

Heterotopias of Production: Unveiling the Everydayness of the Cypriot Economy

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Abstract

In the representation of the Cypriot reality there are areas of social life, particularly in places of labour where a group of people act as a working class, which are not part of our symbolic universe, a universe which has suppressed under its glamorous appearance the reality of toil and harsh labour. The effects that these places have on the economy and the social relations are nonetheless real. To demonstrate the effects, two cases are examined: A fast food industry and a telephone survey firm. Through a workplace level analysis, these places of social production are examined as heterotopias, points of passage of economic and social ordering. The article aims to 'show' these places and furthermore to point that the heterotopias of production might hold the key to understanding what dominant strategies of dealing with the crisis through development might include as a future.

Keywords: Cypriot economy, heterotopia, services, fast food industry, call centres, labour, production, Post-Fordism, class

[...] There is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias. That is a constant of every human group. But the heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found.'

Michel Foucault¹

In an eight minute British film² of 1939 with the title 'Introduction to Cyprus', the island is presented against a soundtrack of melodious music and commentary. The commentator leads us through the island's everyday life. What dominates almost seven minutes of the film are images that feature Cypriot people working on various types of activities ranging from crop harvesting and livestock farming to artisans and small scale manufacturing. The representation of the lives of Cypriots as a people is constituted not through the Cypriots as people performing a number of

1 M. Foucault (1984) 'Des Espaces Autres' [Of Other Spaces], *Architecture, Motion, Continuity*, No. 5, p. 47.

2 Retro Cyprus (2013) Commentary: *1939 An Introduction to Cyprus*. Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRHluZ6_Ys8&feature=youtuve_gdata_player].

activities in various situations but as 'people who work'. No image is shown that points to a distinction between 'Cypriots living' and 'Cypriots working'. To the viewer, every portrayal or description is mediated through a life of a homo-labourans and the prime element in which this society is symbolically epitomised and analysed is that of work, of labour.

Conversely, in a 2012 documentary³ from National Geographic, titled 'The Island of Cyprus', the characterisation of Cyprus⁴ and its inhabitants is elementary different. It is different not simply because of the portrayal of a now modernised country and its ethnic problems, as might be expected, but because during the forty-four minute runtime of the video not a single scene is shown of working Cypriots, apart from a sort of homage to traditional household baking by a family. In a scene where dockside labourers are in attendance it is merely to refer to legal concerns over trading issues that arose due to the island's partitioned status.⁵ By mentioning the melodious music and commentary of the first video, I point to the fact that the first video is not a scientific documentary for research purposes. It is a 'pop' video, aimed probably for newsreels of the time, in contrast with National Geographic which, although not academic, is considered somewhat scientific. It is, for example, not an MTV or a travel channel video. Despite the first and older video being more light-hearted in nature, it shows exclusively labouring images. Not because it 'portrays labour' but precisely because it portrays 'life'. The second video, although it also portrays 'life' in Cyprus, 'life' is now portrayed very differently, despite the fact that work and production is today a much more determining factor. But what is not presented in the second video is the economic activities of the natives which, regardless of its degree of development, is the essential activity of any society.

The basis of this transformation of iconic representation is, of course, the modernisation of the Cypriot economy and the shift in the mode and relations of production that has occurred during the past seventy years. A large part of the then economy was constituted by pre-capitalist ways of production; small artisans and craftsmen, farmers and shepherds. It was an economy that had not yet fully developed the division of labour, market-oriented production and aspects of industry. As pointed out by the commentator in the first video, 'most of the work is being done outdoors'. The development of the economy witnessed the gradual withering away of these conditions and their replacement by a modern capitalist economy. Today, most but not all, labouring, takes place indoors and away from the household. The expansion of the new economic model brought forth the transformation of the social sphere almost in its entirety. This process, similar to the social and

3 Urban Guide (2012) TV Documentary: *The Island of Cyprus – National Geographic*. Part of Urban TV Cyprus series on 'Islands'. Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAwto68jEul&feature=youtu_gdata_player].

4 The research has been undertaken only in the southern part of the island. 'Cypriot', in this study, refers to Greek Cypriot and 'Cyprus' refers to the part under the *de facto* jurisdiction of the Republic of Cyprus.

5 A coup d'état in Cyprus on 15 July 1974 by Greek Cypriot nationalists that wanted union with Greece was followed by a large military intervention by Turkey, whose troops occupied the northern part of the island and later declared it an independent state. That state is not internationally recognised. Negotiations for reaching an accepted solution have been unsuccessful.

economic history of most European countries, withdrew the activity of labour away from the public sphere or the private household, and separated it from the rest of the lived day. New spheres of social life were constituted for activities that were not previously apart or distinct from each other. As E.P. Thomson reveals, labour and free time, work and home, were not experienced as two clearly distinct events or places in everyday life: 'Social intercourse and labour are intermingled [...] and there is no great sense of conflict between labour and "passing the time of the day"'.⁶ This process of separating labour from the rest of the everyday activities has created a heterotopia where the place of the labour activity has been moved to an 'Other' place, both materially and ideologically.

