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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ALTERNATIVE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WITH PRECARIOUS WORKERS: A CASE STUDY FROM TURKEY

*Gulcin Taskiran

Altinbas University, İstanbul, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

In the historical process, the fact that rebending the rights, which were acquired during the processes of organization, for capitalism to overcome the crisis, recreated precarious work. Thus the term “precarization” became a current issue and it started to be discussed. At this process, the form of labor employment, production area, working hours were bent; their legal and union rights were decreasingly exposed to change and unions gradually fell into a decline. Then, those who wouldn’t/couldn’t be organized by unions were in quest of alternatives and coming together, they started to get organized under the roof of labor organizations such as associations, forums, collectives and initiatives. Especially, their intend to execute a pro-union and denominational union is one of the main problematiques of this study. For the field search, owing to the fact that the labor organisations that have class consciousness with no anti-union characteristics are taken into consideration, alternative labor organizations are evaluated in the context of class consciousness and via in-depth interviews that are conducted with organized workers and the authorities of those organizations; the reasons that turn worker’s steps to alternative organisations, the class status of alternative organisations, and its effect on intraclass solidarity practises are examined. As a result it is identified that those organisations that once could be accepted as under union are now independent of the unions, have their distinctive organising manners and grow into such structures that can be evaluated as important tools for working class organisations.

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INTRODUCTION

Marketisation of all social benefits that are regulated by the labour law and earned with social struggles as a result of neoliberal policies aimed at saving capitalism from crisis, caused labour market to become insecure once again. Devaluating social rights and salaries of labour after a period of refining and raising them to a more humanistic level brought out the concept of precariousness. Neoliberalism caused the deterioration of employment and social benefits under cover of policies of flexibility in the period after 1970s. During this period labour’s easy access to regular salary and social benefits was trimmed. Flexibilisation allowed employers to determine the number of workers and change their weekly working hours in accordance with the density of their work load. By this way, flexibilisation also brought deregulation as it gave chance capital to interfere in employees’ working hours. Flexibilisation is not related only to flexibilising working hours, but also to the security of labour, employment and income which means bringing insecurity in all these dimensions. In labour markets, flexibility is becoming more global day by day and it is enabling conditions that ease

dismissal of workers and increase temporary employment (Standing, 2011). Even though the concept of precarious employment is increasingly used, it is not clearly defined. Precarious employment is generally characterised as atypical employment contract, lack of access or limited access to social and legal rights, job insecurity, short-term employment, low wage and high risk of occupational accidents or disease. From a worker’s perspective, precarious employment is defined as uncertain and unpredictable work (Evans and Gibb, 2009). More common and neutral terms for this concept are flexible, atypical and non-standard employment. Atypical employment should be defined in relation to typical employment, or standard employment relations (Pape 2008). If a job is continuous and provides job security, it can be argued that it should not be included in this category (Sennett, 1998). In practice, it is required to discuss the criteria that make work precarious. Standing (2011) mentions 7 basic security definitions. Those are: labor market security, employment security, work security, worker’s health and security, qualification increase security, revenue and representation security. In this regard, precariat is defined by the lack of security in all seven dimensions. On the other hand, aiming to bring a deeper perspective to the concept, Vosko sets new precarity parameters by defining “Conceptualizing Precarious

*Corresponding author: Gülçin Taşkıran,
Altinbas University, İstanbul, Turkey.

Employment” (Vosko, 2006). For unions, it is difficult to organise workers having atypical/flexible contracts that came up with neoliberal policies. These policies have also reduced the power of unions. In particular, change in labour structure, employers’ anti-union strategies, structural changes in industrial areas, new information technologies, goods and service markets’ globalisation and neoliberal policies implementation worldwide have adversely affected union organisation (Lipset and Katchanovski, 2001). According to ILO reports, one of the reasons for declining union membership is emergence of new groups of workers, including women, the youth, highly skilled technical and professional staff, short and part-time employees and those that are subject to unstable employment. These groups of workers are difficult to unionise and defend their rights by traditional ways and methods (ILO, 2002). The separation of the production among contractors due to flexibility and liberty of shifting production to cheap labour areas adversely affects the collective organisations of workers (Bonacich and Gapasin, 2001). In addition, flexible production and flexible employment cause labourers to change jobs often and enable capital holders to arbitrarily hire and dismiss workers in accordance to business needs. These two points bring a serious challenge to the organisation of labour unions. In this respect, workers are increasingly incapable of building a collective organisation and this negatively affects their collective bargaining power. According to Bonacich and Gapasin, changing employment forms accompanied by a rise in the number of precarious workers, women, immigrants, people of colour, creates potential conflicts between old, unionised workers and new, precarious, non-unionised ones. They pointed out to a tendency to blame these precarious workers for bringing flexible jobs, being replaced by them, in other words losing the advantages of stable employment. One the one hand, the unionised workers feel little inclination to express and exercise their solidarity with the less advantaged ones, and, on the other hand, the disadvantaged workers sometimes do not trust union leaders (Bonancich and Gapasin, 2001). This can be generalized to all precarious workers and this conflict is also one of the elements preventing their organisation.

