A R T I C L E S   A N D   E S S A Y S

KAMILA BIAŁY
Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz

HYPERMODERNITY IN CORPORATE BIOGRAPHIES*

INTRODUCTION

In order to define the key category of hypermodernity and the hypermodern order for this article, we will first refer to the concept of order-making dimensions outlined elsewhere (Haratyk, Biały 2018). We understand premodern, modern, and postmodern orders as logical generalisations of sociological possibilities and not as historical necessity or reality. Every empirical reality can be described in terms of relations between these three orders, even if it cannot be reduced to any of them. These rules can be reduced to the relation between three dimensions of social life: the dimension of bonds or relations, work or action, and identity. It follows that contemporaneity is at the same time premodern, modern,

Correspondence address: email: kamila.bialy@uni.lodz.pl; ORCID: 0000-0003-4933--3570

and postmodern, yet it is not a simple manifestation of these orders but the result of the uneasy relationship between their expressions.

We have assumed that the tensions of contemporaneity are particularly pronounced in the corporate work organisation. First, transnational corporations play the role of outposts of Westernisation in the (post)transformational Polish context. Second, the corporations themselves are currently undergoing intensive reorganisation in order to adapt to the changing reality. Third, at the same time, as large hierarchically integrated work organisations, they constitute (together with the modern state) the pinnacle of modernity and the basis for its development. Lastly, in the same text (Haratyk, Biały 2018), we proposed the hypothesis that it is not a postmodern but a hypermodern type of work organisation that currently develops within corporations and that corporations themselves become agents of hypermodernity. By hypermodernity we mean a non-coherent order based on the tension between modernity and postmodernity, the essence of which is conveyed by the formula of postmodern means for modern purposes. In hypermodernity, the modalising factor remains modern, but modalised elements do not lead to its simple reproduction, which causes the core of the order itself to be transformed—hyperbolised—as long as the order remains hypermodern. Let us add that in hypermodernity there are not only tensions between the two aforementioned orders but also those resulting from the discontinuities of postmodernity and the inconsistencies of modernity. Hypermodernity in the corporate context clearly acquires ideological traits, representing a type of social order that is both indirect and intermediary between modernity and postmodernity.

The corporate environment has adopted the language of the "third way" and exploits it, just as in the 1990s new directions of organisation and management, promoting "empowerment", "creativity", and so forth —as Boltanski and Chiapello describe the "new spirit of capitalism"—took over and transformed the typical discourse of critiquing capitalism that had arisen in the 1960s. Using the psychoanalytical metaphor of the division into id, ego, and superego, this "third way" could be presented as follows: in modernity, the superego exercises power over the id and the ego mediates between them mainly through work, including unpaid work at home. In postmodernity, the ego becomes a central category, funding a more or less integrality-oriented identity project by necessity in a situation where the significance of previous references has declined. On the other hand, hypermodernity is characterised by orientation towards the ego (identity, individualisation), but in the function of the superego, that

is, pressure generated and manipulated from the outside, which manifests most prominently through the sphere of work. In other words, consumption, lifestyles, and so forth, are to some extent secondary to realising oneself through work. By emphasizing self-development on the one hand, and achievement on the other, work is designed to give both a sense of autonomy (subjectivity and causality) and a sense of stability; work links the ego with the institutionally understood work/career model. Thus, we have here elements that are postmodern and modern (and even premodern, because apart from the causative subjectivity, there is also a strong emphasis on the ability to establish bonds and build an organisational culture).

In this article, based on the collection of interviews conducted for the purpose of our project, we present various biographical models of realising hypermodernity (they are not a collection of distinctive ideal types) and of dealing with hypermodern ideology. In characterising them, we will focus on the description of tensions, first at the social level, which the individual experiences as inadequacy, or incompatibility in a situation of non-routine encounters with the manifestation of a non-dominant order in a given area, and second, tensions at the biographical level, which take the form of disorders of biographical processes and remain insufficiently realised by the individual when they occur.