Foucault presented the use of the term 'heterotopia' in social sciences in a 1967 seminar defining it as follows:

'There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.'⁷

A heterotopia is a place that functions as a place of otherness that is usually not secularised or can constitute a break in time and space from social everyday space. It could be a cemetery, or a museum. It does not have a fixed attachment to a specific place. Locations of production constitute today a heterotopia par excellence. This applies especially to workplaces that are not commonly seen as places of industry and/or hard labour owing to their more recent development, and relatively recent industrialisation, and are termed instead as services. Services infer a connotation of being places of 'clean', white collar labour.

To describe heterotopias, Foucault proposes a kind of systematic description that could analyse and 'read' these other places. He calls this systematic description 'heterotopology'.

To attempt to make a heterotopology for our purposes here, we have to be aware that through the process of society's modernisation, apart from the spatial division of social activities, labour now situates itself as a heterotopia in the mind as well and not only in physical space. In the social imaginary of the Cypriots, labour, there too, is an 'Other' place, an element somewhat hidden from civic dialogue. Cyprus is portrayed exclusively in public discourse as a service economy and as an island of financiers, so the reference to an industrial working class seems out of touch, not only for Cyprus but for other European countries too. Then again, on taking a closer look, what seem self-evident for contemporary critical theories are, we claim, all but instances where theory is incapable

6 E.P. Thompson (1967) 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present*, Vol. 38, No. 1, p. 60.

7 Foucault (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 47.

or unwilling to delve deeper and examine the content of these social relations and not just their form and appearance. The central issue of the article is that factories, industrial labour and hard work exist despite appearances. They exist in places that we have not sought to look.

The ideology, the way we perceive the reality that surrounds us, has suppressed and concealed any identity that was ascribed to a 'working class'. The turbulent history of the island has contributed to this. The identity that pertains to the Cypriot social imaginary has been stitched together by the 'Cyprus problem' as its *point de capiton*,⁸ its key-signifier that holds together the symbolic universe that signifies the Cypriot reality; that is the way in which Cypriots understand and identify their place and themselves, the discursive mechanisms with which they perceive and describe their reality. For more than thirty years the media and the public discourse in general, were dominated by the 'Cyprus problem'. No room was left for anything in relation to labour issues and class conflict, concerns that were always downgraded to insignificance. The importance of this situation is more profound after the recent economic crisis not only because the negative consequences are mostly inflicting the working people of the lower strata but also because the discourse regarding the causes or the consequences of the crisis, and the ways out of it, rarely considers 'class' as an analytic or political tool. This kind of negligence is an obstacle for properly explaining the crisis and it reinforces the rhetoric of equal collective responsibility. The Cypriot society is taken as a singularity that feasted on finance and stock markets and now must pay the harsh price.

The relatively rapid economic development after the war of 1974 magnified the middle strata and by methods of lending and credit promoted the Cypriot dream as the aim to be achieved: a large house with a swimming pool and a BMW were the priorities, the '*Raison d'être*' of the Cypriot life. Any reference to a 'worker' had become banal and was viewed with contempt. It was now a stigma to be kept away from public appearance because it would imply that the person does not belong to the higher strata of society and has a working or peasant class background. By way of example, today almost no artistic creation has any reference to the main activity of the daily lives of the majority of the population. It had to be excluded in order to construct a harmonious and homogenising essence of oneness; that we as a society are one against our national enemies. As Lacanian political theory describes this process:

'[...] when harmony is not present it has to be somehow introduced in order for our reality to be coherent. It has to be introduced through a fantasmatic social construction. [...] This is due, for instance, to the gap between our harmonious fantasmatic constructions of nature and nature itself, between reality and the real. Our constructions of reality are so strong that nature has to conform to them and not they to nature; reality is conceived as mastering the real. But there is

8 *Point de capiton* (quilting point) is a term Lacan uses to explain how signifier and signified are knotted together. It is what holds together and stabilises the world of meaning, our ideology, preventing it from floating around. 'It's the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively.' Lacan (1997), p. 266.

always a certain leftover, a disturbing element destabilizing our constructions of nature. This has to be stigmatised, made into a scapegoat and exterminated. The more beatific and harmonious is a social fantasy the more this repressed destabilizing element will be excluded from its symbolization – without, however, ever disappearing.⁹