Examples of Non-Union Precarious Worker Organisations in the World

Precarious workers organisations are found in many countries. One of these organizations is the Coalition Against Poverty in Toronto, Ontario (OCAP). OCAP -founded in 1990- is a social association that protects unemployed, precarious and poor against neo liberal policies. Its funding is provided by donations and local unions. OCAP made province pay thousands of dollars for social assistance by its activities. It also provided 250 \$ welfare increase monthly for each individual worker (Black, 2005). National Mobilization Against Sweatshops is an organisation that aims to fight against sweatshop conditions The NMA’s struggles to secure 40 hours/week working time and helps unemployed to find a 40 hours/week job. In 2000, it provided salary increase for New York restaurant workers following a 10 years struggle. By helping to sue NAFTA, it ensured textile manufacturers to secure a wage increase (Black 2005). In addition to these organisations, the cleaning workers’ ‘Justice for Janitors’ campaign in Toronto and ‘Good Jobs for All’ campaigns in USA can be given as good examples of organisations that are developed by non-union associations and supported by unions (Bhullar, 2010). Another example, Los Angeles Manufacturing

Action Project (LAMAP) is given by Bonacich and Gapasin. They explain development of LAMAP by unions not organising. They state that some organizers of LAMAP believe, unions failed to back LAMAP because it was planned as an independent community project outside of the union movement. (Bonacich and Gapasin, 2001). Precarity of employment has been legitimized since 1970s through flexible employment laws. Flexible employment types, which had already been used informally, has become formal in this process. According to Vaysse, this situation decreased the possibility of union movements; however, it wasn’t able to prevent the birth of a novel movement in 1990s. Although this new movement, which was developed by precarious workers, didn’t find itself a place in traditional unions, it acted on its own way (Vaysse, 2011).

Indicating that the movement of precarious workers followed a “path towards a collective action without being alienated”, Vaysse described this path in four stages. The first stage involves the alienation of precarious workers from labor market during the period before 1990. The second stage involves the acts organized by precarious workers themselves to become visible. The third stage involves the small-scale strikes of precarious workers. These strikes, which were organized by especially young precarious workers, started in the early 2000s. The fourth and final stage has been signaling a transformation into a wider worker movement since 2005. Day-care workers’ strike in Germany in October 2009 and the strikes against French pension reform in 2009-2010 can be regarded as examples (Vaysse, 2011).

Vaysse’s four-stage precarious labor movement seems valid for Turkey as well. Alienation of precarious workers by unions is the first stage in Turkey.¹ Turkey has undergone a period in which subcontracted or contracted workers were viewed as second-class workers and were even objected to get on the same service bus and dine on the same table with the permanent workers (Özveri, 2013). Moreover, unions’ efforts not to lose their members due to the crisis (Taşkıran, 2011b) and lack of effort spent for precarious workers resulted in the alienation of precarious workers from unions. Turkey has undergone the second and third stages at the same time. These unprotected workers of labor market started to organize protests in order to become visible, create awareness, and get rid of poor working conditions. These protests enabled them to both found new unions organizing the workers in similar conditions and start conducting alternative organizations. The number of self-developed organizations such as worker associations, platforms, initiatives, and forums has been increasing day by day. The protests of these organizations for common demands such as severance pay and labor safety increased their visibility. In the meantime, small-scale strikes and work stoppage were developed. The question of whether the third stage will continue or not is responded by a new precarious worker protest each day. The workers carry out protests sometimes within a union, sometimes under an association, and sometimes by gathering just because their common demands. Whether the fourth stage will develop in Turkey or not will be determined by the attitudes of unions and alternative labor organizations, which will be discussed in the study.

¹For a study involving union opinions about this issue, see Taşkıran, Gülçin (2011b), Sınıf Örgütlenmesinde Yeni Deneyimler, *Çalışma ve Toplum*, 2011/4, pp. 135- 162

Field Research: Alternative Organization Experiences of Precarious Workers in Turkey