HYPERMODERN CYCLOTHYMIAS

Whether in a mild or more extreme version, the so-called "ups and downs" of professional careers are associated with successive phases of corporate euphoria and dysphoria, which we describe as cyclothymia (more on the subject: Biały 2015). Disappointments, caused by multiple factors but nevertheless stemming from the dependence on corporate structures, are short-lived and shift relatively smoothly into new enchantments. The latter seem not to be acquired in the corporation itself but to be something introjected at earlier stages of life (the "cold breeding" characterising communist-era socialisation in Poland, with its emphasis on individualistic goals and the hidden lack of means to achieve them), so that at the entrance to the corporation a person knows what rules apply there and accepts them in full. The prevailing theme of achievement is encapsulated in the postmodern rhetoric of development and agency.

In the case of many of the eligible narrators, after a certain time, usually many years, they grow tired of this mode of functioning. There are constant changes and the need to look for new opportunities for them-

selves, but the narrators are fatigued not so much by the rivalry of the system as by the necessity of dependence and subjection built into it. A person's own plans to establish a business or to do freelancing, that is, undertakings generated from postmodern motives, are treated as a point of completion of these professional tensions. Nevertheless, being outside the mainstream circulation but within the system is still a hypermodern model, focused around work, and is itself subordinated to corporate rules.

Adam has been working in one industry since the beginning of his career; he keeps learning, focusing on achievements and growth (competences, experience, contacts). His main motive is to control and stabilise his life through these achievements. Nevertheless, if the stabilisation is achieved at the expense of reducing his influence, his voice in the company, or financial potential, then the need for independence wins. However, this independence is largely defensive: he is disappointed, but not enough to experience more serious professional dilemmas and even less so with regard to identity. Successive professional choices follow the current line of development and prestige and, as before, are carefully thought out, that is, by focusing on them, Adam prepares a safe ground to stabilise his own future and does not throw himself into a new situation. It is in such circumstances that he is trying to co-establish a business of his own.

> I don't think it was a great success, um, and the company makes a lot on me and I'm still three years behind, right? [loudly] To put it more precisely, I don't know, the financial resources…That…maybe it is not entirely fair. That…I want, like, um, something new here, right? Um, a new formula of cooperation, and it was as if it were the beginning of some misunderstandings, or not so much misunderstandings even—because…for some reason I don't fully understand, um, that wasn't how it was when I articulated…my expectations, right? To get, um, a new proposal, and a general concept of how to develop it—but also how I should function in it. So, I didn't get any reply and the time of waiting, and somehow reminding them about the reply, started to convince me that maybe I'll never get this reply, or …I'll get it in the negative sense, right? So that's why…since I had various ideas, I started to wonder if this was the time to become independent in some way. Because of that I made a very big name for myself, because it was the media…I had some very big contacts and there was such a large amount of capital, and I believed there was a chance to use it to build this new organisation.

Dorota, after more than ten years of corporate career and successive cycles of "ups and downs", also "matures" to independence. Through disappointments and professional burnout, she has evolved from a fascination with the world of management to having an idea of establishing her own research and consulting company. At the moment of the interview

she is faced with the dilemma of combining humanistic qualities (cooperation, etc.) with the requirements of expert work (routines, procedures, etc.) in such a company. The main issue here is her independence in acting and being in the world and thus her attitude is postmodern to a degree but is also largely a reaction towards corporate experiences and not resulting from it. The narrator is not oriented either towards stability (modernity) or self-realisation (postmodernity).

As a result of the negative experience of several years of corporate work, Coach Piotr (his case is analysed in detail elsewhere, see Haratyk, Biały, Gońda 2017) no longer wants to work in a hierarchical environment and at some point decides to become self-employed. Previously established professional contacts allow him to find more contractors. His voluntary freelancing is a model example of seeking autonomy from institutional entanglements and gives him the opportunity to decide on the directions and nature of his activities. Piotr criticises full-time—and therefore permanent—forms of employment for providing both an illusion of stability and an illusion of self-development:

> *For me stability is having conditions to work as I want; that's stability for me… Thanks to this I feel stable; I am not limited by any formal stuff…Even if someone defines stability as a certain—as a certain transfer every month without an end date —that's not stability for me. For me it is an illusion from a certain point of view, because every contract, even for an indefinite time, can be terminated at any time. Every one, yes* [smiles]—*it is only a matter of the termination being in accord with the labour law, with a certain multiple amount of the salary, right? And that's it…On the other hand, I think that—um—people who have been working in one company for more than three to five years—it may sound bad, um, well—they develop functional illiteracy…professional, in terms of competences, because there is an illusion of safety. A person does not learn new things, does not have an open mind, and does not notice different opportunities. They treat what they have as something obvious, given, and then it turns out that suddenly—and most often it happens when there are various cuts, crises—that someone unilaterally terminates this agreement and not on your terms, but on their terms, right? And there is horror, panic, right? And I think that the American model has such, um—well, with those wagons* [thinks]… *I can't think of the word. Let's say a model of changing the workplace every three to five years and that a new project, a new thing, teaches you new things, refreshes you, makes you build new spheres of contacts, right?…and I recommend it simply…for me such freelance work is such a continuous mode* [smiles] *of learning new things, new projects, flexibility, change, adjustment, diversification, right? Checking what is the financial result, what is my plan for a few months ahead, what is my plan B, what to do, what to do with this client, whom to contact, right? And because of all that you function differently than…well, you know, the proverbial—it happens less and less often now, but somebody that goes to work 220 days a year and every day does the same, leaves*

work at four or five. Although it's also becoming less and less frequent, right? And it becomes a routine, which is okay as long as everything else is okay. So for me stability is the belief that I'm doing something on my own terms, that I'm learning new things. But you know, it's also temperamentally conditioned to a large extent—how we react to risk, security, conformism, non-conformism, you know, a lack of resources and reacting to a lack of information, whether you wait for someone else's information or you're looking for that information yourself. Well, there are a few things that contribute to it, right?…While, um, a full-time job is an illusion of safety, absolutely…

However, while remaining in a corporate context, this initially postmodern professional project quickly slips into a hypermodern formula. Piotr the Coach puts a lot of effort into maintaining work liquidity, which leads to workaholism—of which he is not fully aware: in this self-discipline and compulsive maintenance of professional regimes, he is constantly motivated by a pro-development corporate ideology. This transformation back to hypermodern tracks is related to the specificity of the corporate system itself, which absorbs even the most distant outposts. Moreover, the narrator, entangled in long-standing internal conflicts, is guided by a massive defence and escape strategy, hence his behaviour is neither consistently modern nor postmodern (more on the subject: Haratyk, Biały, Gońda 2017).

Konrad has been working in one and the same company for more than ten years; his biography, for example, serves to show the pattern between entanglement in a hypermodern cyclothymia, a kind of "rebellious" conformism, and a hypermodern distance—a kind of "conformist" rebellion, described below, albeit with an indication of the former tendency or attitude. Basically, he is modern, loyal to the company, and task-based; only the last period of work can be classified as showing an increase in centrifugal tendencies in him. At first, the corporation seduced him. Now he is tired—tired of hypermodern pressures, and he fantasises (for almost the entire narrative part of the interview) about achievements outside the corporate structures. He has an image of himself as an individualist, but it is a defensive individualism; moreover, unlike in the case of previous narrators, his project outside the existing corporation is only a project, an imagination, or an imaginative variation on the subject of a life that would be more rewarding. At the same time, like the previous narrators, while emphasising his individualism, he rationalises the hierarchy of the organisation, the imposed deadlines, and the generally forced nature of the corporation. Although he stresses his independence, he is very loyal and basically uncritical towards his bosses, and thus, for example, he justifies working overtime as an immanent feature of the organisation. He

likes to solve puzzles—to approach problems creatively—but this is part of his individualism-egoism, a strategy aimed at neutralising the increasingly painful burdens and corporate limitations. The rebellion born of this situation, however, is not an open disagreement; it remains a rebellious conformism.

HYPERMODERN DISTANCES

Within this pattern there are elements of enchantment with the corporation at the outset, but what primarily dominates is distance, which is openly expressed and fulfils a self-presentational function. This distanced attitude is characterised at the narrative level by repetitive and complex argumentative structures emphasising independence from and criticism of the corporate world. The whole is harnessed to the reconstruction of self-realisation content and a self-persuasive self-definition. All this in order, first, to justify a person's relationship with the corporation, which is logically inconsistent with the person's life attitude, and, secondly, to create the illusion—and hence the feeling of security—that the person is realising him or herself and is an independent person.

