

Culture Unbound:
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Thematic Section:
*Capitalism: Current Crisis and
Cultural Critique*

Edited by
Johan Fornäs

Extraction from Volume 6, 2014

Linköping University Electronic Press
Culture Unbound: ISSN 2000-1525 (online)
URL: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/>

© 2014 The Authors.

Culture Unbound, Extraction from Volume 6, 2014

Thematic Section: Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique

Johan Fornäs <i>Introducing Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique</i>	15
Christian Fuchs <i>Karl Marx and the Study of Media and Culture Today</i>	39
Brett Neilson <i>Beyond Kulturkritik: Along the Supply Chain of Contemporary Capitalism</i>	77
John Clarke <i>Imagined, Real and Moral Economies</i>	95
Anders Bartonek <i>Labour Against Capitalism? Hegel's Concept of Labour in Between Civil Society and the State</i>	113
Gigi Roggero <i>The General Illumination which Bathes all the Colours: Class Composition and Cognitive Capitalism for Dummies</i>	125
Kylie Jarrett <i>The Alternative to Post-Hegemony: Reproduction and Austerity's Social Factory</i>	137
Steen Nepper Larsen <i>Compulsory Creativity: A Critique of Cognitive Capitalism</i>	159
Andrew Ross <i>You Are Not a Loan: A Debtors Movement</i>	179
Randy Martin <i>What Difference Do Derivatives Make? From the Technical to the Political Conjuncture</i>	189
Jean-Louis Fabiani <i>Cultural Governance and the Crisis of Financial Capitalism</i>	211
Jim McGuigan <i>The Neoliberal Self</i>	223
Mark Banks <i>'Being in the Zone' of Cultural Work</i>	241
Greig de Peuter <i>Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat</i>	263

***Culture Unbound* Volume 6, Editorial**

By Johan Fornäs, Martin Fredriksson & Naomi Stead

With this volume, *Culture Unbound* celebrates its five-year anniversary. This makes a good opportunity both to look back at what we have achieved and to gaze ahead to what we have planned for the future.

Ideas for starting a new journal of cultural research had been circulating for some time at Linköping University, in and around its Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q), the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (AC SIS) and the Swedish Cultural Policy Research Observatory (SweCult). In spring 2008, Johan Fornäs, who was then professor at Tema Q and director of AC SIS, decided that it was time for action, and took the necessary steps to establish such a publishing project. Policy documents were written and signed by these three founding units, editors were recruited, the trademark was duly registered, logo and web design were commissioned, the editorial board invited, guidelines of all sorts developed in collaboration with Linköping University Electronic Press, and calls for articles were launched along various channels.

The first articles of Volume 1 were then published in June 2009. From then onward, roughly 160 articles comprising more than 3,000 pages and organised into 18 theme sections have been published in the first five volumes, with an average of 32 articles, 600 pages and 3.6 theme sections per volume. The trend is towards a steady growth, and the sixth volume is likely to comprise 40 articles, 750 pages and 4-5 theme sections, which we now regard as our established standard. The number of manuscripts received steadily continues to grow, which stretches our review and editing capacities to the limit. We also receive many very promising theme proposals, which ensures that no volume will ever lack substance, but also means we increasingly have to make a delicate selection of which themes to prioritise. This stream of original themes and articles forms a very inspiring and informative map of current trends in the field, and creates a vital interaction between us and our guest editors, authors and reviewers, thereby contributing to the formation of this transnational as well as transdisciplinary field.

Since the journal's beginning, founding editor Johan Fornäs has remained Editor-in-chief. Martin Fredriksson has likewise continued in the role of managing editor, the only one involved to receive a (minor) salary for his work, employed as a researcher at Tema Q. For the first four volumes Jenny Johannisson, based at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research of the Swedish School of Library and Information Science in Borås near Göteborg, served as associate editor, particularly covering research with relevance to cultural policy.

From Volume 5, her position was taken by researcher Naomi Stead from the ATCH Research Centre in the School of Architecture at the University of Queensland, Australia, who has further strengthened the journal's international profile as well as links between arts and academic research.

In qualitative terms, the journal has been a success. Its articles often attract thousands of readers, it is referenced by CrossRef, DOAJ, Scirus and OHP, and has received funding support not only from Linköping University but also from the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) and the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS). The editorial board with its nearly 100 eminent scholars has provided solid academic support to attract and review article manuscripts and theme sections.

Editorial board members will be invited to a workshop on 'Public Knowledge' this forthcoming autumn, to discuss how a journal like *Culture Unbound* can further contribute to the strengthening of an intellectual International – a public sphere for critical investigation and reflection on culture and society. The workshop will have two main subthemes: 'Public Universities' (the struggle for open, public universities against the disruptive effects of privatisation and commercialisation) and 'PublicACTIONS' (new ways of making research public through open access and other forms of publishing). These sub-themes, and the workshop as a whole, are a means to further develop and sharpen the aims of the journal, and our tools to fulfil them.

Over the year 2013 that has just passed *Culture Unbound* published four thematic sections: 'Reports and Reflections From the Field: Current Issues in European Cultural Studies'; 'Feminist Cultural Studies'; 'Communicating Culture in Practice' and 'Pursuing the Trivial'. The first two sections were derived from the conference 'Current Issues in European Cultural Studies', which was held in Sweden in 2011. The first one 'Reports and Reflections From the Field' documented the attempts to map the current state of cultural studies in Europe that constituted an overarching goal of the conference. The second thematic section, 'Feminist Cultural Studies', focused on the encounter between feminism and cultural studies, which became one of the most important and appreciated issues of the conference. The third theme of the year, 'Communication Culture in Practice' discussed how cultural research can be applied outside of academia, focusing on particular challenges and opportunities that researchers have met when working with civic or commercial partners. The final theme, 'Pursuing the Trivial' addressed the social significance of popular culture past and present, and analysed how the seemingly trivial shapes our daily lives and therefore our perceptions of the world.

Together these four themes present a dialogue between academic self-reflection and an outward looking ambition to take part and place in contemporary society that is endemic to contemporary cultural research. While some of the themes and articles focus on the changing conditions for knowledge production in

general and the transformation of the field of cultural research in general, others discuss or exemplify how cultural research can be applied in new ways, approaching new kinds of materials from different perspectives. The themes all point towards the crucial interaction between the conditions for cultural research and the applications of that research, where changes in the economic and political context within which research is undertaken are important not only for the researchers themselves but also for what cultural research can hope to achieve and what role it can play in society.

Volume 6 continues to grapple with contemporary society. The opening theme, 'Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique' offers a rich and comprehensive analysis of the present economic order. In thirteen articles a number of renowned academics discuss the (un)sustainability of the current mode of capitalist production, against the backdrop of the recent economic crisis and in the light of cultural and social theory. This theme, that plunges head first into the transformation of contemporary society, will be followed by a theme about 'Social Movements and Protests' that looks at societal changes from the perspective of resistance. Here the conditions for and consequences of a variety of activist and oppositional social movements are analysed in relation to aspects such as space, religion and new media. Later this year we will publish a section about 'Therapeutic Solutions and Discourses of Self Empowerment', discussing the emergence of a therapeutic culture, or even a structure of feeling, based around the notions of individual wellbeing and personal self-empowerment. 'Therapeutic Solutions' will be paired with an issue that demonstrates and critically addresses the multiple and disputed features of 'Sustainabilities': a set of articles that point to, test, and perhaps also transgress the limits to this notion so widely (mis)used in political, economic, social and environmental discourses. These are followed by a section on 'Changing orders of knowledge? Encyclopedias in transition' analysing the current transition and expansion of the concept of the encyclopaedia, and the consequences of the encounter of encyclopaedic knowledge – traditionally communicated in print – and the changed conditions for production of knowledge that digital media and networks bring with them. In the long term we also plan to explore themes such as 'Writing at Borders'; 'Concurrences: Archives and Voices in Postcolonial Places'; 'Circulating Stuff: Second-hand, Vintage and Retro'; 'The Instability of Intellectual Property' and 'Motion and Emotion'.

This new volume, which will be more extensive and ambitious than ever, thus marks a readiness and willingness to engage with some of the most acute problems and complex transformation that society faces. We hope and believe that this not only expresses the ambitions of *Culture Unbound* but also reflects a more general tendency within contemporary cultural research. In order to better accommodate the most recent developments within the field of cultural research, and facilitate intellectual discussion and critical analysis of contemporary issues we also plan to expand our repertoire of published material. In the coming year

Culture Unbound will therefore introduce a section of texts we have chosen to call ‘Unbound Ideas’. Here we welcome academic essays and texts of a somewhat shorter format and freer approach to scholarly convention than our usual full-length research articles. These essays will take different – perhaps speculative or conjectural – positions, or give a new perspective on pressing topics or recently emerged concerns within cultural research.

‘Unbound Ideas’ is not so much a ‘speakers corner’ offering space for personal opinions and heated debates, as a ‘scholars pulpit’ where the best parts of academic knowledge, insight and critical thought can be applied to crucial or complex issues in contemporary society, but without being ‘bound’ by the formal, methodological and stylistic constraints associated with more conventional research articles. Here we will offer space for texts that are by no means un-academic, but that might be allowed to wear their scholarship lightly: texts that are intelligent and learned, but not conventionally scholarly in the sense of being embroidered with references and restricted by conventional research aims. This is thus not a genre that requires less intellectual and stylistic deliberation and accuracy, but rather the contrary – it demands a different kind of rigour, with originality, topicality, relevance, importance and quality of argument being even more crucial than for those ordinary research articles which are obliged to give an overview of a particular field and present research findings. By embracing an essayistic approach to scholarly work, ‘Unbound Ideas’ will acknowledge the power of writing and rhetoric in the presentation of intellectual arguments, and encourage the submission of perhaps more experimental, though equally rigorous, forms, genres or modes of text.

Together with the rest of our themes for the coming year, ‘Unbound Ideas’ reflects our aim to embrace the best parts of academic thinking and writing. *Culture Unbound* is now firmly established as a leading international and interdisciplinary academic journal for cultural research, with a highly user-friendly open-access interface. You are all welcome to join in our enthralling explorations!

Johan Fornäs is editor-in-chief of *Culture Unbound* and professor at the Department of Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University in South Stockholm. With a background in musicology, he has previously worked at the universities of Göteborg, Stockholm and Linköping, and been vice-chair of the international Association for Cultural Studies ACS. His current research has two main strands, dealing with mediatisation on one hand and on the other with identities, symbols and narratives of Europe. E-mail: johan.fornas@sh.se

Martin Fredriksson is executive editor of *Culture Unbound*. He works at the Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q), Linköping University, with a three-year project on the ideology of piracy, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. He has previously worked with Swedish copyright history, and recently spent a year as visiting scholar at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, conducting a study on copyright and Pirate Parties in North America. E-mail: martin.fredriksson@liu.se

Naomi Stead is a Senior Research Fellow in the Research Centre ATCH (Architecture | Theory | Criticism | History) in the School of Architecture at the University of Queensland, Australia. Her research interests broadly lie within the architectural humanities and the cultural studies of architecture, in its production, mediation and reception. E-mail: n.stead@uq.edu.au

Introducing Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique

By Johan Fornäs

Capitalism is today again the focus of critical discourse. The virally spreading waves of financial crisis have lent renewed urgency to the critique of capitalism's specific historical way of organising modern societies. New movements and leading economists share a growing doubt about the sustainability of the capitalist mode of production. This has simultaneously given rise to a wider interest in Karl Marx's economy critique as a major inspiration.

