
ORGANIZATION THEORY: A CRITICAL READING

FERNANDO RAMALHO MARTINS

UFGD Lecturer

E-mail: fernandomartins@ufgd.edu.br

Abstract

Organization Theory originated from questioning and influence of studies by sociologists and economists who sought to understand a new form of social production organization, marked by the bureaucratic entrepreneurship and capitalism, in the context of Industrial Revolution. Two major lines of thoughts are the basis for the organizational thinking (Hatch, 1997). The first one, composed of sociologists such as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx, focused on “changes in the form and role played by formal organizations in society and the great influence of industrialization on the nature of work and its consequences for the workers” (Hatch, 1997, p. 27). The second line of thought comes from reflections of more contemporary authors who formed the Classical School of Administration, among whom we can highlight: Frederick Taylor and Henri Fayol. A managerial and pragmatic approach, aimed at the increase of the industrial organization productivity, can be mentioned as a characteristic of the second line. According to Fligstein (2001), a third matrix of thinking related to the studies of organizations is found in the economy. It originates from the development of theories such as The Firm Theory and later, the Agency Theory, whose approaches of analysis are amplified when compared to the Classical School approach, since the concern is not the organization itself and its internal mechanisms, but its existence and interrelationship in a larger economic context.

Along the historical development of the Organizational Theory field, different paradigms have emerged, embracing particular world views and scientific frameworks (Morgan, 2005). Although there is some diversity, we can see a process of legitimation and favouring of some ideas, which prioritizes a more pragmatic and functionalist perspective of the organizational phenomenon, shadowing critical and sociological approaches. It is revealing, in that sense, that according to a study carried out by Davel and Alcadipani (2003), only 2% of the papers published in five well regarded Brazilian management journals during the 1990s decade had a critical perspective.

October 01-02nd, 2012

Center for Organization Studies (CORS)

FEA USP (University of São Paulo); FGV (Getúlio Vargas Foundation); Insper (Institute of Education and Research); UFBA (Federal University of Bahia); UFRJ (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and UFSCar (São Carlos Federal University)

Seeking to contribute to overcoming this epistemological gap, our analytical efforts in this theoretical essay aim at the following reflection: How would Organization Theory be conceived of from a critical sociological approach?

Considering a series of variations that this question can suggest (see Alvesson, Bridgman & Willmott, 2009), we will confine this questioning to the field of Marxist studies. This way, the questions to be answered would be: how does the Marxist approach conceive the organization and the organizational theory? How are classical and contemporary management theories (re)interpreted in the light of this referential?

To deal with these questions, we will depart from a literature review, firstly recalling the fundamentals of the Marxist perspective, discussing its analysis on what has remained and what has concretely changed in the organizational world and in the world of work. Secondly, based on organizational literature authors and in the light of the Marxist perspective, our theoretical efforts will aim to understand which questions and social/economic concerns are concretely addressed by three important organizational theorists: Taylor, Ford and Ohno.

In conclusion, our analysis take us toward the following hypothesis: although the Toyotism has been presented as representing a novel model of work organization when compared to the Taylorism-Fordism, a critical analysis suggests that the difference between such models lies more in the appearance realm than in the phenomenon essence, since in the limit both turn to the same agenda of problems, concerns and interests.

Key words: Organization Theory; Critical Management Studies; Marxism.

ORGANIZATION THEORY: A CRITICAL READING

1. The Capitalist Labour Process: a Marxist analysis.

According to Marx (1996) there are two points to be stressed in the capitalism labour process: 1) employees work under the capitalist control; 2) the work results belong to the capitalist (Marx, 1996, p. 304). It is possible to state that capitalism is structured under a contradictory relationship between work-force buyers and sellers and that this relation is mediated by a surplus extraction process.

Starting from the concept of value, in accordance with the classical economic theory which claims that it originates from human labour, Marx (1996) shows that, in a capitalist context, what employees sell (and what capitalists buy) is work-force, i.e., work potentiality, and not work precisely speaking. In last analysis, that is the very secret of profit. After realizing the labour potentiality into labour and accomplishing the transformation of the commodity into money, in the market, part of the value added to the commodity (by workers) is retained by the employer, never getting back to its origin, i.e., workers. That is possible when the wage is lower than the value added by the employees to commodities; when the labour-time is higher than the necessary time for workers reproduction (for them to afford their meanings of existence); in sum, when labour potentiality is achieved, turned into labour.

