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Threats and risks connected with transition from work to unemployment

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Threats and risks connected with transition from work to unemployment / Zagrożenia i ryzyko związane z przejściem na bezrobocie

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ABSTRACT

The article contains the investigation results concerning the uncertainty related other to full-time or part time jobs. The author presents mutual relations between employment and unemployment. He indicates that extinction of just social labor division and traditional forms of labor caused demand for new interpretation of theory and practice determining the frameworks of structural-economic conditions. The content of the article comprises the research results elaborated on the basis of narrative biographic method used for outlining studies on the job form transformation, especially its subjective perception. The author is trying to present the view that work analysis

can be conducted not only by observations of its different areas which create entire existence of people submerged in transitions between employment and unemployment. Designing personal path careers and unemployment occur in the context which is now more open than in the past on science exploration but simultaneously more uncertain and not clearly outlined. For that reason this transition can be understood as a significant condition for differentiated biographic narrations which reflected both investigation result and human biographies.

KEY WORDS: unemployment, transition from work to unemployment, threats and risks

INTRODUCTION

he contemporary research on social division problems¹ and dynamic changes in the area of performing trades show transparently that we are approaching a significant transitional stage in relation to forms, time and work organization, mainly from part-time employment to work basing on psychological contract². Occupation in the form of contracted part-time and frequently uncontrolled by treasury offices destroy our image about monolith of professional stabilization. At present we are becoming the eye-witnesses of running low stock in cognitive and explanation power, what results in changing of employment planning system as well as creating biographic course of phase professional development – career paths which are implemented in

a defined socio-economic, political and cultural environment. It is worth underlining that the emerged new transitional forms of work organization which people identify with profession³, occupation⁴ or job⁵. These new forms of work considerably make designing of changes in trajectory of the biographic models difficult in relation to possessed educational, motivational and economic resources as well as the capability for flexible adaptation of people to work positions and periodical lack of employment⁶.

From the above mentioned reasons, the positions taken on sociological debate over the subject of transformation

E. Durkheim, O podziale pracy społecznej, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1999, s.53-65

M. Armstrong, Zarządzanie ludźmi. Praktyczny przewodnik dla menedżerów liniowych, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, Poznań 2007, s.185.

³ J. Sztumski, Socjologia pracy, Wyd. Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach, Katowice 1999, s. 34-36.

⁴ J. Czapiński, T. Panek, Diagnoza społeczna 2009, Wyd. Rada Monitoringu Społecznego, Warszawa 2009, s. 46-49.

⁵ W. Chojnacki, Profesjonalizacja wojska w teorii i badaniach socjologicznych, Wyd. Akademii Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 2008, s. 45-47.

⁶ J. E. Karney, Podstawy psychologii i pedagogiki pracy, Wyd. Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna im. A. Gieysztora w Pułtusku, Pułtusk 2004, 153.

of the contemporary work and unemployment forms become an extremely important and complex problem. In this debate, on the one hand, there is a risk of try in favor of the traditional work model which lost its development significance, so on the other hand, increases the danger of constructing a new "insular" interpretation schemes featuring extreme static position which in slight transparency allows researchers to perceive and understand the essential qualities connected with greater complexity and work differentiation undergoing permanent changes.

The aim of this article is the performance of significant trial in perception of work through anti-positive⁷ and post-modern8 view of transition between part-time job and unemployment. It is a very important social problem since it concerns the growth of risk level, uncertainty and threat. It is manifested by lack of work stability of whose consequence are transformed into all professional and personal spheres of life. In my considerations I am trying to join contemporary theories and concepts with the studies conducted in the environment of service workers employed in part-time jobs9. The primary goal of this research was to explain relations undergoing between the performance of short-term and odd- jobs as well as their impact on people biography creation. This way, the period of employment was evaluated not only in relation to new contract job forms, which stimulate lack of permanent employment, what makes a great challenge to a homogeneity and standardization trials for professional and personal cycle including the work related to an ideal type of part-time employment. In reality, it is the trial of answering two study problems How deep changes undergo in personality and life of each man working on part-time employment? as well as How each person satisfies his own needs in the period between employment and unemployment?

