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## Chapter 16

### The Dormitory Regime Revisited: Time in Transnational Capitalist Production<sup>1</sup>

Rutvica Andrijasevic  
University of Bristol

#### Introduction

This chapter argues for the need to investigate the temporal dimension of labour regimes in order to account more fully for the changing nature of capitalist production and related forms of labour control. To do so, this chapter revisits the concept of the dormitory labour regime and posits ‘time’ as the principal category in the analysis of the transnational organization of production. Time, as I show below, reveals the novel forms of material and discursive control over labour as well as the extent to which these control practices are imbued within a normative gendered and sexual order. The aim of this chapter is thus to broaden the established spatial approaches to transnationalization of production by bringing attention to the temporal analysis of labour regimes.

The concept of the dormitory labour regime was pioneered by Ngai Pun and Chris Smith (2007) in their discussion of the export-oriented electronics production in post-socialist China. Against the backdrop of the well-established periodization in labour process theory tracing the shift from Taylorism and Fordism to flexible accumulation in the “West”, Pun and Smith embedded their analysis in the context of China to show the prominence of a new form of labour regime, what they call the dormitory labour regime. The regime’s significance lies in showing how mass production is being restructured via a novel labour system of “work-residence” that merges workers’ productive and reproductive spaces. While typically the notion of labour regimes stands for practices of labour control at the place of production (Taylor and Rioux 2018), the dormitory labour regime makes manifest that capital’s control of relations of production pivots on its direct control over the social reproduction of labour. Located in proximity to factories, dormitories combine work and residence, thus permitting transnational corporations (TNCs) to lengthen the workday and command almost all daily reproduction of labour. In that dormitories facilitate the socialization among workers, the “work-life” compression also aims at suppressing the establishing of labour communities and labour institutions that could improve working conditions and advance collective organising. It is precisely such intensive reorganisation of space via the dormitory labour regime, Pun and Smith (2007) suggest, that spearheaded China’s integration into global industrial capitalism.

The concept of the dormitory labour regime also explicates how local and national relations of production and reproduction get locked within transnational and global capital flows, or in Pun and Smith’s (2007) words, within the “transnational labour process”. In line with earlier and recent labour regimes analysis, the emphasis on the transnational aspect aims to overcome the limitations of more orthodox perspectives wherein workplace relations are seen as an outcome of the interplay between national capital and labour and as underpinned by specific national institutional frameworks (Chang 2021, Smith *et al.* 2018). While the locality undeniably exercises an influence on workplace relations, the dormitory labour regime demonstrates that so too do transnational players

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and processes which transform local places of production into “multi-scaling production sites” (Pun and Smith 2007, 28), thus integrating local practices of labour control within “multi-scalar” labour regimes (Coe and Yeung 2019, Hürtgen 2020). The relevance of the dormitory labour regime thus lies in making manifest how global capitalism transforms the territoriality of labour regimes from local to transnational and how such transformation is premised on spatial integration of workers’ productive and reproductive spheres.

The argument I put forward in this chapter is that attention to space in the analysis of labour regimes needs to be matched by attention to time. A temporal approach to labour regimes is crucial as it makes visible diverse ways in which capital deploys time to reorganize and expand and keep labour enrolled within regimes of capital accumulation. Drawing on media and communication studies and sociological theories, I will illustrate how dormitories operationalize a very specific notion of time, so-called “real-time” (Adam 2006, Hope 2016, Wajcman 2019). I will show the relevance of real-time for examining the segmentation of the workforce between permanent and temporary workers and for scrutinizing the ways in which real-time reshapes migration flows into shorter and quicker migration circuits. By grounding my analysis in feminist scholarship on globalization and culture, I will additionally illustrate how, through the discursive construction of imaginary futures that are deeply inflected by gender and sexual norms, dormitories facilitate the formation of labouring subjectivities best suited for the temporalities of global production (Bair 2010, Pun 2005, Salzinger 2003, Wright 2003, see also Schling this volume).