Precarious employment in Turkey covers widely informal, subcontracted, contractual and self-employed workers. In particular, precarious work in the sectors such as health, education and construction industry is increasing day by day in Turkey. It is very difficult for unions to organise this group of workers. On the one hand, precarious workers do not believe that unions protect their rights and, on the other hand, most of the unions are not focus on precarious workers. In addition to this difficulty, unions in Turkey have dramatically lost their power against neo-liberal policies after 1980s. In 2017, the approximate unionisation rate in OECD countries was 17 %, while it was 4.5% in Turkey (OECD, 2018). In their search of an alternative forms of employee interest representation, workers in Turkey began to organise through associations, forums, collectives and initiatives (Taskiran, 2011b). Even though a part of these organisations are not anti-union and believe in working class organisation, they have chosen to establish a non-union organisation associations and acting as an alternative non-union labour organization were explored. Class consciousness, as an important element of union organisation, is a notion related to individual's view of life, class relations and claim of her/himself belonging in a social class (lower-middle-upper). Anderson uses three basic indicators to define class consciousness (Domhoff, 1980): (1) Individual's awareness of her/his own concerns and benefits, and also class identity. (2) Awareness of conflict between her/his class concerns, benefits and other classes' (3) Being volunteer to achieve class aims and benefits in a political challenge. However, Thompson indicates that class consciousness will occur by the effect of experiences of political challenge. He states that, workers tend to build new social classes if they are aware of their own collective interests. They can acquire class consciousness by acting in educational movements, participating in political organisations, publishing periodicals to improve working conditions and keeping the intellectual traditions of working class and solidarity (Thompson, 2012). Alternative labour organizations match exactly this description. It is possible to say that two alternative labour organisations included in the research have class consciousness at some level. They struggle for a broader socio-political change and develop what they see as a class-based organisation. While Waquant suggests that precariat does not have the political consciousness which is needed to create a collective movement (Wacquant, 2007), precarious workers whom I studied managed to develop class-based, alternative labour organizations and collectively resistance. It can also be questioned if precariat is a new and separate class different from proletariat, as it is suggested by Standing (2011). Contrastingly, I argue that alternative labour organizations have an important function of activating the class consciousness of labour. In this study, the reasons of associations' preference to be out of unions, even though they have class consciousness and are not against unions, are investigated.

The Purpose and Problem of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and reveal the reasons of alternative labor organizations for choosing to organize in a non-union/alternative way instead of a union organization despite the fact that they aren't against unions. In the study, it was aimed to reveal the reasons behind the

emergence of non-union alternative organizations rather than determining precarious workers' organizations and to analyze the organization style and process based on existing organization experiences.

METHODS

In this study, structured interviews were conducted. Within the scope of field study, eight organizations were accessed through Worker Forums. A total of 54 workers from eight organizations, which were gathering in their routine Worker Forums to share their problems and find solutions in parallel with the changing agenda of labor, were interviewed. Seven more organizations were accessed through the previous eight organizations, all of which were in common organization. From these seven organizations, 48 workers were interviewed. In sum, 102 workers from 15 organizations were interviewed. Snowball sampling technique, one of the non-random sampling techniques, was used to reach the interviewees. Revealing the existing precarious organizing experiences and analyzing the organization style was sought.

The Scope and Limitation of Study

Although precarity has become a common characteristic for all employment areas in Turkey, the scope of this study was limited by alternative organizations of employees working at private sectors because public officials have relatively more secure jobs compared with the workers that are subject to Labor Law No. 4857. Moreover, the scope was also limited by alternative organizations of labor in service sector without distinguishing between white collar and blue collar workers with reference to the notion that precarity diminishes the difference between them and makes the problems common. The organizations which believe in unionization and carry out organization due to the inability of unions to organize precarious and atypical workers and current legal repressions were purposefully chosen in this study. With reference to the problem that whether labor organizations that aren't against unions cause class division or class solidarity, organizations that weren't against unions and have class organization awareness were the subject of this study. Within this framework, 15 alternative organizations were reached, and the founders and organized workers of these organizations were interviewed. The names of these organizations were kept implicit in this study because some of these organizations were secretly organized and they didn't want to be uncovered by analyzing their names and organization understandings. Therefore, each organization were coded with a letter such as A, B, C, ..., and their organization types were specified by expressing the types. For example, A Association, B Platform, C Solidarity Network.

Some Findings Regarding Alternative Labor Organizations

Demographics: The participants of this study were from different jobs. Of all the participants, 43 were female, and 58 were male. Nearly equal number of women is remarkable because the rate of women in union organizations is pretty low. Moreover, the number of female executives was substantial². Of all the workers in 15 organizations, 67.7% were between the ages of 20 and 29, 27.5% were between the ages of 30 and

²These organizations doesn't uplift being an executive, and it is viewed more like "the person who coordinates the things" or "the name on paper".

39, and 5.8% were between the ages of 40 and 49. When the participants' educational attainment was examined, it was observed that nearly 60% of them had bachelor degree, 27.5% had high school diploma, 15.7% had postgraduate degree, and 5.9% graduated from elementary education. Considering the fact that six of the interviewed 15 organizations involved majorly the subcontracted workers (the number of interviewees was 28), it was observed that the workers with higher levels of education were working as subcontracted workers. Considering the precarious work conditions of the workers within the scope of the study, it can be expressed that workers with high levels of education were also employed at precarious jobs, and higher level of education wasn't inversely correlated with precarity.