It is important to note the existence of a stream in the field of organization theories committed to this particular understanding of work relations: The Labor Process Theory. Based on Marx and Braverman contributions, the authors from that perspective will pay close attention to the indeterminacy of labour. Following their steps, we are going to argue here that the search for solving that indeterminacy will always be the aim of capitalist management theory, even if it has not been explicitly announced as so. In accordance with Thompson (2009, p. 101), Labour Process theorists defend that there is a control imperative in management:

The core [of Labour Process Theory] referred to a control imperative given that market mechanisms alone cannot address the indeterminacy of labour (the conversion of labour power into profitable work), rather than specifying a particular control strategy.

In association with that, another very important point to highlight in order to understand organization theory agenda within a capitalist context is the two possibilities of surplus increasing pointed out by Marx (1996): absolute and relative form. The first form is realized by the prolongation of the working day. In that way, working-hours are increased, but not workers wage. The second form is realized when, due to an innovation, the necessary time for the commodity production is reduced. In order for so, a technical labour revolution is demanded, as stated by Marx (1996, p. 431, our stressing):

Hitherto in treating of surplus value, arising from a simple prolongation of the working day, we have assumed the mode of production to be given and invariable. But when surplus value has to be produced by the conversion of necessary labour into surplus labour, it by no means suffices for capital to take over the labour-process in the form under which it has been historically handed down, and then simply to prolong the duration of that process. **The technical and social conditions of the process, and consequently the very mode of production must be revolutionised, before the productiveness of labour can be increased.** By that means alone can the value of labour-power be made to sink, and the portion of the working day necessary for the reproduction of that value, be shortened. (Marx, 1996, p. 431).

We strongly believe that this search for revolutionising the labour process is a key-point in the understanding of the management and its theories. Thus, it is possible to assume that the search for the surplus increase, and the control imperative over labour, are constants in the propositions of both classical theorists, like Taylor and Ford, and more contemporary ones, like Ohno. Thus, we are going to defend that, even though these authors justify their theories in the name of a “common well”, what matters indeed is the enhance of the surplus extraction, given that “the capitalist who applies the improved method of production appropriates to surplus labour a greater portion of the working day, than the other capitalists in the same trade. He does individually, what the whole body of capitalists engaged in producing relative surplus value, do collectively” (Marx, 1996, p. 435).

2. Taylorism-Fordism

Although Braverman (1981)’s major work, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, was originally published in 1970s it is still a central theorization for those who are looking for understanding the Labor Process under capitalism, especially the taylorist variation of it.

Braverman, analysing the occupational and industrial changes that took place in the 20th century, starts by scrutinizing the origins of management, whose aim has to do with the *administration* of huge numbers of employees under the same employers' roof. In doing so, he highlights what is essential in our management theory: the control over labour.

As stresses this author (p. 61), “at first, the capitalist utilizes labour as it comes to him from prior forms of production, carrying on labour processes as they had been carried on before”. But, as soon as managers master production technics, questions including the follows start guiding their thought: How to get more surplus-value from paid labour? How to control better the work-force? How to avoid workers' making-out? How to reduce the useless time during production?

Those are the questions that raised the building blocks of modern management. Because it deals with paid labour, and because it needs to extract surplus-value from it, a new art was brought into being, “which even in its early manifestations was far more complete, self-conscious, painstaking, and calculating than anything that had gone before” (ibid, p.66). The main concern of it was related to the avoidance of useless time in working-hours or, in last analysis, with the always present indeterminacy caused by the necessity of transforming labour-power into labour.

Although despotism has been present in other forms of production, in modern management it gains new lines. Capitalist management is committed to creating new labour methods aiming to make “free workforce” become accustomed to the work and able to work in a stable way along years and years. In order to do so, it was necessary to get control over what had still remained under workers' control, that is, their knowledge and their skills. That is Taylor Scientific Management's legacy, in accordance with Braverman (1981).

