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OUTLINE OF THE CONCEPT OF ORDER-GENERATING DIMENSIONS: A CASE OF HYPERMODERNITY IN POLISH SOCIETY OF LATE CAPITALISM*

The history of sociology can be described as a debate on the transformation of the social order. It can also be described in other ways; however, in this article we are interested not in society as such, but in the possibility of describing it from the perspective of social order and disorder, types of social order and tensions between them.

“Social order” should be understood here as an analytical category and not as a social ideal. Social order is not an ideological peace and harmony of social life, but any model that demonstrates durability and logical coherence, to the realization/manifestation of which empirical social reality is reduced. Social orders are logically possible factors that coherently organize (or describe) social reality in a holistic way. Despite the multiplicity and diversity of sociological phenomena and the categories by which they are described, herein we assume the existence or usefulness of three basic social orders which, based on the sociological convention and history of the discipline, are called premodernity/traditionality, modernity and postmodernity.

Sociology as a discipline was born out of hopes and fears related to the transformation of the traditional social order into a modern one. Positivism, Marxism, Weberism, Durkheim’s school—to name just some of the early basic paradigms—stem from an attempt to understand, direct or stop these changes

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(Szacki 2006). Tensions between social orders and different visions of the social order are the main driving force stimulating the development of the discipline from its beginnings to the present day. Before the discourse of various modernities was exhausted, concepts of a new great transformation began to emerge more and more clearly since the 1960s/1970s (see Pakulski 2009; Touraine 1971, 1977; Toffler 1970, 1980), as a result of which one of the fundamental debates of the contemporary world—or perhaps the core one, if one were to assume that other issues merely boil down to it—determines the field defined by categories of postmodernity (see Pakulski 2009), late (Giddens 1991)/second (Beck 1992)/liquid (Bauman 2000)/new modernity, post-industrial society (Touraine 1971, 1977), information or network society (Castells 1996, 1997), late/neoliberal capitalism, globalization/glocalization/regionalization (Sassen 1998; Bauman 1999) and retraditionalization/remodernization. On the one side of this field there are those who claim that *after*-modernity is a break with the past—rupture point (Appadurai 1996) in relation to the modern past, or bifurcation (Wallerstein 1999), meta game (Beck 2005), whose effect remains unknown, although it is certain that it is going to be different from everything that has been so far. On the other hand, it is argued that contemporaneity is determined by trends of the past (e.g. Giddens 1991)—elements of continuity are more important than elements of transformations.

However, the purpose of this text is not to characterize this debate or even take a clear stance, but rather to propose a position that makes it possible to adopt different positions. We assume that the present day is not so much postmodern or modern, but that it is pre-modern, modern and postmodern at the same time, yet it is not so much a simple manifestation of orders, but rather a result of the difficult relationship between their manifestations. We do not regard these social orders here as historical necessities or facts, but as logical generalizations of sociological opportunities. Every empirical reality can be described in terms of the relationship between these three orders, even if it cannot be reduced to any of them. These orders amount to the relationship between the three dimensions of social life—the dimension of bonds/relationships, work/activity, and identity. That is why we have described the proposed approach as the concept of order-generating dimensions.

The subject of this article is not to describe any of these orders, dimensions, or even to selectively characterize their manifestations. Many authors have done this much better before us (Pakulski 2009; Marody, Giza-Poleszczuk 2004), and the characteristics in this text are selective by design, and thus incomplete. Our attention will focus not on the social orders themselves, but on the relationship between them. Furthermore, these orders will not be treated as a real effect of social dynamics, i.e. the goal of a sociological description, but as its cause (real or fictitious/analytical), i.e. a tool for describing empirical reality.

In the nominalist (or conceptual) spirit, both the orders (thus defined) and their place in the order of things can be treated as a heuristic fiction whose value determines the usefulness in pointing out and describing tensions important from the individual or social point of view. Alternatively, they can be considered in a realistic spirit as real factors shaping/defining social phenomena that become our experience. This issue—which is not addressed here—does not affect the value of this concept.

In fact, we are interested in two issues—order and chaos, orderliness and tension, coherence and its disorders/changes. The three orders defined by the relations between the three dimensions of social life are proposed as a tool for detecting tensions in empirical reality and describing them in such a way as to maintain an optimal balance between the reduction of information and its relevance. If the proposed concept has a sociological value, it is derived from its usefulness in pointing out tensions and providing an inspiring framework for describing heterogeneous reality. However, it should be noted that premodernity, modernity and postmodernity in the space of this theory are not identical to these categories used as historical generalizations in sociological descriptions, and we leave it to the reader to determine the nature of the relationship between these two sets.

The concept of order-generating dimensions is as much a “tool” as a “theory”. That is why we have not developed many of the issues relevant to this concept in this text. Its purpose is to demonstrate the possible usefulness of this concept in detecting and describing the tensions. Therefore, instead of a twenty-page lecture on the theory, we present its outline and two examples of its application—in the aspect of a supra-individual manifestation—public discourse, and in the aspect of an individual biographical manifestation. It should be noted that these examples may seem dense and abbreviated, since the purpose of this article is not so much to describe the social reality itself but to present and propose a concept of order-generating dimensions.

THE CONCEPT OF ORDER-GENERATING DIMENSIONS

From *Gemeinschaft*, through *Gesellschaft*, to fluid or network systems (for a lack of more precise terminology), the basic unit of ordering social reality, or, to use a mathematical metaphor, the determinant of social orders, has been changing. Premodernity is a community of communities. Modernity is an association of associations. Postmodernity configures a network of networks. From the immersion of an individual in the fixed matter of the collective whole life's fate (premodernity), through anchoring functionally separated and structurally complementary forms of structured cooperation in the stabilized system (modernity), to placement within the spectrum of contextually complementary flows (postmodernity), the character (expanse and stability/durability) of the social space of development of the individual biography changes.

