a typical example of the Fordist production system. This factory was a structure occupying a space of two-thirds of a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide. In this huge plant, all the materials needed to make cars, from raw steel to glass blocks to leather tanneries, were assembled under a single roof. Also, there was a definite work arrangement that was coordinated by a highly disciplined bureaucracy of analysts and managers.

In this system, production mentality was simple: bigger is more efficient. Concentrating all elements of production in one place like Willow Run ensured the firms energy savings in the transportation of materials. In addition to the energy saving advantages of Fordist factories, white-collar workers in sales and executive offices and producers of the commodity were separated. This was one of the most prominent characteristics of the Fordist production system: separation of the

execution and conception processes of production. Later, this was regarded as one of the most negative features of Fordism. Hence, flexibility was offered as a solution to prevent the waste of time and other resources.

While Institutionalism considers the implications of technological improvements in understanding the crisis of Fordism, Regulation School focuses on the exhaustion of 'class relations' and 'capital accumulation' regimes within Fordism.

As the Regulation theorists conceptualise their approach, they stress two fundamental concepts: *regime of accumulation* and *mode of regulation*. For Esser and Hirsch, *regime of accumulation* means “a form of surplus value production and realization, supported by particular types of production and management technology. It includes the type and method of organizing production and labour and the national economic reproduction of labour power and capital” (1994, p. 73). The regime of accumulation refers to “a set of regularities at the level of the whole economy, enabling a more or less coherent process of capital accumulation” (Nielsen, 1991, p. 22).

In a regime of accumulation, in order to ensure proper capital accumulation, the needed regulations should be implemented by abolishing the instabilities in the system. In order to ensure this stability, the regime of accumulation needs comprehensive norms. These norms would help to shape new regulations in all spheres of the production process. These regulations would also comprise “relationships and forms of exchange between branches of the economy, common

rules of industrial and commercial management, principles of income sharing between wages, profits and taxes, norms of consumption and patterns of demand in the market, and other aspects of the macroeconomy” (Amin, 1994, p. 8). It seems that a regime of accumulation has a more comprehensive framework relative to the mode of regulation.

According to Lipietz (1994, p. 341-2), the Fordist development model, was hegemonic in the developed capitalist countries after 1945, and this system stood on a “tripod”. Lipietz defines these three components as follows:

One leg was the dominant form of labour organization, structured around the Taylorist separation of conception and execution and the systematic incorporation of the know-how of technical workers in the automatic operation of machines. These Taylorist principles theoretically excluded the direct producers from any involvement in the intellectual aspects of labour, but in reality implied a certain ‘good will’, a ‘paradoxical involvement’ disclaimed on both sides (by management and workers). The *second leg* was a regime of accumulation, involving growth in popular consumption, and hence ‘outlets’, commensurate with productivity gains. The *third leg* was a set of forms of regulation inducing the conformity of employers and wage-earners alike to the model. In particular, the Fordist mode of regulation drew upon collective agreements and the welfare state, which guaranteed the great majority of wage-earners a regularly rising income (thus helping to sustain the levels of demand required by the mass production norm under Fordism) (1994, p. 341-2).

In the transition from Taylorism to Fordism, a significant change that had occurred in labour organisation was the replacement of labour according to the arrangement of machines. For Aglietta (1979, p. 117) “the characteristic labour process of Fordism is semi-automatic *assembly-line* production and the semi-automatic assembly line is the most suitable labour process for relative surplus-value. In the

assembly line system, positions of machines and workers were reviewed and changed. Thus, there was no need for workers to fetch the components of the goods that they were producing. This method ensured time savings for the firms. Nevertheless, the replacement of workers with machines caused new problems. As Aglietta mentions, “when the fragmentation of tasks is pushed to an extreme limit, several elements combine to prevent a further decline in time wasted and even to reverse its direction” (1979, p. 120).

Wigfield assumes that Ford expected corporate power to be utilised to regulate the economy by increasing wages to increase effective demand. However, corporate power was proved to be an insufficient tool and so the state had to intervene in order to reinforce the trend of mass consumption. Hence, the welfare state emerged, enabling those who were either employed in the Fordist production line or simply not employed to also enjoy mass consumption. This was ensured by a comprehensive system of social security benefits and, in some instances, the introduction of a minimum wage (Wigfield, 2001, p. 9).

2.3.1.1.2. Crisis of Fordism

While the Regulation School focuses on explaining the theoretical framework of capitalist accumulation, one of its main aims was to explain the crisis of the Fordist system. Thus, the crisis of Fordism and the Neo- or Post-Fordist theory is directly related to the crisis itself. While focusing on the analysis of Fordism’s crisis,

Regulationists assume that the crisis of Fordism, in fact, was due to an imbalance between the Fordist accumulation regime and mode of regulation.

For Lipietz, Fordism entered into crisis due to two reasons. First, the possibility of national regulation of the Fordist model of development constituted a disturbance for the internationalisation of production and markets. Second, the dominant labour organisation form reached its limits. Lipietz analyses these two components and argues that “paradoxical involvement yielded only declining productivity gains for rising per capita investment. The results were a fall in profitability, a crisis of investment, a crisis of employment and a crisis of the welfare state” (Lipietz, 1994, p. 347).

Lipietz (1994) emphasises the fundamental characteristics of the Fordist production system as being based on a division between the conception and execution processes. He argues that the Fordist model entered into crisis in the advanced capitalist world in which it was established. For him, it was certainly an economic crisis: “a crisis of the model of labour organization based upon the fragmentation of tasks, the division between ‘conception’ and ‘execution’ and ever costly mechanization; it was a crisis of the ‘welfare state’, and it was a crisis of the nation state, incapable of regulating an increasingly internationalized economy” (Lipietz, 1994, p. 342-3).

Nielsen also depicts four points for the crisis of Fordism. Similar to Lipietz's assumptions, he also focuses on globalisation and its implications on the Fordist production system:

Firstly, productivity gains decreased as a result of the social and technical limits of Fordism (worker resistance to the Fordist organization of work and increasing difficulties in 'balancing' ever longer and more rigid production lines). *Secondly*, the expansion of mass production led to an increasing globalization of economic flows which made national economic management increasingly difficult. *Thirdly*, Fordism led to growing social expenditure (the relative costs of collective consumption increased, because of the inapplicability of mass production methods in this area, leading to inflationary pressures and distributional conflicts). *Fourthly*, the consumption pattern has gradually changed towards a greater variety of use values (the new demands are at odds with standardization, the basis of economies of scale, and cannot easily be satisfied through mass production methods) (Nielsen, 1991, p. 24).

Similar to Nielsen's analysis on the role of social expenditure in the collapse of Fordism, Jessop (1991, p. 94) argues that for the last thirty years, the population has gotten older, the numbers of retired people and the population's medical costs have increased, all leading to the failure of the Fordist system.

In addition to Nielsen and Jessop's expressions about the failure of Fordism, class struggle is emphasised by Aglietta. For Aglietta, the crisis of the 1970s emerged because Fordism reached its limits in the manufacturing industry, due to the growing working class resistance to the intensification of labour, a slowing down of productivity growth, and a squeeze on profits, which intensified the stagflationary growth of both inflation and unemployment (Aglietta, 1979). In addition to such economic problems, Aglietta assumes that the crisis of Fordism worsened by a number of external shocks to the system. One of the principal reasons was the sudden oil price increases as a result of the Arab-Israeli war in

1973. He argues that this problem exacerbated the problems of the already declining capitalist economies and resulted in turmoil in the economies of advanced industrialized countries.

While analysing the collapse of Fordism, the parameters of the international system must, hence, also be taken into account. Kiely, like Aglietta, emphasises international factors in the collapse of the Fordist system. For Kiely, Regulation Theory explains the post-war boom in terms of a “Fordist regime of accumulation based upon techniques of mass production underpinned by a mode of regulation consisting of mass consumption and the Keynesian welfare state” (Kiely, 1998, p. 98). However, from the late 1960s onwards, tensions in the system intensified. Social problems and growing class struggle took place in the context of growing international competition. In addition, the economic power of the US declined and the importance of the Japanese economy and politics increased in the world. Kiely claims that the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates was abandoned in 1971-73, when the US devalued the dollar against the price of gold. Having experienced such problems, the world price of oil nearly quadrupled in 1973-74. Therefore, the 1970s and 1980s saw an important slowdown in growth and were confronted with a periodic and widespread recession (Kiely, 1998, p. 98).

According to the Regulation School, the crisis of the Fordist system caused the emergence of a new accumulation regime and then of a new mode of regulation. Thus, the post-Fordist era entails a new formulation of the regime of accumulation. For Belek (1997, p. 243-4), it has consisted of these five elements: move to a post-

Taylorist organisation of production and labour in the context of new information technologies; industrialisation of the service sector via new technologies; industrialisation of agriculture, thus losing its importance in gross domestic product (GDP) and in the labour force; the separation of productivity and people's revenues, thus increasing the differences between revenue and consumption and move to low level of development; and the abolishment of the relation between wages and work, differentiation of consumption tendency, and thus individualisation in the context of pluralism.

Moreover, it is assumed that "humanitarian" problems also had a great importance in the crisis of Fordism. For Yentürk (1995, p. 803), while on the one hand productivity has increased and the waste of time has decreased thanks to the assembly line system, the routinisation of work and deep division of labour and planning have caused high dissatisfaction among workers during work hours.

For Aglietta and other proponents of the Regulation School, all the aforementioned negative developments caused Fordism to crumble and led to the emergence of a new system which is called neo/post-Fordism or the automation/information economy. This neo/post-Fordist era has demanded a very different, more "flexible" labour process managed by "semi-autonomous units", as well as extended forms of "collective consumption" and further socialisation of wage costs. For Harrington, Fordist mass-production technology is in the process of being replaced with "new much more flexible technology and the need for specialty products, resulting in the need for a *reskilled* workforce to replace the older *deskilled* workers of the Fordist

era” (Harrington, quoted in Foster, 1988, p. 29), However, it is doubtful whether flexible production and labour systems have succeeded in destroying the problems troubles that have caused Fordism to collapse.

2.3.1.1.3. Flexibilisation of Labour Process for Regulation Theory

The crisis of Fordism caused many changes, not only in production systems but also in the labour regimes. Regulationists, regardless of whether they are Neo- or Post-Fordist, assume that a more flexible regime of accumulation has emerged, which is characterised by production and labour flexibility. The transition from the Fordist system to a post-Fordist system was called “flexibilisation”. And flexibilisation of labour is an integral part of the general flexibilisation process.