My discussion here draws on the original fieldwork my collaborators and I conducted on electronics assembly in Europe.<sup>2</sup> The fieldwork took place in Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Turkey and Serbia over the years 2012-2019, and focused primarily on the working conditions and labour recruitment practices in electronics assembly at Foxconn, the world’s largest electronics assembler, and to a lesser degree at Samsung. The primary data consists of 170 in-depth interviews with former and current blue- and white-collar workers and managers, as well as key informants in public institutions such as ministries of labour, trade unions, labour inspectorates, local job centers and NGOs. Workers’ dormitories were a key fieldwork site where we were able to observe workers’ interactions and routines. While dormitories rent out the majority of their rooms to the agencies that supply migrant workers, several also offer accommodation to external paying guests as in the case of the dormitory in Slovakia at the centre of this chapter. By bringing in findings from Europe to bear on a concept developed out of the Chinese context, this chapter hopes to drive forward scholarly debates to attend both to the “patterned” as well as “contingent” (Bair 2010) nature of labour regimes within transnational circuits of production.

### **The gendered time politics of transnational production**

Space, either as a location of local, national and transnational labour regimes or as a site of productive and reproductive labour, is deployed as the primary lens of analysis of dormitory labour regime. Time tends to be reduced to a more marginal appendix. Pun and Smith (2007, 42) touch briefly on the matter of time when they suggest that the dormitory labour regime represents a “just-in-time labour system for just-in-time production.” While they do not elaborate further on this statement, the concept of just-in-time (JIT) production is key for understanding how, within global circuits of production, JIT systems transpose a very specific notion of time to the world of labouring bodies.

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<sup>2</sup> The research project was led by Rutvica Andrijasevic (University of Bristol) in collaboration with Devi Sacchetto (University of Padua), Pun Ngai (University of Hong Kong) and five research assistants: Marek Čaněk, Hannah Schling, Nuran Gülenç, Tereza Virtova, and Tibor Meszmann.

JIT manufacturing, widely adopted in electronics assembly, is typified by what we know as Toyotism's flexible and lean production. Contrary to Fordism, which is based on the principle of mass production and a "just-in-case" logic of overproduction, Toyotism aims at maximising profit by minimizing the production time (Steinberg 2019). This is particularly key for the electronics industry, wherein time-based competition drives price erosion and shortens product life cycles. The JIT system has also been named "zero inventories" because parts arrive to the production line only when they are needed: "[JIT's] basic idea is to produce what is needed, at the time needed, and in the quantity needed" (Nishimoto 2002, 104). JIT thus aims at eliminating "unproductive time" in the assembly process. In other words, the aim of JIT systems is to save costs by achieving synchronization between materials, labour and machinery (Nishimoto 2002, 105). In fact, the model of vertical disintegration, whereby lead firms are in charge of product innovation and contract manufacturers of assembly of hardware, allows lead firms to accrue power and profit while at the same time creating intense commercial pressure on the price conditions along the chain. Time is therefore crucial for contractors if they are to re-appropriate some of the value captured by lead firms.

Importantly for our analysis, synchronization operationalizes a very specific idea of time. That time, instantiated by the interactions between globalizing capitalism and digital information and communication technologies (ICTs), has been conceptualized as "real-time", "timeless time" and/or "networked time" (Hope 2016, Nadeem 2009). Real-time, as suggested by Wajcman (2019, 319), materializes an "economic-utilitarian philosophy of time" that posits time as instantaneous, simultaneous, and globally networked rather than durational, sequential, and globally zoned (Adam 2006). Real-time is thus best understood as a "temporal regime" (Purser 2002, 157) that is underpinned by the belief that time is entirely calculative, functional, and fungible and that technology can be successfully employed to achieve time optimisation. ICT and related electronic information systems have allowed transnational firms to "decentralise operations while centralizing control" (Hope 2006, 284) by linking suppliers to sellers, tallying production to inventories, and checking the quality and speed of production across globally dispersed assembly lines.