Taylor, a former blue-collar worker who became the manager of Midvale Steel Company, originated from a middle-class and quacker North-American background. In 1911, he came up with the principles of what would be known as a revolutionary management theory: the Scientific Management. Taylor (1980) initial aims were to solve what he considered the main problem of America: the soldiering. He believed that the citizens of a nation should hold the feeling shared by baseball or cricket teammates, in which “the universal sentiment is so strong that any man who fails to give out all there is in him in sport

is branded as a ‘quitter’, and treated with contempt by those who are around him” (Taylor, 1980, p. 32).

In order to solve the soldiering problem, Taylor (1980) presents what he called the principles of Scientific Management, whose core concept is related to the knowledge transference from workers to managers:

[Under scientific management] the managers assume, for instance, the burden of gathering together all of the traditional knowledge which in the past has been possessed by the workmen and then of classifying, tabulating, and reducing this knowledge to rules, laws, and formulae which are immensely helpful to the workmen in doing their daily work. (Taylor, 1980, p. 49-50)

The author believes that the Scientific Management principles offered America a way of performing an outstanding production, by guaranteeing the workers’ best “initiative”, and, therefore, saving the economy by overcoming America’s competitors in the commodity market. It is important to highlight that, despite all the claimed novelties, Taylor theorization undoubtedly rely on the transformation of labour-power into labour (because it is clearly the core problem of management in capitalist societies). Even though it is a classist and, hence, egotistical target in terms of societal needs it is always presented by Taylor as a search for a common well; as a win-win possibility in a non-antagonistic relation.

Clearly, the major target of capital cannot be claimed openly without consequences. Thus, euphemisms are vastly used while presenting the new systems of ideas, along with heroics justifications, appealing to equity principles (maximum prosperity both for employer and employee) and to patriotism (solving the soldiering problem in benefit of the nation), as follows:

It will be shown later in this paper that doing away with slow working and "soldiering" in all its forms and so arranging the relations between employer and employees that each workman will work to his very best advantage and at his best speed, accompanied by the intimate cooperation with the management and the help (which the workman should receive) from the management, would result on the average in nearly doubling the output of each man and each machine. What other reforms, among those which are being discussed by these two nations, could do as much toward promoting prosperity, toward the diminution of poverty, and the alleviation of suffering? America and England have been recently agitated over such subjects as the tariff, the control of the large corporations on the one hand, and of hereditary power on the other hand, and over various more or less socialistic proposals for taxation, etc. On these subjects both peoples have been profoundly stirred, and yet hardly a voice has been raised to call attention to this vastly greater and more important subject of "soldiering," which directly and powerfully affects the wages, the prosperity, and the life of almost every working-man, and also quite as much the prosperity of every industrial, establishment in the nation. The

elimination of "soldiering" and of the several causes of slow working would so lower the cost of production that both our home and foreign markets would be greatly enlarged, and we could compete on more than even terms with our rivals. It would remove one of the fundamental causes for dull times, for lack of employment, and for poverty, and therefore would have a more permanent and far-reaching effect upon these misfortunes than any of the curative remedies that are now being used to soften their consequences. It would insure higher wages and make shorter working hours and better working and home conditions possible (Taylor, 1980, p.32).

In sum, that is the way by which Taylor turns the exploitation problem into the problem of getting the best worker initiative and cooperation (instead of soldiering and resistance). But what Taylor brings to Organization Theory is not only a new discourse, but a new method of enhancing the productivity, by improving the control over work-force. From then on, not only workers' actions would be controlled by managers, but also activities' planning process. Before Taylor, workers were allowed to plan their activities according to their own initiative.

According to Taylor's method every single activity should be scrutinized and measured, in order for the managers to achieve consciousness of what a good day of work would be.

Now it must be clearly understood that in these experiments we were not trying to find the maximum work that a man could do on a short spurt or for a few days, but that our endeavor was to learn what really constituted a full day's work for a first-class man; the best day's work that a man could properly do, year in and year out, and still thrive under. (...) What we hoped ultimately to determine was what fraction of a horse-power a man was able to exert, that is, how many foot-pounds of work a man could do in a day. (Ibid, 1980, p 63)

It is important to note that Taylor's ideas are the product of a wider context. In that sense, it is possible to affirm that they were not entirely new. As Braverman (1981) points out, the division of labour had been used before Taylor's time and had been the subject of study of classical economists like Adam Smith. Thus, taylorist ideas are part of a historical development concerned to the beginning of capitalist society.