There are three basic forms of socialization—orientation of an individual towards others, orientation of an individual on acting towards others, or orientation on one's own image among others. From the perspective of a bottom up reproduction what we describe as society—in its premodern, modern and postmodern form—comes from bonds, from work and from identity.

The same can be described in the form of relations within the three dimensions co-creating the universe of social reality from the perspective of social activity: the actor of activity, the activity itself and its recipient, and thus, simplifying and concretizing for the purpose of a sociological image—the identity, the work and the bonds.

In premodernity, it is the individual's rootedness in a community (the type of community and the place of the individual within it), that predates its actions and determines the nature of its activity. Identity is a consequence of both—the duty and its realization by the individual.

In modernity, associations in which individuals participate become a derivative of their activity, however no one can choose the character of his/her activity arbitrarily. The range of available possibilities is still so narrow, and the consequences of choices so extensive within an individual biography (in a diachronic sense, i.e. durability and in a synchronic sense, defining the necessary complementation of the dimension of activity in other areas of an individual's life, ostensibly unrelated to his or her work) that it should be claimed that it is the identity of an individual that is a derivative of his or her activity rather than the other way round.

In postmodernity, neither the bonds of an individual, nor his or her work seems to be necessary and obvious. Thus, as casual, variable, not permanent on their own, but maintained or suspended by an individual together with other individuals, they cannot provide any ontological security in the sense proposed by Giddens (1984) and cannot become the foundation of such individual's social world. In postmodernity, the only keystone of an individual's social world can be himself or herself—his/her identity. Identity is therefore becoming, or seems to be, the cause rather than the result of work and bonds, both for those whose biography abounds in choices, and for those who are crushed by the burden of destabilized necessity. Even if this does not manifest itself in the type of activity undertaken by an individual or in the nature of social circles he or she co-creates, choice finds expression in the style, in the way in which an individual does what he or she does and is wherever he or she is.¹

¹ Perhaps the latter option—an opportunity to choose “how”, when it is not possible to choose “what” or “with whom”—because of the lack of other opportunities combined with the necessity of choosing (necessity to maintain the belief that self-determination is possible, which is sometimes a prerequisite for building an identity in postmodernity) explains the importance of lifestyles in contemporary times. This is confirmed and reinforced by ideologies of these times whose mantra is the necessity of opportunities. The necessity of opportunity should be understood here as the need to broaden the scope of individual and collective opportunities, such as neoliberalism in eco-

Hyperbolically, it can be summarized as follows: in premodernity, the world brought man to life in its image and likeness. In modernity man creates a world in which he/she lives, but not himself/herself. In postmodernity there is no world as such; there are only fragments of it, from which an individual creates his or her own world as a side effect of self-creation.

When presented in a table (see p. 54), the communal unity of the premodern world only in modern order is separated into clearly distinct dimensions of work, bonds and identity. In the community world, however, these dimensions can be distinguished not only in the analytical sense. Although within a community individuals vary in terms of their responsibilities and the effectiveness of their execution, they originate from the community. However, while affiliation with the community is a priori—given and necessary, the activity is a result not only of existing obligations, but also of the way in which they are fulfilled by an individual, which to some extent also influences the former. It is the character of the community and the place of the individual within it that gives rise to its identity, which is the individual's orientation towards the community. Therefore, in pre-modernity, work is “from-the-community” in character, and identity—“to-the-community”. The dark side of premodernity is due to the fatalistic character of the community and the place of an individual within it (cf. oppressive communities, Walzer 2006).

In modernity, in which old communities are subject to destabilization and reorganization, it is work that becomes the dominant dimension. However, the work, unlike the individual self (identity) and collective self (bonds), is by necessity secondary to the individual and therefore cannot fully define his or her bonds and identity. Hence the modus of categorical diversification and compartmentalization of reality characteristic of modernity, which is manifested among others in the division into public and private sectors and a clear distinction between individual spheres and types of activity. Hence the modern division into paid professional work that determines an individual's social position and identity, as well as its social anchoring in associations based on the employment relationship and character of work, and into the private life of an individual based on intimate relationships, in which he or she takes on family and friendship roles, as well as non-professional domestic work.

Just as work as such cannot fully define modern social reality, similarly, professional work cannot fully define the dimension of work itself. In addition to professional work in the public sphere, distinguishable from non-professional work in the private sphere, there is also non-professional work done as a hobby,

nomics, situational inspirations of contemporary social activism, like the Occupy and Indignados movements, self-realization in popular psychological counselling, consensually oriented deliberation in political theory or, more broadly, concentrating social theory (including sociological theory) and social practice on the issue of agency.

as part of cultural, “social,” political activity or as charity. More, there are also categories of the non-working, i.e. those who, despite the multitude of possible characteristics, are defined primarily by the one that is absent from their biography—namely by work; they are the unemployed, pensioners, temporarily unable to continue paid work, or those who do not want to do so. Thus, in the case of those who work professionally in the public sphere, who work in the private sphere (e.g. homemakers) and those who are not in employment, it is the relation to work and its type that determines the nature of the bonds and identity of an individual to a greater extent than the latter are defined by the work.²