BIOGRAPHIC SIGNIFICANCE OF TRANSITIONS FROM WORK TO UNEMPLOYMENT AND VICE VERSA

Changes in the sphere of work which undergo in Poland are the subject of studies and legal regulations especially after 1990. But the significant reforms of pro-market character were introduced in the low of work more than a decade later. These reforms not only influenced the dif-

ficulties connected with prediction of transferring trends in labor resources, changes in job conditions, extension part-time job, uncertainty in its performance but also its deepening specialization and job professionalization. Moreover, lack of legal administrative acts as well as the sluggishness of civil and labor courts in executing of workers rights.

The presented conclusions stemming from survey studies, included in this article, enabled the researchers to understand better the process of shaping contemporary biographies of people affected by periodical unemployment as well as cognition of methods and techniques applied to evaluate its course. So it is a certain attempt of referring to a wonderful tradition initiated by Florian Znaniecki¹⁰, Józef Chałasiński and other outstanding sociologists. The applied biographic method was used to present an essential problem, underappreciated till now in sociological studies. I mean the explanation of the essence of transition from part-time employment to unemployment and its reflection in men's and women's narration and interpretation performing a part-time job. In reality it is not only the description about certain form of job but it is the attempt of presenting a deepened analysis of transition from employment to an employment on the basis of feedback, whose essence is in dangerous for an individual lack of stability characterized by tensions, risks and threats connected with performing or not performing a job and their impact on the level of meeting everyday living needs.

Biographic transition from a job to unemployment seldom takes place in social policy¹¹, work pedagogy¹², sociology of work¹³ and industry¹⁴ as well as work psychology. This transition is mostly described as sequence as the working periods more or less normalized by code of employment procedure, where the change of occupied position in time and space modifies identity, independence and social relations of the cooperating entities.

It is worth emphasizing that the first successful theoretical perspective which was perfectly viewed, encompassed the analysis of transition according to the Ralph Linton's theory of roles, H.H. Sely's stress theory, concept of difficult situations of T. Tomaszewski including

⁷ M. Weber, Gospodarka i społeczeństwo. Zarys socjologii rozumiejącej, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2002, s. 22-25.

⁸ Z. Bauman, Wspólnota. W poszukiwaniu bezpieczeństwa w niepewnym świecie, tłum. J. Margański, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 2008.

⁹ V. Sikorska, Analiza porównawcza bezrobocia rejestrowanego oraz aktywnych form rynku pracy w Gminie Nasielsk w latach 2008-2009 (praca licencjacka pod kierunkiem dr. hab. W. Chojnackiego) oraz A. Mackiewicz, Działalność Powiatowego Urzędu Pracy w Lidzbarku w opinii osób długotrwale bezrobotnych z terenu Gminy Płośnica ((praca licencjacka pod kierunkiem dr. hab. W. Chojnackiego).

¹⁰ F. Znaniecki, Pisma filozoficzne t-1., Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1987.

¹¹ M. Szylko-Skoczny, Problemy społeczne w sferze pracy, [w:] Polityka społeczna. Podręcznik akademicki (pod red. G. Firlit-Fresnak, M. Szylko-Skoczny, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, s. 217-232.

¹² Z. Wiatrowski, Podstawy pedagogiki pracy, Wyd. Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna w Bydgoszczy, Bydgoszcz 2000; oraz B. Baraniak, Metody badania pracy, Wyd. Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2009.

¹³ J. Sztumski, Socjologia pracy op. cit., s. 10.

¹⁴ J. Rifkin, The End of Work. The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era, Published by Penguin Putnam in 1995.

the concept of living changes in accordance with the T. Holme's and Richards Rahe's theories. From this views points the genesis, essence and importance of transition, relies upon radical or less radical change of condition within a certain biography of the individual. But the biography of the individual related to seasonal or casual work is a set of many cycles and life phases as well as professional development paths which are of diverse and linear character.