The Cypriot society has paradoxically signified the reality of a working class, a class that labours hard for a basic living wage, as something to be denied by the very individuals that bear this weight of working and producing. During the past decades the spectacular reality that appeared on television, in lifestyle magazines and in newspapers as ‘life’, or ‘political issues’, constituted the reality and now appears more real to the Cypriots than what goes on each day behind these appearances. The common view is that Cypriots to a large extent work in excellent conditions in a big office in the private or public sector and do not face conditions of hard labour. The category of ‘class’, and specifically the working class, is totally absent from the social imaginary. Very rarely does it become a signification of a social group, a pressure group or an analytical category for those who seek to explain this society and especially the current crisis. The image of a Cypriot as someone who lives day by day through his toil and work would be labelled non-existent, as an image of the past, only to be found today corresponding to a very small minority of migrants. But in these heterotopias there exists an exiled and non-visible world. It is not purely non-visible as a physical presence in space but as an exiled perception and representation (both symbolic and political) of social reality. It is a place, both spatial and symbolic, of a class of persons that work in conditions and circumstances that are not taken into account in most interpretations of Cyprus either generally as a country or particularly as an economy.

The Factory as a Heterotopia

In ‘Badlands of Modernity’, K. Hetherington examines the development of the factory system during the industrial revolution as new heterotopic sites that arose out of the transformation of the networks of production, markets and consumption. Until then, the household was the key space or ‘obligatory point of passage’, in which the ordering and organisation of production and other social relations took place. As mentioned above, the development of production moved this point of passage for social ordering from the household to an ‘Other’ place: the factory, which should be analysed as follows:

‘In looking at the factory as a heterotopia there are four issues that need therefore to be highlighted: the labour process; management and supervisory surveillance; the organization of time and space; and the development of the work ethic.’¹⁰

9 Y. Stavrakakis (1999) *Lacan and the Political*, 1st edition. London: Routledge, p. 55.

10 K. Hetherington (1997) *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*. London: Routledge, p. 132.

It is expected that one would object to the use of such an analysis on the Cypriot reality, as the latter does not seem to include such industrial workplaces anymore. Following a very interesting installation by artist Aazclairicia, accompanied by Foucault's speech on heterotopias, we too question: 'Que sont nos usines devenues?'¹¹ [What has become of our factories?]. Here, we claim that they are present but are 'a nowhere' and through our analysis they can become 'a somewhere', at least in our imaginary. Although K. Hetherington uses the notion of heterotopia on the places of production of the nineteenth century, the totality of the present article points to the fact that many of the twenty-first century's places of production – today's factories – are not even recognised as such. The fact that they are being ignored as places of production or places of a working class, but acknowledged as places of retail, 'services', or at best 'emotional labour', provides evidence that it is more possible today for a factory to exist as a heterotopia than in the nineteenth century.

Places of production are not part of the rest of the everyday life; they are cut off and distinct from it. What applies for the rest of the day, the part of it in which we live, the time that we call 'free', does not apply in the workplace. The order of time changes and it becomes signified from the time you go in, the time you have a break and the time you leave, affecting also the rest of the day. Other social relations apply; outside social relations are neutralised or cancelled. The hierarchy that takes place, for example, transforms to something very different than the one outside; blood relations no longer define the hierarchical interaction, as they might when you step outside in the same society. Workplaces are not considered places of political representation or engagement. As a case in point, one usually does not vote in a constituency based on the workplace but the place where he/she lives, despite the fact that the former is a much more determining factor of life. The changes of weather and seasons do not affect the basis of what goes on in the workplace, unlike a farmer's way of producing which is or was intrinsically connected with the weather. A social and cultural place where a workplace is situated can change immeasurably from New York to Bahrain but if you are working in a New York McDonald's franchise, you know very well what to do the moment you step into a Bahrain McDonald's kitchen. The far becomes near. At that place everything is the same and it is the same place: the hierarchy, the aims, the labour process and the rhythms. On the other hand, if you stepped outside, or in a Bahrain household, you would probably be unable to act and behave in accordance with the local social relations. Heterotopias can shift time and space, enabling two distant places to become the same whilst surrounded by immense difference.

Generally, in Cyprus and in Europe, the overall weakening of the power of syndicalism and union culture, as well as the decline of worker parties, brought a closure to these heterotopias. At the same period there was a development and industrialisation of sectors that were not part of

11 Aazclairicia (2012) 'Que sont nos usines devenues?' [What has become of our factories?]. Retrieved from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksftw_biMPg].

traditional industry. This enhanced the establishment of a mental barrier, a border, reinforcing their existence as heterotopias even more so and making them less visible not only to public opinion but to research and statistical processing. To give an example, rarely does research of the fast food industry deal with its core, namely the production and its 'factory' aspect, and not cultural, consumption and marketing traits. It is aimed, through the study of two case-studies to seek to unveil hints of the 'hidden' world, and glimpse these 'Other' places where part of the Cypriot industry is situated, and consequently an industrial working class.