One key theme of this current critical discourse of capitalism concerns the interface between economy and culture: how economy critique may inform cultural studies and other branches of cultural research, but also how cultural perspectives may qualify the understanding of contemporary capitalism. Under the heading 'Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique', this theme section of *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* presents a set of articles that in various ways approach this discussion from a cultural perspective. The revitalised economy critique of today has a strong cultural component acknowledging symbolic and communicative aspects on several levels. Since the publication of Marx's *Capital*, capitalism has grown and expanded, but also developed facets that were not equally visible at that time. In the last century, there has been a series of cultural turns in many research fields reacting to a corresponding culturalisation of social life, politics and the economy itself. Serious efforts have therefore been made to develop the cultural dimensions of economy critique, including the 1930s Frankfurt school of critical theory, the 1960s and 1970s central and east European reconstruction movement of 'capital logic' (Kapitallogik) and the contemporary new wave of literature in the wake of financial and ecological crises.¹

There are lots of good reasons to read Marx today. In a sharp and often-entertaining style of writing, his work offers uniquely influential political critique, social commentary and economic theory that resonate with the frustrated reactions to the recent series of financial crises. His philosophical argumentation is equally influential, with important concepts such as fetishism, ideology, real abstractions and the dialectical method of immanent critique, all of which point to the key role of symbolic meaning-making, i.e. of culture, to the reproduction of capitalism.

Many of those who today eagerly return to Marx seem to look for solutions to the present day's deep economic and political crisis, asking what can be done to create a better society. For this purpose, Marx will not suffice in spite of his insightful ideas about post-capitalist potentials. I will return to this towards the end.

I have myself taken part in both the latest waves of culturalised approach to capitalism. My latest book, *Capitalism: A Companion to Marx's Economy Critique* (Fornäs 2013), is based on study circle activities I organised in Gothenburg, Sweden, between 1974 and 1983, focusing on *Capital*, Volumes I–III. Before presenting the articles included in this thematic section of *Culture Unbound*, I would here like to discuss these intersections of capitalist economy and culture in relation to Marxist critical theory, point to difficult challenges for this theory today and end by outlining three options for strengthening the cultural dimension of modernity theory: (1) a strict continuation of Marx's own programme for economy critique, further reinforcing its cultural dimensions; (2) an integration of the economy critique in an equally totalising but more generalised model of value production; and (3) a more polydimensional model of contemporary modernity where the economic system interacts with other social and cultural spheres that follow different rules and cannot be reduced to one single logic.

I will start this introduction by offering a personal reflection on why and in which respects I find cultural dimensions necessary for contemporary critiques of capitalism, well knowing that there are lots of other positions in the current debate with divergent priorities. At the end, I will then present the articles in this thematic section of *Culture Unbound*.

Capital Culturally

Let me first mention some key cultural aspects of Marx's capitalism critique. The relation between economy and culture can be understood in many different ways. One may apply economic perspectives to cultural phenomena or vice versa, e.g. by either analysing cultural life with Marx's concepts or conducting cultural studies of the economic processes of capitalism. Whatever the starting point, one is soon entangled in a more complexly dynamic, mutual and indeed dialectical interplay between capitalism and culture, inviting Marxist economy critique and cultural studies to fruitfully interact more dialogically than before.

Implicit in much of today's Marx revival is a kind of reconstructed 'cultural *Capital*' – not in Pierre Bourdieu's specific sense but rather in the general sense of cultural studies: an analysis of capitalism with prominent cultural traits. Instead of seeing communicative, symbolic and signifying processes as belonging to a secondary or mirroring superstructure upon a material basis, or perhaps as the marginalised antithesis of economics, such cultural dimensions should now at last be understood as that core element of capitalism they have actually always been.

Already at the root of commodity analysis, use-values should not be reified into just physical materialities. Marx (1867/1990: 125; see also Fornäs 2013: 31) stresses that it makes no difference whether the needs they meet arise 'from the stomach, or the imagination', and thus avoids any clear-cut ontological dichotomy between materiality and mental or cultural aspects of social reality. Symbolic or

sign values are just a type of use-value, not something fundamentally different. Using a commodity to show others who you are, or who you want to be, is as much a use as is eating it. Also, such symbolic or 'imaginary' use-values were, in principle, just as important in the nineteenth century as they are today. Commodity consumption is not an individual relation between one human body and one material good but a relation between socioculturally situated and saturated subjects and commodities. Marx's theory of formal and real subsumption of labour under capital implies that exchange-values (and abstract labour) gradually shape and develop use-values (and concrete labour), but do not replace them. There is thus from beginning to end an intimate dialectic of material and symbolic aspects, rather than a purely material basis on which a cultural superstructure of more or less false appearances and ideologies are later superimposed. If mediatisation and culturalisation processes in late modernity have expanded the scope of communicative and signifying practices, this is therefore no clean historical break, but rather a continuation of a basic capitalist tendency.

Marx's critique of political economy had clear cultural implications with its dual targets: material exploitation and domination, but also the legitimating ideologies of dominant interpretations of these material processes by bourgeois political economists as well as in everyday life, where daily practices in the capitalist mode of production itself induce forms of understanding which hide its own basic premises behind naturalising appearances which suggest that all is fair and just.

This line of dialectical ideology critique may be traced from commodity fetishism at the beginning of *Capital*, Volume I, to money and capital fetishism and then to the Trinitarian formula in *Capital*, Volume III. Its implication is that the defining cultural processes of signifying practices are far from derivative, mirroring or in any way innocent superstructures. Instead, they are at the core of capitalism.

Janice Peck (2006) has made similar arguments in an effort to mediate between political economy and cultural studies. UK and US media studies are unhappily divided between these two camps, though they are more interconnected elsewhere, including Scandinavia. Peck refers to Nicholas Garnham and Lawrence Grossberg as key representatives of each camp, and contends that both treat economy and culture (or materiality and meaning) as two distinct areas. She instead argues for reconstructing capitalist commodity production and signifying practice as intrinsically interwoven. One of her main examples is Raymond Williams (1977), who indeed makes an important effort to get away from the base/superstructure dichotomy and instead to conceptualise cultural and economy not as two separate domains but as perspectives on a unified sociocultural practice. Another example is Nancy Fraser's perspectival dualism of redistribution and recognition, where economy and culture are not understood as two distinct areas or 'two substantive societal domains', but rather as 'two analytical perspectives that can be assumed with respect to any domain' (Fraser & Honneth 2003: 63). I

will come back to Fraser's perspective, but here just note that these are interesting examples of how the interrelation between cultural theory and economy critique can be strengthened.

Inspired by Hegel's dialectics, Marx insisted that social change must be based on capitalism itself, and work on the inner contradiction of capitalism, rather than applying norms and ideals from the outside. In a letter of 1843, he wanted to 'develop new principles for the world out of the world's own principles':²

The reform of consciousness consists only in making the world aware of its own consciousness, in awakening it out of its dream about itself, in explaining to it the meaning of its own actions. [...] Hence, our motto must be: reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but by analysing the mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself, whether it manifests itself in a religious or a political form. It will then become evident that the world has long dreamed of possessing something of which it has only to be conscious in order to possess it in reality. It will become evident that it is not a question of drawing a great mental dividing line between past and future, but of realising the thoughts of the past. (Marx 1843/1982)

Here critique and interpretation fuse into one single mode of interpretive critique. In *Grundrisse* a decade later, he likewise argued for realising the immanent potentials of history rather than drawing a fundamental line of difference between the past and the future: if societal transformations were to succeed, they must build on existing embryos: 'if we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic' (Marx 1858/1993: 159). And again in the commentary on the Paris Commune of 1871: the working class has 'no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant' (Marx 1871/1986: 335).

In the Frankfurt school, Walter Benjamin (1982/1999: 13) was similarly against rigid dogmas, describing the emergence of consciousness as a dialectical waking from a bad dream: 'The realization of dream elements, in the course of waking up, is the paradigm of dialectical thinking'. And Theodor W. Adorno (1955/1981: 27, 31, 33) in his 'Cultural Criticism and Society' similarly advocated a dialectical or 'immanent criticism' that 'measures culture against culture's own ideal', while the 'transcendent attack on culture regularly speaks the language of false escape'; this 'transcendent critique of ideology is obsolete'. While the transcendent critique contrasts the prevailing social and cultural conditions with an external ideal image of how things ought to be, dialectical immanent criticism instead makes conscious the inner contradictions, conflicts, tensions and ambivalences in, for instance, media culture.

Feminist theorists have productively developed similar ideas. In their dialogue on redistribution and recognition, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003: 207, 244, 264) in different ways both argue for an anchoring of emancipatory transformation or transcendence in immanent social processes, and Fraser (*ibid.*: 200,

212, 222) explicitly formulates her ‘perspectival dualism’ of redistribution and recognition as a response to the new challenges for critical theory that derive from the cultural turn. Albenaz Azmanova (2012: 145) has proposed a feminist agenda based on “‘immanent critique’ of the key structural dynamics of contemporary capitalism’. Judith Butler (1994/1997: 1) also insists on ‘continuing the important intellectual tradition of immanent critique’. And positioning herself as a ‘socialist-feminist’ doing ‘antiracist feminist multicultural studies’ in the critical theory tradition from Marx to the Frankfurt school, Donna Haraway (1978/1991: 23) underlines the contradiction of human existence as possessing the means of human liberation while continuing to live in relations of domination and scarcity: ‘The critical tradition insists that we analyse relations of dominance in consciousness as well as material interests’ and ‘play seriously’ with the ambiguity of the contemporary world. This would also imply an immanent critique focusing on inner contradictions in the capitalist social world as the basis for all emancipatory theory and practice.

Immanent critique thus implies that the critique of capitalism should focus on its inner contradictions and ambivalently identify its authoritarian as well as emancipatory potentials in developing a communicative ethics of demystification and denaturalisation. Meanings and interpretations are here at the core of capitalism’s effective force and eventual overthrow. On one hand material processes are ‘real abstractions’ that through social practices enable and give rise to abstract concepts such as labour or value. Understandings are rooted in social interaction. On the other hand this also means that interpretations – the virtual realities created by signifying cultural processes – have a ‘reality effect’. Capitalism survives by inducing understandings that let people live in a kind of dream world, and revolution mainly consists of a ‘reform of consciousness’, which functions as an awakening from that bad dream. Both the reproduction and the fall of capitalism depend on cultural processes involving collective meaning-making. There is a dialectical interplay of understandings and realities, meaning and materiality, and text and action (Ricoeur 1971/1981).