What makes Taylor's ideas different from other theoretical systems from his time is the fact that it takes control in a higher account than ever. As Braverman puts (1980 p. 86)

(...) Taylor raised the concept of control to an entirely new plane when he asserted as an absolute necessity for adequate management the dictation to the worker of the precise manner in which work is to be performed. That management had the right to "control" labour was generally assumed before Taylor, but in practice this right

usually meant only the general setting of tasks, with little direct interference in the worker's mode of performing them.

Thus, this author leaves to humanity a unique method to manage, i.e., to control work-force, whose main point has to do with the control over planning and execution of work activities. Nonetheless, in some degree, it is possible to say that the control over labour-force did not reach its peak with Taylorism: it was yet to be enhanced even more.

During the twentieth century, Taylor's ideas were developed further, giving birth to Fordism (or Taylorism-Fordism, as some authors prefer). In that sense, following the steps of Taylor, Ford (1954) also recognizes that the secret of capitalist production has to do both with: 1) the rational fractioning of working process; 2) the maintenance of a good work pace. As he puts: “dividing and subdividing operations, keeping the work in motion—those are the keynotes of production” (Ibid, p. 76).

His passion for improving the work process, led Ford to a new development in the labour process: delivering work to workers, and not the other way around:

The first step forward in assembly came when we began taking the work to the men instead of the men to the work. We now have two general principles in all operations — that a man shall never have to take more than one step, if possibly it can be avoided, and that no man need ever stoop over. (Ford, 1954, p. 70)

Three are the principles proposed by Ford, which intensified labour and secured even more control over it:

- (1) Place the tools and the men in the sequence of the operation so that each component part shall travel the least possible distance while in the process of finishing.
- (2) Use work slides or some other form of carrier so that when a workman completes his operation, he drops the part always in the same place — which place must always be the most convenient place to his hand — and if possible have gravity carry the part to the next workman for his operation.
- (3) Use sliding assembling lines by which the parts to be assembled are delivered at convenient distances. (Ford, 1954, p.70)

As a consequence of the application of these principles, as Ford himself puts, there was severe “reduction of the necessity for thought on the part of the worker and the reduction of his movements to a minimum” (Ibid, p. 70). Similarly to Taylor, this theorist passionately looked forward to the elimination of waste (of time and money) in factory. Ford added something new to this effort: mass production and mass consumption.

In order to justify his new-born philosophy, like Taylor, he presents the idea of a common well as the result of its principles.

For anyone to be required to use more force than is absolutely necessary for the job in hand is waste. The essence of my idea then is that waste and greed block the delivery of true service. Both waste and greed are unnecessary. Waste is due largely to not understanding what one does, or being careless in doing of it. Greed is merely a species of near-sightedness. I have striven toward manufacturing with a minimum of waste, both of materials and of human effort, and then toward distribution at a minimum of profit¹, depending for the total profit upon the volume of distribution. In the process of manufacturing I want to distribute the maximum of wage — that is, the maximum of buying power. Since also this makes for a minimum cost and we sell at a minimum profit, we can distribute a product in consonance with buying power. Thus everyone who is connected with us — either as a manager, worker, or purchaser — is the better for our existence. (Ford, 1954, p. 26)

As one can infer, the Fordism, at first, intensifies the principles raised by Taylor related to the control and exploitation of workforce, adding the assembly line to the labour process. Nevertheless, it is important to note that it, as a control device, goes beyond this technical innovation. As Alves (1999, p. 50) points out, by offering a better payment and by trying to develop (or impose) a way of life for its workers (see Faria, 2004), Fordism intensifies even more the control over labour force.

Gramsci (2001), while analysing the North-American way of life (what he called Americanism), was able to note something particularly unique: the hegemonic control as a keystone of North-American social system. In his analysis, this form of control is constituted by the combination of force (symbolized, for instance, by the brutality of Ford's Service Department) and persuasion (symbolized by high wages and benefits added with political and ideological propaganda) (Gramsci, 2001, p. 266).

Faria (2004, p. 45) also draws attention to the physical and moral control implicit in Fordism. He stresses that Ford used to hire employees with the mission of investigating workers' lives and also explaining for workers' wives (especially those who came from abroad) how to behave properly in USA. In accordance with Faria (2004), Ford's Service Department hired around 800 guards (former wrestlers, boxers and gangsters) who used to apply physical violence against workers and union representatives, especially.