Negative biographical effects of modernity, as in the case of premodernity, result from the very essence of this order. Modern compartmentalization exposes an individual to Merton’s (1966) intrapersonal conflicts of roles and psychoanalytical conflicts resulting from the separation of the public sphere represented in the area of personality in Freudian images by the Superego, and the private sphere represented by the Id, between which the Ego, deprived of autonomy, must mediate.³

The conformative nature of work and the precarious status of an individual’s identity associated with the modern uncertainty of status provide a context for consideration of the spread of phenomena such as depression, hysteria and later also narcissism. In his study on suicide, Émile Durkheim (1967 [1897]) pointed out that these acts were not only the result of mental problems, just as Sigmund Freud demonstrated that diseases such as hysteria, depression, various forms of phobias and obsessions were linked to the socio-historical context of Austria-Hungary (Freud 2011 [1929]). The aim of psychoanalysis was to achieve maturity, which was an epitome of the ability to form bonds and perform work while simultaneously repressing drives, which was controlled by fear of the Superego.

At a later stage of modernity, individuals strive to liberate themselves from these conformative social norms and beliefs, both at the relational and professional level. Christopher Lasch (1979) describes this tendency using the term “narcissistic society,” and points out further that deprivation of social rootedness causes the institutional order to start to tie an individual with the market in the model of professional career, satisfying, albeit never fully, the need to reflect the “omnipotent” self. In sociology, this is sometimes referred to as institutionalized individualism (Parsons 1970).

² This is clearly evident in the synchronic dimension (at any moment in biography of an individual). However, this also remains true in the diachronic dimension. Even between generations, inheriting of identity and bonds, if it occurs, is primarily due to the mechanisms of inheriting the relation to work and to its type.

³ The lack of autonomy is due to the identity of an entity, reproduced as secondary to the obligation in terms of activity (working).

The contextual equivalence at the social level and the possibility at the biographical level are the key to understanding postmodernity. As old forms of social reality have become liquid, new opportunities seem to appear to the individual. At the same time, in a situation of constant changeability of forms of social reality (variety and the flowing of some forms into others), an individual, trying to make his or her reality more consistent or being forced to react to constantly changing conditions of his or her life, must constantly seek new opportunities. As a result of the above, as well as due to the keystone character of identity in postmodernity, the work becomes self-realizing at the biography level. An individual no longer treats his or her activity as a modern obligation—external to him or her, but no longer a transcendental sanction, as opposed to the premodern obligation. Such individual's work becomes a realization of his or her internal aspirations, or the image of identity. Therefore, the work is self-realizing not only for those who construct and confirm their own identity through it. Also those whose biography seems to be a domain of necessity rather than opportunity, experience their work in terms of an opportunity to realize themselves, though in a negated form. The bonds constitute a private, individual, contextually reconstructed network, in which neither the community nor the organization is the keystone (the center and condition of persistence, as well as the source of energy required for that purpose), but the individual itself. However, the dark side of postmodernity is not only the result of the possibility of opportunities to transform into a necessity, but also of the blurring of social order and divisions within social reality; the psychological image of individuals in such a social setting is to some extent a borderline phenomenon—a completely new type of personality disorder (Spagnuolo Lobb 2011).

Borderline, etymologically speaking, deals with the problem of borders and the difficulties encountered when trying to establish, abolish or transform them, that is, *de facto* it concerns the relationship with the environment.⁴ Intensified processes of modernity lead to the violation or even disturbance of these borders to such an extent that it is no longer clear and certain what constitutes the basis of identity, order and commitment. This determines the specificity of a narcissistic society, in which individuals seduced by the prospect of “freedom from” quickly become victims of new dependencies (on labor, on relations), ultimately searching for borders, or constancy and stability. Postmodernity differs from the advanced phase of modernity in that individuals, first of all, live in inconsistency and fragmentation—and this applies to the whole of their experience and not only its fragments, and, secondly, they do not aspire to normalization (in/by the *Superego*, in the modern sense), but learn how to accept these ambivalences, discontinuities and disintegrations within their

⁴ The subject of bonds is a central issue for psychotherapists and psychiatrists dealing with the phenomenon of borderline in their clinical practice.

own identity project, treated as a keystone (Kenneth Gergen [1991] defines this phenomenon as *multifrenia*). Obviously, such an identity project, whether through consumption or autotherapy in the broadest sense, bears traces of the influence of Superego's power and can easily become a new obsession, thus expressing the fundamental cultural tensions of capitalism (cf. Jacyno 2007). However, postmodernity creates structural opportunities to liberate oneself from these enslavements; these conditions themselves, however, quickly become autonomous and soon begin to enslave individuals by becoming a necessity. From a formal point of view, this description resembles the psychological climate of the borderline syndrome. An individual, faced with new possibilities—relational or professional—in a shorter or longer time begins to identify with them so strongly that he or she loses his or her border, his or her separateness/difference. In this case, such individual usually has nothing else to do but to break away from his or her bond experienced as a forcible/invasive; he or she repeats this pattern on many occasions over the course of his or her life.