Adam (2002) suggested that in its drive towards instantaneity, real-time "detemporalizes time". That is to say, it decontextualizes time from the flux of everyday life and from the social relations of reproduction. We can see this dynamic at work in transnational labour subcontracting and outsourcing that uses "time arbitrage" to exploit time discrepancies between geographical labour markets and achieve a 24-hour business cycle (Nadeem 2009, 22). Consequently, operationalizing real-time brings about the collapse of the work-life boundary in that workers are required to work round-the-clock hours or permanent night shifts, a phenomenon that Poster (2007) has called the "reversed temporalities of work". The integration of workers into a real-time global economy pivots therefore on a "temporal unhinging of family life" (Aneesh 2009, 364), as can be observed in the fact that electronics manufacturers only hire single workers (Pun 2016). Such unhinging, as Wajcman showed (2019, 323), exposes the fact that for the Silicon Valley high-tech companies driving ICT innovation, the notion of private time is viewed as a "residual category" and work-life balance is labelled as antiquated. In short, real-time is operationalised by management practices that attempt to reshape the labour process by transposing ICT time, disassociated from reproductive work, to the world of labouring bodies and assembly lines.

It is important to note that within this temporal order, certain bodies are required to "recalibrate" (Sharma 2017, 133) their lives to the temporality of transnational capital. Taylor (2006) advised that scholarly accounts of JIT manufacturing failed to examine the extent to which the subordination of women's labour was central to the development of Toyotism. Toyota's JIT model relied on a division of labour between the male permanent labour force and the female (and, later, migrant) contract labour in lower-level suppliers. While men were hired on full-time stable contracts, women – many of them previously full-time employees – were hired on so-called "baby-shift" once they returned to

work following childbirth. Manufacturers made use of baby-shifts from 6:00pm to 10:00pm primarily to cope with the expansion and contraction of production. Women were also paid less as their dexterity was seen as an innate feminine trait rather than a learned skill. Toyota's JIT production model is thus a manifestation (and perpetuation) of the sexual division of labour as well as manifestation of gendered imaginaries that underpinned the international division of labour. Such gendered imaginaries, which Salzinger (2003, 2) called the "fantasy of a naturally productive femininity" – docility, dexterity, malleability, contentedness – played a central role in the global expansion of export-oriented manufacturing. The "docile and dextrous" type, typically associated with East Asian femininity (see also Pun 2005, 77), took hold in transnational managerial imaginaries and became the yardstick for recruitment, labour control and performance appraisal of workers in locations ranging from China to Mexico. The relevance of femininity for our analysis is, as I will elaborate below, that it functions as a constitutive discourse that fashions workers' labouring subjectivities.

In what follows, I further investigate the workings of the dormitories through a temporal perspective. I first discuss the role of dormitories in enabling supply and synchronisation of labour to the JIT production and reveal the key role played by temporary work agencies in this process. I then illustrate how dormitories mobilize a discursive construction of imaginary futures and do so via highly gendered and sexualized imaginaries, in order to produce workforce fit for JIT transnational production.

#### **Just-in-time transnational labour markets**

That dormitories operationalize real-time can be noted at the reception desk of a workers' dormitory in Nitra, Slovakia. Behind the dormitory reception there are several large clocks that show the time in five different cities across Slovakia and the Czech Republic: Prague, Bardejov, Brno, Nitra and Pardubice (Figure 16.1). These are the locations of some of the most important manufacturing sites for electronics and automobile assembly in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Nitra in Slovakia and Pardubice in the Czech Republic are where Foxconn locates respectively its Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) headquarters and assembly plants. The dormitory, located at the outskirts of Nitra just about ten minutes' drive from Foxconn's assembly plant, is owned by Xawax, a temporary work agency supplying workers to Foxconn and other factories across Slovakia and Czechia. In similar ways to the other dormitories, it accommodates both men and women but no families, hence workers who have children must leave them in their home countries.