Instead of choosing between a material and a cultural understanding of capitalism, the point may be to look upon how these two sides are intrinsically interlocked. Just as Paul Ricoeur (1965/1970) and Jean Laplanche (1987/1989) have argued that Sigmund Freud must be read neither as a culturalist nor as a biologist, but his point was rather to see how symbols and bodies evolved together, something similar might be said about Marx. Both Freud and Marx emphasized the social and historical character of human beings and modes of production, but both also acknowledged elements of material practice. There is a necessary duality in these theories demanding an ability to maintain ambivalences and tension rather than looking for reductions to either sociocultural events or physical laws. Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism was a way of coming to grips with the processual intertwining of material and social aspects, none of which can be seen as second-

ary or derived. Use-value and value are neither natural-material nor purely sociocultural phenomena, but different ways in which capitalist society combines and ‘articulates’ sociality and materiality, culture and nature, and their mutual interdependence gives rise to the peculiar dynamics of modern society.

Culture is in this perspective far from the opposite other of capitalist economy; rather, capitalism is itself a cultural formation based on the interpretation of symbols. Capitalism is a historically specific social logic that intrinsically rests on processes of interpretation: signifying practices that make meanings interact indistinguishably with material practices – from giving commodities value and equalising different productive acts under the label of abstract labour to the fetishised understanding of labour-power, capital and natural resources as comparable sources of revenues. Thus interpretations and meanings are central to the reproduction and legitimation of the capitalist economic system – but also to its eventual overthrowing as revolutionary ideas emerge as well from the inner contradictions of the capital relation.

Marx strove to represent capitalism as a totality, but its historical situatedness at the same time hints that it was never, and can never be, all there is to social and cultural reality. Capitalist structures are not eternal laws but historically emerging patterns which have been naturalised so that they appear to be a universal automaton, which is true only as far as that appearance is accepted by sufficiently many. Marx’s economy critique was a dynamic and unfinished project where the late works were links in a longer critical knowledge process, rather than any sharply delimited fortress. Such a perspective mediates between voluntaristic humanism and deterministic structuralism, in a formally similar way as the intersubjectivity of the cultural perspective mediates between individual acting subjects and collective societal structures.

Modern culture is capitalist culture. This makes economic relations central to every critical and cultural theory. Modern capitalism thus has a triple link to culture by (1) being intrinsically based on complex cultural processes of signification; (2) its contemporary late modern phase making these symbolic aspects increasingly central or at least increasingly acknowledged in critical social research as well as in discourses of everyday life; and (3) cultivating seeds of its own post-capitalist transition not just in material forces of production but also in critical reflexivity that opens up possibilities to understand the historical character of this society and thus break its spell.

Cultural Challenges

Meanwhile, there are from a critical cultural studies perspective certain underdeveloped facets of Marx’s work that call for a way to integrate theoretical elements developed in the almost 150 years since the publication of *Capital*, Volume I, during which both capitalism and critical theory have been ‘culturalised’. Capital-

ism has since then turned in unexpected directions, and cultural aspects that were always there have become increasingly central.

One example is an element of Eurocentrism with regard to Asia and the colonial world that Marx only abandoned late in life (Lindner 2011). Another example is the faith in the emancipatory potential of joint-stock companies, which Marx (1894/1991: 567) saw as ‘the abolition of capital as private property within the confines of the capitalist mode of production itself’: ‘Capitalist joint-stock companies as much as cooperative factories should be viewed as transition forms from the capitalist mode of production to the associated one’ (ibid.: 572). It is today possible to see potentials in workers’ cooperatives but less so when it comes to joint-stock companies as they emerged as a key feature with no discernible tendency to threaten private property, let alone abolish it. Also, the increasingly complex and influential financial system points to a need to further develop Marx’s model presented in *Capital*, Volume III.

A third and more relevant example here is the striking lack of any specific discussion of commodity design, packaging, branding, marketing and media technologies, considering their obvious central role today in reproducing capitalism. Wolfgang Fritz Haug’s critique (1971/1986) of commodity aesthetics was an early effort in that direction, looking at how specialised industries provide promises of use-value through packaging and advertising. Issues of communication and signification are certainly present as a key subtext, but later developments of capitalism call for them to be much more the focus of critical attention. It has, for instance, become impossible to understand modern social networking media without comprehending how capital can be accumulated not just by producing and selling communication technologies or mediated texts to audiences, but also by packaging and selling audience segments to advertisers. In this way, the capitalist economy has developed a range of highly complex symbolic use-values that call for adding cultural perspectives to the economic models used to map such phenomena.

Marx’s economy critique remained an unfinished programme where even those parts that were published have a fragmentary and contested character as they exist in different versions from various phases of his work, many of them heavily edited by Friedrich Engels before publication. Incomplete versions of Marx’s programmatic thoughts about how to continue his writing project indicate that large sections on the state, the world market, ethics, aesthetics, etc., have been missing from the beginning, leaving these topics for later generations to develop.

The Frankfurt school of critical theory – from its original formation by Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin in the 1930s to Habermas and others decades later – was an attempt to update and revitalise Marx’s programme (Habermas 1981/1987: 374–403). Critical theory can be seen as an early response to a cultural turn in the history of modernity, and as a first version of doing critical cultural studies that combined social and symbolic approaches. It has particularly elaborated on issues

such as socialisation and subject formation, media and popular culture, arts and aesthetics since these appear to be increasingly central to the workings of late modern capitalism and at the same time least developed in Marx's own work.

Today, some go as far as to conceptualise an in some sense new cultural phase of capitalism. The talk of 'cognitive capitalism' is one such example of how practices of knowledge, signification and thus of culture have been seen to establish a new phase of capitalist development or at least new conditions for class struggle. It may be asked whether this is really a new phase that replaces classical forms of industrial capitalism, or rather a matter of recognising symbolic aspects that are a key subtext of the whole modern economy. With totally different political shades, this discussion slightly parallels how (mostly non-Marxist) ideas of culturalised post-industrial production giving rise to a new 'creative class' have been questioned for exaggerating historical change and underestimating both the cultural aspects of older modes of production and the continued industrial character of contemporary world capitalism (Fornäs et al. 2007: 18).

There is already in the initial analysis of commodities and values a potential for the culturalisation of economy critique. Building on Michael Heinrich (2004/2012), Anders Ramsay (2011: 88) traces an internal opposition and wavering in Marx's economy critique between a naturalistic and a social version of value theory (Fornäs 2013: 297).

Value is not a thing but rather a social relationship. It emerges neither through production nor through exchange, but presupposes both. It is a property something is assigned in relation to other things, which then gives the appearance of possessing it quite apart from such a relationship. As Marx insists on repeatedly, value is a ghostly or over-sensual property, not a substantial one. The conception of a commodity possessing its value objectivity independent of these relations is a semblance that transforms a social property into what is taken to be a natural one. (Ramsay 2011: 90)

Ramsay (2011: 91) compares economic value with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. In both cases, individual efforts must be socially recognised in order to result in true value production: 'the value-relation does not arise in exchange without a labour process, but without exchange, concrete labour would never be reduced to abstract labour either, and thus, no value would emerge'. It, therefore, becomes clear that value is not a purely objective material property, but something that emerges and is defined in social relations, just as is the case with meaning and thus with culture.

There is a dialectical interaction between practice and interpretation (Fornäs 2013: 302–306). Marx sees capitalism's real social relations and practices of exploitation and oppression as rooted and reproduced in the fetish forms to which his presentation repeatedly returns. By bringing such mechanisms into consciousness, humanity is able to break their spell. Social and cultural practices are therefore mutually interlaced and equally important for transforming society.

Marx's method of tracing essences behind mystifying but necessary surface appearances was indebted to Hegel. It is clearly different from any postmodern erasure of deep structures or, for instance, Michel Foucault's explicitly flat discourse theory. However, Marx's 'essentialism' was not biological or universal, but historical and situated. His abstractions were not eternal truths but real abstractions bound to a specific mode of production. It defined the commodity form as the essential social relation of capitalist society, but not for all of human history. There may, in fact, not be any corresponding essence at all in other – pre- or post-capitalist – modes of production. It is the historically specific capital relation that, when established as dominant in the world, introduces the essence/appearance structure and thus also legitimates, enables and necessitates the dialectical mode of interpretation itself. One might conclude that Marx's 'essentialism' (unlike Hegel's) is neither ontological (as it is only relevant to life under capitalism), nor epistemological (as it is not an ahistorical form of knowledge), but historically and methodologically situated. Slightly paradoxically, the essences of capitalism, with its depth/surface structure, are social and historical constructions.

However, Marx constructs a rather strict model of modern societies by identifying the commodity form as the unique core essence of capitalism, from which all other forms of not only economic but also social and cultural life are derived. It is true that he reconstructs commodities not as homogeneous entities but as deeply contradictory and split between a value and a use-value side, where the latter is a necessary basic condition, whereas the former dominates and shapes the world through exchange-values, money, capital, etc., in a dialectical chain moving from the abstract essence to increasingly more concrete appearances in everyday life. But this model of society tends to reduce other contradictions, struggles and forms of domination or emancipation than those centred on commodity production, markets, capital and class struggle to being secondary or derived surface phenomena.

Culturalising Strategies

Immanent critique needs to carefully consider where to find the key inner contradictions in modern capitalist society, and how to identify corresponding forces of emancipation. Here some form of cultural perspective seems needed, which was not possible to conceive until the cultural turns that emerged throughout the twentieth-century. Before that, there was yet no strongly developed theoretical understanding of culture and communication as key resources and spheres of society. This first emerged in the twentieth century as a response to the intensified mediation of widening spheres of society and with the development of critical theory, cultural sociology, critical hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism and cultural studies. No wonder Marx could not yet fully decipher the structures and processes

of this cultural level and aspect of social interaction. It is necessary for late modern critical theory to take the cultural dimension seriously in a much more complex and focused manner than ever before.

In the current German debate on the relation between the logic and history of capitalism, one may trace scattered efforts in this direction in all the main positions: the ‘new orthodoxy’ of W. F. Haug and others; the ‘new Marx reading’ fronted by Hans Georg Backhaus, Helmut Reichelt and Michael Heinrich; and the value critique of Robert Kurz et al. For instance, the historicising arguments in Kurz (2012) open up the theory of fetishism to a wider discussion of the socially integrating role of symbols and signifying practices, and when Heinrich (2004/2012) underlines the centrality of the money form for realising commodity values, this is implicitly also an opening for reflecting on how materiality and meaning mutually determine each other but at the same time are also mutually projected in the fetishised understanding of capitalist commodity production. Nevertheless, the task of performing a cultural turn in the critique of capitalism remains largely still ahead of us.

One may here tentatively discern three or four different possible strategies to explore. These strategies are reconstructed ‘ideal types’ of positions on how to connect cultural theory with economy critique today.