Working Conditions of Workers: The most fundamental problems emphasized by the interviewees were frequent job switches and low wages. It wasn't possible for majority of workers to get the enough wage to compensate their efforts. Wage policy of employing the workers doing the best with lowest wage is the cause of this situation. High rate of labor turnover is another data about the precarious work conditions. Most interviewees complained about the constant job switches. The following statement by a subcontracted worker aged 37, working for 15 years, switching 8 jobs, and being from K initiative displays the precarity:

"I graduated from engineering faculty 15 years ago. So far, I worked for 8 different companies due to low wages and workload. I had been unemployed for 3 years in sum. Now, I'm working freelance."

Expressing that they observed their employers' mood to talk about annual leave with pay, majority of workers were unable to use their leave. The workers' caution to talk about their legal right of annual leave when the employer is in a good mood is sourced from the fact that "there are many people out there to work instead of them", which is the result of precarity and high rate of unemployment. Working hours is another issue that the workers complain about most. Weekly work hours of interviewees were estimated as 56 hours. Moreover, a worker from C platform, who felt the precarity about worker health deeply and earned more than others, expresses that being a precarious worker creates the feeling of insecurity over their whole life:

"As your wage increases, you become more attached to the system. You take out loans based on your wage, and get into a debt. This puts you in a bigger stress. In my dreams, I always fear about what to do if I am discharged from my job."

Yücesan-Özdemir expresses that physical health issues in call centers intensify at some aspects depending on how the job is carried out, and getting constant calls through earphones causes hearing loss, external auditory canal infections, nodules in vocal cords, and pharyngitis (2013).

Precarity Spreading to Social Sphere: Uncertainties in individuals' lives brought about by precarity have started to make their social positions uncertain as well. According to Ishiguro, young workers in unstandardized jobs postpone their marriages and desires to have child as a social result of this situation (Ishiguro, 2008). The uncertainty of social position, wage, and employment type has an effect on individuals' future plans. The interviewees demonstrated their concern

about future during the interviews. A subcontracted worker from L association expresses his despair and resentment as:

"I had a girlfriend. We wanted to marry. She told her father. Her father asked about my job at first. She replied as he was a worker at hospital. Her father asked whether I was permanent or subcontracted. When he learned that I was subcontracted, he told "how will you become happy with a man with uncertain, precarious, and temporal job? They viewed me as a subcontracted worker rather than a human. We couldn't get married... But this isn't our destiny, it will change as we organize."

A 40-years old unmarried worker from J association complains about the same issue and summarizes his experience as:

"Let's assume that I convinced a girl and her family, and get married. How will I look after them? 6 months at a job, and 6 months at another job. You get unemployed when you least expect it. All of my married friends are in financial difficulty. I would like to have a regular job, a family, and a kid."

In addition to insecurity in each field of life, precarity pertain to the profession and labor exploitation is a question. Another issue about it is emotional and affective labor exploitation. Emotional labor is used to emphasize the transformation of labor in production fields into a commodity that can be bought and sold in exchange for a price, and describes the use of emotions at workplaces in short. Conceptualized by Hardt and Negri (2004), affective labor indicates the dominion of capital over the exploited emotional labor in every aspect of life in addition to production mode, which is used to increase the added value.

A worker from A association carrying out organization of musicians expresses his opinions about this issue as:

"Composing songs, playing music on the stage... These things give us so much pleasure that they bring us into existence. When you choose this profession, you are exploited voluntarily."

Lorey defines culture producers as "those who entered into a precarious situation of their own accord", and she mentions about the mass precarization of labor conditions is forced upon all of those who fall out of normal labor conditions along with the promise of the ability to take responsibility for their own creativity and fashion their lives according to their own rules, as a desirable, supposedly normal condition of existence (Lorey, 2014).

Reasons of Workers' Non-Union Organizations

Crisis of Traditional Union Understanding and Union Bureaucracy: The crisis experienced by general union understanding organizing standard employment as the employment type is changed was mentioned in other parts of the study. One of the most fundamental reasons of interviewees for choosing non-union organizations is the traditional union understanding. A worker from J association expresses his opinions regarding this issue as:

"Subcontracted workers can't even pass through the doors of many unions. Unions are trying to save themselves rather than

saving workers nowadays. The system scattered them as well as it scattered us”.

Other organizations also share this thought. A worker from D solidarity network which is a platform organizing white collars explains the situation as:

“The unions aren’t even aware of the problems of white collar workers. It is possible to organize workers working collectively in a large factory; however, you have to think about and find a way to organize workers working in plazas and different places of the same firm”.