Table 1

Order-generating dimensions (modalizing dimensions in bold text)

Order	Bond	Work	Identity
Premodern	community	from-the-community	to-the-community
Modern	associational in the professional sphere and intimate in the private sphere	professional in the public sphere, non-professional in the domestic sphere and public non-professional	positional (prone to conflicts of roles and psychoanalytical conflicts)
Postmodern	individualistically networked	self-realizing (in the affirmative or negative form)	individualistic

TENSIONS IN HETEROGENEOUS CONTEMPORANEITY

As in the case of Max Weber's ideal types (1968 [1922]) or constructs such as the Erving Goffman's total institution (1961) or orders as understood by Stanisław Ossowski (1983), in the course of abductive reasoning in the research process we are aiming not at a nominalistic description of reality, but at reducing its complexity to such categories that allow us to understand it, regardless of whether we want to recognize the reality of their existence or merely their cognitive usefulness. Even if there are examples of societies that are clear manifestations of premodern or modern order, empirical reality is a separate analytical level. This is particularly evident in the case of contemporaneity,

whose image is determined not by any single order, but by the interference of premodernity, modernity and postmodernity. However, each of these orders creates/describes a different comprehensive configuration of social reality. As a consequence, the co-occurrence of their manifestations generates tensions which an individual at the social level experiences as maladjustment and inadequacy in the situation of non-routine encounter with a manifestation of the non-dominant order in a given area. Analogous tensions at the biographical level take the form of disturbances of biographical processes and remain not fully understood by an individual in the circumstances of their occurrence. In addition, the individual him/herself can react to the tensions of his or her contemporaneity by using elements of the nonspecific orders in his/her strategies of coping with a life immersed in heterogeneous order.

The value of the order-generating dimensions concept lies primarily in its usefulness in detecting and describing social and biographical tensions. Presented below is the application of this concept first on the example of a discourse and then on the basis of a biographical narrative. We have selected these examples in such a way that they clearly demonstrate the dilemmas of the late capitalism era in Poland at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATIONS OF PREMODERNITY AND POSTMODERNITY

Faced with the world of work, presented as rapidly and fundamentally changing to fit the post/no longer-modern model, the theme of the need to change, adapt, restructure is repeated like a mantra in the discourse of present-day companies. The discourse of an Internet website—in this case, maintained by one of the Polish business consulting companies,⁵ is, as will be shown, subordinated to the modern order. This conclusion can only be reached after a thorough analysis of the material, because initially our attention is drawn to a multitude of references to other orders, and thus to undisclosed tensions or even inter-order contradictions at the level of principles and values. Below you will find examples of blending these orders.

The employee suggestion program is an important element of incentive systems in the lean environment, which are designed to ensure that all employees are fully involved in achieving the company's goals and strive for its continuous improvement. [...]

When developing or reactivating it after an unsuccessful implementation, it is therefore worth considering how to build it properly, what are its necessary elements, how to avoid implementation errors and how to adapt it to match other elements of the continuous improvement system.

⁵ See <http://lean.org.pl>

Building/adjusting of the company's suggestion system, as we read above, implies that in the hitherto modern thinking of the company, its objectives and constant methodical development, elements of various orders must be present, especially since employees—according to the modern division into roles—have so far not been “fully involved in the implementation of the company's goals”. Contrary to this modern image, the expression “fully involved” relates to *Gemeinschaft*, a premodern community described by Ferdinand Tönnies (2008), in which an individual is immersed completely and where all individuals and their actions are organistically interlinked. In contrast, in modern *Gesellschaft* (society/societies) individuals participate in various social domains only partially, with parts of their personalities or identities and not as holistic persons. What's more, the terms “employee suggestions” and the “incentive system” could even imply that employees are to be given an opportunity—in the postmodern fashion—to adapt the company to their own needs, rather than vice versa—to adapt their identity to the community/*Gemeinschaft* and to be no longer only passive reproducers of a given order as it was in premodern *Gemeinschaft* but also as it was mainly in modern *Gesellschaft*.

In the following section, the premodern element is cited/ referred to again, this time in a less contradictory way, when it is said that the “personal presence” of the supervisor plays a key role in the modern approach to the enterprise and its management by qualified managers. It is distinguished from “hunt for problems,” which is what can be described as a modern *panopticon* control; here, as in pre-modernity, the presence of the charisma of authority itself, embodying the holiness and primacy of the community and therefore of co-existence, in this order is sufficient. On the other hand, however, modernity is manifested in the fact that these “superiors,” fully committed and traditional by the power of natural attribution, must first “master” the rule(s) allowing them to observe processes, draw conclusions and shape correct attitudes of employees.

Gemba Walk is one of the most valuable and effective practices in the arsenal of a good manager. It is understood as a regular, personal presence or passing [walk] through the places and processes where products or services are actually created [gemba]. Without the right skills, however, it is easy to turn Gemba Walk into a “hunt” for problems that often causes fear among employees. That is why it is so important to define the principles of Gemba Walk and to have practical control over the rules that enable supervisors to observe processes, draw conclusions and shape the correct attitudes of employees.

The examples cited so far suggest a more general conclusion that the premodern (and postmodern) elements are only inscribed in the broader context of modern management. It is work—and not the community that is the mod- alizing factor here, and the main goal is the company's benefit, as in the section above: “building a structure of gemba walks for the whole factory and implementing uniform standards”. Thus, all references to premodernity (and postmodernity) must be interpreted as instrumental.

The following section also reveals this previously described discursive company strategy:

In today's highly dynamic and changing environment, we can no longer rely on the thinking power of a few people who will guide continuous improvement and develop innovation of new products, processes and ways of working. The key element of the organization is to engage the creative and intellectual potential of all people in the company, so as to make the company more effective, efficient and innovative. In a modern organization, leadership makes it easier for people: to discover the potential of employees, to develop visions and goals; to involve everyone in operational and strategic matters; to make decisions together and to stimulate the development of the thinking process in a team that is treated as one organism.