While examining the Regulationist stance in terms of the flexible or post-Fordist transformation of labour, it must be noted that there are different stances among the Regulationists about the emergence of flexible systems in labour systems. For instance, while Aglietta is doubtful about the positive effects of flexibilisation on production and labour processes, Leborgne and Lipietz are positive about the implications of flexibilisation on labour. They assume that in a flexible labour regime, alternative types of labour organisation can emerge which are both beneficial and detrimental. In this regard, they share a common stance with the Institutionalists.

Lipietz associates the failure of Taylorist labour formulations in the Fordist system with the necessity for compromised and democratic labour arrangements. He

argues that, in order to reach a *new social compromise on productivity*, the Taylorist labour organisation of the Fordist system must be reviewed. (Lipietz, 1994, p.346-7) (emphasis added) Then, he adds that the crisis of the Fordist labour system, in fact, is a crisis of Taylorism as a form of ‘paradoxical non-involvement’ of the direct worker. He argues that “direct operators should be able to involve themselves, with all their imagination, their capacity for innovation, qualifications and the know-how acquired in routine production, not only to refine the operation of the productive process, but also to socialize and collectivize their acquired practical knowledge: a task which Taylor reserved for the office of methods” (Lipietz, 1994, p. 347).

For a *new social compromise on productivity*, according to Lipietz, the position of wage-earners must be taken into account. Through flexible labour regimes, labour mobility is sought, but most wage-earners are unwilling to accept mobility between types of work and between regions. Lipietz still recognizes that the workers are right. “Work is only one aspect of individual and social life. Emotional and familial relations are the main component in the conditions for human development and happiness, and they require material conditions: stability of communities, linked to territories. The compromise should therefore embrace not only the ‘right to work’, but also the ‘right to live and work in one’s own region” (Lipietz, 1994, p. 348).

Leborgne and Lipietz (1988) agree that technical revolution is extremely important in the restructuring process. The main characteristic of this era is the development of flexible and high-tech production models, such as “flexible manufacturing

systems” (FMS), computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacturing (CAM). With the help of such technological or flexible production methods, the number of workers employed full-time has decreased and flexible employment models, such as part-time work, shift work, telework and home-based work, have emerged.

Leborgne and Lipietz assume that together with the Post-Fordist era, alternative types of labour organisation can emerge and these types can be both beneficial and detrimental, while Aglietta assumes the opposite. Leborgne and Lipietz (1988) and Lipietz (1997) assume that Fordism involves a high polarisation of tasks and a separation of conception and execution. While workers in a central planning bureau implement complex mental activities, the workers on the shop floor implement simple, unskilled, operative tasks. Labour regime and employment structure also change according to such fragmentation. The workers in the central bureau are more qualified and have many opportunities in terms of training, social security benefits and relatively high wages, while the workers on the shop floor get lower wages and their labour is not regarded as being as valuable as that of the central bureau’s workers. Leborgne and Lipietz (1988) observe that in the Post-Fordist labour process, the goal is “the reconnecting of what Taylorism had disconnected, the manual and intellectual aspects of labour” (Leborgne & Lipietz, 1988, p. 269). Such a process constitutes multi-skilling and job enrichment for labour. However, Aglietta argues that multi-skilling or job enrichment discourse is “shameless propaganda about the liberation of man in work” (Aglietta, 1979, p. 122).

Contrary to Aglietta's negative views about flexibilisation and job enrichment, Lipietz assumes that functional flexibility, which requires workers to be mobilised between all phases of production, means a move toward more worker involvement, providing the benefits of a semi-autonomous group work, multi-skilling and job enrichment.

The involvement of wage-earners in the decision on 'how to produce' leads also the workers' dealing with the question of what to produce. Flexible labour formulation provides a kind of compromise between capital and labour. Lipietz depicts this as a *new social compromise on productivity*, as mentioned before. He assumes that there are two imperatives that must guide alternative reformulations on restructuring of the productive apparatuses. One of them is the *preservation and enrichment of know-how*. Lipietz emphasises this by saying, "it is as humiliating as it is irrational not to acknowledge the acquired know-how of workers. This is why wage-earners must be involved in decisions about restructuring. They contribute their know-how and can demand retraining in return" (Lipietz, 1994, p. 348). The second imperative is the *democratic definition of the social needs to be satisfied*. For Lipietz, "new forms of democratic planning, preceding any judgement of the market, must be invented" (1994, p. 349).

Institutionalists have assumed that workers and entrepreneurs can share the benefits thanks to flexible labour reformulation. Similarly, Lipietz argues that wage-earners should benefit as much as enterprises do. If this is not possible, sluggish demand, contrasting with soaring productivity, would result in overproduction and rising

unemployment. This problem can be solved either through an increase in the purchasing power of wage-earners, via salaries or the welfare state, or through an increase of their free time. He adds that the “the *compromise should bear mainly on an expansion of free time*, and less on an increase in purchasing power over communities” (Lipietz, 1994, p. 349).

By looking at Lipietz’s assumption, it might be said that he assumes that less humiliating, more humanised labour can be attained within the existing system without requiring a revolution. Thus, for him, through a properly planned flexibilisation process, it would be possible to ensure a compromised, more democratic formulation in which labour is more humanised or emancipated. Nevertheless, it must be added that neither compromise between capital and labour, not emancipation of labour can be attained in the existing system. As Clarke (2004) mentioned, neither the crisis of capitalism or Fordism, nor alienation of labour is a technical matter. Therefore, the alienation problem of labour and the diminishing profit rate are problems that capital cannot solve via the flexible reformulation of production and labour process. Crises are intrinsic to capitalist relations of production. Without abandoning the system, neither a real democratic formulation can be established, nor can a humanised labour force be constructed.

Lipietz was also criticized due to his neglect of the fragmented labour strata. Wigfield (2001) argues that Leborgne and Lipietz do not give any substantial details; the implications for labour relations are mentioned but they are not verified. Besides this, Gough (1996) mentions that the absence of empirical and concrete

evidence in terms of benefits of functional flexibility and job enrichment are another flaw of Leborgne and Lipietz's work.

Also, when the claims of Aglietta (1979) and Leborgne and Lipietz (1988) are reviewed, it can be said that while they make sense of the flexibilisation of labour processes, they totally neglect the possible implications of flexibilisation on gender relations. For while very limited worker groups, who are generally men and specialised in computer-based production or stock market sectors and benefited from the flexibilisation process, the majority of workers within which the women comprises a large portion has been forced to work with low wages, long work hours, and low security benefits.

2.3.2. Criticisms Directed at Post-Fordist Arguments

One of the most influential assumptions about flexibilisation and its implications for labour comes from Sennett and Gorz. Gorz (1999) analyzes the characteristics of the model of the post-Fordist enterprise. For him, the paradigm of organisation in flexible enterprise is replaced by that of the network of interconnected flows. In such an enterprise, none of the units occupies a central position, and thus an acentric, self-organising structure emerges. For Gorz, flexible reorganisation of work has a conflictual structure and many disputes occur there. He points out these issues as follows (1999, p. 31):

The question arises whether this conception opens up unprecedented scope for workers' power, and whether it heralds a possible liberation both *within* work and *from* work. Or does it, rather, carry the subjugation of workers to new heights, forcing them to take on both the function of management and the 'competitive imperative', to put the interests of the company before everything else, including their health and even their lives? (original emphasis)

He also asks whether these new work arrangements represent the introduction of a new feudalism into social relations of production in which the workers become the "proud vassal" of a company (1999, p. 31). He urges that the emancipatory character of flexibilisation or post-Fordism has succeeded temporarily in very rare cases "where the 'involvement' demanded of the workers could be negotiated by a trade union which had not yet been weakened by an 'historic defeat'" (Gorz, 1999, p. 32).

Similar to Gorz's assumptions on post-Fordist processes, Sennett also questions the implications of this process on workers' lives. In his work, *The Corrosion of Character* (1999), he emphasises the sociological and psychological effects of the flexibilisation of labour processes. According to Gorz, taking risks and being ambiguous are praised by flexible firms. Short-term work regulations are glorified, while the long-term arrangements are down-graded. Work arrangements and production decisions, employment deals and tastes become short-term. In such a world, Sennett is worried about the presumable negative impact of flexibilisation on people's lives. He asks, "How can long-term purposes be pursued in a short-term society? How can durable social relations be sustained? How can a human

being develop a narrative of identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments?” (Sennett, 1998, p. 26-7)

Sennett argues that the ambiguity and short-term character of flexible capitalism arises from one of its fundamental features: volatility of the consumer demand. Due to this ambiguity within production processes, firms aim to arrange their production and labour system to be compatible with the changing demand conditions. Sennett observes that volatility of demand forces flexible regimes to accept “flexible specialisation” (Sennett, 1999, p. 51). In contrast to Piore and Sabel, Sennett is very doubtful that new organisation of work ensures producers more control over their own activities. For him, new information systems provide the firms with perfect control over every phase of the production processes. In this regard, *Security Information Management Systems (SIMS)* has a great importance. SIMS is software for firms. It defines all work processes for workers. Every detail related to production is displayed by computers. It also provides firms with the ability to monitor every detail within the company. It controls all workers; who produce more (or less), which worker is productive or unproductive, all such details are identified by this program. Today there are many programs like the SIMS. Hence, Sennett thinks it would be difficult to talk about the autonomy of producers under these conditions.

In the flexible production system, teamwork is very important. In this system, there are teams, and every team has a production target. How they would reach this target is determined by the team. This might seem as freedom though it is rather

dubious whether this is the case. According to Sennett, it is very rare for flexible organizations to set easy goals. “Usually the units are pressed to produce or to earn far more than lies within their immediate capabilities. The realities of supply and demand are seldom in sync with these targets; the effort is to push units harder and harder despite those realities” (Sennett, 1999, p. 56). The superior authorities of the firms are interested in the targets, but they do not ensure a system for the groups to reach these targets. The result is more anxiety, more stress and more dissatisfaction among the workers.

In addition to these points, it can be seen that critical views on the flexibilisation/post-Fordism debates emphasise two points: the “inflexibility of Fordism” as claimed by the Regulationists and Institutionalists; and inadequate concrete examples for flexible economies, or the generalisation of “ideal” flexibility examples to all cases.