Adrian had previously worked in large corporations as a copywriter, but at the time of the interview he was employed in a small creative company. During his career he has used corporations to achieve his goals (mainly consumer ones) rather than letting corporations use him. He chose the better offer; he did not get attached to any place. On the other hand, his actions have not been as creative and autonomous as he tries to show during the interview. Adrian works and therefore he has acquired certain characteristics; it is not as if he chose a certain profession because of these characteristics. He is not loyal to corporations, but at the same time he is externally controllable, focused on achievements within the corporation and on thereby establishing himself in life. He does not have, or rather does not let himself be faced with, more serious dilemmas. Hence his narrative is conducted in a forced biographical reconstruction in order to adapt his identity to the corporate requirements. To create, to be inspired, to be creative, and to consume—this is his motto, but in reality he lacks creativity and—what is equally important and related to the former—lacks recognition of his conformism. With the passage of years in a corporation, the idea of writing novels or poems has become only a fantasy, a hobby element that builds his self-presentation.

Filip has been working as an IT specialist in the same place for more than ten years; it is a rather uncreative job, but changeable enough not

to be boring, as he says. He is interested in the artistic work that he does after hours, and in his day job he does the necessary minimum. He speaks a lot about alternatives, interchangeably with independence, but it is rather a mantra he repeats to himself and in the interview. In fact, he is defensive, which means that he does not have a sufficient offense in the most important matters for himself. He pursues his artistic passions half-heartedly and compensatorily, not taking the risk of offering his productions to the public and thus remaining in long-term dependence on the corporation. Like Adrian, he has egotistically isolated himself through a collection of compensations and rationalisations (cf. the quote below). While Adrian has more of a consumer identity, Filip's is a melancholic one. He complains about his lack of satisfaction with life and his emotional suppression and does not associate it with his attitudes and rather vegetative way of life.

> Well, it's just such a comfortable situation. And altogether now, as I look at it from, from this perspective, […] well, I could do something nicer in my life. If I actually had some creative profession — more or less artistic, but…closer to some visual products, films, music, whatever, I don't know what. One somehow externalises oneself artistically, or even in crafts, but there would probably be a problem with money then. I now have the comfort that I have my own apartment, that […] I have no problem with paying for various things, with the repayment of the loan, with, um, planning, buying something there, planning to go on holiday, such things, that is. It's that it is financial and living convenience. At the same time work gives me…the possibility to just live a life after work, meaning there's no overtime, doing something on the weekends, thinking about work when you're at home. It's comfortable. The only thing is you have to get up in the morning, and I don't like it. Um, and it gives you money. But it does not give you what I would prefer: to create for people—that people could—that people could interact with on the basis of such aesthetic sensations.

HYPERMODERN CONVERSIONS

The conversion to a hypermodern *modus* takes place through a gradual and consistent enchantment. This process, however, focuses not so much on the values associated with achieving as on taking the perspective of the company as one's own, as one's own worldview, and the values and goals of the company become autotelic, almost sacred. This is particularly true of the biographies of those who are socialised in the modern fashion, where there is less concentration on the ego and more on the image of a good person or employee. However, in each of the following cases, it is important that the company involved emphasises individualistic values; here, in the context of achieving management positions. Further, it might

be said that serving the company strengthens the false self, that is, sustains the illusion of causative subjectivity, while the narrative itself shows that the company thus exploits the potential of these kinds of employees, inducing them to feel a sense of mission.

Cezary has been working in one place for over ten years, since the beginning of his career, not counting his studies and internships. He was promoted quickly, and apart from expert work he also has managerial or soft tasks: he leads the team. Initially he focused on doing everything as it should be, optimally; with time he identified himself so much with the company that the profit of the company became a superior value for him (quotation 1) and he began to have a sense of mission beyond just doing his work impeccably. He has introjected, or rather internalised, his task of managing the team (quotation 2)—from which he once clearly distanced himself—and now, apart from carrying out his mission in this way, he strengthens his "I" as the manager of the organisation he believes in.