Individuals in the postmodern sense, "creative" and "with intellectual potential," are at the same time inclined to create, "collectively" and with "everyone," the foundations of a premodern "organism". The whole is tied together by a "modern organization" and its main objectives, i.e. efficiency, "productivity" and "innovation." However, this does not provide an answer to the question of how collective action is supposed to emerge from individuals focused on themselves and their own creative potential, nor where the motivation to do so is supposed to come from, if the ultimate goal, namely the company's profit, does not have a direct—apart from instrumental—link to either these individuals or the community.

CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATIONS OF MODERNITY

One of the manifestations of modernity in contemporary Polish reality is the standardization of service work, especially markedly present in branches of transnational corporations. It is presented as a necessary "tool" for maintaining changes that lead to progress within the enterprise, both in terms of production and service:

Standardization is a wedge that prevents the ball [representing a change in the illustration accompanying the article] from sliding downhill [the upper end of which is marked as "vision of the ideal"]. The standardization of the process provides it with a momentary support point from which it is possible to continue upward. It is a temporary support, because just as the wedge can break under weight, so the standard whose meaning and content is not constantly made clear to users who are not audited and, if necessary, updated, will no longer fulfill its role of consolidating the change and will not prevent a return to previous, worse practices and standards.

The rest of the text tells us that almost all activities in the company can be standardized and that this is one of the most cost-effective ways of improving work organization.

Standardization and control are the cornerstones of modern work organization, based on narrowing the scope of employee's possibilities/freedom of action by creating complementary divisions in the production chain and clarifying the regulations concerning the roles implemented due to an external obligation. Therefore, standardization favors treating work as autonomous obligation, external to the individual, who is obliged to submit to it rather than seek in it the expression of self or community. At present, however, the tendency towards modern standardization coexists with references to broadening the scope of employee's agency, which is a postmodern theme of self-realization. In the above-mentioned internet article there can be found among the benefits of standardization: "reducing changeability" and "facilitating [...] the development of employee versatility." This can be interpreted as the intention to minimize negative (in view of the company's functioning) elements of postmodernity using modern means, together with simultaneous promotion of selected postmodern elements. There are no explicit references in the text to the tensions that such a combination generates. Perhaps, however, the image of the wedge, which is supposed to represent standardization in the above quotation, is a modern answer to these problems.

In another text on the same website, we read that thanks to the application of:

[...] the Lean idea in services [...] work becomes much more dynamic and we are able to react in a standardized, predictable way. This, in turn, is of great importance to employees, because they feel free and open, and that allows them to find surprising solutions.⁶

Even without a thorough analysis, there is a noticeable tension between the standardization mentioned in the first sentence and the sense of freedom and openness of employees described in the second. This section can be interpreted as a wish that is impossible to fulfill. However, the question remains why this is so. Freedom and openness of an individual is associated with references to his or her identity and development. In contrast, the standardization of work consists in the autonomization of work within the biographical structure and subordinating the identity of an individual to the dimension of work (at least in the area of work). The autonomization of work through standardization and autonomization of identity are mutually incompatible according to the concept of order-generating dimensions.

These descriptions are accompanied by rhetoric of progress which also combines modern and postmodern themes: progress was the principal idea of modernity. Here, however, it is presented as a temporal rather than linear process, still under threat and constantly reconstructed in the spirit of postmodern

⁶ See: <http://lean.org.pl/firmy-uslugowe-maja-potencjal-doskonalenia-swoich-dzialan-w-tempie-20-50-razy-szybszym-niz-produkcja-wywiad-ze-stephenem-parrym-ekspertem-lean-managament-w-uslugach/>

fluidity (cf. above). The response of the corporate world to the individual's focus on his or her own self instead of a modern duty is the simultaneous increase in standardisation and control, as well as the development of rhetoric of progress, self-realization, creativity and the building of an organizational culture designed to lead to the recollectivization of individuals,⁷ which constitutes the confluence of elements of all three orders.

Attempts to combine modern and postmodern elements in the discursive layer can be read as an indicator of the corporate world's reaction to the heterogenization of contemporary times. Intensifying the modern element (standardization) is said to foster the development and direction of the postmodern element (freedom, creativity, development of the individual's versatility), which is supposed to stabilize the objectives of the modern order. It may be assumed that with the spread of postmodern elements in the present day, tensions are beginning to appear within the organization of transnational corporations with a modern structure. Thus, one of the responses of this structure is the intensification of modern elements. It is to be expected that this will result in a further increase of tensions and the need for further intensification of modern elements, which will generate exacerbating dilemmas at both social and biographical level, until a transformation takes place, which will make the structure coherent in a modern or postmodern spirit.

CORPORATE WORK ORGANIZATION AS AN AREA OF TENSIONS: HYPERMODERNITY

We assume that tensions of the present day are particularly evident in corporate work organization. First of all, transnational corporations play the role of an outpost of Westernizing changes in the Polish (post-)transformation context. Secondly, the corporations themselves are currently undergoing intensive reorganization processes aimed at adapting them to changing realities. At the same time, however, thirdly, as a great hierarchically integrated labor organization, they constitute (together with the modern state) the pinnacle effect and the basis of modern development. In view of the above, as well as based on the conclusions drawn from the above example of management discourse analysis, we hypothesize that the organization of work that is emerging within the corporate environment is not postmodern but hypermodern, and corporations themselves become agents of hypermodernity. By hypermodernity we mean an incoherent order based on tensions between modernity and postmodernity, the essence of which is defined by the following formula: postmodern means for modern purposes. In hypermodernity, the modalizing factor remains modern, however, modalized elements do not lead to its simple reproduction, as a result

⁷ See descriptions of the application of the *Lean Management* method in services: <http://lean.org.pl/lean/baza-wiedzy/lean-w-roznych-branzach/uslugi/>

of which the very core of the order undergoes transformations—hyperbolization—as long as the order remains hypermodern. Fourthly, in the hypermodernity there are present not only tensions between the two aforementioned orders, but also those resulting from revealed discontinuities characteristic of postmodernity and hidden inconsistencies characteristic of modernity. Thus, in hypermodernity, conflicts characteristic of modernity between the world of life (*Lebenswelt*) and the system as understood by Jürgen Habermas are becoming more acute, which is particularly evident in the interplay between private and professional life among employees of transnational corporations.