2.3.2.1. “Inflexibility” and the Collapse of the Fordist System

First of all, it should be remembered that it is questionable whether Fordism is inflexible or not. As Clarke urges, the limits to Fordism do not lie in the supposed technological inflexibility of the Fordist methods of production, which are indeed social rather than technical, so that they can be transcended (Clarke, 1992, p. 16). Clarke also emphasises the relations between the crisis and the emergence of “new” regulations in production processes. He states that “there is a widespread belief, on both the Left and the Right, that capitalism has managed to resolve the

crises which beset it in the 1970s, and that changes in the 1980s have laid the foundations for a new 'Post-Fordist regime of accumulation', based on new 'flexible specialist' methods of production, which combine new technologies, new patterns of demand, and new forms of the social organization of production" (Clarke, 1990, p. 131). For him, the post-Fordist arguments are based on the experience of a very few successful industrial regions, on which the main generalisations related to the new regime of accumulation are made. He disagrees that post-Fordism makes it possible to realise the social democratic dream of reconciling the interests of capital in securing high rates of productivity with the interests of the working class in combining fulfilment at work with rising levels of income (Clarke, 1990, p. 131). Although there have been widespread changes within in the work organisation, wage bargaining and payment systems, Clarke argues that these changes reflect the growing strength of the management and the weakening of labour rather than having been determined by technological change (Clarke, 1990, p. 132).

As mentioned before, the main assumptions of both Regulationists and Institutionalists are based on the claim that the Fordist economic model was inflexible, and thus it was not able to reformulate itself according to the changing character of the economy. However, against this assumption of Fordist inflexibility, it is argued that "...dedicated equipment, semi-skilled workers and standardized products do not necessarily mean rigidity or inflexibility and certainly not on all fronts; it is another [thing] to say that certain types of rigidities and flexibilities have existed in Fordist systems" (Wood, 1993, p. 538). For Wood (1993), it would

be a significant mistake to associate Fordism with inflexibility or to assume that Japanese and other innovative management methods represent a break from Fordist mass production. Such a narrative indeed misses a central characteristic of Fordism which is its flexibility. (Wood, 1993)

Contrary to the assumptions of Regulationists and Institutionalists, there are also alternative views that underline that Fordism has not ended. Although the flexibility discourse insists that routinisation and typical Fordist production systems disappeared in the dynamic sectors of the economy, Sennett claims that most labour remains inscribed within the circle of Fordism, and the majority of workers still work in typical “Fordist” jobs (1999, p. 45). Today, almost all industrialised countries follow mass production systems. The assumed flexible production in Japan or the US is still based on mass production system. Hence, the American and Japanese automobiles, televisions, computers and other goods are still produced through mass production. There have obviously been many prominent changes in production processes due to computer-based techniques; however, the main rearrangements seem to focus within labour regimes. Hence, the discourse of flexibilisation makes sense mainly in the labour markets.

Rather than inflexibility, the Fordist fragmentation of tasks and standardisation of components has built a new flexibility in the labour process, which was the condition for technological dynamism. This flexibility appeared in particular in the dual labour processes. While on the one hand Fordism leads to the deskilling/routinisation of labour in some areas, it requires on the other hand more

skilled and polyvalent labour in order to produce high-tech products, leading to a fragmentation in labour markets. Hence, as Clarke argues, “while Fordism deskilled large parts of direct production labour, it also created a need for new skills” (Clarke, 1992, p. 18).

In order to keep the line moving, Ford needed a stratum of workers with polyvalent skills to fill gaps in the line, overcome bottlenecks and maintain machinery. Also, “the dynamism of Fordism implied the constant development of new tools, dies and machines, which could only be developed by highly skilled workers who were able to use flexible and general purpose machines” (Williams et al., 1987, p. 331-335). Here, it has to be added that the aim of flexibilisation in production or labour processes is not to minimise the labour time. The Fordist revolution meant not only a technical revolution but a simultaneous revolution in the social organisation of production. From this perspective, the most important summary comes from Clarke: “The primary barrier to the Fordist Revolution in production lay not in any technological inflexibility but in the resistance of the workers to their subordination to the whim of the employer” (Clarke, 1992, p. 19).

There are two main elements in the Fordist system. First, the rigorous decomposition of tasks, which includes the rigid separation of skilled from unskilled tasks, permitted the rigorous differentiation of the labour force. This was ensured by the existence of a dual labour market system which was composed of a small stratum of skilled workers and a mass of unskilled workers, who were generally immigrants. Second, “the industrial labour force no longer comprised a

more or less coordinated mass of discrete individual workers and work-groups, each of which was under the direction of a skilled or supervisory worker” (Clarke, 1992, p. 19). From that point, it can be seen that the Fordist production system aimed to fuse the labour force into an organic whole, in which the productive contribution of each individual and group was dependent on the contribution of every other worker. This was the common feature of the Fordist labour process with the process of Toyotaism, because in Toyotaism as well, the wage policy and premium systems are articulated with the success of each worker. For instance, if the production of a batch is not implemented because of the illness of one worker, the other workers fail to receive their premiums.

In fact, the most important issue in the Fordist labour process lay here. The interdependence of tasks within the Fordist production system makes the system very fragile and vulnerable that if any of its component processes are interrupted, for instance by workers’ involvement the whole process might come to a halt. Therefore, “neither tasks nor workers can ever be perfectly standardized, so that a degree of flexibility has to be built into the industrial system to ensure that normal variations in the pace of work can be absorbed without bringing the whole system to a grinding halt” (Clarke, 1992, p. 19). In order to attain this aim, the holding of buffer stocks, reduction in the speed of the line, permitting workers to move up or down the line, and breaking up of the process into discrete groups and other methods have all been utilised.

In the Fordist labour regime, technology ensured high productivity for employers through the assembly line. The traditional method of controlling labour in craft production had been through the payment of piece-rates, and with supervision achieved by skilled workers on the basis of internal subcontracting and the gang or helper system (Clarke, 1992, p. 20). But such an individualistic method to control the workers was not possible in the new collective forms of organisation of labour in which each labourer's contribution was crucial within the whole. Nevertheless, after the strong strike movement during the 1910s in the US, it was perceived that labour control was a necessity for capital. In the US, the employers had been able to achieve this by exploiting the mass influx of immigrant workers and the sharp sectional and racist divisions within the trade union movement to destroy craft unions and to establish an almost unchallenged capitalist control of production (Clarke, 1992, p. 20).

Nor only the assumption of inflexible Fordism, but also the assumption of flexible post-Fordism was questioned by critical approaches. It is claimed that although the subcontracting system enables a high degree of productive flexibility, it might also have a dual effect on the labour force. Solinas (1982) argues that the jobs of workers within final firms and stage firms require different degrees of skill content and workers' security. Because the final firms are central to the production process and the workers within these firms produce the complete product, they are highly skilled relative to others. On the other hand, the final commodities are indeed collectively produced by a series of peripheral stage firms. Each firm would perform a specific stage of the production process; they are subcontracted by the

final firm according to the amount and type of the product required. As a result of this process, the work force in these stage firms perform just one unskilled task and are often subject to numerically inflexible work practices (Wigfield, 2001, p. 23).

2.3.2.2. Criticism of the “Ideal Types”

Another criticism directed at Regulationists’ and Institutionalists’ views of Fordism is related to the “ideal type” issue. When proponents of post-Fordism and flexible specialisation approaches construct their models, they prefer to use ideal examples, or ideal types. Clarke criticises this effectively by arguing that “These theories have also come under sharp attack on empirical grounds, as it has proved impossible to find pure cases of Fordism, post-Fordism, or flexible specialization. The response of the proponents of these theories to such criticism has been to beat a strategic retreat, detaching their models from reality and presenting them as ‘ideal types’” (Clarke, 1992, p. 15). As Clarke states, the methodological device of the ideal type is a very practical tool for sociologists because it frees the sociological imagination from the boring constraints of empirical reality. Another significant implication of using ideal types is the wrong vision they picture on capitalist production relations. This is because “the ideal-type of the Fordist regime of accumulation purports to offer a model of a stabilized capitalism, in which the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production are, at least provisionally, overcome in order to secure sustained capital accumulation, social harmony and political tranquillity” (Clarke, 1992, p. 15).

One similar criticism related to the concept of ideal types is offered by Williams et al. about Piore and Sabel's flexible specialisation concept. Williams et al. effectively underline that Piore and Sabel never specify the criteria which might be used in deciding whether or not one type of production is dominant in a particular case (Williams et al., 1987, p. 407). They assert that there can be no real economy where all production is undertaken on a mass basis, as Piore and Sabel concede by arguing that "Some firms in all industries and almost all firms in some industries continued to apply craft principles of production" (Piore & Sabel, 1984, p. 20). For Williams et al. (1987, p. 415), "Piore and Sabel fail to state criteria of dominance which would allow us to determine whether and when one form of production comes to dominate a given area thereby creating a distinctive regional or national economy of the mass production or flexible specialization type".

According to Williams et al. (1987), the flexible specialisation theory builds no coherent relations among its different elements. For there is no empirical evidence for the claimed abolishment of mass markets, or for the supposed inability of mass production to respond to changing economic conditions, or for the claimed correlation between new technology and the scale and social forms of production.

When flexible production and labour systems are analysed, the Japanese management model and labour process regimes are praised and the Japanese model is assumed to be the prototype of the new flexible era for the post-Fordist writers. Thus, the Japanese model and the basic characteristics of the post-Fordist model are regarded as the same. The Japanese industry introduces new products more

rapidly; teamwork and production systems are highly flexible; functional flexibility is prevalent on the shop floor; and the relational subcontracting (*Shitanke*) between large and small firms facilitates the responsive just-in-time system (Wood, 1993, p. 536)

The relationship between the Japanese model and post-Fordism or flexibility is more problematic than envisioned “because at the labour process level, the Japanese model rests on the fundamental bedrock of Fordism - work study, assembly lines and mass production and marketing” (Wood, 1993, p. 538). Although certain features of Fordism have been reversed, one can better talk about an evolution rather than a transformation of the production process. Hence, Wood argues that the Japanese model indeed represents the Japanisation of Fordism, a type of neo-Fordism, not post-Fordism, which is indeed only comprehensible within the context of mass production, work study and other hallmarks of Fordism (Wood, 1993). In other words, “whatever the condition of mass production elsewhere, it is alive and well in Japan” (Sayer & Walker, 1992, p. 192).

Table 2: The Contrasts in Production Flexibility between Fordism and Flexible Specialisation

Fordism	Flexible Specialisation
Mass production	Small batch production
Standardised products	Specialised, semi-customised products
Low value, low quality, high volume commodities	High value, high quality, low volume commodities
Infrequent changes in product design or production methods	Frequent changes in product design or production methods
Economies of scale	Economies of scope
Competition based on price	Competition based on design & quality

Product specific capital equipment	General purpose capital equipment based on the use of flexible technologies, i.e., Computer Aided Design (CAD), Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM), Flexible Manufacturing Systems (FMS), Computer Numerically Controlled machine tools (CNC)
Periodic innovation of both products and processes	Continuous incremental innovation of both products and processes

Source: A combination of the work of Amin (1989), Hirst and Zeitlin (1989), Jones (1989), Piore and Sabel (1984) (Wigfield, 2001, p. 19).