Heterotopia I

The first case is that of the fast food industry. The research was primarily conducted on site during the time that the author was employed as kitchen staff in one of the Taco Bell enterprises, for a total of thirteen months beginning in May 2012.

During this work period a number of questions emerged that are engaged with here: Can the fast food sector be categorised as an industry and, if yes, then are those who work in it not an industrial working class? These questions connect with more general ones: Is there an industrial working class in Cyprus or generally in developed economies? The persistence in such terms of sociological classification such as 'industrial workers' seems obsolete. Nonetheless, is not such a class limited today in developing economies in the so-called Third-World where a large part of production has been outsourced? The answer that is given here not only concerns Cyprus but has greater value outside of the island since it deals with a sector that is internationally identical and is dominated worldwide by only a few franchises.

Terms such as 'de-industrialisation' and 'post-industrial society'¹² are now widely used for the analysis of class relations (that is, if the existence of classes is taken as a given), hence drawing to the conclusion that the industrial working class, as described in the main by Marxist influenced theories or even from Max Weber, has been diminished or, in some cases, no longer exists. It is supported that a large part of industry has given its place to 'services', thus changing the material conditions of production and generally the conditions that once made the industrial working class not only a sociological category but the central political subject.

The fast food sector is one of the most emergent sectors categorised as services. The 'sample' is the fast food franchise of Taco Bell, one of the largest fast food franchises in the world with 6,500 stores worldwide and one of the major competitors of McDonald's in the USA. Taco Bell was chosen as a subject of examination for two reasons: a) It represents one of the largest and one of the technologically most advanced in its sector; and b) It is a workplace where the author had access and experience of its activities.

12 Most notable of these scholars is Daniel Bell in his well-known 'The Coming of Post-Industrial Society', Bell (1976).

It is aimed, through this analysis to demonstrate that certain large sectors categorised as 'services' are thoroughly industrial with a combination of Fordist (the production characterised by the aim to achieve higher productivity by standardisation of output, conveyor assembly lines and generally large scale mass production), and Post-Fordist (characterised by the turn to small, more flexible manufacturing units with more customised products) properties. By close scrutiny of the nature, intensity and material conditions of such work, the production process and workers' relation to it as well as the degree of exploitation, it can be supported that the workforce involved at the base of this sector, and consequently in a sizeable part of 'services', are an industrial working class.

The irony is that while a large part of critical theory tried and indeed managed to prove convincing in relation to the huge de-industrialisation and servicelisation of the economy and hence the impoverishment of industry, other academics have noted the exact opposite as early as the 1970s. There is a plethora of scientific articles in journals such as *Harvard Business Review*: the most notable of them being articles with the indicative title 'Production-line approach to service' and 'The industrialization of service' by T. Levitt, in 1972 and 1976 respectively. Apart from the relatively easy, yet indeed correct reply that can be given – specifically that a large part of traditional industry has not vanished but has simply outsourced its production in other continents – what the supporters of the de-industrialisation and servicelisation theories ignore is the degree of the industrialisation of services. In his research, T. Levitt uses McDonald's as a representative example of a service sector that increased its efficiency by applying Fordism in its production process and its logic of organisation.¹³

In 1998, Bowen and Youngdahl, in a paper entitled "Lean" Service: In Defense of a Production Line Approach', followed up from T. Levitt and indicated a paradigm shift in industrialised services, using this time Taco Bell. This particular company combines elements of Fordism in a ground-breaking way together with features of so called 'toyotism', a type of organising production first implemented in Toyota. This organisation overcomes Fordism with its basic elements being: a) the preservation of mass production, but with the introduction of mass customisation; and b) JIT (Just in Time), a production and supply mechanism more adjusted according to customer orders. With these components the enterprises can respond to the requirements of the post-modern consumer much better than before. Bowen and Youngdahl not only emphasise the radical change that the implementation of such an industrialised production model brought to Taco Bell, far surpassing Fordist McDonald's in efficiency and productivity, but wholeheartedly suggest and promote the implementation of such an industrialised organisation to be applied in all kinds of services and offices.¹⁴ The two other examples of successful

13 T. Levitt (1972) 'Production-Line Approach to Service', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 50, p. 44 and (1976) 'The Industrialization of Service', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 54, pp. 32–43.