1. Culturalising Economy Critique

It is an immense task to develop a complex cultural theory that integrates Marx’s understanding of capitalism while also meeting challenges that have emerged since his time as a result of a series of ‘cultural turns’ in theory and society. The most orthodox solution would be to stick to Marx’s own programme and strive to expand the explanatory force of his economy critique to a widening sphere of phenomena so that, for instance, the state, media, gender and ethnicity would be interpreted too as ultimately based on a further appearance level of the capital relation. This would require uncovering the function of signifying practices in the commodity form and the capital relation, i.e. to strengthen the cultural dimensions of Marx’s analysis and show how capitalist commodity production shapes culture and communication. This should go all the way from the commodity form to the capital relation to the surface phenomena of contemporary capitalism, with its marketing and cultural industries, for example. Such an analysis not only needs to extract how commodity fetishism plays out on various levels, but also show how the dialectics of value and use-value give rise both to spiralling modes of exploitation and mystification and to equally important germs of emancipatory thought and action. An interesting example at the very basic level was the 1970s efforts to prove how the earliest forms of commodity exchange and money also gave rise to a social capacity for abstract thinking and thus for specific kinds of signifying practice of meaning production (Sohn-Rethel 1970/1978; Müller 1977). It would, however, then be important as well to respect the fundamental difference between

the history and the logic of capitalism in order not to project modern concepts onto pre-capitalist social formations (which both Sohn-Rethel and Adorno tended to do). At the same time, several cultural phenomena such as dialogue, drama, narrative, play or gifts seem to have long historical trajectories that go back far beyond the modern age of capital. This creates a demand to carefully disentangle how the modern forms of such mediating practices can be derived from capitalist commodity production, even when they may have much older historical roots. By tracing how classical and modern modes of representation and discourse also develop in dialectical interaction with the unfolding commodity form, it might be possible for an immanent critique to show how capitalism's inner contradictions breed modern cultural and social criticism itself. This is at least partly what the first generation of critical theorists tried to do, especially Adorno, who explored the complexities of how the commodity form affected, enabled and constrained the production, circulation and use of (other) symbolic forms. This was also what the 1960s and 1970s capital logic movement and other reconstructions of economy critique tended to aim for.

However, there are reasons to doubt whether such a totalising explanation of all of modern society as deriving from the basic logic of capitalist commodity production can ever succeed and suffice for founding a comprehensive social and cultural theory of modernity. It may be necessary to go even further, and not to reduce all kinds of values and interactions to the production and exchange of economic values. Perhaps the ambitions of Marx and his faithful followers can never be fulfilled since modern society and culture cannot be reduced to the effect of the single logic of economic relations, however full of internal contradictions it may be. There are reasons to hesitate before collapsing all kinds of value into one single commodity system. The world of commodities consists of economic values exchanged according to principles of equivalence in a market, but not all human relations seem evidently reducible to this particular form.

Anthropological and historical economist Karl Polanyi (1957) has distinguished between three different systems of social interaction. Commercial commodities can thus be transformed into mutual interpersonal gifts, which follow a different social logic than the market-bound pricing. A third category consists of common or shared public utilities made freely available to a larger community. In the media sector, interpersonal communication is based on the gift economy, while libraries and public service exemplify public goods. It is evident that commodity exchange interacts strongly with both the other two, but it may not be fruitful to fully reduce them to the first-mentioned. It is not necessary to accept all of Polanyi's work to see a point in this differentiation. His extension of social intercourse to plural systems of exchange far outside of the market sphere seems to destabilise the boundary between economy and culture, or at least redefine economy as a more limited and specific subset of significant social relations.

I remain unconvinced that the gift or public utility form can be fully translated into (variants of) the commodity form. Both are historically older than the last-mentioned, but still cannot be dismissed as marginal exceptions or residuals from pre-capitalist times, especially considering the new forms of gift economies and public arenas generated in the use of social media. The communicative resources in contemporary networked public spheres do not seem fully reducible to effects of market relations, however influential these may be.

Many cultural theories have seen cultural phenomena of signifying practice and symbolic communication as one of the main dimensions of modern society that calls for another theoretical foundation than commodity analysis. I will here just briefly and tentatively suggest alternative directions for strengthening the cultural dimension on a slightly different basis than economy critique, but still keeping open the possibility of retaining key aspects of Marx's analysis. While the first position above seemed to equate modernity with capitalism, the two others described below instead see capitalism (based on capitalist commodity production) as just one of several cornerstones of modern societies and seek to construct a more culturally oriented basis for understanding these.

2. Generalising Value Theory

One may culturalise the analysis of capitalism so far as to substitute economic capital as the core of modern society with something else that is more general and may encompass commodity production but also cover other realms of value. I believe Pierre Bourdieu does something like this by developing a more general concept of value and capital, with economic capital as just one of its forms. I will here just briefly mention this position. The polarity between economic and cultural capital is central to Bourdieu, and is seen as the main axis of inner contradiction in modern societies, on which he can build a kind of immanent critique. This places the core contradiction still within society, though not just within the economic market system but between two kinds of value formation. Bourdieu still keeps them together by regarding them both as varieties of symbolic capital, and thus the two competing poles within the social field.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital supplementing economic capital as two examples of symbolic values is one prime instance of how to differentiate between kinds of values, and not just economic ones. Bourdieu suggests a general theory of practices and values encompassing but not limited to economic capital. Bourdieu's general theory of value formation can thus be read to integrate parts of the Marxian analysis of capitalism into a wider framework of symbolic values in which economic values are reconstructed as a subdivision rather than the primary foundation. Bourdieu's solution (2005) is therefore to redefine value and capital in a much wider sense, with economic capital as one among several different value dimensions.

This necessitates a redefinition of key conceptual pairs such as value/use-value and capital/labour, and it has been discussed how well that has been achieved (Guillory 1993; Beasley-Murray 2000). Suffice to say that such an approach still is, to some extent, reductionist, in that it tends to stress homologies between different systems of value and place them within a larger scheme where all value forms are integrated as instances of a more general value-accumulating process where cultural aspects are more strongly developed than in Marx's economy critique. Bourdieu generalises the concept of value and reformulates a more 'cultural' model of society where economic capital is but one of several forms of symbolic capital.

Whereas the first option would tend to integrate cultural theory into economy critique, the second one does roughly the reverse, integrating commodity analysis into a more general (cultural) theory of symbolic value. One might strive for a more balanced integration of the two into one completely new cultural concept of value that is at the same time a value-oriented concept of culture, i.e. fusing the cultural and the economic perspective without reducing any to the other. I know of no such successful example. Considering how various aspects of signifying practice are differently organised and have a dissimilar historical development than capitalist commodity production, it is difficult to see how the two could be combined in such a non-hierarchic manner. In spite of certain parallels and lots of interaction, economic and cultural values are differently structured. Symbolic value may be conceived as a kind of (never fully quantifiable) use-value, but exchange-value may on the other hand also be understood as a particular kind of (quantified and quantifying) symbolic value. And even if such a new synthesis succeeded, additional problems would then emerge in trying to relate it to other dimensions of modern societies that still would remain outside this synthesis, such as, for instance, the gender order or ethnic relations. This prepares the way for the last strategy to be discussed here.

3. Diversifying Modernity

A last option is finally to give up all such totalising aspirations and develop a multilevel model of capitalism, accepting that parallel social mechanisms co-exist without any evident common denominator. This is similar to the intersectionalist approach to identity issues, which argues that class, gender, ethnicity and age are intertwined but irreducible to one single mode of social relationship. Nancy Fraser's work (2008) on redistribution and recognition, for instance, acknowledges that issues of symbolic representation and thus culture, which are brought to the fore by gender, sexuality and ethnicity movements, need to be taken seriously besides the demand for redistribution of resources that is the focus of most class analysis. Fraser argues for a 'perspectival dualism' that links distribution and recognition to 'two modes of social ordering' both based on capitalism: 'the economic and the cultural, which are conceived not as separate spheres but as differ-

entiated and interpenetrating' (Fraser & Honneth 2003: 66). Marx's method of immanent critique can then remain relevant to the economic processes of capitalism, but be extended and also applied to other aspects of society so as to fully conceptualise not only class relations but also those founded on gender, ethnicity and age. Just as with class, these other forms of social identity are based on specific ways in which social practices combine material with symbolic levels.

Gender and ethnicity cannot be reduced to forms of appearance of the commodity value form in the same way that might be said of class. They all form identity orders that are mutually interacting and intertwined, but where none can be subsumed under the other. There is a series of different orders, all of them mutually intersecting within the intersubjective lifeworlds of everyday life. And they, in turn, are all co-determined by, as well as co-determining, the market system of exploitation (and also the system of state power, to which I will soon return below). Capitalism as a mode of production co-constitutes modern gender relations, but does not fully explain them – and vice versa. This could be an argument for the need for more than one theory to understand modern societies. If the third option meant fusing theories into a total whole that still was based on a core integrating mechanism, the fourth strategy would then rather be to give up such total integration and instead accept a plurality of different co-existing theories that need to work dialogically and dialectically in combination, each focusing on a certain level and aspect of society, but never possible to sum up within a neat homological framework. This makes the conflict of interpretations unavoidable in a necessarily open-ended struggle and communication between different approaches since human lives and societies are themselves fundamentally heterological.

Fraser works in the spirit of Habermas, whose *Theory of Communicative Action* could serve as the basis for one way to develop this fourth strategy. (Another example could build on Paul Ricoeur, who in somewhat similar ways strove to make room for several explanatory dimensions of modern society and culture.) Habermas (1981/1987: 374f.) argues that the theory of value is not needed anymore, and can be replaced with his own theory of communicative action and systemic differentiation, though 'in other respects' he follows the Marxian model, e.g. by being 'critical both of contemporary social sciences and of the social reality they are supposed to grasp'.

In his earlier works, Habermas first added to the logics of production and labour a different dimension of interaction and communication, and problematised Marx's theories for being stuck in a production paradigm that tended to miss the different basis of intersubjective communicative action, which cannot be analysed in terms of labour, where individual subjects interact with objects in the world. Habermas instead constructed a multilevel model of complex modern society, where the market and the state are two different systems needed for relieving the pressure on interpersonal and public communication. None of them can be reduced to a passive effect of the other. Without the market system, people would

be forced to spend all their lifetime discussing how to distribute the means of existence. In Habermas's opinion, modern societies cannot do without commodity production, and he instead argues for counteracting the hypertrophy of the market system and its tendency to colonise the lifeworlds of civic society.

From a Habermasian perspective on critical theory, one may propose two main additions to Marx's model of modern society. First, to acknowledge not just one determining system, but (at least) two: those of the economic market and of the political state institutions, which certainly tend to serve the former but cannot simply be reduced to its form of appearance or its subordinate agent. Marx uncovers the logic of the market system, but the logic of the political and administrative power of the state has at least a relative autonomy. It is hard to say whether Marx would have come to the same conclusion if he had managed to complete his unfinished analysis of the state, or if this could only be done at a later stage of capitalist development, when the complex dialectical interaction between the two systems had become more visible.