Whether or not the post-Fordist flexible specialisation system has abandoned the mass production regime is very disputable. While the Institutionalist stance depicts the conflicting relationships between Fordist mass production and flexible specialisation as seen in Table 2, it is argued that Fordist and flexible production methods can coexist together properly. Wood emphasises such coexistence as follows:

Indeed the reported observations of a range of researchers (including myself) of Japanese plants both in and outside Japan emphasize the continued centrality of the assembly line, standardized products and short job-cycled jobs (see e.g. Adler, 1993; Milkman, 1991) in those industries in which they have traditionally been associated. Most of the products identified with ascendancy of Japan in world trade are classic mass-produced goods, such cameras, transistors, televisions and cars, and Japan more than any other country has opened up markets for such new mass products as videos, cassette players and fax machine (Wood, 1993, p. 536).

Another disputed argument proposed by Piore and Sabel is their assumption that the importance and role of huge mass-production firms would decrease thanks to flexible technology. For them, via flexible technologies, craft production will re-emerge, like in the Third Italy region. However, the machines and robots used by firms are very expensive that only very large firms can afford such technologies, not small- or middle-sized firms (Parlak, 1999).

CHAPTER III

HOME-BASED LABOUR

Home-based working has been one of the significant types of work associated with flexibility since the 1980s, though in comparison to the wider topic of “flexibilisation”. It has attracted relatively less academic attention. The majority of studies on home-based working seems to be done within “woman studies” due to the fact that they have been essentially unemployed woman who work at home. McDouglass (1998) recognizes increased female participation as one of the major changes in the structure of the labour force in recent years, and Jenson (1989) argues that more research on this issue is done within gender studies for men and women who are located in different positions in the labour market, working in different industries and often in separate locations within the same workplace. This might also be the reason why home-based working as a woman concentrated sector has been recognized as such. Besides the gender-based aspects of this development however, women working at home need to be also recognized as part of the labour force and studied in relation to its position *vis-à-vis* the capital.

When the trend of the last forty years is considered, it can be assumed that the role and functions of women in production relations have changed fundamentally. In the primitive accumulation era of capitalism during the 1800s, women and child labourers were used intensely as cheap labour. In addition, women had a role in

their homes to provide the reproduction of labour. In the Fordist production system, the labour force consisted of mainly men, and women were encouraged to stay at home, engaging in housework. Even Henry Ford himself had announced that only male workers whose wives did not work outside their homes could get premiums (Foster, 1988, p. 18). However, thanks to technological innovations in production techniques, there was no need to apply physical force to use computer-based machines. Thus, women's participation in the labour force began to increase gradually all over the world. Especially through technological development in production, it became possible to employ labourers who could use computer-based machines. Thus, the labour pool was expanded via the entrance of woman workers to labour markets. Table 4 displays some figures in terms of the increase of woman labourers in the world economy.

The growth of the service sector in economies since the 1970s also motivated firms to employ more women, because it is traditionally accepted that women are more suitable for working in service sectors, such as banking, education, health, as well as in the textile sector.

Table 3: Rate of Women’s Participation in Employment

COUNTRY	YEAR	
	<u>1980</u>	<u>2007</u>
	(%)	(%)
Belgium	46.4	52.6
France	48.9	55.2
Germany	50.8	55.4
Italy	45.8	53.8
Netherlands	48.3	52.9
Spain	38.4	53.0
Turkey	14 (in 1988)	21.4

Source: The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and TÜİK, 2008.

While women’s participation in employment increases, “the workforce has become increasingly polarised in terms of gender, with many women concentrated in jobs which are classified as unskilled or semi-skilled however. Consequently women workers have not necessarily been affected by post-Fordism in the same way as their male counterparts” (Wigfield, 2001, p. 50). Thus, it is possible to ask whether or not flexibility in labour also provides beneficial results for women workers. Belussi (1992) argues that an internal, skilled, core labour force, which is mainly white collar and male, is responsible for the control and coordination of production and distribution operations, while female workers perform the peripheral, blue collar, repetitive and fragmented operations.

At that point, as Wigfield (2001) mentions, questions arise in relation to the implications of post-Fordism on gender relations, because it might be the case that

labour flexibility would lead to the maintenance of existing gender segregation in the workplace, whereby women form the majority of the numerically flexible workforce (the periphery) while male employees enjoy the functional flexibility of the core. Therefore, against the claims of Institutionalists and Leborgne and Lipietz, who assume beneficial implications of flexibility on labour, it can be said that while some workers will enjoy job enrichment, benefiting from the functional flexibility involved in post-Fordism, others will inevitably suffer, experiencing job enlargement (Wigfield, 2001).

3.1. The Home-Based Labour System

As discussed in Chapter Two, the transformation of the Fordist full-time life-long employment system since the 1980s has led to flexible working types, such as part-time work, shift work, teleworking and home-based labour in all over the world. Although all these flexible types have substantially affected working conditions, home-based labour due to its invisibility and informality has been among the ones to be exploited worst. Today, millions of people participate in home-based labour, not only in underdeveloped or developing countries, but also in industrialised or developed countries. While home-based labour means a vital resource for living, it also means reconciliation of work and family life. At that point, home-based working is assumed to be a compatible labour type for women predominantly (Meulders *et al.*, 1994; Lordoğlu, 1990; Hattatoğlu, 2002).

Home-based labour is the most flexible form among all labour types according to Sennett (1999). In fact, working at home is assumed to be a kind of reward for employees a perception identified also in this thesis's field study. On the other hand, this causes an anxiety among employers. Sennett argues that employers fear losing control over their absent workers and suspect that those who stay at home will abuse their freedom (Sennett, 1999, p. 59). Therefore, employers institute many regulations for home-based workers. People might be controlled via telephone, intranet or e-mails. At first glance, it might seem that home-based workers are more comfortable and free relative to employees in the office. Nevertheless, Sennett says that a number of studies suggest that the surveillance of labour is in fact often greater for those absent from the office than for those who are present (Sennett, 1999, p. 59). However, it should be noted that such technology-monitored jobs that Sennett mentions are relatively few in developing or underdeveloped countries. While the home-based labour system consists of mainly technological or stock exchange jobs in developed countries, it is based on manual jobs, via intense labour, in developing countries. It might be argued that while highly competitive working conditions play a disciplinary role in the home-based production systems in the developing countries, the middlemen/women fulfil the close monitoring role when required.

In addition to these issues, one point looms large in terms of the home-based labour system. As mentioned before, this kind of labour system consists of mainly women. This rate of female participation is 95% for Germany, Italy, the Netherlands,

Greece and Ireland; 93.5% for Japan; 90% for India; 97% for Algeria; 84% for France; 75% for Spain; and 70% for the UK (ILO, 1995).

As mentioned before, home-based woman labour has been analyzed hitherto in women studies in a more extensive way though by scholars from different perspectives such as liberal (Hakim, 2004) or socialist feminist (Wigfield, 2001), or those coming neither from the feminist nor Marxist tradition. (Toksöz, 2007; Acar *et al.* 1999) There are those who come from liberal feminism, such as Hakim (2004), and those who come from socialist feminism, such as Wigfield (2001).

When studies in women studies are analysed, it is seen that the majority of these works regard home-based women's labour as exploited labour. Some scholars, such as Toksöz (2007), do not use the term "exploitation" explicitly. She analyses disadvantageous conditions of women's labour and tries to explain in which sectors and how women workers work. She applies many figures, graphics and other data, but she does not address class relations and characteristics of capitalist production relations. While she focuses on informal employment and the high rate of informal women's labour in Turkey, she does not provide any explanation as to why the informal employment rate is very high in underdeveloped countries relative to developed countries. She also mentions atypical labour types, but she regards these forms as given facts.

Hakim (2004) either does not consider class relations in production relations. One of Hakim's most prominent assumptions is the "preference theory". According to

this theory, women's employment patterns are in large part an outcome of the existence of different 'types' of women. According to Hakim, the majority of women either gives lifetime priority to their families or shifts their priorities over the employment-family lifecycle. Thus, the majority of women either voluntarily leaves employment or shift to part-time work when their children are young, and it is this kind of behaviour that explains women's relative lack of success in the employment sphere. Similarly, if a woman prefers to work in the home-based labour system, she can. As it is seen, Hakim's assumptions are far from explaining why women work in the home-based system. Here, it can be added that emphasis on the overwhelming significance of women's 'choices' reveals the theses of increasing 'individualisation'. As these examples implies, understanding the flexibilisation of labour through home-based women's labour cannot be fully possible in "women studies". It is clear that women workers are confronted with much more difficult situations in family and working life due to their gender. However, it does not need to be assumed that capitalism exploits women's labour due to their gender only. Rather, it tries to find the most convenient conditions for producing surplus value, and home-based women's labour provides capital with ample opportunities in this sense. As a result, it can be stated that it is not important for the capitalist system whether workers are male or female.

3.2. A New Form of the Putting-Out System?

It might be argued that home-based working in the 21st century represents a return to the conditions of 19th century putting-out system, which used to be also done on

a home-based basis. Until the factory system had developed, production had been done in small shopfloors and at producers' homes. The putting-out system was a production method that was used in New England from the mid-1700s to the early 1800s (Rowbotham & Tate, 1998). Under this system, merchants supplied raw materials (cotton, for example) to families, especially women and young girls, who would make partially finished goods (yarn) or fully finished goods (cloth) for the merchant. These manufactured goods were then sold elsewhere by the merchant.

By looking at this system, it can be easily seen that workers had greater autonomy over the product. They were able to determine how the product would be made. Design, colour and other features of the product were partially decided by home-based labourers. However, the same thing cannot be said for the actual contemporary home-based labour system. In the existing form of the home-based labour system, workers must produce what the merchant or middleman wants. Workers do not have any authority or determination over the features of the product. If they do not produce as demanded, they cannot get their wages. In that sense, home-based working represents a deeper exploitation of labourers in comparison to the conditions even in the 18th century putting-out system.

3.3. A Flexible Work Model

While putting-out system resembles a lot to today's home-based working, the historical background of home-based production as we know it today goes back to the industrial revolution. It is assumed that this kind of work took shape and

became established with the industrial revolution and particularly with the gradual spread of electricity (Ruiz, 1996). Throughout this era, home-based labour became very common in the world, and after the development of production technology and mechanisation, it was assumed that this kind of work would disappear. Nevertheless, although many important innovations and developments were experienced in production technologies, the number of home-based workers did not decrease; rather, it has substantially increased in time. Thus, it can be assumed that the emergence and pervasiveness of flexible labour systems is determined not solely by technological developments, but by such other factors, as class struggles.