14 'There are clearly differences between the Toyota lean manufacturing environment and an attorney's office, for

industrialisation that they bring forth include an airline company and a hospital. Throughout their paper they constantly stress that industry is the leading sector which services always follow and try to catch up and not the opposite. They also speak of this model as one that empowers the workers, enforces their participation and their autonomy. The key factors for this 'empowerment', they claim, are the following: a) power to make decisions affecting how to perform their jobs and even what strategies the firm pursues; b) information about business performance, plans and goals; and c) rewards that are based on organisational performance.¹⁵ Yet, this argument is paradoxical. These characteristics seem to fit only the role of the store managers. They are far from fitting the reality of the workers. A reality that, as we shall see, is dominated by an immense division of labour, a monotonous, standardised and repetitive work effort and absolutely no power, reward or information regarding plans, strategies or execution.

But the fast food sector is not even industrialised services; it is pure industry: production of material goods. The fact that the retail sale of the commodities takes place immediately after the production, or the production is undertaken by order, hardly differs from what happens in Toyota. More specifically, it is a fusion/merger in time and space of the production process together with the processes of demand and circulation of commodities: A fusion that contributes to the veiling, in our everyday lives, of the sector's particular character. But in the end it cannot prevent us from understanding that what we see before us in a shopping centre or a commercial street is nothing but mini-factories with a sales department at the front. How is it that the production of packaged foods constitutes a factory (which is how it is counted in the statistics), but the most intensive and exploitative industry of mass food production does not? The physical presence of customers on the premises of this factory creates an illusion, a false perception. Where we encounter the commodity, an object, phenomenally overshadows the relation of production. This we can call: objectification of social relations, and it is a process that also 'hides' a place of production and turns it into a heterotopia.

But let us cross the gates of this factory of Taco Bell to witness, in short, a few basic and essential characteristics of its production. Firstly, we are dealing here with the production of material commodities: A production, according to customer demand, that can reach breakneck levels of tension and speed. The 'heart' is comprised of two mini-production lines with four different posts. In rush hours the worker might stand and work furiously for hours at one post, and in one spot, without the luxury of pausing to even wipe the sweat out of his face. Not because it is

example. Yet, even in professional services, one can find some isolated examples of effective production line approaches. [...] unique opportunities for competitive advantage may emerge when production-line thinking is seemingly mismatched to professional services', DE. Bowen and W.E. Youngdahl (1998) "Lean" Service: In Defense of a Production-line Approach, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 221.

15 Bowen and Youngdahl (1998), *ibid.*, p. 219.

forbidden but because of the furious speed of production and sale, the slightest delay of a mere second (*sic*) is capable of overloading the production line and stalling the orders. The LCD screens above the workers' heads show each order's preparation time and constantly displays an 'average preparation time' which must remain under one minute. When a period of time has elapsed without the completion of an order, the screen rapidly flashes the order to indicate to the workers to speed up. The process is completely rationalised to the degree that the quantity of, let us say, lettuce, that the assembler places in a particular product is defined down to the last gramme (e.g. 26 grammes in a particular product or 15 grammes in another).

The movements of hands in the production line – precisely where the right hand should be at a specific moment to minimise production time down to the last second – are also predefined: The spirit of Taylorism is still very much alive; that is to say, achieving maximum efficiency in production by determining all the movements down to the last detail, under extreme discipline and supervision. Cameras on the walls control and punish every unauthorised movement such as someone eating a single piece of potato. Break-time is exactly half an hour and is deducted from the wage. There are no free meals allowed so workers must pay to eat. If we take into consideration that workers toil here from 7 hours upwards to 12–13 hours every day then we can perhaps begin to realise the level of exhaustion. At weekends a member of staff might work 12 or 13 hour shifts for three consecutive days. In reality, workers often request to work shifts of many hours because of the very low wage of €3.75 per hour, pushing themselves to the limit of their physical capabilities. Outbreaks of despair are not uncommon. A characteristic incident occurred during a long and tiring shift, when a co-worker, a 30-year old Bulgarian male who immigrated to Cyprus a few years ago in an effort to escape poverty, stopped work suddenly and went to a corner and began crying. When asked why he was crying he replied, 'my life is too hard, I cannot go on.' Ill at ease and unable to reply we turned our heads away and continued working, leaving him to calm down. Unfortunately, the official statistics lack any data on the composition of this sector's workers. From personal experience it can be verified that most of the workers in the kitchen are primarily East European immigrants and secondly Cypriots, all between the ages of 21 and 30 years old. The cashiers are predominantly Cypriot university students, but constitute the smaller percentage of the personnel. The whole sector of fast food in Cyprus is not unionised at all. It rests on individual contracts and has never experienced industrial action. Additionally, this 'class' is invisible when it comes to struggles and union representation. It lacks paid leave, paid sick leave and any form of over-time payment. The total number of working hours in a week usually exceeds fifty. Resignation of workers is common and much more common than sacked workers. New ones are constantly being employed.

This combination of Fordism, Taylorism and panoptic discipline make up the quintessential production organisation of the future which, according to its champions such as Bowen and Youngdahl, ought to, and eventually will, be applied to a broad spectrum of the service industry, the open field of private entrepreneurship and healthy business.