HYBRIDIZATION OF ORDERS FROM A BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The biographical material makes it possible to trace how, in Polish conditions, specific variations of the premodern, modern and postmodern orders influence the ordering of personal life in terms of work, bonds and identity, and at the same time what response results from the clash of these various types of logic with the need to solve dilemmas at the level of individual existence. Fragments of the biographical interview with Aleksandra, a manager in a large corporation in one of the largest cities in Poland, show the course of an individual's interpretive work in the face of discontinuity, tensions and dilemmas that characterize the heterogeneous transformation process in Poland. We claim that the coexistence of these orders and the conflicts taking place within and between them result in the formation of incoherent orders, which, in turn, can lead to the formation of hyperbolized form—and thus inconsistent and unstable. In the case of a corporation, it is the previously presented organization of work—hypermodern, i.e. built on the incoherence of a modern and postmodern order. As such, it constitutes an environment that has a fundamental impact on incoherences that characterize, as in the example below, biographical processes of corporate employees.

The interview with Alexandra was conducted in 2012 according to a biographical narrative interview's model created and developed by Fritz Schütze (1981). It lasted about 3 hours. It was later transcribed as a whole and analyzed at the level of biographical processes, semantic manifestations and emerging Gestalts. Below large fragments of the interview are presented so that the reader could learn the narrator's life story, and—more importantly to the analysis—her narration style and way of interpreting one's life. The conclusions that are drawn from this (illustratory) interview are part of the larger study results, with more data and more research indicators that could not be included in this article. Note that some extracts of the interview have been bolded with an aim to relate them to the analytical part.

At the time of the interview Aleksandra is middle-aged and has been working for over 10 years in one and the same corporation. At an early stage of her professional life her jobs are casual. She treats them with a lot of freedom,

without any pressure, and the motivation to perform them does not result from the typically modern rationale that characterizes casual jobs, i.e. the necessity to secure existence or build up professional experience.

I didn't have that money, so I said that I would look for a job and try it for six months. Well, at one point in my life, I had a job interview and when the woman heard me say that I would like to work for 7 months, to make enough money for my studies, she said, well it takes me 7 months just to train my assistant and then I want to make some use of her. So I thanked her, she thanked me, and I thanked her. In the meantime I started something with a friend of mine who had been living in Australia for years and was spoke better English—we translated films together. It was also my dream to translate films, such as the ones broadcast on television. And she also knew somebody there, and we did it in such a way that it was her job was to understand English and mine to convey it in Polish, so somehow we did it together. And a lot of linguistic curiosities and such experiences came about, perhaps there's not enough time to get into that now, but in any case, my dream came true, I was translating. [...] And everything worked out well, because after Christmas, it was already six months after my graduation, but I was translating these films and making some money there, anyway, I had a phone call from my friend on Boxing Day, saying that at her sister's work they needed people who would be doing such a commissioned work, and that it was urgent and there were not enough people. And I was free and I could go there the following day, so I went there. It consisted in reading and comparing data on one printout with what was in the original, from which it was copied, something quite banal in itself. But they paid well, it was warm, they gave food, there were well-behaved people, so I worked there for as long as was needed there, I don't know, a week or two, because there was urgent. Later on, that sister of hers asked me what I was studying, I told her that I had graduated and what it was, and if we had something to translate, would you be willing, I said, yes, please. And she called me immediately, the next day, that they had something as part of that project, very urgent, in the translation category, as soon as possible. [...] And that's how my story in the company began [...] For me it was good, because I could use English and as for everything else really I had to learn it anyway, and to a large extent it boiled down to preparing correspondence for the so-called filing, i. e. archiving, binding together according to a certain model, a table of contents, and placing in folders. [...] And so it was so that I always thought, somewhat timidly, about what would happen next, because I always wanted, I thought that when I finished my studies I would marry, have children and not worry about working, just like my mother did. But it didn't happen like that, and it simply happened that roughly every three years, there was some big change in the company's needs, so my position changed, or at least the task, or the role.

Aleksandra's narration about dimension of work is initially, at least in its style or stylization, postmodern. Her professional life is presented as casual, variable, and results to some extent from the narrator's characteristics, or rather her style of expression. Paradoxically, in this moment of biographical narration the postmodern elements are accentuated despite, as it seems, the absence of a postmodern core, i.e. identity. Even if some of her activities—such as the translation of films—result from the importance of identity, in the con-

text of the whole interview it becomes clear that there is a lack of real reference to self, i.e. to her own inclination or self-realization ideals. She does not make any choices; instead, in her actions she grasps what is available, and secondarily rationalizes it as light and pleasant, focusing on her inner perception of things. In this sense, it is not a characteristic of postmodern identity, although the style of its manifestation is postmodern or postmodernistically stylized.