Figure 16.1: Clocks at workers' dormitory, Nitra, Slovakia (photo taken by the author)

To understand the significance of workers' dormitories for the realization of JIT manufacturing, one first needs to understand the business dynamics of the electronics industry. Consumer electronics assembly is a highly cyclical market, characterised by periods of high production volumes such as those during Christmas, Black Friday in the USA, 11/11 in China, Back-to-School, new product launch dates, etc. These alternate with periods of average or very low demand. Consequently, electronics contract manufacturers put in place a flexible labour system that enables them to respond quickly and to avail themselves of sufficient workforce when orders are high and to radically decrease the numbers of workers once the orders fall (Pawlicki 2017). To this end, assemblers segment their workforce into core and temporary workers. In China, the workforce is segmented between core and student workers and in CEE between directly employed and temporary workers. The presence of both students and temporary workers is not ad-hoc, but rather is structural to JIT manufacturing. In China students from vocational schools make up 15 per cent of the total workforce during peak production months (Smith and Chan 2015) and in Europe the ratio between core and temporary workers is typically 60:40 per cent, but during periods of high production it gets reversed with temporary migrant workers making up the majority of the workforce (Čaněk 2016).<sup>3</sup> The segmentation of the workforce thus allows assemblers to expand or contract the workforce, depending on the demands of production.

While core workers are employed directly by the manufacturer on full-time contracts, temporary workers are hired by temporary work agencies (TWAs) based in countries where manufacturing plants are located. Manufacturers use TWAs to manage fluctuations in productive activity, externalise costs and regulatory risks, reduce the contractual responsibilities of direct employment, and weaken workers' protests and demands for higher wages and better working conditions (Andrijasevic *et al.* 2020). At Foxconn's assembly plants, due to poor working conditions, irregular shifts, compulsory overtime and low pay, TWAs are often unable to find workers in sufficient numbers locally. While Foxconn recruits part of its core workforce in Mongolia and Vietnam, TWAs

<sup>3</sup> The Samsung plant in Slovakia had 570 permanent and 1000 agency workers in January 2017 <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20748727/samsung-will-shut-down-its-slovak-plant.html>

recruit workers closer to home i.e. the neighbouring countries of Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, (Slovakia, in case of Czech plants), Ukraine and Serbia. This is achieved via a chain of local subsidiaries that recruit and select workers in their countries of origin and organize the cross-border transportation, usually by coaches, to the manufacturing sites. These workers are passed onto the “mother” TWA that organizes workers’ contracts, pay and accommodation as well as returns to their countries of origin during periods of low production. In addition, the TWA exercises control over workers in the dormitory and on the assembly lines. In the dormitory, control is aimed at suppressing behaviours that are considered dangerous, such as smoking in rooms, or that can decrease productivity, such as excessive drinking and hosting friends. This is especially because 12-hour night shifts are common. On the assembly line, agency line-leaders implement, on a daily basis and based on manufacturer’s requests, decisions regarding worker numbers, placements and working shifts while at the same time monitoring the performance of agency workers.

As we can see, TWAs operate comprehensive management of migrant labour. Analytically speaking, this is relevant and novel for two reasons. First, in the triangular employment relationship that regulates the interaction between the client firm, TWA and workers, managerial responsibilities for production commonly lie with the firm and legal responsibilities with the agency. In our case, however, TWAs were directly responsible for organizing, controlling and managing agency worker performance on the assembly line. Second, such functioning of TWAs represents a major departure from the previous model of organized labour migration flows in Europe where, under guest-worker regimes, states arranged the recruitment and transportation of migrant workers while leaving the control of the labour process to the firm.

Within this arrangement, dormitories are key in that they allow TWAs and manufacturers to put in place a model of private and comprehensive management of the workforce, aimed at maximizing the short-term utilization of labour (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2017). Dormitories are essential not only because they allow TWAs to recruit and supply labour at short notice, but also they allow TWAs to put workers to work quickly, usually the very next day regardless of the fact that they may have just travelled some 500-600 km across several international borders (Schling 2019). Additionally, dormitories also function as repositories for migrant labour in that it is quite common for workers to have to wait in the dormitory without work during periods of low production. Dormitories thus enable TWA and manufacturers to avail themselves of a stationary workforce that they can stand down for several days or even weeks without risking a significant shortage of workers. In light of fluctuating production, dormitories thus facilitate the JIT model for the utilization of migrant labour.