This exhaustive and degrading production of material goods is baptised as 'services' and as an empowering activity. In the statistics of the Republic of Cyprus, service workers comprise of 76.9% while industry embraces 20.2%¹⁶ of the labour force. The food manufacturing companies are branded as 'manufacture', in the sector of industry, but fast food is pigeon-holed in 'services' in the category 'shops that sell ready-made food'. Where are these foods being manufactured? – Evidently inside these 'shops'. Yet, this particular manufacture of goods exists nowhere in the statistics. It is hidden in the above category. Moreover, in the 'ready-made foods' category there are more than four thousand workers, most of them concentrated in three companies. Therefore, not only in the social imaginary but also in the more scientifically official statistics, a part of industrial labour exists in a heterotopia, an 'Other' place which veils itself as if it were trying to convince itself that no hard labour is taking place here.

The only difference with the classical industrial worker is the low concentration in space. In these shops the maximum number of personnel is up to twenty-five. This breakdown in space, away from the traditional large factory, provides a breach of the collective consciousness of these workers as a wider group of people comprising a 'class'. It brings forth problems of unity between them and recognition of their existence not only on the level of consciousness but also on the practical level of uniting them in struggle and achieving demands. Nevertheless, it does not change the objective conditions of this 'class' existence as a productive force.

Heterotopia II

Let us now proceed to the Pulse Market Research firm. The research has been conducted from, personal experience again, together with interviews from long-term workers. Pulse Market Research is a research and consulting firm that collects, processes, and presents quantitative and qualitative data, mostly opinion polls. As it states on its website, it provides 'objective, fact-based decision support and implementation, based on rigorous and valid research [...] with market-approved research, statistical and marketing skills, Pulse MR utilises a wide range of methodologies, from qualitative interviewing and analysis, to the most innovative techniques data'.¹⁷ The essential method of the firm's data collection is telephone surveys.

Work starts at 15:30 and ends at 20:30 hours but according to the number of projects undertaken the work could also start in the morning. For most of the time the work is seven days per week and at weekends the time schedule starts from 08:30 to 20:30 hours, with a two-hour pause in between. Each shift is manned by 20 to 25 persons who all sit in one room. Each worker

16 Statistical Service (2012) *Labour Force Survey 2012* Annual Report by Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Finance. Available at: [[http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/FA71F003F435D24BC225777003EF934/\\$file/LFS-2012-130513.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/FA71F003F435D24BC225777003EF934/$file/LFS-2012-130513.pdf?OpenElement)].

17 See [<http://www.pulse.com.cy/>].

sits at a desk and uses a PC which is separated from the others by tall screens on either side thus forming cubicles. The work is paid hourly at €4 per hour and every month the workers must sign a disclaimer form that removes any obligation by the company to contribute to the employee's social insurance. One ten-minute break is given which is unpaid. Any time which is utilised for briefing and informing the workers about anything new (which might take up to thirty minutes) does not count as working time and is unpaid. The entire room is monitored by cameras and supervisors. In order to maintain the maximum degree of surveillance, the shift managers not only monitor the cameras but also eavesdrop, via the central system, on any telephone operator's call whilst he or she is conducting a questionnaire. During work the computer programme automatically calls a random number (from a pre-selected list) as soon as the previous call has ended. If someone stands up to head, let us say, for the bathroom, the computer programme will stop the timer as no phone calls are being made, and that particular timed frame will be unpaid. In the course of the last two months before the end of 2013, going to the bathroom during a shift was no longer tolerated and it was frowned upon. An astonishing degree of time and activity discipline is exerted and monitored throughout. What the operator must and is allowed to utter in her dialogue with the call's receiver is designated precisely on the caller's PC software. It is completely standardised and even the slightest deviation is not allowed. No exclamations or interjections such as 'uh' or 'good', 'uh-huh' are permitted and these regulations are indeed practically imposed. This mechanical structure and method means that the receiver of the call often experiences a ludicrous colloquy between her/him and an apparently human but nonetheless robot-sounding subject who cannot provide any human reactions to the conversation. For instance, if the receiver comes back with a query or does not clarify something, the response will be the repetition of the pre-determined phrase over and over again as if speaking to an answering machine. In one case, as a worker (32-year old Greek female who had worked there for 5 months) reported, the manager was scolding the workers because they 'were not working as robots: "You must be robots" said the manager'.¹⁸ The operators are not allowed to turn their faces away from the PCs for a single second, and if by chance someone turns to say something to the worker next to her/him, not only will she/he be shouted at but she/he might be sacked. Every call is recorded without the called person being informed of this, possibly to save time on providing explanations. Each worker is evaluated and given a score in order to increase productivity and competition among staff that put in a great effort to avoid receiving a low score which might threaten their job. The management exerts an enormous amount of pressure upon the workers to constantly increase the speed with which they complete each phone survey. A five-hour shift, at the end of the day, is a five-hour robotic-style activity of an unceasingly repetitive and dreary procedure. Call after call, question after question, the work is an extraordinary nerve wracking activity which is acted out under a thorough and strict surveillance of all physical and vocal actions for hours.