> (1) *However, our institution has developed in us additionally a sense of co-responsibility for business results in general, and not only for what lies in our area of management mainly…and we try to make every decision in such a way that it really has a real benefit for the bank, that it does no harm, that it is not such a stupid cutting off of the discussion, and so on.* [...] *to approach it in such a way as to optimise our methods and the risk in the bank, so that the bank could earn as much as possible, at least from our point of view, from what we have a direct influence on, because it is known that the bank's profit is affected by a lot of things—not only the costs of risk, but that's what it's about, among other things—and that's what I'm concerned with and our employees really understand it and it is important.*

> (2) *I have to arrange this work in this team later, so this team can simply work and they want to cooperate with one another and the tasks are carried out correctly—so that everything simply goes smoothly and is as it should be. So you need to approach it sensibly, because otherwise, after a short time, some kind of burnout, discouragement, or demotivation may occur, and then the effect is much worse.*

Aleksandra has been working in one company for more than ten years and, just like Cezary, she likes to perform her tasks reliably. However, the fact that she is a woman—and, in the back of her mind, conscious of the traditional role of members of her sex—while at the same time she is really unable to be a mother, shows that the conversion is compensatory in nature. It is no more than an ideology in which Aleksandra would like to believe. From the very beginning, she has associated her time in the corporation with increasing needs without life goals, especially because although she has married she has not become a mother, and additionally, as a result of various circumstances, she has become the

main breadwinner in her family of two people. Everything in her biography has consequently been subordinated to the dimension of work and the work itself did not bring her satisfaction. Aleksandra began to cross her own borders (workaholism) and those of others (elements of mobbing). She focused on achievements, marginalising her family. This duality in her narrative (and life) indicates that she was torn without really realising it. On the one hand, she wants to see herself (and the world to see her) as a woman who is guided by Christian ethics to serve all, and on the other hand she feels like a manager with a corporate mission, who is oriented towards self-development and at the same time cares about interpersonal relations and the communal nature of work. She has not resolved the dilemma of the modern woman, and her difficulties are also caused by the lack of a real reference to the "I", that is to her own desires or ideals of self-realisation, such as characterise Cezary. She does not make choices. Instead, at the moment she entered the labour market, she grasped the first job she found and then largely, thoughtlessly, subordinated herself to a single institutional model. Therefore, this is only seemingly a conversion; some kind of identity project is needed.

> So I think that what would probably draw me more—I'm saying—it's hard for me to say what it would be; what would I feel like, whether I wouldn't want to run away from home after staying there with a small child, but I think that it would most likely be so that I could be with people, among people, and do something that has its beginning and end, and is some sort of settled matter that favours…Well, I'm not even going to go into why we're doing it at all, because I feel that we're doing it for money—yes, we want it, the company earns money. When someone makes furniture, they also earn money. But somewhere else—for instance, I couldn't work in a nicotine company, or—I hope it won't happen—for example, there are a couple of companies that…are making some kind of contraceptives or something. For me, in such a company, if I knew about it, I simply wouldn't want to work there and it would be morally very difficult for me—if suddenly something like that turned out…That, and I would prefer not to face such choices, but there are more difficult ones. So somewhere, I feel that we are doing something good for patients, particularly as I really know what a big discrepancy there is between what is commonly said both about pharmaceutical companies and about medical representatives, and about what doctors get, and how they no longer get it, and about those that do bad work—like in the TV series For Better or Worse, years ago, showing things that are simply untrue about research in a style that—how did it go? There was probably a scene where the female supervisor has a certain document that the researcher should, well, already know about…because he was super accurate; there's the so-called research brochure, which she does not want to show him, because she is not allowed to. This is complete nonsense, because it is a basic document for the researcher. So somewhere else…I don't have any such convictions that I am doing something great for mankind, but I have the feeling that our medicines are

relatively good. They are also good for other places, because it depends on what disease and what is needed, so it hurts me that our refunds are treated badly like that.

HYPERMODERN IDENTITY/RELATIONAL PALLIATIVES

Unlike the pattern of enchantment with the *modus* of achievements and rivalry, that is, values at the ego level, and the resulting conformism towards corporations, in this system conformism is a starting point, or rather the starting need in the absence of other identity and relational references. Thus, the corporate ideology of the causative subjectivity is relatively quickly and easily assimilated as a person's own, with a similar intensity as in the case of the conversion model. However, in this formula there is only conformism, and in a sense it becomes of secondary importance what that conformism concerns, while conversion only secondarily presupposes conformism, and most often it is based on some kind of a project of "I". The narrators who qualify for this pattern are, in contrast to the representatives of the previously mentioned patterns, only at the beginning of their careers; it might therefore be supposed that they are still free from the disappointment that characterises the cyclothymic pattern. A variant of the "palliative" form of being in a corporation involves more or less conscious idleness in a person's own existence; this existential drifting is taken over by the corporation. However, there is no "conversion" to its institutional model, and the "idle gear" is still in use.