At this point, it must be added that technological developments in production systems and the role of class struggle cannot be separated from each other. Instead of a purely technological analysis, it has to be recognized that all changes in production systems and labour regimes are inseparable products of class struggle. Therefore, flexibilisation of production and labour regimes can be defined as the result of a class struggle in which the working class has lost its powerful position while capital has gained new advantages since the 1970s.

In the neoliberal era, the rate of full-time employment decreased; shop floors were shifted from traditional factories to numerous small firms where many workers work under decreased security benefits, longer work hours and lower wages. Thanks to such a flexible process, firms have been saved from being dependant on particular spaces and employing full-time workers. Rather, they have been able to move their capital wherever they want, and they adopt subcontractation methods,

employing part-time or home-based workers. Together with such developments, labour systems and employment types have been restructured in line with these changes.

Like part-time and temporary work, home-based labour is also assumed to be a kind of numerically flexible arrangement. Some writers argue that the post-Fordist era has led to an increase in numerically flexible jobs, the majority of which are performed by women who are subjected to 'hire and fire' work practices in peripheral labour markets (McDowell, 1991; Walby, 1989). As Wigfield mentions, "the lower the level of welfare provision, the greater likelihood that women will be employed in numerically flexible jobs" (2001, p. 189-190)

3.3.1. Who are the Home-Based Workers and What Do They Do?

Meulders et al. (1994, p. 147), quoted in a German report, prepared by M. Langkau-Herrmann in 1988, define the home-based worker as follows:

A home-worker is any worker who, in response to request from manufacturers or traders, undertakes vocational work either alone or with the help of his or her family in a place of his or her choosing, but who cedes the exploitation of the results of this activity to the manufacturers or trader commissioning it.

Rowbotham and Tate (1998) state that although most home-workers are women, there are some broad distinctions which can be made geographically in the structure of the labour force and in the social groups who do home-based work. "In

northern Europe, home-based work is common within minority and migrant communities, though it is also to be found among indigenous women in both cities and in the countryside. In southern Europe, it is likely to be found in both rural urban areas, can be linked to craft production, and is common not only among those who are impoverished, but also among the better off.” (Rowbotham and Tate, 1998, p.114) Similar to their assumptions, Singh and Viitanen (1987, p.13) state that “although home-based labour also exists in developed regions, like Europe, it is much more pervasive in underdeveloped Asian and African regions. The number of women workers engaged in home-based production in Asia is not only massive, but evidently increasing”.

Besides the geographical differentiation of home-based labour, there are also differences in terms of the commodities produced. As Singh and Viitanen (1987) explain, while home-based labour is confined largely to micro-electronic technology and the automation of office work in developed countries, it spans an enormous range of both traditional activities and new technologies in the developing ones. In the Northern countries “the developments of computer systems and telecommunications, in particular electronic mail, have made it feasible for large numbers of people to work from terminals at home” (Wigfield, 2001, p. 59). Even though there are geographical and occupational differences between regions within the South, there are fundamental common features in terms of the characteristics of home-based labour. The home-based workers receive low wages, have to work long and erratic hours, are confronted with fragmentation and atomisation and lack organisation (Singh & Viitanen, 1987, p. 14).

It is seen that there are many different kinds of job within the realm of home-based labour. The home-based workers engage in 'beedi' (tobacco leaf) making, block printing, bamboo work, weaving, ready-made garment making, embroidery and sewing, assembling and packing laboratory equipment, carpentry, and food preparation (Jumani, 1988, p. 251).

While home-based workers engage in these diverse works, they are confronted not only with problems of low wages or lack of organisation, but they also have to struggle with health problems related to home-based work. There emerge many illnesses or injuries due to home-based work. For instance, in Italy, the glue used in the leather industry causes paralysis among local women and girls working at home. Hazards include paints, solvents and dust or chemicals in fabrics. Soldering work can produce toxic fumes (Rowbotham & Tate, 1998, p. 116). Unfortunately, because of the work's invisibility, many injuries in home-based labour cannot be documented.

A report for the Commission of the European Communities on home-based labour in Italy, France and the United Kingdom makes reference to the assumptions of Seveso Pietro (1986, p. 3-4) about three factors in terms of the home-based labour system:

1) **Place of Work**: Home-workers basically work at home (i.e., away from the premises of the firm providing the work).

2) **Dependency** (technological and/or economic): Home-workers do not work for the market but for one or more principals, upon whom they are dependent.

3) **Market Position**: Home-workers have no, or virtually no, say in the product market. It is particularly this dimension which places them in a position of economic dependency.

According to Meulders et al. (1994, p. 154-5), even though there are diverse differences in home-based work in various countries, home-based work does have common features in European countries. These are defined as follows:

(i) “It is generally concentrated in certain clearly defined sectors such as the clothing industry, the manufacture of ready-to-wear clothing, textiles, leather working and woodworking;

(ii) Since these sectors mainly employ women, the number of women home-based workers is very high (90% in Germany and Ireland);

(iii) It is often illegal;

(iv) Spain and the United Kingdom emphasise the high percentage of part-time home-based workers;

(v) In Ireland, Portugal and Italy, this form of employment is concentrated in areas (often rural) with low living standards;

(vi) Except in the United Kingdom, its weight is marginal in relation to the labour force as a whole”.

While there has been a large increase in the number of home-based workers, “few accurate statistics exist on the number of women engaged in home-based production due to lack of recognition of home-based producers as workers in most

national data gathering systems” (Singh & Kelles-Viitanen, 1987, p. 13). Therefore, some writers call home-based work an “invisible hand” (Meulders et al., 1994; Drew and Emerek, 1998). Home-based work involves women in labour markets; however, it also makes women cheaper, disorganised and economically/socially poorer. Given the fact that the home-based labour type exists also in developed countries, such as Germany, France, Italy and Japan, it is evident that the issue of home-based labour is not only related to economical development, but is also intimately related to the division of labour within the family (Lordoğlu, 1993, p. 101).

The importance of home-based labour has increased all around the world, not only in underdeveloped but also in developed countries. In 1998, it was estimated that 6.9 million people in Europe performed work at home, and this figure was equal to 4.9% of the total population (European Commission, 2000). However, it is very difficult to find the exact number of total home-based workers. This arises from the fact that home-based workers are often not officially registered and there are problems about the definition of home-based work (Rowbotham & Tate, 1998).

3.3.2. Legal Arrangements for Home-Based Labour

It is a very disputable matter whether home-based workers are workers, entrepreneurs or something else. That is why there is no clarity about the legal situations of home-based workers in the labour laws of most countries. Due to these difficulties, home-based workers are not regarded as “workers” in many

countries, work informally and hence lack social security. Some countries apply some legal regulations for home-based workers to be included in the social security system. For instance, if a home-based worker wants to benefit from social security in Austria, he or she must earn equal to a ten- or twenty-hour weekly wage. Also, in the Netherlands, home-based workers must earn at least 40% of a weekly minimum wage (Bakırcı, 2002, p. 67). It must be added that there are not common applications between countries in terms of legal arrangements for home-based working. While some countries (Austria, Canada-Quebec, France) regard home-based workers as the same as all other workers, some countries (Denmark, Malta, Sweden) do not accept home-based workers to be included in their labour laws. Some countries (Germany, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Japan, Hungary) prefer to apply some special legal regulations for home-based workers (Bakırcı, 2002, p. 64).

In atypical work models, home-based work is particularly important as it enhances numerical flexibility. A majority of home-based workers work informally and operate without official contracts. They have very limited and poor employment rights as to social security benefits, sick pay and security about their work, and they might lose their jobs easily without getting any compensation (Rowbotham & Tate, 1998). It is said that home-based workers are often paid on a piecework payment system and earn much less than comparable office or factory workers (Wajcman, 1991). Due to the work's negative characteristics, some legal arrangements were needed and the first prominent arrangement, ILO Homework Convention 177, was implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1996. The

European Commission (2000) has recommended that all member states ratify it. It should also be added that the Turkish state has not ratified this convention yet.

Convention 177 provides a framework for protecting home-based workers, thus helping to achieve a balance between flexibility of the labour market and security of employees. The Convention offers more general and flexible rules instead of rigid regulations to be adopted into national labour laws. (Bakırcı, 2002, p. 63). In Article 3, it aims to ensure that all actors, including states, firms and home-based women workers, come together and improve the conditions of home-based labour.

In Article 1 of this Convention, it is defined that:

- (i) “Home-work means work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a home-worker,
- (ii) Home-worker works in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer;
- (iii) Home-worker works for remuneration;
- (iv) Product or service is specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used” (ILO, Convention 177)

When the common demographic characteristics of home-based labour are considered, it is clear that women are the main labourers in this kind of work. There are also men home-workers; however, these men are mainly self-employed professionals or managerial staff operating a small business from home. They also earn much more than their female counterparts (Wajcman, 1991).

Article 7 of the Convention asserts that legislators of the states should ensure all occupational safety and health rights for home-based workers. And in Articles 3-9 of ILO Convention 177, protections for home-based workers and responsibilities for governments are enumerated as follows:

The national policy on home-work should promote, as far as possible, equality of treatment between home-workers and other wage-earners, particularly in relation to:

- the right of home-workers to establish or join organizations of their own choosing;
- protection against discrimination in employment and occupation;
- protection in occupational safety and health;
- remuneration;
- statutory social security protection;
- access to training;
- minimum age for admission to employment or work;
- maternity protection.

Convention 177 urges that members that ratify this convention are expected to:

- develop a national policy on home-work and implement it by means of laws and regulations, collective agreements, arbitration awards, or in any other manner consistent with national practice;
- take measures to include home-work, to the extent possible, in labour statistics;
- establish measures to include home-work in national laws and regulations on safety and health;

- where the use of intermediaries in home-work is permitted, determine by laws, regulations, or court decisions the respective responsibilities of employers and intermediaries;
- implement a system of inspection for home-work.

In order to ensure the pervasiveness of Convention 177, the European Commission announced Recommendation 98/370/EC on May 27, 1998. As of May 2008, just 5 of the 183 ILO member countries had ratified Convention 177. Those were Albania, Argentina, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands (Briefing Paper No: 3, www.ngh.org.uk). The low number of ratification implies that home-based working is a vulnerable issue in the majority of countries, regardless of their being developed or developing.