The second – and in this context more relevant – move is to acknowledge that the signifying practices of civic culture and communication cannot be reduced to a reflex or appearance of the commodity form, even though economic relations certainly have great influence on everyday life. In people's lifeworlds, other use-value-based practices stubbornly survive and develop, and they cannot be understood solely on the basis of a paradigm of production or of commodity exchange. Dreams of another world may well arise from the capital relation itself as it, for instance, reinforces working-class collectivity. Other elements of such a dream derive from the experience of concrete labour. However, crucial parts of social life cannot be reduced to labour processes at all, but are rooted in non-commodified modes of interaction of other kinds than productive labour: communicative and signifying practices that, for instance, make it possible to fantasise about fictive realities and contrast them with the brute realities of the present, thus driving forward the collective will to change. Besides commodities, people also interact through communicative action, e.g. when exchanging interpersonal gifts or making use of communal utilities (such as common lands, libraries or public service). When Marx addresses the working class as a formation that not only is reproduced by capital but also resists it, he implicitly acknowledges the existence of another kind of discourse and action.

Habermas thinks of communicative action and the public sphere as key resources for civic society to counteract the colonising tendencies of the market and the state apparatus, and this is clearly a different solution than what Marx had in mind. From such a perspective, Marx may have been right in describing how simple commodity production leads to money that, in turn, transforms labour-power into a commodity and puts capital in motion, but perhaps capitalist history also gives rise to other parallel social formations, such as states and, more importantly, civil societies, with movements and public spheres that build up institutions and

forms of practice that might in the future be able to prevent that first mechanism from being repeated. If that were the case, then the abolition of capital and wage-labour might suffice if the inherent tendencies of the market distribution of resources to develop into those problematic forms could be prevented from breaking through.

In any case, one might argue for the need for a polycentric model of modern society, which cannot be analysed in terms of the unfolding of one singular dialectic – that of commodity production – but must be understood as the result of a combination of economic-market, political-institutional and social-cultural dimensions. Such a supplementary expansion of Marx's economy critique would result in a polycentric or 'heterological' model of society, which conceptualises a range of further contradictions and tensions. *Capital* offers inspiration for such continued critical interpretation of the inner contradictions of contemporary capitalism, but present-day critical theorists cannot just fill in Marx's own programme, but must develop a more fully cultural understanding of capitalism.

Openings

It is hard to say which of the three solutions holds most promise for the future: (1) it might still be possible to continue the work of Adorno, the first generation of critical theory and/or later reconstructions of Marx's programme to develop a late modern economy critique where cultural dimensions are fully acknowledged – from the commodity form to the capital relation to all the current aspects and levels of social and cultural life; (2) it may also be possible to go with Bourdieu or some other theorist who develops a cultural theory of modernity that encompasses Marx's economy critique but integrates it in a slightly more general totality in which different forms of value are put on a common denominator; and (3) a third possibility might be to evolve a multipolar theory of modernity that makes space for economic, political and cultural dimensions, and shows their mutual tensions, whether in Habermas's or, for instance, Paul Ricoeur's terms.

I see advantages and disadvantages in all these positions. The original programme of economy critique retains its fascination and may well have hitherto-underdeveloped potentials when it comes to cultural theory, but seems (as has been argued above) not quite able to account for all aspects of contemporary modernity. The attempt to find another general foundation for social and cultural theory in a wider concept of value formation is a totalising approach that likewise has both its attractions and detractions. As for the third option, I am, in principle, inclined towards 'heterological' theories that allow for polydimensional thinking, but Habermas's version of this approach has been subjected to such extensive critical debate that one might perhaps need to look elsewhere for achieving an acceptable solution to the task of laying a new foundation for a cultural understanding of contemporary capitalism.

This has just been an initial attempt to point out some strategic ways in which economy critique of capitalism needs to be culturalised today. I started by suggesting that Marx's economy critique may not be enough to offer guidance to those many who these days look for help to invent a better post-capitalist world. Reading Marx is obviously strongly recommended, but can never be enough for several reasons.

First, capitalism has developed in ways Marx could never have predicted, and so has social theory. The culturalisation of both society and theory has given rise to important phenomena that are never fully covered in his work, such as the role of marketing, the service sector and the middle classes, as well as critical ideas from cultural studies and feminist and postcolonial theory.

Second, capitalism theory may, in principle, not suffice to understand modernity as a whole. Commodity analysis may need to be supplemented with other models in order to conceptualise the role of signifying practice, interaction, communication and public spheres without reducing them to forms of appearance of the commodity form.

Third, the difficulty of predicting what a post-capitalist society would look like is not just a lack of clarity in Marx's theory. Perhaps no theory at all may ever provide the recipe for a post-capitalist future since – unlike capitalism – such utopia can never follow any quasi-automatic rules. Capitalism builds on the quasi-automatic machinery of commodity production, which like a ruthless growth motor propels social development forward as soon as it is solidly in place. It is all too easy to look for a new mechanism that will solve for good the problems and dilemmas of capitalism. There cannot be any such simple answer at all. The answer must instead be sought in the interfaces between many different movements that together deconstruct the logic of history that capitalism once installed. The point of socialism is that what comes after capitalism *cannot* be an automatism: it is no abstract form that unfolds and determines the world. Instead, it is up to the flow of political practices and actions to shape the post-capitalist world. It cannot be reduced to a simple formula based on a predictable mechanism or an idealist thought-construction that could be envisaged in advance. It must be a matter of practice and agency, not of economic laws. Humanity must release itself from its 'self-incurred tutelage' (Kant 1784/1997), which is not only represented by religious fetishes but also by the economic fetishes emanating from the market logic of commodity production, and thus find ways to act together without support in any social logics at all. Immanent critique can therefore only discern the main capitalist contradictions on which such action can build, but never predict its outcomes. Those who produce use-values must explore together, in interaction and communication, how to reorganise society in the absence of any driving motor such as commodity production. This again calls for contemporary critical theory to creatively combine economic and cultural dimensions, issues of distribution

and of recognition (Fraser 2003, 2008), and never subsume any of them under the other.

Thematic Articles

At the biennial Crossroads in Cultural Studies conference held in Paris in July 2012, the importance of economic issues to cultural research was foregrounded by spotlight sessions on 'Cultural Studies and Economies/Economics' and 'Cognitive Capitalism'. It was these sessions that inspired me to invite some forty scholars to contribute manuscripts to a theme section on 'Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique' in *Culture Unbound*.

The call for articles for this theme section aimed to attract pieces that (a) debated the role of economic topics in cultural studies and research today, and the possibility for contemporary cultural critique to better integrate key facets of Marx's theories, but also those that (b) discussed in light of capitalism's current crisis which new understandings contemporary economy critique needs to deliver, and if there is a cultural dimension to be further developed in this context. What can cultural research in today's state of economic, social and ecological crisis learn from Marx's economy critique? How can cultural perspectives cast new light on Marx's economy critique and on contemporary capitalism? What does it mean to incorporate Marx into cultural studies today? Is it his writing style that inspires followers: his brilliant combination of sharp philosophical arguments, empirical historical and economic research and deeply engaged political commentary and visions? Is it his focus on class or on the economy that needs to be taken up again? Is it a radical political commitment that cultural research today longs to revive? Or is it an understanding of dialectical thinking that can again be explored after having fallen out of fashion through a number of critical deconstructions? Those questions were the starting point for this theme section.

The result is thirteen eminent essays covering a wide range of perspectives on this topical theme. There is no straightforward and self-evident way to organise the articles, and it is easy to come up with other subtopics that would also have been well worth dealing with here. This is therefore not the final word, but a provocative start to continued research and debate. The articles may be loosely divided into four main sections, though there are plenty of overlaps between and heterogeneities within them.

Economy and Culture

First, some articles offer cultural perspectives on economic theory, providing a meta-discussion of different standpoints in this respect. Most authors focus on the uses of Marx today, but attention is also given to how Hegel's philosophy of labour can shed light on certain aspects of capitalist economy.

Christian Fuchs in 'Karl Marx and the Study of Media and Culture Today' critically analyses three cultural studies publications and points out how they agree on asking for more economic analysis but disagree on how to do that and whether Marx has any relevance to this task. Fuchs argues that Marx's labour theory of value is especially important for critically analysing media, culture and communication in the current times of global crisis and resurgent critique.

The next text, Brett Neilson's 'Beyond *Kulturkritik*: Along the Supply Chain of Contemporary Capitalism', aims to establish a role for culture in struggles against globalised capitalism and to rethink the place of critique and ideology by reviving a tradition of cultural critique that saw culture as an ideological effect of the mode of production. It contends that cultural processes of translation, signification, communication and argument have become central to the development of capitalism as infrastructural technology shapes relations of capital and labour, but also opens up for oppositional activism.

In the third article, 'Imagined, Real and Moral Economies', John Clarke distinguishes three approaches to the idea of economy and explores the possibilities and limits of each, looking for productive ways to confront and interrelate them. Clarke sees both 'real' and 'moral economy' (introduced by E. P. Thompson) as instances or forms of imagined economy, and uses their interaction to investigate the shifting and contested character of what counts as 'economic' in contemporary capitalism.

Anders Bartonek, in turn, moves the focus away from Marx to his key philosophical predecessor, Hegel. In his article 'Labour against Capitalism? Hegel's Concept of Labour in between Civil Society and the State', Bartonek finds cultivating dimensions of Hegel's concepts of labour, political economy and civil society, offering a critical perspective on the relation between economy and culture, and a useful platform for revitalising capitalism critique.

Cultural Capitalism

A second group of articles deals critically with the phenomenon and discourse of cognitive capitalism, i.e. of a new phase of capitalist societies where culture, communication and information processes are more central than before.

In 'The General Illumination which Bathes all the Colours: Class Composition and Cognitive Capitalism for Dummies', Gigi Roggero presents the political theory and concept of cognitive capitalism, focusing on processes of cognitivisation, which is slightly similar to the idea of culturalisation discussed above. He scrutinises the forms of class composition and subjectivity that it implies, summarising its genealogy as a new battlefield of class struggle. He juxtaposes labour cooperation and autonomy, which makes production common, with capital as a social relation of capture and subordination, and ends by discussing how the materiality of class composition can enable a revolutionary break with capitalism.

In 'The Alternative to Post-Hegemony: Reproduction in Austerity's Social Factory', Kylie Jarrett uses the Irish example to investigate whether the distinction between work and sociality has really become blurred in the transition to the 'social factory' of post-Fordist economic paradigms. It is often said that sociality is industrialised and industrialisation increasingly centred on immaterial, social activity, in a regime based on biopower where the concept of hegemony has become irrelevant. Jarrett challenges such post-hegemony arguments, and contends that recent European austerity economics seriously undermines such assumptions. She uses feminist thinking to challenge the epochalisation inherent in arguments of post-hegemony, championing instead a return to engagement with the reproductive logic of hegemonic discipline.

Steen Nepper Larsen in 'Compulsory Creativity: A Critique of Cognitive Capitalism' scrutinises paradoxical ideas of compulsory creativity and mandatory originality, criticising how human inventiveness becomes attuned to economy and market strategies, depriving them of their social qualities. His ambition is to renew and sharpen a critique of the new type of capitalism and to inspire alternative ways of thinking and living.

Contemporary Crisis

A third subset of this theme section comprises two articles that deal with the recent and contemporary financial crisis from a cultural perspective.