Such a careless approach seems to leave space for reference to the modern order. As she says herself, she was brought up to keep a clear division between paid work and private life as well as to perceive herself through roles—in this case, the role of a wife and mother. However, this is not reflected in her life choices. Similarly to the concept of strong and weak bonds, which describes the changes in an individual's relationship with others (cf. Brubaker, Cooper 2000), in Aleksandra's case, what constituted a strong relationship between the individual and his or her (social) images in modernity, becomes weakened here. It can be assumed that the weakness of this modern keystone is a result of incomplete internalization of the message received at home in the situation of a multitude of competitive messages coming from the Westernizing and postmodernizing world. Heterogenization and liquidation of reality may, however, compromise the ontological safety of individuals. Even if the message learned at home has not been fully internalized, it can be recalled over the course of life for compensatory purposes—devoid of the power to direct an individual's actions, it becomes an incantation meant to dispel postmodern fears and fill the void that such an individual cannot fill him/herself if deprived of strong (postmodern) identity. The postmodern (hypermodern or disorganised) order cannot provide her with any external stable ground. Her family of origin did not create any real possibilities for autonomy, which is a prerequisite for the development of postmodern identity, new keystone of stabilizing individual biography. The values promoted in her family of origin were rather of modern character and constitute an obstacle in her contemporary reality. It is a recurring element of the biography of people brought up during the communist era. Additionally, from the very beginning, her professional life has promoted at a discursive level postmodern values without, however, ensuring safety and postmodern working conditions.

This tension between postmodern elements of discourse, deficits of modern support for an individual and lack of postmodern institutional possibilities can explain the incoherent style of narration about the beginnings of Aleksandra's professional life. The institutional character of Polish society of these times could not be coherently treated as modern or postmodern. Probably its best characterization is disorganized modernism which provides the possibilities for hypermodernism to grow and expand. Postmodern flexibility is a way for an individual to adapt to institutional conditions of disorganised modernism. Expectations of stable educational-professional path are no longer valid. An individual has to be flexible to grasp the opportunities which cannot be suf-

ficiently predicted in advance. Any strong values, strong convictions and even strong self-images could be an obstacle in pursuit to adaptation and—as a consequence—achievements and social rewards. At the same time postmodern identity in the meaning presented above—as a real source of one's actions and its interpretations—indispensable in much more fluid, postmodern institutional context—could be an impediment in less flexible conditions of disorganised modernism; conditions less prone to redefinitions and reorganizations, even if the discourses of these times have already promoted these tendencies. Thus, the references to self can be treated as a mechanism of ego-defence and social adaptation rather than the effect of postmodern identity. This type of self-orientation can be understood as a system of translation of haphazardous actions, tasks, orientations, goals which appear in the biography of an individual into his/her personal goals, actions, orientations. Such a translation effort is needed because of the following two interrelated reasons. Firstly, social interpretations, legitimizations, normativizations are no longer strong enough under the conditions of the disorganization of modernity. Secondly, an individual has to, to be efficient enough in adaptation and in achieving social rewards, gain motivation or at least justification of her/his actions, and this has to be internal for lack of external sources.

At a later stage of her career, it turns out that her plan to realize modern image of being a mother does not come true. Because of her husband's low salary, she takes on the role of the breadwinner and decides not to have children; all that together undermines the image of the modern order that has so far been maintained (cf. above, Merton's conflicts of roles). However, the destabilized modern frame and the postmodern style soon become reinforced in the form of the hypermodern corporate order, along with a new (post?, hyper?) modern-image of a business woman realizing herself in her work. As has been demonstrated earlier—in the discursive analysis—this sort of order combines conflicting, if not mutually exclusive assumptions and values, and the intended effect is an ideology/legitimization of a holistic nature, subordinated to the goals and interpretation of a modern company. In this sense, in the narrator's life a weak framework is repeated (cf. above): the pre-corporate period was determined by images of possibilities without a possibility for self-realization, while the corporate period is associated with growing necessities without the realization of life goals.

Such an approach to the problem refers to the narcissistic society described above. Enthusiastically seduced by the great myth of autonomy, subjectivity and creativity, individuals become entangled in new enslavements, as a result of weak social or individual empowerment, including, among others, addiction to work. Thus, the modern order in such a hypermodern working environment is deprived of a modern core, i.e. the boundaries between spheres of life and within spheres. Everything in the biography is subordinated to work, and work itself fails to bring satisfaction.

So I have been a leader for a bit more than a year, and that was due to the fact that, first of all, the company was being restructured and our local office, where there were about ten of us doing global research, we moved to the office, that initially had more or less 10–15 people, now there are almost 90, so it has happened since last May, so a year has not yet passed since that happened. And there was a lot of work, perhaps not so much just logistics and office work, because moving to a new place is a simple thing, but just because there were so many people, someone had to teach them, I distanced myself from that because I got those two studies, which were still in such phase that there was a lot of work, it was piling up. And in fact, it was a very difficult time for me, in May, June, in my family, it was so difficult, but also there was no end to the growing amount of work, and new people kept coming to the team. And even if they were trained in the work they were ultimately doing, but not in our company, they had to be here for a week at some kind of training, and we were doing what we were doing, we were also doing that first, there was no one to ask, and those we could ask, then there were people from neighboring countries. I also spent one and a half weeks on sick leave, and then I said that I had to go on vacation because I was just going to break down if I didn't. And then there came a list, something very urgent to do, and there was that luckily a girl who was already leaving my team, but her study was only just beginning, so she helped me a lot. And here is another lesson, I hope that I really will be wiser now, that I either asked for help too late, or rather I couldn't find arguments and I took it very much to the heart that it was hard for me, I felt so hurt, instead of saying it was difficult, I was not able to work 60 hours a week.