3.3.3. Home-Based Labour in the World

As mentioned before, home-based labour is pervasive not only in underdeveloped countries, but also in developed countries, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Portugal. The pervasiveness of home-based labour all around the world inspired the emergence of many organisations related to home-based labour. SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), NGH (National Group on Home-Working²), HomeNet (international network of home-based workers) and "HomeWorkers Worldwide" (HWW) are just a few of them. The HomeNet and HWW are the largest internet-based organisations of all other home-based work organisations.

² It was announced that the National Group on Home-Working (NGH) was closed in November 2008.

There are two main forms of home-based labour. In one, women produce their products at home and then sell them at bazaars. Thus, they are similar to small artisans. In the other form, home-based women workers produce for firms. Mostly, they get their jobs via middlemen. In order to prepare the batches on time, home-based workers must work until night. All home-based workers get lower wages and work without social security. Besides this, they lack any occupational training or occupational development. It is seen that many home-based women workers are poor and illiterate in Asia (Singh and Viitanen, 1987).

In the UK, NGH struggled for the rights of home-based women workers, and the UK government ultimately accepted a minimum wage to be given to all workers, including the home-based ones. In Germany, there is a law that preserves the minimum wage right of home-based workers. The home-based work committees oversee the fulfilment of this law. The home-based workers in Germany work for the automotive sector in general, and they work on assembling some components of cars. In Canada, a ready-wearing union formed an organisation, and they succeeded in getting minimum wage rights for home-based workers. In India, SEWA has undertaken a struggle for home-based workers to be recognised as “workers” by the Indian state. Also, due to the fact that home-based workers lack social security, SEWA has developed a model that works under the Beedi Workers Social Assistance Fund. This fund provides medical and social provisions and assistance to home-based workers’ children for their education (HomeNet, 1999).

When the general characteristics of home-based working in these examples are analysed, it is seen that workers have no determination over the characteristics of products; they have no occupational training; they have to work until night; they rarely participate in social activities, such as going to the cinema or reading books; and they work under harsh conditions for very low wages. When all these issues are evaluated as a whole, it is difficult to assume that home-based labour ensures labour more autonomy, more humanisation or more job enrichment. Rather, the home-based women workers are regarded as cheap and disorganised labour. As a result, the assumptions of Institutionalists and Leborgne and Lipietz are far from depicting the home-based labour reality.

3.3.4. Home-Based Labour in Turkey

Turkey also reflects the general characteristics of home-based work, and similar to other examples, this labour consists of mainly women who are illiterate, poor and disorganised. Even though the home-based work might be found in many different regions of Turkey, it comprises a horizontal axis containing İstanbul, Bursa, İzmit and Tokat, and a curve across southern regions that contains Antalya, Mersin, Muğla and İzmir (Lordoğlu, 1993, p. 102). Nevertheless, İstanbul is the city in which home-based labour has pervasively got concentrated since the 1980s.

When the development of home-based labour is examined in Turkey, it can be stated that this type of work has increased in line with the transformation of the Turkish economy and the impoverishment of the people. As the Turkish economy

has been confronted with structural transitions since the 1950s, the structure of labour regimes, demographical characteristics of cities and types of work have also changed. The increasing weight of industrialisation, migration and the articulation endeavours of Turkish capital with international capital were fundamental components of these transitions. While the Turkish economy was articulating with international capital, the labour regimes were reviewed in this context and since the 1980s, many of the benefits of the working class have decreased (Boratav, 2003). In this process, many crucial regulations were implemented and different labour types, such as part-time work, shift work, subcontracted work, and home-based work, began to be carried out, particularly in the 1990s. However, because of its work conditions and the wage level, home-based work has comprised one of the most undefended, disorganised and vulnerable components of the labour pool in Turkey (Eraydın and Erendil, 2002, p. 23). At this point, before arguing about the basis of home-based labour in Turkey, some economic transitions within the Turkish economy should be mentioned.

3.3.4.1. Transformation of the Turkish Economy

Since the 1970s, the Turkish economy has been faced with structural changes in terms of the characteristics of production and labour regimes. While the weight of agricultural production and labour in the economy has decreased since then, the population in rural areas has also declined. The destination of the emigrants from the rural areas has been big cities as they seem to promise jobs. While cities have been filled with unskilled, poorly trained migrated masses however, many of these

people had to confront unemployment rather than employment there. Therefore, they were forced to work informally with very low wages and under detrimental working conditions (Ecevit, 1990). These masses have constituted the labour resources of the home-based labour that has emerged in this era.

Economic and social transformations of Turkey in the 1980s had their roots in the neo-liberal regulations of those years. Together with the “24 January Decisions” in the 1980s, neo-liberal economic policies were carried out. “Resolution 32” was adopted in 1989, and through this resolution, the Turkish economy was opened to international capital movements and the Turkish lira was made convertible (Timur, 2004, p. 62). Also, while on one hand the weight of the agricultural sector in the economy decreased, the weight of manufacturing production and exportation increased. While the total exportation amount was \$588,476,000 in 1970, it reached \$2,910,122,000 in 1980, then \$12,959,288,000 in 1990, and \$27,774,906,000 in 2000. According to 2008 data, exportation reached \$132,027,196,000 in 2008 (Foreign Trade Statistics, TÜİK, 2008).

Although there was an increase in the exportation level during the 1980s, the rate of exportation in total sales of large firms in Turkey was just 10-11% (Ataay, 2006, p. 148) for the greatest amount of their production targeted was manufacturing for domestic markets. This shows that they have been essentially small and medium scale enterprises that engage in exportation since the 1980s in line with the export-promotion strategies of the state.

In addition to these developments, many new supplier industries have also emerged. Many workers have begun to work in these industries, both formally and informally. In this era, the labour regime was reviewed as well wages and many social benefits have been reduced for the sake of international competition (Boratav, 2003). In parallel to these changes, workers have increasingly become deunionised. At the beginning of the 1990s, there were 3.5 million registered workers, and half of them were unionised; however, today, there are 7 million registered workers but just 10% of them are unionised (Özüğurlu, 2006, p. 283). One of the most significant consequences of the weakening of labour *vis-à-vis* capital Turkey has been the flexibilisation of working conditions, where home-based working has represented the most exploited type of labour.

3.3.4.2. Home-Based Workers in Turkey

Like in other countries, home-based workers are primarily women in Turkey. The majority of home-based women workers are under 35 years old, and almost 80% of them have very low levels of education (Kümbetoğlu, 1994; Lordoğlu, 1993; Erendil, 2002). Although there are many different sectors in which home-based labour is performed, the confection sector has dominance in the Turkish home-work system. Again, the labour in confection consists of mostly women who can be employed at low costs. The non-requirement of capital goods and its labour-intensive character makes home-based work much more attractive for firms in the confection sector. Another reason for using women in the home-based labour sector is related to the traditional social structure which does not allow women to

work outside their homes (Lordođlu, 1993, p. 101-102). One of the critical points related to home-based women's labour is about the women's perceptions. Although the home-based woman workers work for 10-12 hours a day, it is stated that they do not regard themselves as "workers", and consider their labour only as a contribution to the family budget (Kümbetođlu, 1994, p. 566). This situation is still valid today, because home-based work is depicted even by home-based women workers as leisure business, even though they work until night (White, 1994, p. 12). A majority of home-based women workers call themselves housewives (White, 1994; Lordođlu, 1993).

As Kümbetođlu argues on the basis of a project carried out in 1990 in İstanbul, 77% of home-based women workers reported that they worked to contribute to family revenues; 16% of them said that they engaged in home-based work to meet the necessities of their children; 5% of women worked in order to prepare their dowry. Meanwhile, 92% of women said that they spent all the money for family needs, but not for their individual needs. More importantly, 77% of women reported that they did not benefit from any social security institution (Kümbetođlu, 1994, p. 567). As will be shown in the next chapter, almost all of these findings are opposed in the fieldwork done for the completion of this thesis.

The invisibility of home-based labour is also a problem in Turkey. Even though it arises from statistical reasons, the perceptions of the women themselves are also important for this invisibility, because women themselves do not regard home-based work as proper job, as mentioned before. In order to ensure an improvement

in home-based work, first of all the invisibility problem should be resolved. Additionally, gender roles in society and the separation of jobs as “male” and “female” jobs must be taken into account (Erendil, 2002, p. 39). In addition to socio-cultural issues, the minimum wage must be ensured for all home-based workers, and all of them must be registered. There are many responsibilities that the Turkish state must take. First, the Labour Law must be reviewed. According to Labour Law No. 4857, home-based workers cannot be included in the social security system. As a result, they cannot receive a social security number. According to Union Law No. 274, it is impossible for workers to participate in any trade union without a social security number. In the end, thanks to the home-based labour system there emerges a huge, cheap and disorganised labour force which consists of mainly women. Nevertheless, there are also some endeavours that could improve the situations of these workers. Although there is no real activity in terms of the improvement of home-based work, in a report of the Specialised Commission for Poverty, prepared by State Planning Organization (DPT) under the 8th Five-Year Development Plan: 2002-2005, it has been stated that home-based labour must be regulated legally and some regulations must be taken into account (DPT, 2005).

The following chapter will critically question the validity of the assumptions of the Institutionalists and Leborgne and Lipietz on the flexibilisation of labour on the basis of a field work done in Tuzluçayır, Ankara in August 2009. Within the framework of this fieldwork, 10 in-depth interviews were done with the home-based working women in Tuzluçayır.

CHAPTER IV

THE CASE OF HOME-BASED LABOUR IN TUZLUÇAYIR

In this chapter, interviews that were conducted with ten home-based women workers will be analysed. All interviews were conducted in August 2009, carried out in the Tuzluçayır district of Ankara. Tuzluçayır was chosen as the district is one of the leading regions of Ankara where home-based labour is most pervasive. Today, many women work as home-based workers in Tuzluçayır. Many different commodities are produced at home. Women sew; they crochet; they make small dumplings, or *mantı*, and homemade macaroni; they embroider skirts and t-shirts; they make bags; they count matches in boxes; in other words, they do many things that require intensive labour. Like other examples of home-based labour in the world, home-based labour in Tuzluçayır consists totally of women. There are very few men who are home-based workers, and, in fact, they work together with their wives.

Before analysing the details of the interviews, a short history of Tuzluçayır will be helpful to understand the social context that the home-based working women there have been subject to. Two people provided the bulk of the information about this district. One of them was the head administrator of the Tuzluçayır district, Gani Pilavcı, who has been living there for sixty years. The other primary resource for

information is the writer of this thesis, who has lived in Tuzluçayır for fifteen years.