Written from the participant perspective, Andrew Ross's 'You Are Not a Loan: A Debtors Movement' offers a unique insight into contemporary experiences of anti-capitalist struggle during a prolonged financial crisis, with a focus on the debt resistance movement that evolved from Occupy Wall Street. Concentrating on the Student Debt Campaign and its continuation in Strike Debt, the article relates the emerging fabric of a debtors movement to the dynamics of other current and historical instances of popular rebellion against exploitation, arguing that in the twenty-first century, debt is the successor of wages in the front line of anti-capitalist struggles.

In 'What Difference Do Derivatives Make? From the Technical to the Political Conjuncture', Randy Martin investigates the role of finance in the contemporary capitalist economy, showing how finance and other forms of capital have become more closely articulated and interwoven. He presents a critical social logic of the derivative, following on Marx's commodity analysis, explaining the dominating role of finance and the politics of debt today. The derivative provides key insights into the process of valorisation and the interdependence that creates mutual indebtedness.

Culture in Contemporary Capitalism

Finally, the last set of articles analyses how various aspects of culture and cultural practices function in late capitalism: subject formation, cultural policy and cultural work.

Jean-Louis Fabiani's 'Cultural Governance and the Crisis of Financial Capitalism' discusses how the 1980s neoliberal turn has shifted European cultural policies from democratic cultural consumption to creativity, branding and sponsoring. This has created new contradictions and disenchantment in the cultural sector. The crisis has led to shrinking budgets but also to new claims for democratic access to cultural resources, voiced by innovative movements. Post-crisis policies must deal with sharpening contradictions between cultural freedom and commodification, a deepening legitimacy crisis of elite cultures and increased tensions between identity claims and globalisation.

The next article moves from policy issues to subjectivity. Jim McGuigan in 'The Neoliberal Self' describes a preferred ideal lifestyle for contemporary capitalism. The neoliberal self combines traits of classical economics with present-day discourses that actually derive from cultures of disaffection and opposition. He shows how the recent transition from organised to neoliberal capitalism has engendered a corresponding transformation in subjectivity. Leading celebrities and high-tech entrepreneurs operate in the popular imagination as models of achievement, providing guidelines of conduct in a ruthlessly competitive and unequal world.

In "'Being in the Zone" of Cultural Work', Mark Banks approaches the intensified exploitation of workers in the cultural industries, where they must perform as creative subjects. 'Being in the zone' describes the ideal fusion of the productive mind and the labouring body. Banks studies how such a creative synthesis is constituted, offering a critical perspective that politicises its social effects in different empirical contexts.

Finally, Greig De Peuter's 'Revenge of Talent' also thematises how cultural workers are increasingly invoked as contemporary capitalism's role-model subjects. Self-exploiting flexible workers who generate economic value from knowledge, symbols, information and social interaction fit in neatly with the neoliberal priorities of post-Fordist capitalism. It is argued that this role model fails to produce the capacity to contest. An alternative approach focuses instead on three kinds of resistant activism in the arts, media and cultural industries: unionisation, compensation and occupation. Empirical examples lead up to a discussion of the creative-economy rhetoric about 'talent' and read the oppositional activism as a revenge of talent that defies the role-model reputation.

Together, the articles that form this theme section offer a qualified and provocative introduction to an intensified engagement with various dimensions of inter-

sections between economy and culture, as a step towards an immanent and communicative critique in this ambiguous era of multifaceted late-capitalist crisis.

Johan Fornäs is editor-in-chief of *Culture Unbound* and professor at the Department of Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University in South Stockholm. With a background in musicology, he is a board member of the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and was 2004–2008 vice-chair of the international Association for Cultural Studies ACS. His current research has two main strands, dealing with mediatisation on one hand and on the other with identities, symbols and narratives of Europe. E-mail: johan.fornas@sh.s

Notes

- ¹ The second wave included authors such as the Ukrainian Roman Rosdolsky, the Czechs Jindřich Zelený and Karel Kosík and Germans such as Helmut Reichelt, Hans-Georg Backhaus and Oskar Negt (see Elbe 2010, 2013; Fornäs 2013a: 294; Jameson 2009: 284). The current wave includes Bonefeld and Heinrich (2011), Eagleton (2011), Harvey (2010) and Jameson (2011). Another example was the ‘Marx2013’ conference held in Stockholm on 19–20 October 2013, where a draft of this text received valuable feedback for which the author is grateful to Anders Ramsay’s session on ‘*Capital today*’ and in particular to Paula Rauhala and Donald Broady.
- ² The following section on immanent critique builds on Fornäs (2013a: 300–302, 2013b). See also Antonio (1981), Buchwalter (1991) and Sabia (2010).

References

- Adorno, Theodor W. (1955/1981): ‘Cultural Criticism and Society’, *Prisms*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 17–34.
- Antonio, Robert J. (1981): ‘Immanent Critique as the Core of Critical Theory: Its Origins and Developments in Hegel, Marx and Contemporary Thought’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 32:3, 330–345.
- Beasley-Murray, Jon (2000): ‘Value and Capital in Bourdieu and Marx’, Nicholas Brown & Imre Szeman (eds): *Pierre Bourdieu: Fieldwork in Culture*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 100–119.
- Bonefeld, Werner & Michael Heinrich (eds) (2011): *Kapital und Kritik. Nach der “neuen” Marx-Lektüre*, Hamburg: VSA.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (2005): *The Social Structures of the Economy*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Buchwalter, Andrew (1991): ‘Hegel, Marx, and the Concept of Immanent Critique’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 29:2, 253–279.
- Butler, Judith (1994/1997): ‘Against Proper Objects’, Elizabeth Weed & Naomi Schor (eds): *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Eagleton, Terry (2011): *Why Marx Was Right*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Elbe, Ingo (2010): *Marx im Westen. Die neue Marx-Lektüre in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

- Elbe, Ingo (2013): 'Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms – Ways of reading Marx's theory', *Viewpointmag.com*, October 2013: <http://viewpointmag.com/2013/10/21/between-marx-marxism-and-marxisms-ways-of-reading-marxs-theory/> (accessed 15 January 2014).
- Fornäs, Johan (2013a): *Capitalism: A Companion to Marx's Economy Critique*, London/New York: Routledge.
- Fornäs, Johan (2013b): 'The Dialectics of Communicative and Immanent Critique', *tripleC*, 11:2, 504-514.
- Fornäs, Johan, Peter Aronsson, Karin Becker, Svante Beckman, Erling Bjurström, Tora Friberg, Martin Kylhammar & Roger Qvarsell (2007): *Culture Unbound: Dimensions of Culturalisation*, Norrköping: Department of Culture Studies/Linköping University Electronic Press: www.ep.liu.se/ea/temaq/2007/005 (accessed 15 January 2014).
- Fraser, Nancy (2008): *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fraser, Nancy & Axel Honneth (2003): *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso.
- Guillory, John (1993): *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1981/1987): *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Haraway, D. J. (1978/1991): 'The Past is the Contested Zone: Human Nature and Theories of Production and Reproduction in Primate Behaviour Studies', *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, London: Free Association Books, 21–42.
- Harvey, David (2010): *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*, London: Profile Books.
- Haug, Wolfgang Fritz (1971/1986): *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Heinrich, Michael (2004/2012): *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Horkheimer, Max (1930/1989): 'The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research', S.E. Bronner & Douglas Kellner (eds): *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, London: Routledge, 25–36.
- Jameson, Fredric (2009): *Valences of the Dialectic*, London/New York: Verso.
- (2011): *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One*, London/New York: Verso.
- Kant, Immanuel (1784/1997): *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and, What is Enlightenment?*, 2nd ed., Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall.
- Kurz, Robert (2012): *Geld ohne Wert. Grundrisse zu einer Transformation der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Berlin: Horlemann.
- Laplanche, Jean (1987/1989): *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Lindner, Kolja (2011): 'Eurozentrismus bei Marx. Marx-Debatte und Postcolonial Studies im Dialog', Werner Bonefeld & Michael Heinrich (eds): *Kapital und Kritik. Nach der "neuen" Marx-Lektüre*, Hamburg: VSA, 93–129.
- Marx, Karl (1843/1982): 'Letter from Marx to Arnold Ruge in Dresden, September 1843', *Marx & Engels Collected Works. Volume 3*, London: Lawrence & Wishart: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/letters/43_09-alt.htm (accessed 15 January 2014).
- Marx, Karl (1858/1993): *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (rough draft), London: Penguin.
- (1867/1990): *Capital, a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I*, London: Penguin Books/New Left Review.
- (1871/1986): 'The Civil War in France', *Marx & Engels Collected Works. Volume 22*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- (1894/1991): *Capital, a Critique of Political Economy. Volume III*, London: Penguin Books/New Left Review.
- Müller, Rudolf Wolfgang (1977): *Geld und Geist. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Identitätsbewußtsein und Rationalität seit der Antike*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

- Polanyi, Karl (1957): 'The Economy as Instituted Process', Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg & Harry W. Pearson (eds): *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, New York: Free Press, 243–270.
- Ramsay, Anders (2011): 'Marx? Which Marx?', Carl Henrik Fredriksson & Simon Garnett (eds): *Europe Talks to Europe: A Polylogue on Culture and Politics*, Wien: Eurozine, 82–93.
- Ricoeur, Paul (1965/1970): *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul (1971/1981): 'The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 197–221.
- Sabia, Dan (2010): 'Defending Immanent Critique', *Political Theory*, 38:5, 684–711.
- Sohn-Rethel, Alfred (1970/1978): *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, London: Macmillan.
- Williams, Raymond (1977): *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Karl Marx and the Study of Media and Culture Today

By Christian Fuchs

Abstract

The task of this paper discusses the role of Marx in analysing media, communication and culture today. An analysis of three contemporary Cultural Studies works – Lawrence Grossberg’s monograph *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, John Hartley’s monograph *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies* and Paul Smith’s edited volume *The Renewal of Cultural Studies* – shows that there is an agreement that the economy needs to be taken more into account by Cultural Studies, but disagreement on which approach should be taken and what the role of Karl Marx’s works shall be. The paper argues that Marx’s labour theory of value is especially important for critically analysing the media, culture and communication. Labour is still a blind spot of the study of culture and the media, although this situation is slowly improving. It is maintained that the turn away from Marx in Cultural and Media Studies was a profound mistake that should be reverted. Only an engagement with Marx can make Cultural and Media Studies topical, politically relevant, practical and critical, in the current times of global crisis and resurgent critique.

Keywords: Karl Marx, Marxist theory, culture, media, capitalism.

Introduction

- * 'Marx makes a comeback' (*Svenska Dagbladet*, Oct 17, 2008)
- * 'Crunch resurrects Marx' (*The Independent*, Oct 17, 2008)
- * 'Crisis allows us to reconsider left-wing ideas' (*The Irish Times*, Oct 18, 2008)
- * 'Marx exhumed, capitalism buried' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Oct 23, 2008)
- * 'Marx Renaissance' (*Korea Times*, Jan 1, 2009)
- * 'Was Marx Right All Along?' (*The Evening Standard*, March 30, 2009).