18 Interview: Female worker, 2013.

This sector is quite a scientifically managed industry that warrants a de-personalisation, de-skilling and automation of not just the body but of the mind and speech. Other phone survey companies in Cyprus pay by the questionnaire and not by the hour: in this way giving more incentives to their staff to work even faster. The workers are either Greek-Cypriot or of Greek nationality and aged around 25 to 35 years old.

Telephone operating has been one of the service sectors accredited with a serious degree of industrial logic from the early twentieth century despite seeming a more soft profession. In 'Women, War, and Work', MW. Greenwald notes that concerning telephone operators of the early twentieth century: 'dressed for work in her finest shirtwaist and long skirt, the telephone operator may have occupied a higher social niche than the factory operative, but her working conditions and income invoked little envy from those women who had experienced corporate telephone operating'.¹⁹ Female telephone operators in the USA were involved in high tense struggles of unionising and striking, resembling industrial unionising. With the passing of years the sector continually expanded its degree of industrialisation on its journey to contemporary development. Furthermore, Pulse applies a type of telephone operator organisation of the kind that is similar to other firms both globally and, of course, in Cyprus. The company states in its website that: 'The international trended method of data collection is utilised at Pulse MR providing our clients with a cost efficient, fast and reliable solution for most research projects. Technological advancements are employed at Pulse MR ensuring 100% data collection supervision and exhaustive sampling coverage.'²⁰ It is exhaustive coverage indeed.

The cases that have been presented are not marginal in terms of their share in the economy. They do not constitute a minority. Fast food franchises have been increasing even after the crisis. It is possible that the island's crisis has given a boost to this sector due to their relatively cheap products.

Many, like B&Y, claim that the new so-called Post-Fordist types of industrial organisation are benefiting the workers by empowering them and enforcing their autonomy and creativity, turning their activities into something more fulfilling, in contrast to old Fordism. But considering what has been covered here, a vast degree of imagination or of ignoring reality is needed to characterise the degrading, de-skilling, monotonous and non-living wage for work at a telephone centre or a fast food establishment, as being creative and empowering. It is also doubtful whether the claims of a disappearance of the working class can be supported.

The 'service' category in the official statistics of the Republic of Cyprus also includes: cleaning services, industrial cleaning, domestic workers, nurses, telecommunications, various telephone centres, refuse disposal companies, equipment and machinery repairs and, of course, normal eating

19 MW. Greenwald (1990) *Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 201.

20 See [<http://www.pulse.com.cy/index.php/methodologies/quantitative-research-methodologies>].

establishments and hotels. The total number of waged labourers in Cyprus in 2012 was 82% of the working population. We can understand how much the working class would shrink if we consider that it does not include service workers, whether this concerns Cyprus or the USA where fast food workers number more than four million.²¹

Heterotopias in Times of Crisis: New Utopics?

'Although the effects of these institutions are the exclusion of the individual, they have as primary aim to arrange individuals in an apparatus of normalization of men. The factory, school, prison or hospitals aim to bind the individual to a process of production, training or correction of producers.'²²

Throughout the past year, the economic crisis and the response to it, had and will be expected to have, damaging effects to a large section of the population.²³ There have been wage reductions, a dramatic increase in unemployment, and a diminishing of welfare. But there has also been an intensification of labour which is evident in our two cases of work places.

In the macro perspective, new processes of social ordering are taking place. Different ethics are to be employed in order to ensure that the population accept new harsh conditions that have changed its expectations for the future. Such processes take place in the daily microcosm of various institutions. It is the microphysics of power that we have to examine in order to understand the production of new social orderings as well as new disciplinary and normalising mechanisms that produce new norms. In our case, those disciplinary mechanisms that produce new ethics are driven by the pressure on capital to safeguard a viable profit against the crisis and in the face of any possible reaction from discontented workers whose labour is being more intensified and cheapened. It is not that a production of a particular social order *per se* is being pursued. Yet, an ordering or re-ordering of production to achieve a maximisation of profits does consciously take place and from that, directly or indirectly, gives rise to a situation which has ramifications on the whole society. In the heterotopias of production new utopics are put to work; that is to say,

21 M. Doussard (2013) *Fast Food, Poverty Wages: The Public Cost of Low-Wage Jobs in the Fast-Food Industry*. Report by University of California – Berkeley.