Krystian has only been working for a few years, in one corporation. He is deeply involved in the company and has been keen on development opportunities: international contacts, salaries, promotions—these topics are mentioned very often during the interview. In terms of identity, he has low expectations: basic autonomy at work is enough for him and drives him to act. His example demonstrates how many needs can be satisfied by a corporation: it enables a person to "show off", "take things into your own hands" and "organise" (as opposed to creative activity). It gives a person a sense of agency. However, the main theme is the possibility of fulfilling the requirements; in Krystian's case, conformism towards the institution is reinforced by an intergenerational family message. Hence the modus of conformism leads here to a focus on achievements and not vice versa; apparently he "broke away" from home, where he experienced a high level of control, and in the corporation he found his (first and so far only) sense of control and independence (even though it is negligible and secondary, and once again conformist). The narrative is dominated by presentism and the sense of losing oneself in work, framed in the hy-

permodern discourse of achievements. It is only between the lines that fragments can be found indicating the narrator's sense of loneliness or existential uncertainty. Meanwhile, he does not realise that the corporate field, especially through its emphasis on competition, is the cause of his loneliness; homeostasis would be restored by finding a partner and starting a family.

Iwona, like Krystian, is just entering the labour market and, like him, has an *a priori* conformist attitude towards the requirements of work and is affirmative towards corporations. She has also been raised under strict discipline and control, and the motive of achievement is for her a consequence of the deficiencies of her reality—on the one hand, due to the nature of the modern world, and on the other hand, due to her own lack of full involvement in the external world. Like Krystian, she has relational difficulties and feels emptiness in life. Despite the almost identical mode of functioning and aspirations, the motive of achievement in her case is to a lesser extent a consequence of a hypermodern vision of the rivalry of the world and, therefore, the necessary individual agency, and more a modern view with a need for, and optimism about, achieving a meaningful life (through diligence and perseverance).

Unlike Krystian or Iwona, Iza does not feel attached to the corporation where she works. She does not internalise institutional values, so she does not act out of conformism towards the company, although it cannot be said that she is distanced from it enough to be motivated to look for work elsewhere, and so on. Due to the lack (the imagining) of other motives and possibilities, she is seduced by the corporation in a hypermodern way, that is, with an emphasis on individualism: she is faced with deadlines that are difficult to meet, but it is up to her how to execute her work. As a result, with a strong desire for deeper relations and relationships, she is exhausted with professional interactions that do not generate bonds. This feeling of exhaustion and fatigue, however, does not generate the imagination of a change, but rather leaves her inert, running in idle, both in relation to work, as well as to her own human relations.

> *It depends. That is, at the initial stage of these, um, this project, so to speak, or initial training, I might still have the strength to go somewhere, um, during the weekend— to meet somebody, to talk about what my week was like—just to talk to other people, to share. Then it's a little bit better. Sometimes I don't want to meet anyone at all. Because I've been with people all the time and I was just focusing on people. [amusement] And now, for example, I am already very tired. It is the final stage of these trainings. Yesterday—I was actually somewhere in Warsaw this week—but I also had a lot of work. And yesterday I went out somewhere, but also…earlier I returned home,*

because I was simply tired and, and I wanted to sleep a lot. And, well, I feel in general that I am overworked at this moment. I didn't have a longer holiday. I had—I think I had a week only, during the May weekend.

Sonia allowed herself to be hypermodernly embedded in the institutional framework and external goals (success, etc.), but unlike for Krystian or Iwona, work never gave her any sense of purpose, even though it absorbed her. Because of her family history she had to take on a lot of duties and obligations. She overloaded herself. Then in order to relieve herself, she "threw herself" into relationships designed to give sense to life and a framework for it, subjecting herself to discipline and a working regime. Unlike Iza, existential and relational emptiness and the search for fulfilment in work does not deplete her. She feels professionally and biographically burned out, but for her it is a moment of breakthrough and moratorium. The fact that she is almost a generation older than the other people discussed in this section is not without significance. Although like them she entered the corporate institutional framework out of a sense of emptiness, if the framework were different she could pursue some form of postmodern model, thanks to a relatively high awareness of her "I" and internal dilemmas.