Scholarly analysis of the dormitory labour regime needs, therefore, to move away from the narrow focus on how dormitories extend management’s control over labour into the worker reproductive sphere. Instead, there is an urgent need to begin to examine how the short-term utilization of labour that dormitories facilitate is altering the established patterns and temporality of traditional migratory flows. For example, Czechia has traditionally been a destination country for Slovaks and Ukrainians. Yet, the growth of export-oriented manufacturing has changed traditional immigration flows and, since the end of 2014, the country has seen a significant increase in Romanian, Mongolian and Bulgarian nationals (Caritas 2019, Čaněk 2016). The temporality of migration flows has changed too. Nowadays short-term labour mobility, involving temporary and repetitive movements between home and a variety of host countries, is on the rise and has already become more widespread than the classic long-term labour migration (Mussche *et al.* 2017). One telling instance is the example of a Croatian female worker residing in Serbia. In a four year period (October 2015 to June 2019), she was hired eight times by different TWAs for temporary engagements in Slovakia and Czechia. During this period, she worked in electronics, white goods, and logistics for brands ranging from Shin Hueng Precision, to Samsung, and Honeywell, over periods varying from several weeks to several months.

It is equally urgent, I suggest, to examine how the temporal demands of JIT manufacturing and the prominence of TWAs are obfuscating employment relations, diluting employer's responsibilities, and impeding the effective enforcement of workers' employment and social rights. Even though workers were in possession of signed employment contracts, TWAs typically did not pay social security contributions thus depriving workers of the possibility of claiming unemployment benefits. Those workers who wanted to raise complaints about working conditions or pay did not know whom to contact. This is because, as for example in the case of Serbian workers working for Samsung in Slovakia, they were recruited by a TWA in Serbia, signed the contract with a TWA in Hungary, were paid by a Slovak TWA and then put on a new contract with a Romanian TWA when police shut down the Serbian TWA subsidiary. While it is well established that temporary migrant agency workers do not enjoy sufficient protection in destination states as employment laws and industrial relations are national in scope and character (Berntsen and Lillie 2016), the real-time model of labour intermediation also gives rise to subcontracting chains that have been referred to as "labour chains" or "human supply chains" (Barrientos 2013, Gordon 2017). The notion of chains is also illustrative of the relations of dependency: workers were tied into a contract with a particular employer, lived under the menace of penalty and/or non-payment of wages, were subject to illicit deductions from pay, risked homelessness because of tied accommodation, were isolated by geography and language, and lacked any meaningful legal protection.

To sum up, dormitories make visible the extent to which JIT manufacturing imposes onto workers the demands and dynamics of just-in-time organizational temporality. Operationalizing this temporality reshapes work and employment relations, in particular via the JIT model aimed at short-term utilization of labour, and alters transnational labour markets by instantiating novel flows of labour migration. At the same time, the extensive reliance on TWAs to supply and comprehensively manage migrant labour on a large scale discloses how JIT labour regimes enable private commercial actors to gain ground in directing transnational labour migration and in restricting the ability of workers to claim rights.

### **Discursive construction of imaginary futures**

While studies of dormitory labour regimes tend to focus on material forms of control (Azmeah 2014, Ceccagno and Sacchetto 2020, Peng 2011, Schling 2017), with a few exceptions that approach the discursive construction of labour regimes (Coe and Kelly 2002, Baglioni 2018), in this section I advance these approaches through a temporal analysis of representational practices deployed within the dormitory under investigation. The workers' dormitory in Nitra is of particular interest here in that it was purpose built by the TWA that owns it, Xawax. This is quite unusual as typically TWAs hire existing hotels, army barracks or former factory lodgings to house workers. Upon entering the dormitory and checking in, one immediately finds themselves in front of the clocks discussed in the section above. Also, at the reception desk, one can pick up the dormitory's business card. On one side the card features a map of the area with a pin indicating the location of the dormitory, and on the other side there is an image of a woman superimposed over a dormitory building (Figure 16.2). The image is striking for its overtly sexualised overtones. The shape and the colour of the dress and the inviting and provocative bodily position bring up an immediate association with women working in a strip club rather than in an assembly plant. The dress is red, matching the background of the Xawax logo. The top part reveals the woman's shoulders and the skirt is short, displaying the black lace of her undergarments. She is climbing out of the image, her thigh pushing through the internal frame of the business card with the agency's contact details. She leans towards the viewer, offering the company logo, an enlarged X, in her hand as if she is blowing a kiss.