The present theories and concepts of transition concentrated mainly on defining careers and achievements of people in their social life. There stages have a run of events in accordance with some general basic rules like: education, high school diploma, further studies, working, cohabitation with parents up to independent life with a partner or life as a single. Unfortunately the Gabriel Marcel's considerations, outstanding French existence researcher, are omitted. He based these considerations on the dialectics of existence and possession what stands for difference of social position you are in and which is often reduce to the relation between to be or to have. At the same time we forget that we can achieve a condition of fullness only then when we share ourselves with other others since a man is an interactive social being.

The theory of transition also shows sensitivity to its researching when basing upon structural, functional and interactive theories. It is especially evidence in using the structural to functional analyses. They deal mainly with exposing the mere transition from one position of social organizational structure to the other one. So fare the power of explanation concerning at least the two procedural concepts as well as the play interest has been underestimated. The first concept focuses primarily on what occurs and happens during the transition and how can exist with a dangerous vision of losing job resulting in uncertainty of existence.

But the other concept concentrates on the notion of profit and loss – is it worth taking up a job or receive an unemployment benefit or on the other hand to be provided for by a family and to be on the dole rendered by social aid institution such solutions are neither of linear nor of reversible character and for people who are provided for by them in a regular way it is even not transparent what consecutive positions they will hold or not. These transitions are not necessary evident in a multitrend configuration. But trough constant appearance and disappearance, reversing, interruption, recurrence and resumption, they form situations difficult for phys-

ical and mental endurance. This way the main purpose is to understand those who are living in permanent threat and danger as well as the limited certainty and full of risk.

METHODOLOGY OF INVESTIGATING THE CONTEXT OF TRANSITION

The reflection the presented here are based on pilot and proper research on consequence of work made on the basis of contract and during registered unemployment. The decision of taking up pilot research resulted mainly from the fact the analysis of the problem was possible due to management students dissertation in the Academy of the Humanities named after A. Gieysztor in Pułtusk. In the sociological debates the most frequent problem to be talked is long-term and structural unemployment resulting from the lack correlation between education system and labor market. In reality, not so much attention in focused on contract working performed in small, medium-sized an big private firms. It is worth underlining that there was no interest in reviling this problem concerning mainly high percent index of female workers - the most lowliest qualified and paid in the labor market. The results from the essential research were based on the analysis of 50 biographic and narrative interviews with the men and women aged 30 to 50 who prior to inactivity period (unemployment) were working on contract job. The context of the review was always determined by personality traits of respondent being interviews with the up-most carefulness about discretion and anonymity in relation to acquaintances and employers. There interviews was consequently made at their homes and public places like: parks, bars but never a their sides of their working and lasted approximately from 30 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. These talks were recopied.

The subjective individual transactions in which the individuals experienced stressful situations full of risk and uncertainty were the most frequent developmental approach to biographic transitions from the employment treated as secured situation to the unemployment understood as insecure situation. When accomplishing the biographic – to – narrative procedure to evaluate narrations the respondents were permitted to define the limits and relativity of transitions as well as the presentation of their own life experiences. In conducted studies it was assumed that the analysis of experience is indispensable for elaborating an individual biography. This way the life experience and biographies entangled in the network of complicated situations and events, especially in cases when the respondents were obliged to leave from this

very difficult life situations having an essential significance for sense of life and single case studies.

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According to the narrative approach the transitions, as it was mentioned earlier, were of crucial importance in acquiring and transferring some information about themselves and sharing their own biographies, creative reconstruction of the fragmentary portions of life which created a ready-made scenario or even an important thread of life. Such way of narration allowed for this, that the range of transition was extremely elevated, and the fragments which referred to searching for reasons of losing a job, birth of child, bank credit repayments or sick leaves. The biographic-narrative approach was perfectly used for description and the analysis of method by which the respondents gave priority to changes undergoing in their lives through reconstruction and chronology of each important fragment of life. The risk narrative analysis of transition between employment and unemployment allowed to focus an attention both on full biography of the individual and the way in which the working people organized their lives on the basis of contracts which having no concrete life planes even for the nearest days, weeks, moths and years. For this reason the two different perspectives periodical employment were accepted. The first included the chronologic reference to a specific and critical moments of human life. The second one based on the analysis of each period of life where the transition related only to a fragment of narration between to areas of life: paid, unpaid and sometimes free etc.