Management understandings, bureaucracy, and the lack of leaders and democracy within the union play a big role in the crisis of unions (Lordođlu, 2003). Another reason behind the lack of faith owned by white collar workers is their thought that the unions do nothing other than wage negotiations, and that isn’t enough for white collar workers. A worker from D solidarity network states this problem as:

“We have needs other than the wage. We have a career goal that the system locked us in. How will we learn a language? How will we receive support while studying for master’s degree? These seem as imagination by the market doesn’t give the opportunity to find a job for individuals who have only bachelor degree and don’t speak a foreign language. Union organizes people through wage and overtime. These doesn’t meet our expectations.”

This situation shows that the expectations from the unions depend on the workers’ profession, sector, and education.

Obligation of Sector Unionism: Today’s unionism understanding of Turkey is based on organization model at sector level. By operation of 2/1-đ provision of law no 6356, unions are legal entities that are created for operating in a sector to protect and develop employees’ and employers’ joint economic and social rights and interests in working relations. With reference to this provision, the prerequisite to call an organization as a union is that it should be founded on sector basis. By the operation of 2/4 provision of the law, it is stated as “A natural person who carries out his professional activities independently for a fee, apart from a labor contract and in accordance with a transport contract, work contract, attorney agreement, brokerage contract, publishing contract and a commission contract shall also be considered as workers within the meaning of from the second to the sixth part of this Law.” Accordingly, while people who work in accordance with publishing contract, attorney contract, transport contract, commission contract, and brokerage contract have the right to found a union, profession-based organizations founded by people working in accordance with work contract will not be regarded as union in accordance with the legal definition. Sector unionism understanding is one of the fundamental reasons of workers’ non-union organizations, and it prevents the workers from the same profession to organize. A worker from D solidarity network complains about the fact that there is only one IT specialist in each sector, and an IT specialist working in health sector has to organize in a union on health sector, and IT specialists aren’t able to find a channel to discuss the problems specific to their own profession:

“There is one IT specialist in each sector. The obligation to get into different unions isolates us all. We share our

professional problems in our solidarity network and create a common solution area.”

Alternative labor organizations indicate that the lack of professional unions is another reason for them to not to organize within the unions. According to Akkaya, workplace and professional unionism is required today to increase worker movement and develop the class struggle. Sector unionism not only fails to meet the needs of today’s workplaces and professions, but leads workers to keep distance from union organizations. Especially people with relatively high status such as doctors, engineers, and architects remain distant from unions although they become proletarian. Workers in small medium business regard unions meaningless even dangerous since the sector unions don’t engage in their problems (Akkaya, 2009). Although the sector unionism is obligatory today, there are a lot of unions which operate as workplace and professional unions in practice. Unions such as Music-Sen, Cine-Sen, Actors and Actresses-Sen, and Authors-Sen, which were founded by musicians, are the professional unions trying to protect and develop the rights of their members through gang contracts since they don’t have the opportunity for collective labor agreement due to reasons such as sector unionization and 10% threshold practices. Moreover, Bil-İş union is a workplace union organized under IBM.

White Collars’ Notice of Being Workers: Who is involved in the ‘white collar worker’ definition is controversial. There are various definitions based on brain-brawn approach, functional approach, eclectic approach and critical approach. Erdayı emphasizes three basic criteria based on these fundamental approaches for defining white collars. These criteria involve working based on head/mental power with muscle strength, being educated, and being close to authority or have the authority although it is mainly symbolic (Erdayı, 2012). Marx expresses that white collars are also productive labor. However, the big gap between white and blue collars in terms of working conditions, wages, and social rights is decreasing day by day. Expansion in work definitions of white collars, degradation of their working conditions, and long-term unemployment shows that this class who didn’t viewed themselves as workers earlier has started to realize that they become workers. Entrance of educated/skilled people under structural unemployment threat constitutes one of the critical aspects of today’s unemployment phenomenon. The common tendency is making white collars unnecessary (Bora and Erdoğan, 2013: 18). Working in better conditions earlier and having trouble in finding jobs with satisfying wages, white collars experiencing long-term unemployment express that they didn’t call themselves as workers before, but they realized that they were workers. A worker from K initiative summarizes the situation as:

“We had difficulty in explaining plaza workers that we are office workers. High wages, suits, private health insurances, vested benefits... Whenever they learn that they are fired and they don’t even get compensation, they figure out that they are workers. Employers’ ‘we are a family’ discourse loses its reality then”.

A worker among the founding members of C platform exemplifies this situation as:

“People in Turkey have trouble in accepting that they are workers. As the system makes them workers, they find it

difficult to accept it. One of my lawyer friend's statement 'you can't call me a worker, I'm a lawyer' at a meeting summarizes this situation".