HYPERMODERN EPISODES

The orientations presented so far, even if they were not always at the time of the interview finalised within the corporation itself, nevertheless fit into the general *modus* of hypermodernity. However, hypermodern episodes connote a break with such a *modus*. We have examples of short entanglements in hypermodern models, but above all, these longer lasting experiences are more cognitively inspiring in communicating both the life strategies of the narrators and the power of hypermodern ideology. Episodes that extend to a couple or even several years tend to involve women in particular. This seems to be related to their modern role in professional and family spheres and the resulting conflict, which does not exist or is not so intense in the case of men. In the case of women with families, the hypermodern emphasis on the ego at the professional level leads to even greater tensions, dilemmas, and even pathologies (workaholism, mobbing, etc.) than in modernity. Women save themselves—though not at all easily—by embracing a modern family, a modern or postmodern (pure) relationship, or by turning towards a postmodern identity.

Wojciech gives the impression that he was not at all enchanted by the corporation during three years of work there. From the very beginning he knew that sooner or later he would like to be on his own and he unequivocally assessed that there were aspects of the work that would make him leave (even though for other people these might constitute the basis of corporate affirmation, that is, work in delegations, commuting, and bureaucratic regulations). The most important motive, however, was the increasingly bothersome lack of independence. Establishing a small business was Wojciech's only possibility for decision-making independence. The business would be built on the bad experience of working in a corporation, but also, and perhaps above all, on capital from home. This family business in his narrative is characterised by modern (and sometimes postmodern) rationality and restraint: development is good, but not at the price of stability and independence, so it is an orientation devoid of the development generated by force, or early capitalist romanticism, loans, and so forth. Confidence in his status and skills allowed him to create the conditions to move himself (and his family company) away from the corporate world.

Grażyna remained in the hypermodern *modus* much longer than Wojciech. From the moment she entered the labour market, it was difficult for her to stick to the modern path, that is, to focus on ensuring life stability at an appropriate level for herself and her family. The modern roles of wife, mother, and successful woman generated tensions and dilemmas, reinforced by the message of high expectations she received at home; in her case these resulted in the need for her to cope with life more or less without help and without the status certainty inherited by Wojciech.

This fear of doing nothing, of being useless, worthless—because she felt she could only be valuable through achievement—made her fit very well into the hypermodern frame. Since childhood, Grażyna's image of herself had been very dependent on recognition and appreciation, especially her mother's, so her efforts were all the greater. In adult life the spiral of working in a corporation, as well as devoting herself to her home life (with her husband and children) gradually tightened. Her decision to leave the corporation, after a few years of deconstructing her internal life constraints through therapy, had to be a complete break, a clean cut.

> There was a general rumour that I was rebellious, and hence, um, there was a reason
> for my dismissal and sending me away…I mean doing it…in such a way that they in
> fact did not deal with anyone there—because he fired me on the spot, right? He didn't
> let me take…he didn't let me look at my computer, didn't let me take my personal
> things, just…Previously I had such tactics and such a way of acting in life that I sup-

pressed everything, um, things I didn't like. I had such a facade…that people simply thought that I…I mean, I didn't show much emotion; I was able to cover it up and even though, for example, something annoyed me or I didn't agree with something, or I was afraid of something very much, it wasn't—it wasn't visible [sigh]. But at the moment when I started to…work more intensively on myself [I realised that I don't agree with many things] and I don't want to hide it anymore; I don't want to pretend anymore; I don't want to, um…cheat people like that and myself—get involved in situations that were very…um, very…and I don't want to allow it…there is huge pressure there, because it's a company in which there are mainly guys, men, and…was also very…um, abusive at certain moments.

However, returning to the modern pattern proved difficult. On the one hand, Grażyna sees the advantages of weakening this hypermodern pressure in herself:

[…] and I somehow begin to function without any…without any such hysteria and without any such, um, constant lack of contact with reality. Um, yes, I used to function in…I was constantly task-oriented. Since the children came, there are more things to do. There's the doctor, and there's lunch to make, there's shopping, there's…and this is here-here-here, and just a million points to…to tick, and I myself was already tired by thinking about these things.