In sum, it is possible to say that the Fordism, by adding to the Scientific Management the assembly line, the payment increase and the morality control, turned into a

¹ It is interesting to note Ford's mention to greed, considering that the "minimum profit" pursued by him was the source of accumulation of an impressive fortune.

much more effective management device. Harvey (2002) takes the year of 1914 as a symbolic date (because of the introduction of the assembly line and the five-dollars-per-day payment), but, in fact, it reached its peak after the post second war period (1945-1973).

Overall, until the 1970s decade, the Fordism was the main production system in the automobile industry, in which the assembly line employee appears as “a profit machine”, as put by Gounet (1999, p. 17). This theorist defends that the Fordism, as a production system, relied in five bases:

1. Mass production
2. Division of labour, in a taylorist fashion
3. Assembly line usage
4. Utilization of standardized pieces
5. Factory automation

Although Fordism can be described as a new system of factory management, given that it represents a significant rationalization of labour process, Antunes (2000) prefers to refer to it as Taylorism-Fordism, once that one depends so much on the other that it becomes difficult to determine where the first ends and where the latter starts. This author ponders that

Generally speaking, it is possible to infer that the binomial Taylorism / Fordism, dominant sentence concerned to the system of production and its respective labour process, which lasted in large industry during the twentieth century, especially from its second decade on, was based on commodity mass production, structured on homogeneous and vertical production. (...). Such a process [Taylorism-Fordism] was characterized by a mix between the Fordist mass production and the Taylorist chronometer, followed by the clear separation between activity planning and execution. For Capital, it is matter of capturing to itself the labour *savoir faire*, taking its intellectual dimension out of workplace. Work activity was reduced to its mechanical and monotonous dimension (Antunes, 2000, p.36- 37)

In conclusion, some of the characteristics of Taylorism-Fordism can be synthetized as follows: time and motion control; mass production; work specialization; work fragmentation; *centralization* (of communication and decision making); vertical integration; separation between activity planning and execution (Antunes, 2001, 2005; Harvey, 1992; Furtado, 2004). Undoubtedly, Taylorism-Fordism proved to be an impressive device in order to extract surplus-value. However, after 1970s decade a new discourse emerged on the scene: the Toyotism or Lean Production.

3. Toyotism or Lean Production

Until 1970s decade, taylorist-fordist production system was dominant, but since then it has faced a critical period, which would challenge its effectiveness. According to Antunes (2000, p. 29-30), that period was characterized by the following events:

- Decrease in profit rates, due to: “the increase of the labour prices, after 1945 period, and (...) the intensification of social struggles during 1960s decade, whose aims were to get social production control back” (Ibid, p. 29).
- “Taylorist-fordist accumulation pattern reached its limit (...) due to its incapacity to respond to the constant consumption decrease” (Ibid, p. 29)
- Economy financial hypertrophy
- The increase of Capital Concentration
- Welfare State crisis
- Privatization, economy deregulation and flexibility of production (including flexibility in terms of market and in terms of workforce regulation)

As a consequence of a world crisis, the capitalist elite initiated a process of economic reconfiguration

whose main characteristics were connected to the introduction of neoliberalism, with the state privatization, deregulation of labour rights and state productive sector dismantlement, from which Thatcher-Reagan era was an icon; that was followed by a production and labour restructuring process, aiming to allow Capital to get back to a profit-rate-expansion situation (Antunes, 2000, p. 31).

In such a context of production restructuring, Toyotism or Lean Production was presented as the ultimate solution. Ohno (1997, p. ix), in that way, defends that its origin derived from necessity, once that “certain restrictions in the marketplace required the production of small quantities of many varieties under conditions of low demand, a fate that Japanese automobile industry had faced in post-war period”.

It is important to note that, even for this author, the Toyota system is not a simple negation of the taylorist-fordist system, but, beyond that, it represents a historical evolution, an evolving process both with absorption and refutation of practices introduced in the fordist context. In that sense, as claimed by Faria (2004), Ford had already pioneered conceptions related to what would be called *kanban* or *just-in-time* system.