22 M. Foucault (1974) 'La Vérité et les Formes Juridiques' [Truth and Juridical Forms]. *Chimères*, Vol. 10, p. 15.

23 Cyprus has an economy with the so-called service sector being the main driving force of the economy together with the construction industry. Since the previous decade the country has seen growth rates above the EU average but in the last 5 years it has followed a constant decrease and has now gone into depression and has taken the largest hit after the bank bail-in in March 2013. Since the most important sectors are tourism, financial services and real-estate, the crisis, not only in its Cypriot manifestation but internationally, has asphyxiated the Cypriot economy lowering the demand for these sectors. Cyprus experienced numerous downgrades of its credit rating in 2012 and has been cut off from international money markets. Cyprus is the 5th euro zone country to request a bailout programme from the Troika. A fiscal austerity programme led, and will lead to more, cuts in welfare and wages that increased the social effects of the depression (poverty, unemployment, insecurity).

localisable utopias on behalf of capital in which ‘their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled’.²⁴

As K. Hetherington claims, the factory, has from its beginning been such a place which, through its orderings, influenced society immensely:

“The factory can lay a justifiable claim to define some of the most significant aspects of life associated with modernity. The factory of the Industrial Revolution was an obligatory point of passage, where agency was constituted through the ordering of production, a division of labour, the labour process, spatial and temporal relations, modes of pay, social hierarchies, products, relations between workers, gender, education, morality, scale, power, speed, volume, specialization, embodiment, urban systems, housing, transportation systems, and so on.”²⁵

E.P. Thompson’s highly influential analysis that was mentioned earlier in relation to how the factory reordered time and constructed the time of modernity, also demonstrates this process. At present a new kind of process is taking place from which we can take a glimpse from these heterotopias, but whose full and broad spectrum will perhaps come to light after the dust around this historical process settles down. According to Foucault it is not necessary to ascribe such a process to a fully conscious social actor:

“The moralization of the working class wasn’t imposed by Guizot, through his schools legislation, nor by Dupin through his books. It wasn’t imposed by the employers’ unions either. And yet it was accomplished, because it met the urgent need to master a vagabond, floating labour force. So the objective existed and the strategy was developed, with ever-growing coherence, but without being necessary to attribute to it a subject which makes the law, pronouncing it in the form of “Thou Shalt” and “Thou shalt not.”²⁶

The organisational techniques of the cases that were shown here exemplify a de-skilling and degrading process into which subjects are emerged, together with the panopticon-like surveillance and discipline mechanisms. If we take a Foucaultian standpoint we cannot but ask: What sort of social subjects, what sort of agencies, will these power mechanisms construct? What forms of social ordering will be constituted and what effects will these key spaces of production have on broader spheres of social and personal life? It might seem as an exaggeration to claim that the organisation of humans in the two specific places that were examined could have such an influential disposition. Yet, these specific places are exemplifications of the newest, most efficient models, the paragons of highly modernised productivity.²⁷ They do not represent older and outdated forms that are to be

24 Foucault (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 48.

25 Hetherington (1997), *op. cit.*, p. 117.

26 M. Foucault (1988) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, 1st American edition. New York: Random House USA Inc., p. 204.

27 K. Hetherington writes: ‘The fact that there were so few factories until the 1830s and yet it became such a significant discursive object around which a vision of an Industrial Revolution was constructed, speaks volumes

withered away by technological advancement. As higher modernisation of production ensues, we can expect these models to be applied to a greater extent. By way of illustration, in a short documentary by History Channel entitled 'Modern Marvels: Fast Food Tech',²⁸ Taco Bell's manufacturing process was presented as being exactly that: A modern marvel of industry technology that enables a maximising effect on production time and on low costs of production. The 'modernisation' of economic sectors is one of the key signifiers that is being put forward in Cyprus by business cycles and the State as the way out of the crisis. The heterotopias of production might hold the key to understanding how these strategies of dealing with the crisis might unfold and what consequences they might have. If this kind of economic modernisation provides an exit out of the crisis, to whose benefit will this particular exit be? Development as the way out of the crisis, for instance, investments, advancement in productive forces, division of labour, infrastructure, and growth, entails the growth of these types of workplaces and their conditions. These other places can show us what the future might hold for many workers.

Such heterotopias of production have not experienced yet the political praxis of a struggle by the subjects that exist in them. A form of simple demands such as '8 hours and a union', however old-fashion it might seem, can institute a break in the disappearance of these people as workers, bringing to light their physical, material presence in contrast with their inexistence in the social imaginary and become a step for the transformative power of the invisible.

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28 *Taco Bell – A Peek Behind the Counter: How the Food is Made* (2008) Video from Modern Marvels. Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtHpOXpdSM&feature=youtuve_gdata_player].

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