4.1. A Short History of Tuzluçayır

Tuzluçayır is possibly one of the most politicised regions of Ankara. Its history goes back to the end of the 1940s. Together with the unplanned urbanisation of Ankara, many regions like Tuzluçayır were established. Being the capital of the country made Ankara one of the most attractive cities for migrant masses. Typical reasons such as inadequate education or lack of job and health opportunities were also valid motives for the migrants of Tuzluçayır to come to the city. The people of Tuzluçayır are mainly Kurdish and Alevi. Why these people preferred to settle in this particular region is not definite. Possibly, closeness to the historic city centre, Ulus, made Tuzluçayır an attractive location for them. The first migrant groups were engaged in self-employment. The majority worked in the construction sector. Also, many people were engaged in selling vegetables and fruits in local bazaars. In addition to these sectors, there were also numerous informal sectors in which people worked. There were very few people who succeeded in obtaining government jobs, a major success for a person living in Tuzluçayır. Working in the state sector required some special connections, but such networking was extremely difficult for Tuzluçayır residents of Kurdish or Alevi origin. There was no *de jure* restriction against these people obtaining government employment, but they faced many *de facto* difficulties. Due to these reasons, the informal sector has been the largest employment sector in Tuzluçayır particularly for the last fifty years.

As mentioned before, the people of Tuzluçayır are primarily Kurdish and Alevi. This was probably one of the most important reasons for Tuzluçayır to become one of the most politicised regions of Ankara since the 1960s. Together with the industrialisation processes of Turkey and international developments in the broader world, class struggle became a more significant issue. In the 1960s and 1970s, conflicts between leftist and rightist groups and street clashes were ordinary daily affairs in the district. In those years, Tuzluçayır was called “little Moscow”. Many leftist organisations were founded in this region. Also, many prominent founders of the illegal “Kurdistan Workers’ Party”, *PKK*, were from the Tuzluçayır district.

The politicisation of Tuzluçayır continues today. Although it has paid the costs of being “little Moscow”, this unique character of Tuzluçayır is still present today. Even though it is close to city centres such as Kızılay or Ulus, Tuzluçayır has been devoid of many opportunities because of its leftist identification. Since the establishment of the municipality of Mamak in 1983, conservative and rightist political parties have won the municipal elections four times in six elections. Today, Tuzluçayır appears to be endlessly under construction. The majority of slum houses were destroyed and many new apartments are being built within the framework of the neoliberal urban restructuring processes.

Throughout the interviews, it was seen that the political background of Tuzluçayır was extremely influential on the perceptions of home-based women workers. The majority of the women witnessed the historical evolution of the district. Hence, it

can be said that they approached the issue of home-based work as being a more “political” issue.

4.2. Details of the Interviews

While giving the details of the interviews in the following section, only the first names of the participants will be used. All interviews were conducted via in-depth method in August 2009. The location of the interviews was a building that was belongs to the From Cocoon to Silk Women’s Cooperative, (*Kozadan İpeğe Kadın Kooperatifi*) *KİKK*. This cooperative was established by home-based women workers living in the Tuzluçayır district. Among the participants, just one person, Naciye Ş., was a member of the administrative board of the cooperative; however, half of the group stated that they regularly participate in the projects of the *KİKK*.

In the interviews, twenty-eight questions were asked, and these questions focused on three issues. First, personal questions, such as the women’s age, marital status, children, and length of residence in Tuzluçayır, were asked. Second, their experiences and perceptions of home-based work were examined. They were asked how they began to work as home-based workers; how long they have been working in this sector; and how they identify themselves, as workers, as mothers, as housewives, or as entrepreneurs. Third set of questions focused on their self-perceptions on being a home-based worker. They were asked what they think about this job; whether they would offer this job to anyone else or to their children; and what they expect from the state in terms of the home-based labour system.

While carrying out these interviews, the one of the significant aims was to question the assumptions of Institutionalism and Lipietz in terms of the positive outcomes of the flexible regulations in labour regimes. Whether the flexibilisation of labour processes are valid for all flexible working groups and whether the flexibilisation processes ensured more autonomy and humanisation for home-based workers was tried to be verified in practice.

4.2.1. Participants of the Interviews

All of the home-based workers interviewed were women. Ayşecik A., who twenty-years old, was the youngest of the workers. She has been married for two years. The oldest of the women was Gülseren D, who was forty-nine. She has been living in Tuzluçayır since her birth. The majority of the group has been living in Tuzluçayır for more than 20 years. There was only one single woman, whose name was Filiz E. It should be added that she was the most politicised member of the group. Except for Ayşecik A., all of the married women had two children each. Contrary to a common characteristic of home-based workers around the world, the home-based women workers in Tuzluçayır were literate. One of them even had a university degree. Five of them were high school graduates, and four of them were either elementary school graduates or just literate. This feature is exceptional when the general situation of home-based workers is considered in the world, because the majority of home-based women workers in Asia and Latin America are illiterate (Beneria and Roldan, 1987).

Only Füsün E. was the primary worker within her family. As she explained, her husband has been unemployed for a long time. Therefore, her family was totally dependent on her earnings. None of the interviewed home-based woman workers had any social security; hence none of them were registered with the state and work formally. Nevertheless, the majority of them benefited from their husband's working formally. Füsün E., however, was totally deprived of such an opportunity due to the unemployment of her husband as well. When they were asked what would happen if they divorced, they all said that they had no idea. This represents a good example to understand how capitalist exploitation gets articulated with gender-based discrimination in the society and how these processes mutually reinforce each other. It can be argued that if these women had not have social security protection through their husbands/fathers, the firms would have found a much demanding labour force in the production process; however, under the given circumstances not only capital enjoys such a relief but also the man (being the husbands or the fathers of the women) see their superior position in the gendered hierarchy reproduced.

Except for one woman, all of the workers' families consist of four people, like a typical atomic family: husband, wife and two children. Two of the ten are living in shanty houses, while the remaining eight are living in apartments. Those latter, however, used to also live in shanty houses before they moved to apartments. Even though it was not explicitly stated, it seems that living in apartments has made those workers feel slightly superior to those living in shanty houses.

4.2.2 Working as a Home-Based Worker

4.2.2.1. Defining Themselves

When they were asked how they describe themselves, as a worker, a housewife or an entrepreneur, the majority replied that they were first housewives, and then workers. Nevertheless, Gül K. and Gülseren D., who have been working as home-based workers for along time, described themselves as “workers” first. One woman stated that she was simultaneously a woman, a worker, a mother, and also a housewife. She added that where there was a need, she was there. In many studies, the majority of home-based woman workers define themselves solely as housewives, even though they work 10-12 hours a day (Lordođlu, 1993; Kümbetođlu, 1994; White, 1994). Like other home-based woman workers, the women in Tuzluçayır also stated that being a housewife was their main personal duty. One woman explained that if she had been a ‘worker’, she would have worked in a factory or a workshop, but she was working at home, and thus she could not be defined as a worker. Another woman said that her husband never regarded her work as ‘working’. According to her, he did not respect her labour, and he at times humiliated her because of her job.

The perceptions of the women in describing themselves reflect the general social understanding. Their paid employment is directly related to their daily chores, such as sewing, embroidering, making pasta or cake, and so on. All housewives do all of these tasks at home as part of their daily life, and thus, when they do these jobs for money, it is seen as an ordinary thing, not as a job. As a result, the women’s

perceptions and understandings in terms of their home-based labour are fundamentally shaped by their gendered roles in the society.

At this point, possibly the only positive potential observed in this ultimately exploitative process in terms of labour/human emancipation needs to be mentioned. Gül K., among the interviewed women, said that she was not telling to her relatives, friends, and people in her close circle that she was “selling” the knitting pieces or home-made food that she was producing at home as this still appears to be a socially and ethically unacceptable activity for her- a confession would probably be shared by some other women as well-. Without being too much optimistic about the implications of this comment for political action, it can be argued that alienation of the woman workers from their own labour-power has not been a fulfilled process yet due to the production process’ taking place “at home”, in the private sphere of the women.

While half of the group has been working in home-based labour for ten years or more, the others have held their jobs for one to five years. All the women said that they began to work at home secretly, because their husbands had not initially wanted them to take the job. It seems that the home-based women feel rather uneasy but confused about their financial position *vis-a-vis* their husbands. They said that, on the one hand, whenever they had wanted money from their husbands, there had been no problem. Still, on the other hand, after earning money from their current jobs, they stated that they enjoyed spending their money more than even though they also stated that they spent all the money for their family-for instance,

for children's school expenditures-. It is obvious that spending their 'own' money has given the women them incredible pleasure, a feeling that implies their excitement to be able to partially overcome their gender-based subordination in the family.

4.2.2.2. Production Process and the Middlemen

All women stated that the main reason for working in home-based labour was poverty. If they had had enough resources, they would not have begun to work as a home-based worker. A majority of them started to work at home by producing something for their close relatives without payment. The relatives told other relatives, and then thanks to those relations, they had communicated with other women who were producing things at home. Women said that once they got a first job with a home-based work group, it was then easier to find another one. Nevertheless, it was difficult for them to find jobs. At that point, middlemen get involved in the process. These middlemen find jobs from firms or people via their personal relationships. Then, they contact with women working as home-based workers in the district. After this step, these women would inform other home-based women workers about various opportunities, and thus the needed labour is found. When required, they come together to complete the batches on time.

Besides, when they were asked whether or not anyone worked with them to complete the batches, they stated that, even though they did not want it, their

children worked with them. Sometimes children would not go to school work and help their mothers; at times their husbands would also help them.

When they were asked whether or not they have any chance to determine the shape, colour, or any other feature of the batches, they replied that they could not make any decisions about the characteristics of the products. They had to produce in the way that the middlemen had identified; thus, it was impossible to change any feature of the batch. Women added that the work would have been better if they had had a definitive role in the design of the products. They complained about their inactive position during the production process. Even though they feel that they had a better understanding of the design of the product, they realised that they could not change any feature of it.

The work done in Tuzluçayır is diverse. The women produce food items, such as small dumplings (mantı), pastries and handmade macaroni (erişte); they paste stickers on furniture; they sew and do embroidery for skirts, t-shirts and jumpers; they make bags and accessories; they assemble pieces and make calendars; they make official envelopes³ for state institutions; they make cloth dolls. These jobs are primarily provided by middlemen, and the women receive their money when the batches are delivered to the middlemen.

³ They made these envelopes for an official department of the state. One man had brought the pieces of envelopes, and these women assembled them. However, this is an exceptional situation, because not any state institution can do such a thing.

The position of the middlemen is fundamentally important in home-based working system as the workers cannot meet directly with the employers. Thus, they cannot bargain with the employer nor have a face to face relationship with the capitalists as workers.