Thus, taking ideas from North-America and also from Japanese textile industry, the Toyota Company developed a production system announced as great novelty, which relied on: just-in-time and “automation with a human touch” (Ohno, 1997, p. 4). The Kanban², whose origins are linked to American supermarket’s sector, also played a very import role in its system. Moreover, as Coriat (1994) stresses, another important characteristic of Toyota System is the fact that the production is set from the end to the beginning. In accordance with Ohno’s explanation (1997, p. 27):

The final assembly line is taken as the starting point. On this basis, the production plan, indicating the desired types of cars with their quantity and due date, goes to the final assembly line. Then the method of transferring the material is reversed. To supply parts used in assembly, a later process goes to an earlier process to withdraw only the number of parts needed when they are needed. In this reverse way, the manufacturing process goes from finished product back to the earliest materials-forming department. Every link in the just-in-time chain is connected and synchronized. By this, the management work force is also reduced drastically.

Such a system is advantageous in relation to mass production in a very specific context, i.e., when demand is not predictable or hardly predictable, as stresses Ohno (1997, p. 54):

Toyota Production System was originally conceived to produce small quantities of many types for the Japanese environment. Consequently, on this foundation it evolved into a production system that can meet the challenge of diversification. While the traditional planned mass-production system does not respond easily to change, the Toyota production system is very elastic and can take the difficult conditions imposed by diverse market demands and digest them. The Toyota system has the flexibility to do this. After the oil crisis, people started paying attention to the Toyota production system. I would like to make clear that the reasons lie in the system's unsurpassed flexibility in adapting to changing conditions.

Dealing with a crisis’ scenario, where resources (human and material) were scarce, Ohno (1997, p. 82) faced the following question: “how could we increase productivity with less workers? To take into account the number of [working] days to answer this question would be a mistake. Instead, we should take into account the number of workers.”

² Defined by Ohno (1997, p. 27) “as the means used for conveying information about picking up or receiving the production order”.

Arguably, the core of the question Ohno is trying to answer could be expressed as follows: how should one proceed in order to extract more surplus-value within the same working hours employing less workers? In our analysis, the basic problem addressed by Ohno is precisely the issue raised by Marx when analysing the relative form of surplus-value extraction, i.e.: how should one proceed to revolutionise the social and technical production processes in order to shorten the portion of the working day necessary for the commodity production and consequently the reproduction of that value?

Antunes (2000, p.53), in that sense, defends that Toyotism is in fact a process of organizing the labour process “whose main aim is the intensification of labour exploitation, by eliminating, in a great deal, the **unproductive labour**, i.e., **the labour that does not add value to commodities**, and its similar forms”, and, as a consequence, “it creates a new standard in terms of **work intensification**, making use of both forms of surplus extraction forms, absolute and relative one” (p. 56).

It is important to note, however, that neither Ohno (1997) nor Taylor or Ford use words such as work intensification, exploitation, control, surplus-value extraction. Instead, as a manner of making his claims more connected to the idea of a common well, Ohno prefers to use the expression *waste elimination* (of unnecessary labour, time or resources), as the central claim in favour of Toyotism, stated by him once and again, as follows:

The most important objective of the Toyota system has been to increase production efficiency by consistently and thoroughly eliminating waste (Ohno, 1997, p.IX)

The starting concept of the Toyota production system was, as I have emphasized several times, a thorough elimination of waste. (Ohno, 1997, p.X)

There is no magic method. Rather, a total management system is needed that *develops human ability to its fullest capacity to best enhance creativity and fruitfulness, to utilize facilities and machines well, and to eliminate all waste* (Ohno, 1997, p. 30)

When thinking about waste elimination, one needs to have in mind:

1. Improving efficiency only makes sense when it is tied to cost reduction. Look at the efficiency of each operator and of each line.
2. Then look at the operators as a group, and then at the efficiency of the entire plant (all the lines). Efficiency must be improved at each step and at the same time, for the plant as a whole. (Ohno, 1997, p. 38)

The Toyota production system is a method to thoroughly eliminate waste and enhance productivity. In production, ‘waste’ refers to all elements of production that only increase cost without adding value – for example, excess people, inventory and equipment.