RISK OF DANGER RELATED TO IMPORTANT LIFE TRANSITIONS REFLECTED IN NARRATIONS

To make analysis of biographic changes in life narrations attention was paid to so called "turning point" that means the critical occurrence which obliged some persons to state that they are not the some persons as before. There is a possibility of defining the turning point as the event which displace different directions or change of direction in the course of some one duration of life and the reason for which the subject can respect the most important episode until this moment which reflects a significant biographic experiences occurring during "interactive turning point situations".

In the literature is common agreement that placing the analysis of life turning points not only on generated definitions by researcher but rather on this with whom the subjects are identified. This are the moments to which the author prescribes the crucial changes or a special role in narration when basing on believe, public conviction, constructing transition experiences in a narrative way.

The lack of complete control on transition conditions by an individual result from the verity of situation which in their own sense can be tightly related but only then when the individuals recognized themselves as those who need the harmonious connections. This is a role, leads to orienting each interest an a way the man a women confront the transition between employment and unemployment and design make the biographies with respect to course on preparing for vocation trainings, vocational improvement organized by employers and District State Employment Offices to be active or passive - employed and unemployed15. The undertaken operations strived for merging different fragments of human biographies into a coherent integrity.

The event sand experiences identified as decisions of full time employers described in their biographies either negative or positive trace. They tried to join in their biographies the transitions at work when reducing them to these moments, which related to a difficult life situation, lost or trauma caused by sudden and unexpected events, which fallowed after losing a job.

Between the devil and the deep sea

Acquiring a new job in the opinion of respondents, was not for them the end of earlier stages of work but the end traumatic transition, which should not occur frequently in a democratic society. The situation that took places in narrators' lives indicate that biographic transitions took form of various processes in collecting experiences, in which the construction of vocational life project was all the time vulnerable to further thinking revision turning points sudden separation and departure. In this way the biographies feature not only progressive individualization but also diffusive entangling of situations and conditions including training periods and gathering vocational experiences as well as extreme situations.

One of these turning points which most often occur in summarizing the people interviewed by narrations concerned the fragments of stories between the final portion of the first job and the initial portion of the other job. The key moment in these narrations was the approaching closure of the contract, understood by them as ambiguous and limited transparency of this situation.

These unclear situations appear especially at the moment when the respondents are leaving for their homes during forthcoming holidays and hoping that when they come back they still will be able to work. They particularly fear

¹⁵ K. Czekaj, A. Nieszporek, M. Zawartka-Czekaj, Ruda Śląska. Od problemów społecznych górnośląskiego miasta do polityki miejskiej, Górnośląska Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa, im. W. Korfantego w Katowicach, Katowice 2010, s. 53-56.

talks during which the managers determine extension of contracts provided that the recent wages remain unchanged and even lowered. In their opinion, the managers are always claming for lack of financial liquidity. Such situation mostly appear by the end of year when you are not confirmed on prolongation of your contract, since the hope for prolonging the contract dies as the late. The respondents say that the greatest psychical tension appears at that time when there is a lack of information on prolonging or resuming the contract. Most of the respondents share the opinion that managers expect from employees that in case of misinformation concerning the possibilities of further working, the employees will make a decision on solving their own employment contract. The relations between job and unemployment become more complex in periods between expiration and resumption of a new contract. The general opinion of employers about employees is rather negative and manifest in their weak engagement in performing duties. It indicates the low social competence of the managers as well as the lack of a good system for motivating the personnel. But the workers having lower qualifications expect from managers to apply effective communication, good counseling and coaching and objective evaluation of their job.