[...] She says, Aleksandra, we are all human, try to see me as a human being, too, don't scream at me, well, it happened, it was really so unpleasant, because of all that stress. And while it was, well, it was unpleasant to see myself in such a role, some harpy, it is better among such people with kindness. There's no point in talking about it, but there were such situations, so much stress, that I was already there, well, I was crying, it happened there, as for shouting at work, it happened that one time, once, I was not, maybe, there were no people there, I think, it was just already in the evening, but once it was so much, there were a few such difficult situations, just like those, the ones I'm thinking about, I think it may have been necessary, in some way, because I got some allergy that I'm still struggling with, a typical stress reaction [...] And the lesson for me is, first of all, to respect people more, because if I expect that for myself then I need to better control myself when necessary.

[...] I like being with people, among people and doing something that has its beginning and end, and it is some sort of settled matter that helps... Well, I'm not even going very much in this direction, what we are doing at all for, because I feel that we are doing it for money, yes, we want, the company earns money. When someone makes furniture, they also earn money, but I couldn't work in a tobacco company, or, I don't know, to I hope it won't come to that, but there are some companies that make contraceptives or something. I would also never want to work in such a company, if I knew about it, I wouldn't want to work there and it would be morally very difficult for me somehow, if something like this suddenly turned out that I need to, too. I would prefer not to face such choices, but they are more difficult. So somehow I feel that we are doing something good for the patients. [...] Well, I am a Christian, and somehow in general, such an approach to life, such as to be rather than to have, is closer to me, and also, if I look at myself, and even in my family, it is really more important to see this rela-

tionship between people, whether in the family, or at work too, somehow... I even happened to say recently on one occasion, we had this party celebrating the completion of another database. And somebody said something, I said that I don't know if I'm going to come, and they said, but why, don't you like us? And I say, no, it's not so much that I don't like you, but I like to separate this work from my private life, especially now that we aren't all on the same level, only that sometimes I'm ordering someone to do something, I demand something from them, and it's easier not to have such close relations, because then it's more difficult to enforce it, especially if someone wants to exploit it.

Aleksandra starts to cross her own boundaries and those of others; this disturbs the modern work/life balance, the stabilizing boundary between work and other dimensions, and the modern ethos, ensuring boundaries in the work dimension. On the one hand, she has mental and health problems, exhibits signs of being overworked and burned out, while on the other, she has an incident of mobbing and other unethical behavior at work. All these elements are brought together in a biographical whole by the postmodern image/phantasm of a professional manager as a successful woman focused on self-development and at the same time attentive about the significance of interpersonal relations and the communal character of work. Although all biographical dimensions boil down to this image (based on implicitly contradictory values) as the biographical keystone, we are dealing here with a weak version of identity, dominated/imposed by the dimension of work. Thus, it is an example of an institutionalized individualization founded on contradictory messages sent by the company and the conditions created by it: on the one hand, institutional requirements exceed the capabilities of an individual and on the other hand, the lack of sufficient support directs the individual towards a more complete commitment to achieving goals that limit his or her own individual possibilities for development and the possibility for development of a stronger identity in a postmodern meaning.

CONCLUSION

The concept of order-generating dimensions has been utilized in this article to describe the heterogeneous empirical reality in its discursive (social/transindividual) and biographical (social/individual) manifestations, as well as to identify the tensions resulting from collision and coexistence in these manifestations of the components of all three orders: premodern, modern and postmodern. It was not without reason that empirical examples have been chosen from the corporate field, whose specific type of regulating relations between elements of postmodern (subordinate) and modern (superior) order penetrates into many other institutional areas, and thus largely determines the dilemmas of late capitalism in post-transformation Poland.

The analysis of fragments from the website of one of the Polish companies indicated specific and fundamental tensions, manifested here on a discursive level and resulting from an attempt to conflate different social orders. The study of a biographical narrative, on the other hand, has shown step by step the stages of the progressive disturbance of a biographical process, from the initial incoherence to the incoherence that is finalized in a corporate world; both hardly ever realized by the narrator, thus hindering her secondary reaction to the tensions of her contemporaneity occurring in the incoherent and hypermodern corporate context. Moreover, Alexandra's example did not bear any traces of an individual reformulation of the mentioned tensions. She did not possess qualities of what we could call—inspired by Gergen (2009)—post-modern multiphrenia, i.e. flexibility of moving between different orders, and borrowing but simultaneously resisting inconsistencies resulting in open-up self-definitions and ability to reconfigure relational and professional contexts. Such kind of multiphrenia constitutes a new powerful source of agency and empowerment in a “demodernised” reality. Rather, she is one of those individuals who have been narcissistically enchanted by hypermodernity and its free ideology, who have no chance of the free and gradual development of identity references, and instead have an unfulfilled need to stabilize and self-define (being called a false self for its origin in external and not internal forces), and which most often transforms into dependence on the (parts of) system.

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Abstract

Reality of the late capitalism is not so much postmodern or modern, but it is simultaneously premodern, modern and postmodern. However, it is not a simple manifestation of these orders, but rather a result of the dynamic relationship between their manifestations, generating tensions. The orders boil down to the relationship between the three dimensions of social life—the dimension of bonds/relationships, work/activity, and identity. The first part of the text presents an outline of the concepts, the second one—its application on the example of the phenomena of hypermodernity in late-capitalist Poland, analyzed both at the level of public discourse and individual biography.

Key words: social order, modernity, postmodernity, premodernity, hypermodernity, biography, discourse, late capitalism, transnational corporation, Poland