White collars' unemployment in Turkey emerged especially during 1994 and 2001 crises. These crises hit the sectors where the skilled labor was intense such as banking. 2010 A&G unemployment research revealed that nearly 25% of unemployed people in Turkey were university graduates³. In their survey conducted with 1500 young engineers and architects (graduated between 2004 and 2008) affiliated with five chambers in İzmir after the unemployment wave in 2009, Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (UCTEA) found that the unemployment rate was 24,58%. Moreover, the data indicating that the risk of unemployment started to create psychological pressure and working conditions were getting more 'intimidating' were obtained in the research (Bora, 2013). Young unemployment rate of 28 EU countries in 2013 was 9,8%. According to Turkish Statistical Institute data of May 2014 about household labor, young unemployment rate including 15-24 age group was 15,8%.

The Will to Overcome the Organizing Limited by Being Employed

One of the main characteristics of atypical employment types is that they are temporary. Union membership has become intimidating since the membership of workers frequently job-switching and being unemployed for long periods is ended.

A worker from I association expresses his opinions regarding the issue as:

"We are unemployed for most of the time. The jobs we find are either seasonal or until the end of subcontractor firm's tender. It is difficult to be a union member. You are put out of the door. If you are a union member, it ends as well when your job ends. You need support when unemployed. We look for jobs for each other at the association. We support each other financially and spiritually."

Frequent job-switches of especially atypically employed workers and their long-term of unemployment are seen as a reason triggering alternative organizations among others. Emphasizing the passive effect of unemployment on organizing, Bora and Erdoğan point at structural effects created by the unemployed people's role in economic production process and ideological political processes as the reason why the unemployed people aren't able to organize in a collective spirit and develop an unemployed movement. Individuality, inactivity, and isolation created by unemployment are the main obstacles before getting organized (Bora and Erdoğan, 2013). However, getting together with others, socializing, and trying to find jobs through this channel in spaces where the unemployed people are organized is a significant tool to remove this isolation. A worker from J association carrying out unemployed and precarious organization expresses this situation as:

"I have been unemployed for a long time. I feel all alone. I came here immediately when I heard about unemployed organization. I really needed it..."

According to official data, shadow employment in Turkey was 37, 8% in 2013. Since the shadow workers aren't able to become official union members, non-union organizations become an obligation. A worker from A association explains why they organized as an association as:

"We are shadow workers. We work wherever we play music and most of us work temporarily. We are already uninsured and work without having any legal right. It is possible for us to express our demands only through an association or a platform."

Freelance working is widespread in especially information sector. Since it isn't possible to organize workers working on daily or temporary businesses in a union, a worker from D solidarity network carrying out information organization draws attention to flexible employment types' negative effects on organizing.

The Problem of Union Trust and Union Reaction: The ability of employers to discharge workers in unions when they are precarious and legal understanding that doesn't protect the worker decreased workers' confidence in unions. There are organizations which express that organizing is faster and workers' reaction is less when the organization is carried out without a name of a union. Efforts put by some unions to organize at workplaces earlier and their failure are triggering factors. A worker from D solidarity network explains this situation as:

"In my factory, a few unions tried to organize. Although we supported these unions, employer's victory over these unions and the lack of resistance from these unions broke the workers' faith in unions. To make matters worse, the crises experienced by unions tarnished powerful union image years ago."

According to a study conducted by Urhan and Selamoğlu in 2007, workers' belief that unions are trustworthy organizations decreased compared with 2004. The rate of people who thought that unions were trustworthy was 29, 5%, while this rate decreased to 22,6% in 2007. Workers who had been members of unions earlier had lower trust in unions compared with other workers (2008: 182). The result of a study conducted by Uçkan and Kağnıcıoğlu showed that non-union workers' trust in unions was low (2008: 48).

The Need for Organization out of Workplace: Bonacich and Gapasin express that workplace based organizations are temporary for precarious workers since they constantly switch jobs and sectors (Bonacich and Gapasin, 2001). A worker from B platform which carries out labor organization although it doesn't include the term of worker in its name expresses that secret organization is very important in their work field and it is impossible to organize under a union:

"Although we believe in the necessity of union organizations, a secret organization is needed to gather the workers together who are afraid of being discharged due to union reasons while organizing the office workers called as white collars."

A worker from B platform indicates that they are an organization satisfying the need to organize without being visible by employers:

"We hope that we are visible to white collars who want to defend their rights without being visible to their employers,"

³ For details, see <http://www.agarastirma.com.tr/arastirmalar/issizlik-anketi/>, (Accessed on 19.08.2014)

need such an organization and solidarity, and don't want to be alone in such a wearing work order."

However, some organizations express that this situation is changing and the fear to be discharged is decreasing as the precarity is increasing. The fact that most of the jobs in the market is precarious gives workers a comfort about finding another precarious job somehow. Although the fear of being fired is a triggering reason for alternative organizations, it isn't the dominant reason. The thought that the precarious worker will find another precarious job decreases the workers' fear of being fired.