These news clippings indicate that with the new global crisis of capitalism, a new interest in Karl Marx's works has emerged. The new world economic crisis that started in 2008 is the most obvious reason for the return of the interest in Marx. This shift is however multidimensional and has multiple causes:

- The new world economic crisis has resulted in an increasing interest in the dynamics and contradictions of capitalism and the notion of crisis.
- Neoliberalism and the precariousness of work and life can best be analysed as phenomena of class, exploitation, and commodification.
- New new social movements (the anti-corporate movement, global justice movement, Occupy movement) have an interest in questions of class.
- The financialization of the economy can be analysed with categories such as the new imperialism or fictitious capital.
- New global wars bring about an interest in the category of imperialism.
- Contemporary revolutions and rebellions (as the Arab spring) give attention to the relevance of revolution, emancipation, and liberation.
- The globalization discourse has been accompanied by discussions about global capitalism.
- The role of mediatization, ICTs, and knowledge work in contemporary capitalism was anticipated by Marx' focus on the General Intellect.
- A whole generation of precariously working university scholars and students has a certain interest in Marxian theory.

Given that the interest in Marx's works and the economic in general has today returned, the question arises which role Marx should play in the analysis of media, communication and culture and which role his works actually do play in such studies. In order to contribute to the discussion of this question, this paper discusses the role of Marx in current works of selected representatives of Cultural Studies and argues for a renewed reading and interpretation of Marx's works in the context of studying the media, communication and culture.

Section 2 contextualises the paper by briefly discussing the role of Marx in Cultural Studies. It lays the grounds for an analysis of the role of Marx in contemporary works in Cultural Studies that is accomplished in section 3 that discusses the role of Marx's theory in three books published by prominent representatives of Cultural Studies: Lawrence Grossberg's *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (section 3.1), John Hartley's *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies* (section 3.2) and the collected volume *The Renewal of Cultural Studies* that features 27

contributions and was edited by Paul Smith (section 3.3). Many approaches in contemporary Cultural Studies agree that the economic has to be taken more into account, although there is no agreement on how this engagement with the economy should look like. The position taken in this paper is that the analysis of media, communication and culture requires a profound engagement with, discussion and interpretation of Karl Marx's works. Therefore, section 4 presents a possible entry point into such a debate, namely the application of Marx's labour theory of value to contemporary media. Finally, some conclusions are drawn.

Karl Marx and Cultural Studies

The works of Karl Marx had an important influence on early Cultural Studies. So for example Raymond Williams argued in one of his earliest books, *Culture & Society: 1780-1950*, that he is 'interested in Marxist theory because socialism and communism are now important' (Williams 1958: 284). Williams argued for and worked on a 'Marxist theory of culture' that recognises 'diversity and complexity', takes account of continuity within change, allows 'for chance and certain limited autonomies', but takes 'the facts of the economic structure and the consequent social relations as the guiding string on which a culture is woven, and by following which a culture is to be understood' (Williams 1958: 269). 17 years later, Williams confirmed his deep commitment to Marxist thought: he argued that he has 'no real hesitation' to define himself as a historical materialist, if this position means demanding 'the destruction of capitalist society', 'the need to supersede' capitalist society and 'to go beyond' it 'so that a socialist society' is established (Williams 1975: 72). He wrote that Marxism that extends its scope to the totality of culture is 'a movement to which I find myself belonging and to which I am glad to belong' (Williams 1975: 76).

Edward P. Thompson argued for a Marxism that stresses human experience and culture. He defended such Marxism politically against Stalinism (Thompson 1957), theoretically on the left against Althusserian structuralism (Thompson 1978) and against the right-wing reactions against Marx led by thinkers like Leszek Kolakowski (Thompson 1973). Thompson argued that this form of Marxist thinking was present, first, in Marx's 'writings on alienation, commodity fetishism, and reification; and, second, in his notion of man, in history, continuously making over his own nature' (Thompson 1973: 165). The political perspective underlying Thompson's political and theoretical interventions is socialist humanism, a position that 'is humanist because it places once again real men and women at the centre of socialist theory and aspiration, instead of the resounding abstractions – the Party, Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, the Two Camps, the Vanguard of the Working-Class – so dear to Stalinism. It is socialist because it re-affirms the revolutionary perspectives of Communism, faith in the revolutionary potentialities

not only of the Human Race or of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat but of real men and women' (Thompson 1957: 109).

In the 1990s, a controversy between Cultural Studies and Critical Political Economy developed that culminated in an exchange between Nicholas Garnham (1995a, b) and Lawrence Grossberg (1995). The basic points of criticism are summarised in table 1. Garnham (1995a: 64) summarises the criticism of Cultural Studies by saying that the latter refuses 'to think through the implications of its own claim that the forms of subordination and their attendant cultural practices – to which cultural studies gives analytical priority – are grounded within a capitalist mode of production'. The discussion between Garnham and Grossberg is an indication that something fundamentally changed in Cultural Studies since the time Williams and Thompson had written their major works, namely a profound move away from Marx, Marxism and the analysis of culture in the context of class and capitalism.

Topic	Nicholas Garnham	Lawrence Grossberg
The basic difference between Cultural Studies and Critical Political Economy	Political Economy sees class as the key to the structure of domination: in capitalism, non-class domination is always related to class domination Cultural Studies sees class and gender, race, etc as independent, it ignores the economy and class.	Political Economy is a form of class/economic reductionism and determinism. Cultural Studies sees a plurality of articulated differences.
Assessment of classical Cultural Studies works	Williams, Hoggart and Thompson stressed working class culture and the struggle against capitalism	William, Hoggart and Thompson focused on practices, by which people represent themselves and the world
The analysis of production	Cultural Studies gives priority to cultural practices and ignores that they are grounded in the capitalist mode of production	Political Economy equates production with the cultural industries
The analysis of consumption	Cultural Studies focuses on cultural consumption/leisure instead of production/work/institutions	Political Economy ignores studying consumption and everyday life
The analysis of resistance in culture	Cultural Studies sees the interpretation of culture as arbitrary and always resistant, authentic, progressive	Some, but not all work in Cultural Studies celebrates popular culture as resistant. Political Economy sees people as passively manipulated cultural dupes and culture only as commodity and ideological tool. Cultural Studies says that

		institutions cannot control how people interpret culture. Cultural Studies sees consumers as active.
Truth and ethics	Cultural Studies rejects the notion of truth and therefore ethics and the quest for a just society.	Notions like truth and false consciousness are elitist.

Table 1: The controversy between Nicholas Garnham and Lawrence Grossberg

The return of Marx in contemporary academia was preceded by a disappearance of Marx. In 1990, it was announced that Stuart Hall's keynote talk at the conference 'Cultural Studies: Now and in the Future' would have the title 'The Marxist Element in Cultural Studies' (Sparks 1996: 72). The programme finally announced him as talking about 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies', which is also the title of the published version of the presentation (Hall 1992/1996). Hall describes in the troubled relationship of his version of Cultural Studies to Marx. He says that was never a moment 'when cultural studies and marxism represented a perfect theoretical fit' because Marx's work has 'great inadequacies': he 'did not talk about [...] culture, ideology, language, the symbolic'. A certain 'reductionism and economism' and 'Eurocentrism' would be 'intrinsic to marxism' (Hall 1992/1996: 265). Therefore 'the encounter between British cultural studies and marxism has first to be understood as the engagement with a problem' (Hall 1992/1996: 265). The 1990s and 2000s were decades of the disappearance of Marx in the humanities and social sciences in general.

Hall generalizes and constructs a homogeneity of British Cultural Studies that never existed. Whereas his own encounter with Marx may always have been troubled and at the time, when he felt more appealed by Marx's works, was mainly an encounter with Althusser's structuralism, other representatives of Cultural Studies, namely Edward P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, were much attracted by Humanist Marxism. Whereas Hall took up Althusser's work, Edward P. Thompson at the same time employed his theoretical and literary skills for writing a bitter satirical critique of Althusser from a Marxist-Humanist standpoint (Thompson 1978) and for writing a defence of Marx and Marxism against Leszek Kolakowski (Thompson 1973), a former Humanist Marxist, who published a book against Marx and Marxism (Kolakowski 2005). So the identification and depth of engagement with Marxism has definitely been different in various strands of Cultural Studies. Stuart Hall gives (against his own epistemology) a quite non-complex, non-contextualized and reductionistic reading of Cultural Studies and Marxism that too much generalizes his own experiences and worldview.

Vincent Mosco (2009) argues that Hoggart, Williams, Thompson, Willis and Hall et al. (1976) 'maintained a strong commitment to an engaged class analysis' (Mosco 2009: 233), but that later Cultural Studies became 'less than clear about

its commitment to political projects and purposes' (Mosco 2009: 229) and that it is 'hard to make the case that cultural studies has devoted much attention to labor, the activity that occupies most people's waking hours' (Mosco 2009: 214). Colin Sparks describes the relationship between Hallian Cultural Studies and Marxism as 'move towards marxism and move away from marxism' (Sparks 1996: 71). He argues that Stuart Hall's 'slow movement away from any self-identification with marxism' (Sparks 1996: 88) in the 1980s was influenced by the uptake of Ernesto Laclau's approach. The resulting 'distance between cultural studies and marxism' is for Sparks a 'retrograde move' (Sparks 1996: 98). 'Marrying' Marxism and Cultural Studies would remain 'an important and fruitful project' (Sparks 1996: 99). Ernesto Laclau has in a dialogue with Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek admitted that in postmodern approaches it is a common language game to 'transform 'class' into one more link in an enumerative chain [...] 'race, gender, ethnicity, etc. – and class' (Butler, Laclau & Žižek 2000: 297) and to put class deliberately as last element in the chain in order to stress its unimportance – Laclau speaks of 'deconstructing classes' (Butler, Laclau & Žižek 2000: 296). Slavoj Žižek has in this context in my opinion correctly said that Postmodernism, Cultural Studies and post-Marxism have by assuming an 'irreducible plurality of struggles' accepted 'capitalism as 'the only game in town'' and have renounced 'any real attempt to overcome the existing capitalist liberal regime' (Butler, Laclau & Žižek 2000: 95). Colin Sparks (1996: 92) holds that the Laclauian move in Cultural Studies was to 'give equal weight to each of the members of the 'holy trinity' of race, class and gender'. According to Laclau himself, the task of his approach was to deliberately ignore and downplay the importance of class in favour of other forms of power.

Given the ambivalent position of Karl Marx in Cultural Studies, the question that arises is what role for Marx and the analysis of capitalism and class Cultural Studies scholars see today and in the future. I will take up this question next.

Cultural Studies and Karl Marx Today

I have looked at how three recent Cultural Studies books have discussed the relationship of Cultural Studies to Marx and Marxist theory. The books were published in the past three years, so all are relatively recent, and have set themselves the task to reflect on the future of Cultural Studies. This is already indicated in the titles of the three works: *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Grossberg 2010), *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies* (Hartley 2012) and *The Renewal of Cultural Studies* (Smith 2011b). Grossberg's title choice indicates that the book sets the stage for the future of Cultural Studies. Hartley goes one step further and includes a specific statement on how the future of Cultural Studies should look like in the title: he wants this field to focus on the analysis of digital media. Paul Smith's book title is also oriented on the future of Cultural Studies, but in contrast

to Grossberg and Hartley makes a quite normative statement, namely that something is wrong with Cultural Studies and that it therefore needs to be renewed.