Figure 16.2: Xawax dormitory business card, Nitra, Slovakia (photo by the author)

There are other images in the dormitory too. In the lobby area and the stairwell that reaches across four floors, there are numerous, large, decorative photographs hanging on the walls: private jets, racing cars, tourist icons (e.g. a red London double-decker bus) and children on group excursions. These all appeal to workers' desire for family life, economic stability and enjoyments brought about by consumer experience. While these images are fixed on the wall, business cards have a different quality to them: they are designed to be portable and are intended to be passed from hand to hand to business partners, acquaintances and guests. In his work on organizational artefacts, Baruch (2006) explains that business cards are part of an identity-creating system representing the organization to the wider environment. In that context we can interpret the superimposing of the sexualized woman's body over the dormitory building as suggesting that at the Xawax dormitory one (i.e. men) will be able to meet such highly seductive women. In fact, business cards and their logos have a dual function in that they are designed to appeal both to the rational and unconscious part of individuals (Baruch 2006). The sexualized imagery is therefore designed to elicit an association between the "sexy woman" and the dormitory, and thus to appeal to the erotic desire of heterosexual male workers. Contrary to the early deployment of solely young women in China, nowadays male workers constitute about half of the workforce in electronics assembly. Hence, quite paradoxically, while the dormitory implements a strict no children policy, and the demands of JIT manufacturing significantly diminish workers' daily space and time for social reproduction, the dormitory is also a site of imaginary futures that promise erotic/romantic encounters, offspring and earnings that can purchase a family trip to London. I call this "governing through desire".

It is worth keeping in mind that scholars have previously identified the promise of heterosexual intimacy and family life as a powerful tool to increase productivity and lessen absconding (Weston 2008). Let us also remember that, as mentioned in the previous section, TWAs tend to put workers to work within a day of arrival in the destination country. This is a deliberate strategy in order to give workers the least possible time to acclimatize, make friends and leave for a different workplace. In fact, absconding is a significant problem for the TWAs and manufacturers, both of whom struggle with a 30-40 per cent turnover of agency workers per year. This turnover is best understood in the context of the EU enlargement in that those workers who are EU citizens enjoy the freedom to move and take up work across the EU, and as such are not subject to immigration regulations. The EU agency workers are a "hypermobile" workforce (Berntsen and Lillie 2016) with significant previous experience of labour migration that allows workers to accumulate knowledge about labour migration, develop cross-country job search strategies and compare wages and working conditions across various locations. This freedom of movement is producing a transnational workforce (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2016) whose mobility strategies are not confined to a single workplace or a single country but are enacted across the European labour market. Accordingly, agency workers recount that prior to working in electronics in the Czech Republic, they have also worked in retail in

the UK, agriculture in Italy or Greece and/or construction industry in Germany, and moved on when wages dropped, contracts ended, and better opportunities came up elsewhere. Hence, I suggest that in a highly competitive business environment wherein several TWAs compete for contracts from assembly manufacturers and struggle to keep their migrant workforces, Xawax strategically deployed the imaginary inferring heterosexual intimacy, family life and economic stability in order to lessen worker exits and gain competitive advantage over other agencies.