The emerging and intangible lack of defined limits between job and unemployment become more and more significant in designing new perspectives not only in macro-scale through standardizing and deregulating the process of labor market but also focusing on micro-scale, especially the subjective perception and vocational experience of people. Moreover, it is an important problem to investigate how workers perceive risk and threats connected with the lack of professional stability as well as strong links between the work and wages. In fact, the above problems are important but the most important is the creation of new vacancies and teaching people more effective methods of searching for jobs. The above mentioned statement found its own reflection with respondents as the most essential problems in their personal biographies. In their opinion, the time between consecutive moments of working is understood as a crucial turning point in their life. For this reason, each expiration of contract and transition from one job to another one makes the beginning of the adaptation to the new tasks facing the vocational groups. These new tasks appear in narrative interviews with contract workers. The respondents emphasize the change of workers behavior on whom the transition was "exerted". They stressed that they were trying invisible to others in order not to be perceived as the persons experience suffering.

Transition risk in everyday life

The debates conducted by sociologist investigating the social problems presented in numerous available studies on systemic transformation in Poland clearly show that labor market mostly focused on professional problems of work. On the other hand, a little attention is paid to those who begin to enter for local labor markets and those who often lose their jobs not because of their own guilt. The exact socio-economic analyses of many scholars indicate that causes of such situations are in too much liberal code of work, high cost of work and low rates of economic development. Moreover, these scholars orient their attention more to consequences resulted from the new forms of work affecting the organization of everyday life, constructing their privet life, free time and their motivation for work.

The processes oriented to enhancing the range of flexible time of performing work and self-employment pointing to a strong pressure, on the part of employers, toward de-institutionalization and enhancement of the risk along with the uncertainty of work. Burdening the everyday life with lack of security, contradictions and total ignorance among employees. These processes are not accompanied by wage raises and differentiated forms of social assurance on the part of state which would enable them to be ensured in case lack of vacancy. If on the one hand we can observe short and long term unemployment phenomenon then on the other hand there is an essential assessment concerning possibility of acquiring job which should ensure decent life of each Pole according to regulations inscribed in our constitution. The above problems allow people as well as state institutions of administration and self-government organizations to perceive mutual links between social structures and national culture which create postmodern model of socio-economic life in Poland.

Deepening process of work disintegration connected with the complexity of its effective planning and performance is one of most radical and transparent changes undergoing in Polish society. More own more company owners experiment with chronological divisions which initiate formalization and structuring of work day, since the employees are employed with regards to individual programs of work. These new work programs require greater self-engagement in work, more responsibility and creativity.

At present many full-time positions definitely disappears from labor market and simultaneously the employees seek for well paid jobs. In these narrations the workers employed in part-time jobs stress that they are

treated as those who addict to work (workaholics) to whom the managers can prolong the time of their work. This situation was precisely defined by one of the respondents who said "We struggle for maintaining vacancies but for the price of losing free Saturdays and Sundays". In consequence workers have strongly reduced relax time and hardly ever their effort is properly paid.

Freedom of the employed in free time management is very limited especially at that time when the contract term is going to be expired, then most often the managers exert prolongation of work and its rate time. In this situation the problem is the proper management of time by employees who in most cases are in position of their families, acquaintances and have different needs of spending their leisure time.

Risk and consequences of imposing employment on unemployment

The performed analyses of the time related to man and women working on part-time, indicate not only the differentiated praxes applied by individuals in reference to work time and free time but also create the image of their existence in various spheres of socio-economic and cultural life. However, more positive picture of time work emerges from many narrations of respondents, what indicates the limited possibility of autonomic use of time. Though the situations in which the autonomy in managing work days is limited the autonomy seems to grow mainly because of progressive expansion of work to other area of life. For this reason the freedom for independent defining of professional skills and working rhythms is in reality confined by the costumers since they have a great impact on work organization where the freedom seems to be limited.