On the other hand, as a woman, she has to face the phenomenon of the transformation of the communist model of marriage, while the values of equality—at least in her marriage—only conceal the patriarchy. The following section illustrates this situation well:

However, at some point my husband felt that I kept spending money on things. He could not see the money that I have from my office, because it stayed with me in my wallet. So it's not at all visible…that I earn money, and as it turned out I got two thousand for one class—and there, almost two thousand for training, and here…He started turning up his nose and saying…you do the calculation. It turns out, however, that I do earn, additionally, and that I am not a burden on the household budget—on the contrary. So it is not as if my husband has to bear the entire financial burden of supporting the whole house, but I do too, um, without any effort this time and without any…[sigh] kind of killing myself, physically and mentally, I am able to contribute to this budget as much as I had as a rule earlier and this is only a matter of a few more months…

Despite many years of work on herself, she does not have full access to postmodern values, or to her own desires and wishes. She has managed to weaken her hypermodern orientation, but the development of postmodern themes comes with difficulty and is superficial—precisely because of her strong modern character, her rationality and the habit of continuity. This can be seen in her relations with people at work, or even more with people

at a coaching school that has been in existence for some years. She had many rather intense relations with other people, especially at school, but few survived due to her modern, excessive concentration (being drawn in by duties) on her home and family.

CONCLUSION

As the above analysis demonstrates, hypermodernity has many faces; even if it contains traces of other orders, the durability of this pattern in the corporation is in the foreground. From cyclothymic narratives we learn that there is an attempt to reformulate the hypermodern *modus* of institutionalised individualism into a postmodern autonomous professional project. However, it is crucial to establish its relative independence from corporate structures (and this is supposed to ensure stability), that is, the project must be largely an answer to the situation. Moreover, there is no complete departure from the hypermodern mode: professional life involves the corporate need to achieve and build networks, and passes in an atmosphere of recognition and applause within the industry. Hypermodern cycles of independence and dependence are still in force here, because the work is done according to corporate standards, and the people involved are still guided—conformingly—by the motives imposed by this order. Although the desire for independence may initially be creative or grassroots in origin—or only reactive, a certain life necessity—it may quickly become its opposite, along with self-destructive elements, and may be taken over again by the corporate discourse.

On the other hand, the narrators who embody the pattern of hypermodern distance accomplish their work in part in the postmodern mode, and, unlike in the above pattern of rebellious conformists, work takes the form of affirmation (possibilities) rather than negation (necessity). It takes place outside the corporation, in their free time. At the same time it is a hobby, incomplete, and without the belief that it can be fully realised. The place of faith and courage is occupied by a highly controlled (self-presentational and self-persuasive, rationalised) narrative and (as can be deduced) way of being. These are the reasons why there is no room for spontaneity here; in a sense its opposite, that is, the fear of self-realisation, dominates.

Two further patterns—conversions and palliatives—are more clearly hypermodern and conformist, and even affirmative towards corporations. On the other hand, the stories of corporate episodes demonstrate that it is possible to negate a corporation in favour of basing one's biography on

various orders, though not without costs, unless the biography involves a status-based modern certainty or a long-term project of postmodern identity, "fed" at home.

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Abstract

This article discusses the issue of hypermodernity, which was studied as part of the research project *Poles in the World of Late Capitalism*. The article presents biographical models of hypermodernity and strategies of coping with hypermodern ideology, that is, cyclothymias, conversions, and hypermodern episodes.

Key words: hypermodernity, hypermodern episode, cyclothymia, conversions, biography

HIPERNOWOCZESNOŚĆ KORPORACYJNYCH BIOGRAFII

Kamila Biały
(Uniwersytet Łódzki)

Abstrakt

W artykule omawiany jest problem hipernowoczesności, który został podjęty w ramach projektu badawczego „Polacy w świecie późnego kapitalizmu". Przedstawiono w nim biograficzne modele realizacji hipernowoczesności oraz strategie radzenia sobie z hipernowoczesną ideologią, to jest cyklotymiami, konwersjami, epizodami hipernowoczesności.

Słowa kluczowe: hipernowoczesność, hipernowoczesne epizody, cyklotymia, konwersje, biiografia