Class Solidarity Patterns

Marx and Engels emphasize that unions are the real class organizations of proletariat, and struggle with capital through them in addition to educating themselves through them. In Marxist theory, the only prerequisite of class organization is to organize within unions; however, some non-union labor organizations carry out their organizations without keeping themselves out of this class consciousness. According to these organizations which are the focus of this study, workers staying out of unions and getting away from this consciousness can become a part of an in-class struggle within the alternative organizations founded with class consciousness. A worker from B platform expresses that white collars are away from getting organized, they approach unions with cautions, and organizing through a platform makes them a part of the class:

"The workers with no organization consciousness learn that the labor organizations are necessary, they are workers, and they belong to worker class through our platform."

An authority from O subcontracted worker association indicates that subcontracted workers switch jobs frequently and they have very short union experiences if they have any. Organized workers in the association realize that unions aren't able to respond the deficiencies of current system:

"Working as a union member with collective labor contract is a dream for us. They want to be union members; however, they think that it isn't a permanent organization method since they will be fired when the tender changes."

We already mentioned that the continuance of union membership is based on the permanence of the job, which causes precarious workers to join alternative labor organizations. This situation also helps the workers to stay in alternative organizations and keep their class bounds. An authority from G forum summarizes this situation as:

"They can't be union members when they are unemployed. However, their association membership continues. They don't view themselves as a part of worker class without union membership. However, although the association doesn't function as a union, it carries out an organization that isn't anti-union by explaining the importance of union consciousness."

Unemployment is the most concrete reality for workers to move away from class consciousness. Alternative organizations' structure that include the unemployed rather than employment based structure is an important step not to lose the worker during unemployment. An authority from B

platform which supports the isolated workers during unemployment and creates a network for them to find jobs summarizes this situation as:

"We try to find jobs for our friends who are discharged. They aren't alone. We know what it means to be unemployed in Turkey. If you are unemployed, it is difficult to find a job immediately. It means you are hungry."

A worker from H store workers' organization with no union experience and seven-year work experience describes his work life before being involved in this organization as apolitical and out of class:

"Before getting involved in this store organization, I have never been to an act, gone to a union, and thought about my rights. I found a job and worked. I switched six jobs in seven years, you do the math. I learned that I am a part of worker class, not alone, and my power will increase as long as I'm in solidarity with other workers in this organization. I was an apolitical person. I would never imagine that I would think about world affairs and go to an act (he mentions about the act for severance pay)."

It is a frequently encountered situation in Turkey to label labor organizations as "anarchists" due to their political struggles to achieve their class goals and interests (Taşkıran, 2011a). It is also difficult to convince the workers that a political struggle is necessary. Although the union organizations are carried out in workplaces, alternative organizations carry out their affairs out of workplaces, which creates a significant space to convince workers for political struggle. Moreover, a number of worker protests joined by many workers within these organizations increases their class consciousness. The effectiveness of class solidarity and collective spirit can be seen in the words of a worker from C platform while telling about his first experience in 1 May Labor and Solidarity Day:

"I went to Taksim Square for the first time in the last 1 May. My shakes were shaking due to my excitement. Hundreds of thousands like me were there, I wasn't alone. When I figured out that I was a part of the worker class and read and learn about it, I started to bring myself into existence. We were five friends from our plaza. We were wearing suits and called as ... director, official. We were pulled away from worker class with these lies. We were fully aware of the fact that we were workers while we were chanting under our platform's banner on 1 May."

The workers expressed that they gained class consciousness more thanks to strikes, workplace occupations, 1 May, severance pay protests, and Gezi resistance protests. Organization brochures and education booklets prepared by these organizations are also interesting. Education brochures of especially platforms, solidarity networks, and collective organizations involve legal, class, and political emphases. The brochures cannot be presented in this study since the identity of labor organizations in this study are kept confidential. However, the brochures involve information about how to organize, how it makes a difference in sectoral and professional manner step by step, our legal rights, and criticisms of political agenda. A worker from D solidarity network indicating that labor organizations based on precarity can establish bound with each other although they were at different, IT workers build the web pages of construction

workers, and get support from their organization experiences expresses this situation as:

“We arrange other organizations’ blogs and webpages (construction workers, textile workers). We learn how to organize from them. We learn not to leave workplace when a worker is fired. We inform them about our protests. We carry our joint worker forums. The professions are different but the problems are common. We are aware of that.”