While the business card aesthetic is primarily designed to appeal to heterosexual men, I suggest it also holds a strong appeal for women workers as it visualizes the promise of the seductive power to be gained by working for Xawax. For female migrant workers whose working lives, as those of their male counterparts, are typified by subsistence-level wages and sporadic short-term contracts, living at the dormitory and working for Xawax offers, to paraphrase Berlant (2007), proximity to a fantasy life in which they are subjects endowed with erotic power to seduce and experience intimacy. This sexualized affective appeal needs also to be understood in relation to asexual images of workers which, during the socialist past, dominated the representation of the working-class in Eastern Europe (Bonfiglioli 2020, Walker 2018). In fact, expansion of transnational capital is closely connected, as feminist scholars have shown, to the proliferation of sexual imaginaries and livelihoods (Lee 2010, Lowthers 2018). Pun's early work is extremely helpful here. Her analysis of women factory workers in export-oriented industries in China illustrated that "sexualizing of labouring bodies" (Pun 2005, 21) is the very condition for the expansion of transnational capital. The enrolment of a large scale rural migrant female workforce into factory work went hand-in-hand with devaluation of the asexual worker of socialist labour relations, and construction of newly sexualized female industrial subjects as a way of both attracting potential women workers and fitting them into factory discipline (Pun 2005, 133–165).

As in China, so in Europe – former collective socialist identities are thus being reimagined as individual neoliberal ones. I suggest that images of sexualized femininity, family life and consumerism deploy time strategically to project migrant men and women into a "better" future away from poverty wages and the impoverishment of prospects that have characterised the working-class lives across eastern Europe since the collapse of state socialism. A condition of possibility encapsulated in these images operates through the affective attachment to capitalism's promise of what Berlant (2007) has called the "good life". Images are thus productive of workers' desire for a better future, a future in which workers imagine themselves as agents in command of their money, bodies, and daily reproduction (Axelsson *et al.* 2017). While workers' everyday life is characterized by too much or too little work, and hence by the anxiety and anticipation of work or what Gregg (2011) has called "work's intimacy", images deployed by Xawax remove any explicit reference to work. In that they summon desire and pleasure, the images of heterosexual intimacy, family life, consumer experience and economic stability are in stark contrast with the labour regime in which workers find themselves. Viewed within the context of high level of turnover of agency workers, the visualizations deployed by Xawax displace workers "problems" from the economic realm and replace these with aspirational class mobility in the imaginary.

I suggest, therefore, that it is helpful to interpret these representations as a temporal technology of labour control aimed at curtailing worker exit and recreating a relationship of economic and affective dependency through discursive construction of imaginary futures. In a context where the existing contractual conditions, wage levels and shrinkage of the reproductive time due to JIT production requirements make the realization of such desire close to impossible, the imaginary futures function as a discursive form of control that "bonds" workers, at least temporarily, to the TWA and the firm. It is this affective and highly gendered attachment to a futurity that I suggest scholars scrutinize more attentively in order to account for the ways in which labour regimes mobilize material as well as discursive forms to control and render productive the mobility of labour.

## Conclusions

In this chapter I have used time as an analytical lens through which to revisit Pun and Smith's (2007) suggestion that dormitory labour regime is a global spatial fix that enables capital to expand and develop. I have shown that collective worker dormitories are also a temporal strategy that enables firms to operationalize JIT manufacturing via the synchronization of production with labour. Such synchronization pivots on segmentation between permanent and temporary workers and on a further division between non-dormitory lives of the former and dormitory lives, intended here in terms of daily social reproductive time, of the latter. A temporal approach to labour regimes thus reveals how transnational firms apply to labour the logic of assembly familiar to us from JIT manufacturing and how such logic is engendering new directionality and temporality of migratory flows. The resulting labour regime impedes the enforcement of workers' employment and social rights. Moreover, I have shown that the dormitory labour regime is steeped in discursive forms of control aimed at matching the labouring subjectivities to the temporalities of JIT production. Gender and sexuality are, as this chapter has illustrated, key to understanding this process and its temporary dimension especially via the discursive mobilization of imaginary futures of a "good life".

In sum, the temporal lens adopted here enriches and advances existing labour regime analysis by providing a temporal account of the entangled processes of capital expansion and subject formation. A temporal analysis shows how labour regimes attempt to govern labour not just through the material control of time in production but also through the discursive appropriation of social reproductive time. I hope that this chapter will stimulate other scholars to explore the temporal dimension of labour regimes, perhaps via the analysis of the dynamic evolution of the regime itself, so as to account in greater detail for the role time plays in relation to the changing nature of capitalist production and related forms of labour control.

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