Too many workers, equipment, and product only increase the cost and cause secondary waste. For example, with too many workers, unnecessary work is invented which, in turn, increases power and materials usage. This is secondary waste. (Ohno, 1997, p. 71)

In sum, it is possible to see how Ohno (1997) repeatedly shows that the system efficiency is based on the elimination of waste. Therefore, it is clear that, like Taylor and Ford, the main concern here is linked to the best utilization of labour resources during the process of adding value to commodities. All in all, those three authors were concerned with the assurance of the “best initiative” from worker (solving the indeterminacy problem linked to the process of turning workforce into labour). The quotations make clear that Ohno’s theory explicitly deals with the need of the capitalist productive system of eliminating unproductive labour, but it conceals that such reorganization of labour process implies intensification of work.

In last analysis, all three author analysed here, by different paths, were trying to revolutionise labour process, enhancing the relative surplus extraction. In doing so, the three of them were trying to offer more than a solution for a critical moment or crisis, but the best solution for one of the fundamental problems of capitalism, in general, and of Capital, in particular, that is, its perpetual increase (in accordance with Marx, 1996, that is one of the defining characteristics of Capital). A goal that, due to its inner properties, will never be fully accomplished.

4. Conclusions

In this theoretical essay, we tried to make a contribution to Organization Theory, by means of a critical analysis of it, from a Marxist perspective. In order for so, a brief synthesis of the bases of capitalist production system was presented, showing that its keystone is the constant search for surplus-value extraction. As a result, it seems to us that the role expected from management theorists in such a society is to try to come up with new ideas capable of “revolutionizing” labour process in order to achieve better rates of relative surplus

value, in order to get a competitive advantage over their rivals, and making more profit. Nevertheless, that intention is hardly clearly revealed. As we tried to show, a theory which reveals a class domination or relation is not part of the agenda of management theorists, once that they clearly assume that the productive logic, firm and labour process are always in favour of common well (a quasi-universal common well).

We showed that Taylorism-Fordism enhanced the control over labour, due to the appropriation of workers' tacit knowledge, which was wrote down, classified, and turned into norms and procedures. The labour execution time was measured, compared, and controlled like never before.

From 1970s on, Taylorism-Fordism reached its limit and a “new” philosophy was created, promising to solve the mass production crisis. Toytism appears, bringing along just-in-time, kanban, and the “automation with a human touch”. As a result, apparently, “management becomes more consensual, attractive, and participatory”, but, in fact, “more manipulative” than ever before (Antunes, 2005, p.42).

As we tried to show, although all these management theories were presented as representatives of new labour process models and ideas, such differences, in last analysis, rest on the superficial realm, given that they look for the same target (increase relative surplus value extraction) and they try to answer the same set of questions (how to increase profit).

In that sense, Faria (2004, p. 35) defends that

Henry Ford was, at same time, a visionary and an industrial entrepreneur who resembles the capitalist described by Marx. His conceptions related to productive integration, mass production (by means of assembly line), idle time reduction (...) , waste management and production and realization of surplus-value, preceded Toyota's model of production (...). A reading through his reflexions and views about the industry allow me to once again claim (FARIA 1992), without hesitation, that the called Toyota's model is nothing else than a Taylorism-Fordism based on microelectronics, a Taylorism-Fordism based on computer technology, a varnished Taylorism-Fordism, a Taylorism-Fordism in which was added a management model based on Douglas McGregor (1960)'s ideas, which encourage teamwork and allow the conceptualization of a more flexible worker instead of a specialized one, like in Fordism.

Then, the development of these ideas and models of labour exploitation in organizational world can be understood, in some degree, as the answer to the following question: “How can the production of surplus value be increased, i.e., how can the surplus labour be prolonged, without, or independently of, any prolongation of a c [labour time]?” (Marx, 1996, p. 429).

As a result of this paper, we hope to have contributed to the Critical Management Studies, by trying to reveal and denounce the real agenda of Organization Theory, while in service of a capitalist agenda. In doing so, we believe that we are aligned with the critical organization section from the Academy of Management, whose “shared belief is that management of the modern firm (and often of other types of organizations too) is guided by a narrow goal — profits — rather than by the interests of society as a whole, and that other goals — justice, community, human development, ecological balance” (Adler; Forbes; Willmott, 2007, p. 7).