An association organizing musicians expresses that they support the protests of other alternative labor organizations and unions with their music. Similarly, they state that they are supported by other associations or platforms in terms of legal issues, IT specialists support them by preparing their webpages, and there are other labor organizations that carry out joint activities on 1 May. Along with the adverse effects of globalization and flexible employment on organization, the increase in the number of precarious workers communize the destiny of many workers due to the homogenizer characteristic of precarity. Expressing the precarity as a characteristic of flexibility while dividing the labor, Özügurlu argues that destiny of most workers results in precarity (Özügurlu, 2010). According to Silver, a homogenous worker class around the world that has similar (and unpleasant at the same time) work and life conditions is on the process of emergence (Silver, 2009: 21). Global production not only created a universal worker class whose work and life conditions were getting common, but generated a labor across the world that is faced with multinational corporation owners as well. Fragmentation, temporalization, and precarization that characterizes capitalism spawned both a minority working for high wages and a majority working at temporary jobs for lower wages to save the day. It is not ignorable that these two parties get homogenized within themselves. Common problems gather blue and white collars, engineers and welding workers, academics and cleaning workers together day by day.

Conclusion and Evaluation

Beyond being an employment type, precarity has become a concept involving the whole social life, and work conditions of labor has become heavier, which made them important reasons triggering the necessity of organizing. The recession in union organizations and unions’ efforts to maintain their few workers but not to develop new organization strategies to involve precarious workers abused the workers’ trust in unions. However, that wasn’t enough to shake their belief in organizing. Precarious labor started to look for alternatives. During this process, a number of labor organizations emerged which were or weren’t antiunion. The organizations named as association, platform, initiative, forum, collective, and solidarity network started to draw more attention thanks to their protests of worker discharges and violations of rights. In this study, the place of founding and carrying out alternative labor organizations in class struggle was emphasized with reference to reasons of these organizations’ nonunion structures, which weren’t antiunion and carried out class organizations. Semi-structured interviews with 102 workers from 15 alternative labor organizations with class consciousness revealed data about these organizations’ reasons of carrying out nonunion organization, their opportunities, limitations, solidarity practices, and common organization fields. One of the most important factors of the need for alternative organizations, precarity has expanded from employment to the

whole social life, and today’s unions has been inadequate to organize atypical/flexible workers, which resulted in the current union crisis. According to field research findings, although they weren’t antiunion, workers explained the reasons of their need for alternative organizations as: the crisis of traditional union understanding and union bureaucracy, obligation of organizing based on sector in Turkey, white collars’ notice that they were workers, individualization of workers day by day, the will to overcome the obligation of organizing limited by employment, union trust issue, and the need for organizing out of workplace. Although alternative labor organizations have some advantages, they have some limitations as well. These organizations sometimes experience financial difficulties since they don’t raise membership fee, which has an effect on their activities. They expressed that when they weren’t able to support a strike or workplace occupation financially, they had to end the protests if they couldn’t get support from other labor organizations or unions. Demonstrating a collective solidarity by alternative labor organizations is another interesting aspect of them. They get support from each other’s professions while providing educations, protesting, preparing their internet pages, and publishing organization brochures. Having a communication network among them, these organizations support each other during protests and sometimes take common actions. In worker forums, the current problems of workers are discussed and joint protest plans are made.

Some limitations experienced by alternative labor organizations were revealed during interviews. The constant change in the number of people who join the meetings is one of these limitations, which means that the decisions taken at meetings are sometimes put into practice by few people. Additionally, organizations expressed that sometimes they were faced with crises when they had to find immediate solutions. Therefore, they stated that they needed to found some units regarding certain issues. They imitated unions about this issue, and divided the affairs into small units. These organizations are in the process of becoming a class through the legal and political educations they provided and the collective protests they took part in. They expressed that social media organizations sometimes didn’t reflect on the streets, and the workers out of the core crew behaved arbitrarily. Moreover, unwilling to move with a management mentality and the will to involve everyone in the management, these organizations have trouble in creating an initiative organ to conduct some affairs. Employers out of unions gain class consciousness through alternative labor organizations, which contributes to workers’ struggle. Although the main organization for workers is the unions, the foundation of these alternation organizations ensures class solidarity since they were founded to prevent isolation without denying the place of unions. Although it has never been homogenous, worker class started to become homogeneous due to precarity. Which way will this common process evolve is uncertain, but alternative labor organizations are a part of worker class movement today, and they serve as a platform to organize workers during the process of union crises. Considered as a sub-union formations earlier, alternative organizations are now independent from unions and have become organizations that have their own way of organizing and can be regarded as important tools to organize worker class. These organizations should be pay regard while unions voice the internal criticisms. Unions that are criticized in terms of isolation of labor should view alternative organizations as a chance because workers pushed

to isolation and out of class solidarity are able to be involved in class struggle thanks to alternative labor organizations. These organizations should be viewed by unions as the labor organizations with which they could walk side by side, establish organic bounds, and get class support for a large class movement when required. It is considered that this study which focused on alternative labor organizations in service industry can be an example for precarious worker organizations in other sectors.

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