The attempt and proposals secondary defining of significant and articulation of periods as well as reorganizing daily duties has a colossal impact on creating conflicts in confrontation with working conditions. The time of work changes due to traditional distinctions and even mixing work with leisure time. Each day of work is really connected with the areas of life and no longer takes alternative forms of spare time. In every day transitions between employment and unemployment appears another area of activity gaining a peculiar significance and summarizing workers employed on full time jobs. This area is the time not paid for performing daily odd jobs and healthcare. The unpaid work is absent from sociological definitions and empirical studies, first of all because the work in the XX-th century was synonymous for paid work. This specific methodological reductionism can be perceived as a certain change that takes place in the

period of modernization and postmodernism and relies on separating the public sphere from the private one. As I indicated earlier in relation to biographic-narrative transitions, this dichotomy is the beginning of the complex connotation connected with the system of sex relation to one self when constructing the public sphere of production as the specific male sphere, while the women were perceived as private sphere of family and the subject of reproduction.

Despite transitions from modernism to postmodernism in economy the sex labor division is still existing. It mostly concerns domestic odd jobs, education, healthcare and social help. The biographic-narrative interviews revealed that the role of women is still under appreciated especially in working on full time job. One of the respondents states that "that women are needed mainly for domestic odd jobs and this way the man can save money for maintaining household and he feels happy that his mother lives at this house. It is a typical the situation of the extended family members helping each other.

Moreover, these biographic narrations display that traditional division of labor into female and male jobs is still up-to-date, what indicates the lack of balance in performing social and economic roles among females and males.

SUMMARY

The conclusion on research studies that I have presented were focused on uncertainty of contract job - work related to full time job which extends to various spheres of life that may penetrate into one another. The relations taken place between employment and unemployment as well as disappearance of the social division of typical careers exerts the need of searching for new concept and interpretation possibilities which define the theoretic framework concentrated most frequently on the analysis of social structures and economic possibilities. This material comprises the research studies in which the biographic-narrative concepts were used for studies on transformation of elastic forms of labor and especially the ways in which the individuals can perceive and evaluate them. I am convinced that work analysis should be conducted through observing different areas of life, which consist of individual experiences covering the transitions between employment and unemployment. Constructing personal work courses really occurs in the contest which is more open at present than in the past but simultaneously more uncertain and unclearly defined and for this reason the transition can be read out as a permanent sine qua non condition which signals variety of stories which reflect both works and biographies.

Especially, taking into consideration uncertainty of work forced me to take interest in changes in biographies through suggested distinctions between differences in work seasoning: in diachronic context – concerning designing stories through events that occurred by many years (periods of employment and unemployment) in facing against such episodes as: disease or maternity leave etc.

One of the aspects which appeared in a significant way was the analysis of collected interviews concerning impacts of sex on risk in transitions not only in the stories but also in daily life described by respondents. The fragments of summaries presented the situations which exist on different levels of dynamics in work division in relation to sex. This division was characteristic for a steady and secured work related to sex. Uncertainty of work diminished the different between man and women on the one hand but the other hand created new forms of relations since the time when women were force to continue unpaid work and that performed on labor market in economic crisis situation.

Focusing on narrative summaries and subjective experience allowed to evaluate organizational and institutional context which in reflexive way influenced the work biographies of the respondents. The experiences which combined the individuals` history not only indicated the course of life trajectory but also the firms with which

they had a contract. In this case, organizational and institutional context had an impact on pressure exerting flexibility in resource shortage what resulted in increase of work time. The dangerous moments in respondents life were connected with biographic transitions which corresponded to expectation for intervention. It concerned mainly these periods of life whose people were not fully protected in relation to law (they did not have social insurance).

Thinking about the future perspectives and the research in unemployment area should not miss the biographic studies which are essential for work and social policy but should constitute a solid base for monitoring changes in periods of transitions between employment and unemployment. The systematic investigation of human biographies and experience enables decedents to understand better the complexity of changes in the area of social policy, especially these changes which are closely connected with shaping social inequities and feeling the social injustice clearly appearing in biographic narrations. In the author's opinion there is a need of making deep changes in social and labor market policy in Poland. These changes should mainly concern more comprehensive grasping of labor market functioning in relation to decent life and be treated as fully-legal citizen of the state.

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