In that way, we look forward to a new Organization Theory, led by new questions, capable of breaking the commitment with labour exploitation and with the market logic and its engagement with the perpetual Capital reproduction. That is the only way for us to see new theories, committed to human emancipation, freedom and to a real common well.

Thus, after having presented how a sociological, critical, and Marxist theory understands Organization Theory we hope to have contributed, even modestly, to the emergence of a new paradigm able to be applied in different loci and organizations (such as schools, hospitals, government, cooperatives, etc.), a paradigm that will not reproduce class and authoritarian relations linked to our contemporary capitalist society.

References

ALVES, A. E. S. **Qualificação e trabalho bancário no contexto da reestruturação produtiva**. Vitória da conquista: edições Uesb, 2005.

ALVESSON, M. BRIDGMAN, T., WILLMOTT, H. **The oxford handbook of critical management studies**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

ADLER, P.S., FORBES, L.C., WILLMOTT, H. Critical Management Studies. In.: Brief, A.P.; Walsh, J.P. (eds.), **The Academy of Management Annals of Organization and Management, Vol. 1**. New York : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates , 2007. Disponível em:<<https://msbfile03.usc.edu/digitalmeasures/padler/intellcont/CMS-AAM-1.pdf> > . Acessado em: 10/04/2011.

ANTUNES, Ricardo. **Adeus ao trabalho?:** ensaio sobre as metamorfoses e a centralidade do mundo do trabalho. 10 ed. São Paulo: Cortes, 2005.

ANTUNES, Ricardo. **Os sentidos do trabalho**: ensaio sobre a afirmação e a negação do trabalho. São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 2000.

ANTUNES, Ricardo. Trabalho e precarização numa ordem neoliberal. In: GENTILI, P.; FRIGOTO, G. (org.). **A cidadania negada**: políticas de exclusão na educação e no trabalho. São Paulo: Cortez, 2001, p. 35-48.

BRAVERMAN, H. **Trabalho e capital monopolista**: a degradação do trabalho no século XX. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1981.

CORIAT, B.. **Pensar pelo avesso**: o modelo japonês de trabalho e organização. Rio de Janeiro: Revan: UFRJ, 1994.

DAVEL, E.; ALCADIPANI, R. Estudos Críticos em Administração: a produção científica brasileira nos anos noventa. **RAE**, v. 43, n. 4, 2003.

FARIA, José Henrique. **Economia Política do Poder**: uma crítica da teoria geral da administração. V.2. Curitiba: Juruá, 2004.

FLIGSTEIN, N. **Organizations**: theoretical debates and the scope of organizational theory. Berkeley: Department of Sociology/ University of California, 2001. Disponível em:<http://didattica.spbo.unibo.it/adon/files/fligstein,_organizations_and_organizational_theory,_2001.pdf> . Acessado em: 10/04/2011.

FORD, Henry. **Os princípios da prosperidade**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Brand Ltda., 1954.

FURTADO, O.H.P. **Grupos Semi-Autônomos e Times de Produção**: Novas Formas de Gestão do Trabalho em Duas Montadoras de Caminhões e Ônibus. Campinas, 2004. Tese (Doutorado em Ciências Sociais) – Instituto de filosofia e ciências humanas, UNICAMP.

GOUNET, T. **Fordismo e Toyotismo na civilização do automóvel**. São Paulo: Editorial Boitempo, 1999.

HARVEY, D. **A condição pós-moderna**: uma pesquisa sobre as origens da mudança cultural. São Paulo: Loyola, 1992.

HATCH, M. **Organization theory**: Modern, symbolic and postmodern theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

MARX, K. **O Capital**: crítica da economia política. São Paulo: Editora Nova Cultural, v. 1, 1996 (Os Economistas).

MORGAN, G. Paradigmas, metáforas e resolução de quebra-cabeças na teoria das organizações. **RAE**, V.45, N. 1, jan. /mar . 2005.



OHNO, T. **O sistema toyota de produção**: além da produção em larga escala. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 1997.

TAYLOR, F. W. **Princípios de administração científica**. 7 ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 1980.

THOMPSON, P.; O'DOHERTY, D.P. Perspectives on Labor Process Theory. In:
ALVESSON, M. BRIDGMAN, T., WILLMOTT, H. **The oxford handbook of critical management studies**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. pp. 100-122