Institutionalists assert that through the flexible working system, workers would be better trained, polyvalent labourers. However, all home-based women workers in Tuzluçayır stated that they did not get any training during the production process, and they learned everything either by themselves or from a mother or friend. Thus, by looking at the Tuzluçayır case, it is impossible to assume that home-based workers are more trained or multi-skilled because of this flexible labour type.

All of the home-based workers in Tuzluçayır get their jobs via middlemen, who are generally residents of the same district. But once the scope of work enlarges, different middlemen might contact with the women. Additionally, even though it is rare, middlemen occasionally find workers through the help of the district's head administrator, *muhtar*. They inform the head administrator about the job, and the head administrator informs women who are elderly and experienced within their district. At the end of this process, an information network is implemented.

During these interviews, it was realized that perceptions of these workers in terms of middlemen were very clear. When they were asked whether or not the roles of these middlemen were positive or negative, almost all workers stated that these middlemen were exploiting their labour, and they were aware of this fact.

Nevertheless, they also added that if these middlemen were not there, they would not be able to find any jobs. Therefore, the possibility of earning money depends fundamentally on the middlemen in Tuzluçayır.

The position of the middlemen is fundamentally important in home-based working system also from a class position. Because, through the middlemen system, workers cannot meet directly with the employers. Thus, they cannot bargain with the employer. It can be assumed that the employer in home-based working system acquires to a fantastic, invisible and untouchable character. Workers do not know to whom they produce. Thus, this system provides the capital with an effective tool to manage workers. All home-based workers in interviews said that they had very limited contacts with the main employer. Filiz E. added that although they tried to contact with the employer directly, he refused to negotiate with the workers. Even though the presence of the middlemen was more expensive for him, he preferred to work through the middlemen rather than directly with workers.

All of the women workers stated that they had no bargaining power against the middlemen. They said that if they insisted on their personal demands, the middlemen would take the job away to some other place where home-based labour was more pervasive, such as Sincan or Siteler. They stated that instead of sitting idly at home, working was more preferable, even if their labour was exploited by the middlemen.

They added that, four years ago, they had decided to eliminate the middlemen, and they had gone directly to the textile firm for which they were doing home-based labour. They had offered the firm to make the labour much cheaper than the middlemen offered. “Interestingly” (for them), the firm did not accept the women’s offer, although their suggestion was economically much more beneficial for the firm. They explained that the firm did not want to be in direct contact with a large group of women workers. Instead of maintaining so many complex relations, the firm preferred to contact only one person, the middleman. Additionally, half of the interviewed women workers also assumed that the main aim of the firm was to prevent women from coming together to demand employee rights from the firm. These women have a more political stance relative to others; however, their situation is much more clearly related to their personal history. It is unreasonable to assume that their minds were transformed or politicised thanks to the home-based labour system itself. But rather, more or less, the political atmosphere of Tuzlucaýır has an important role on people’s personal attitudes. All of these ‘politicised’ workers have been living in Tuzlucaýır for more than 20 years; therefore, it is most likely that the fundamental reason for their awareness is related to their individual features, not to the exploitative conditions in the home-based labour system.

4.2.2.3. Organisation

As mentioned before, all interviews were implemented in the building of *KİKK* in Tuzlucaýır. If a woman wants to participate to the Cooperative, firstly, she is given a self-confidence course. After this course, the participant can involve in the works.

When they were asked how their labour could get its real value in the home-based labour system, all women replied that they had to come together and build an organisation among themselves. They added that as they were disorganised, it was impossible to struggle against the middlemen and the firms. Here, it must be observed that all of these workers realise that an organisation must be established in order to preserve their rights. There might be personal influences on their perceptions because of the influences of the “politicised workers”, or local influences because of the general atmosphere of Tuzluçayır; however, they were all aware of how their labour is exploited in this system.

When they were asked whether or not they saw the prices of their products being sold in the bazaars, the majority of them replied that they saw and were upset by the high price of their products, while they were receiving very low per-piece payments themselves.

In order to enforce their bargaining power, they said that they established a cooperative in 2007, “From Cocoon to Silk Cooperative”, with the support of the Modern Youth and Women Foundation. The Cooperative is well known by the people of Tuzluçayır. Half of the interviewed women have been working with the Cooperative since its establishment, while the rest of them have just recently become involved. The Cooperative is useful for women because of its institutional identity. They explained that, thanks to the Cooperative, it was easier to meet with institutions and firms now. For instance, they found many new jobs with chambers and trade associations through the Cooperative. Every home-based woman worker

can participate in the Cooperative, but she must give 25% of her earnings for the expenditures of the Cooperative. They explained that this was because they had to pay three kinds of taxes to the state: a corporation tax, income tax and value added tax (VAT). Because of the Cooperative's institutional identity, they had to pay all these taxes. They also had to pay the rent of the Cooperative's building, its electricity, telephone and other costs. One of the prominent members of the Cooperative said that sometimes they worked just to pay the compulsory expenditures of the Cooperative. She also wondered: why, if they were paying all these taxes, they were not still included in any social security system? If they were not included in the social security system, why should they pay these taxes at all? She added that, in order to ensure the visibility of home-workers' problems, they came together two years ago with other home-based women workers in Turkey, and collected signatures between 2006 and 2007 for the recognition of ILO Convention 177 by the Turkish Parliament. In addition, they also demanded a minimum wage for all home-based workers. Nevertheless, none of these demands were accepted by the authorities.

4.2.3. Expectations from the Future and the State

All the interviewed women stated that they had no expectations, neither from their life nor the state. It seemed that all the women were pessimistic about their futures. They were asked whether or not they preferred to work as a typical full-time worker and all women said "absolutely yes", because the income of the home-based labour system was not definite. They stated that if their income was definite

from month to month, they would have made a household plan, but nothing was predictable in the home-based labour system.

When they were asked whether or not they would advise anyone else to work as a home-based worker, some of them advised this and some of them did not. Those who advised it believe that working was better than sitting idly at home. Those who did not advise it believed that home-based workers could not get the real value of their labour. When they were asked whether they would like their children to become a home-based worker in the future, without exception all women said “no”. They instead wanted their children to continue their educations for as long as possible.

They added that they did not have many expectations from the state because they believe that the state would not in any way do anything to improve their situation; nothing ever changed positively in the country for them. One of their most important expectations from the state was the recognition of ILO Convention 177 by the Turkish Parliament. The women also wanted the state to accept them as workers and for the minimum wage to be ensured for all home-based workers. They also wanted the state to support them financially, through lowered taxes or tax immunity.

It was observed that a majority of the women were very critical about the state. No woman had any hope for her future. At the end of these interviews, three main feelings emerged: hopelessness, pessimism, and annoyance.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, one of the most important employment concepts of the last forty years, the flexibilisation of labour, has been examined with regard to the situation of home-based labour. Thus, throughout this thesis, the main aim was to emphasise the necessity of rethinking on the implications of the flexibilisation process on labour. To do this, assumptions of Institutionalism and of two influential proponents of the French Regulation School, Leborgne and Lipietz, were examined. While analyzing the basic assumptions of the Institutionalism, it has been seen that this theory has neglected the partial character of the labour. For the Piore and Sabel, flexibilisation process would ensure autonomy and humanisation for labour in general. At that point, we have the right to expect that autonomy and humanisation is valid for all labour groups. Unfortunately, it is not possible to assume that their assumptions comprise the home-based women workers. Although the home-based working system is promoted as a privilege for workers, it was not the case for the home-based women workers in Tuzluçayır. Flexibilisation of labour regimes might constitute positive outcomes for only a very limited group of workers, such as finance or computer system specialists. Even in their case, however, the Institutionalists' claims would have still limited validity for as Sennett argues (1999, p.48), even these “workers” are strictly dependent on their employers.

One of the interesting issues within the flexibilisation debates is the position of Lipietz. As argued in the Chapter Two, flexibilisation of the production systems would ensure the labour to involve directly in production process. Thus, workers can contact directly with their employers, and this would ensure themselves to be more powerful against the capital. However, the real life conflicts with this assumption. Firstly, as seen in the interviews, workers cannot negotiate with the employers. They do not decide how many or what kind of commodity they will produce. In the existing home-based working system, every batch has definite characteristics and workers have no authority over the features of the batches. They have to produce exactly what it is wanted. Therefore, also the Lipietz's assumptions conflict with the practices in the real life.

In Chapter Three, characteristics of the home-based working system have been argued. It has been seen that the home-based working system in the world has some common characteristics. Great majority of home-based workers is women. Majority of workers is lack of any social security benefit, they are low educated, and they have to work under bad conditions. However, the situation in Tuzluçayır example is a little different. In Tuzluçayır home-based workers, all women are literate. Just two of them are elementary school degree. The rest of them have high school and university degree. This conflicts with the general characteristics of the home-based working system in the world. Moreover, in comparison their situation with their counterparts in the European countries, home-based woman labour in Turkey is the labour group that works under inhuman conditions. Under such

conditions, it would be meaningless to talk about the autonomy or humanisation of the workers.

One of the major contributions of Chapter Four to the existing scholarly works on home-based woman labour has been the interviews which powerfully showed how capitalist exploitation gets well articulated with gendered social discriminations prevailing in the society. The home-based working women work long hours under rather inhuman conditions, but still rely on their husbands'/fathers' social security protection and do not regard their work as "proper" work. This explains well how the women relatively easily accept to work under unregistered, informal conditions and turn out to be an easily exploitable target for the capital. Insecure, disorganized and legally weak position of the home-based woman workers make themselves a huge labour potential for capital. Then, capital ensures the reproduction of the surplus value through such a flexible working type. Moreover, the position of women in home-based working system provides the patriarchal relations within the society to keep on. In return, due to their strengthened position as the one to ensure "security" to the family, the males see their already well-established gendered privileges to get reproduced. The strengthened position of males in their family arises from their social security opportunities. As seen in the interviews, all of the women were totally devoid of their personal social security. Rather, except Füsün E., all women benefited from their husbands' social security. In addition to this, as can be remembered from Sennett (1999, p.26-7) how would it be possible for these women to transmit the positive values to their children in such inhuman, insecure and unpredictable working relations?

At the end of the thesis, it is impossible to mention that flexibilisation of labour ensures positive results for all labour groups. When the last forty-year era of flexibilisation process is considered, it can be asserted that flexibilisation process ensures positive outcomes just for the capital. Because, thanks to flexible arrangements in labour regimes, collective bargain system has been abandoned in many countries. And instead of the collective bargain system, the firms enforce workers to accept personal job contracts. Thus, they attain the right to employ and fire workers whenever they want. In such a relation, how can it possible to talk about an autonomous or humanized relation?

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