I conducted a book title search covering the years 2010-2013 for the keyword Cultural Studies in the British Library's catalogue (date: February 2nd, 2013). It produced 47 results that have both words in their title and refer to the academic field named Cultural Studies. Many of these books are introductions and have titles like *Introducing Cultural Studies*, *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*, *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*, or *American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture*. So most of these books are oriented on documenting specific aspects of the history of Cultural Studies, whereas only a few are concerned with assessing the current status and the potential futures of Cultural Studies. The three selected books in contrast have exactly the purpose of critically assessing the present and helping to construct the future of Cultural Studies and are therefore suited for further analysis.

The three books have in common that they see a problem in contemporary Cultural Studies and a task for the future. For Grossberg, the problem is that 'too much of the work that takes place under the sign of cultural studies has simply become too lazy' (Grossberg 2010: 2). For Hartley, the problem is that Media and Cultural Studies was founded on and would stick to a broadcasting model of the media that sees 'everyday cultural practices [...] beset on all sides by darker forces that seemed to be exploiting the pleasure-seeking consumer for quite different ends, both political and corporate' (Hartley 2012: 1). For Smith, the problem is that Cultural Studies on the one hand has always had 'this kind of residual desire for some form of political efficacy' (Ross & Smith 2011: 245), but on the other hand by its institutionalisation this desire would have 'turned into something like a phantom limb' (Ross & Smith 2011: 246). So all three books have in common that they perceive a crisis of Cultural Studies and the need to change something in this field of studies. The profound crisis of contemporary society is on the academic level accompanied by a profound crisis of Cultural Studies. This is at least the impression that one gets from reading the books of these authors, who can all be considered to be among the most influential contemporary figures in Cultural Studies.

All three books identify a future task for Cultural Studies. For Grossberg, the task is to 'construct a vision for cultural studies out of its own intellectual and political history' (Grossberg 2010: 3). His book is 'an attempt to set an agenda for cultural studies work in the present and into the future' and to 'produce a cultural studies capable of responding to the contemporary worlds and the struggle constituting them' (ibid.). For Hartley, the task is to reform Cultural Studies (Hartley 2012: 2) so that it takes into account digital media and the 'dialogic model of communication' (ibid.). The task for Paul Smith's collected volume is to 'help define a new kind of identity for cultural studies' (Smith 2011a: 2) and to give answers to the question: 'What can and should cultural studies be doing right

now?’ (Smith 2011a: 3). These tasks vary in the way they want to transform Cultural Studies, but have in common that in the situation of the crisis of Cultural Studies they want to contribute to its reconstruction.

I will here discuss the books in chronological order of publication and therefore start with Lawrence Grossberg.

Lawrence Grossberg: Cultural Studies in the Future Tense

Grossberg (2010: 16) argues that Cultural Studies focuses on complexity by refusing ‘to reduce the complexity of reality to any single plane or domain of existence’, It would be ‘decidedly antireductionist’ (Grossberg 2010: 17), contextual and opposed to universalism and completeness (Grossberg 2010: 17). ‘Radical contextualism is the heart of cultural studies’ (Grossberg 2010: 20). This contextuality is expressed in the use of Stuart Hall’s concept of articulation, the ‘transformative practice or work of making, unmaking, and remaking relations and contexts, of establishing new relations out of old relations or non-relations’ (Grossberg 2010: 21). It focuses on ‘discovering the heterogeneity, the differences, the fractures, in the wholes’ (Grossberg 2010: 22). Power has ‘multiple axes and dimensions that cannot be reduced to one another’ (Grossberg 2010: 29). ‘Contexts are always in relations to other contexts, producing complex sets of multidimensional relations and connections’ (Grossberg 2010: 31). The ‘commitment to complexity, contingency, contestation, and multiplicity’ is ‘a hallmark of cultural studies’ (Grossberg 2010: 54).

Grossberg sees an important role for economics in Cultural Studies today. He argues that Cultural Studies should ‘take on and take up economic questions without falling back into forms of reductionism and essentialism’ (Grossberg 2010: 101), which logically implies that previously there was a neglect and ignorance of economic questions. Grossberg (2010: 105) argues that Cultural Studies ‘does need to take questions of economics more seriously’. He says that it should do so in a way ‘which would not reproduce the reductionism of many forms of political economy’ (Grossberg 2010: 105). Looking back on the debate between Cultural Studies and Marxist Political Economy of the Media, he says that Cultural Studies opposes ‘economic and class reductionism’ and refuses ‘to believe that the economy could define the bottom line of every account of social realities’ (Grossberg 2010: 105). Paul Smith argues in this context from within the Cultural Studies field that the claim by certain Cultural Studies scholars that Marxism is ‘reductive’ and ‘economically determinist’ (Smith 2006: 337) is a rhetoric used ‘to eschew the economic’. The result would be an ‘anarchist or nihilistic stance in relation to the object’ (Smith 2006: 338). As a result, Cultural Studies would have followed ‘numerous dead ends and crises’ and would have been held back from ‘realizing its best intellectual and political aspirations’ (Smith 2006: 339).

Grossberg’s own approach of reconciling economics and Cultural Studies starts with a discussion of Marx’s labour theory of value (Grossberg 2010: 151-165). He

argues for ‘a radically contextual theory of value and, hence, a radically contextual reading of Marx’s labor theory of value’ (Grossberg 2010: 156). Grossberg aims at decentring the value concept from the labour concept and therefore interprets it in its broader meaning as representation, desire, measure of a degree of singularity, and what is good and desirable (Grossberg 2010: 158f). He suggests a ‘general theory of value’ (Grossberg 2010: 159) that is based on the assumption of a ‘multiplicity, dispersion, and contingency of values’ (Grossberg 2010: 122) and a ‘general theory of value’ (Grossberg 2010: 159). Value would involve the production of all types of surplus so that ‘the real’ is ‘always greater than, in excess of, the actual’ (Grossberg 2010: 160). The contemporary crisis would be constituted by manifold ‘crises of commensuration’ (Grossberg 2010: 160), the inability to measure/value various differences, which would have resulted in religious, political, economic, intellectual, and financial fundamentalisms (Grossberg 2010: 167f) that demand ‘the extermination of the other’ (Grossberg 2010: 168). The financial crisis would have been caused ‘by the existence of an enormous set of financial (‘toxic’) assets that cannot be commensurated – that is to say, their value cannot be calculated’ (Grossberg 2010: 167), but it would just form one of many simultaneous crises of commensuration.

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE, now called Research Excellence Framework: REF) is an assessment of research conducted in the United Kingdom that aims at producing ‘quality profiles for each submission of research activity’ (<http://www.rae.ac.uk/>). It tries to measure the quality of research and to thereby compare and rank higher education institutions and departments. The results have implications for budget allocation. In the 2008 RAE, 45% of the submissions of Middlesex University in the ‘unit of assessment’ area of philosophy were classified as 3* (internationally excellent) and 20% as 4* (world-leading), which makes a total of 65% of excellent (4* + 3*) research. 7 institutions received better, 8 the same (including the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford) and 26 worse results. According to this assessment, philosophy at Middlesex University was very good. In April 2010, Middlesex University announced that it would close all Philosophy programmes and to terminate further recruitments in this area for ‘simply financial’ reasons and ‘based on the fact that the University believes that it may be able to generate more revenue if it shifts its resources to other subjects’¹. The announcement was followed by protests, an occupation, the suspension of staff members and students, many protest letters to the university’s administration, signed by leading intellectual as e.g. Étienne Balibar, Judith Butler, David Harvey, Martha Nussbaum or Jacques Rancière, and the institutional relocation of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy from Middlesex University to Kingston University. In 2012, no courses and research in the area of philosophy were indicated on Middlesex University’s website (see <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/>; accessed on August 30th, 2012) – philosophy had formally ceased to exist at the

university. In 2011, Philosophy at London Metropolitan University and the University of Greenwich was facing similar debates as at Middlesex University.

Modern universities are based on an enlightenment ideal – they accumulate systematic knowledge that aims at advancing the status of human knowledge about the world as well as society. In this accumulation, universities compete with each other. Capitalist industry and governments apply the accumulated scientific knowledge, whereas the workforce and management in the modern economy apply the accumulated educational skills created by higher education. The Noble Prize, established in 1895, is characteristic for the modern competitive assessment of knowledge and universities in the areas of chemistry, economics, literature, medicine, peace and physics. Modern universities are inherently shaped by an economic logic of accumulation, competition and ranking. At the same time, the university has also been a locus and space for the formation of counterculture, critical ideas, and political protests that question the very logic of accumulation and resulting inequalities in society at large. An important step in the institutionalization of quality assessment was the establishment of the Science Citation Index in 1960 that is today owned by a commercial publishing company – Thomson Reuters. The index originated in the natural sciences, but was later extended to cover the humanities (Arts and Humanities Index) and the Social Sciences (Social Sciences Citation Index). Nation-wide research assessments (such as the RAE) and global university rankings are more recent developments. The first RAE was conducted in 1986 under the Thatcher government. The first Times Higher Education World University Ranking was published in 2004. The Academic Ranking of World Universities has been conducted since 2003.

These phenomena are indications that economic logic is one immanent feature of the modern university system and that in neoliberal times, the economization of higher education and research has become an even stronger feature of universities. The closing of Philosophy at Middlesex University is an indication that fields, programmes, and people engaged in areas that are difficult to subsume under the logic of revenue generation and industry are prone to being dropped. In this example, the contradictions of economization became fully apparent: Although receiving very good results in one form of economization (research assessment), Philosophy at Middlesex University was closed because of another form of economization (monetary revenue): the university management thought that the department does not generate enough monetary revenue.

I have chosen this example because it shows how modern culture in general and contemporary culture in particular is shaped by economic logic. It shows that the central (moral) value of modern society is (economic) value. The ‘radical contextuality’ that Lawrence Grossberg propagates does not allow grasping the particular role that the economic logic of accumulation and money plays in modern society. It advances a peculiar kind of relativism disguised under headlines such as contextuality, multidimensionality, heterogeneity and difference. Modern so-

ciety definitely is complex in that it is made up of many interacting and interdependent spheres (the economy, politics, everyday life, private life, the public sphere, the media, higher education, health and care, nature, arts, entertainment, sports, etc), but there is a need for a conceptual apparatus that allows analysing the power relations between these spheres. It is unlikely that all spheres and actors in a state, phase or 'conjuncture' of society have the same power. There are indications that the economic sphere has in capitalism always been the dominant (although not determining) sphere. A 'radical contextualism' results in a dualistic relativism that cannot adequately analyse power *relations* and power *distributions* (and as a consequence power struggles) and sees power as independently constituted in multiple spheres. Rejecting such a position does not mean that struggles against capitalism and domination are impossible, but that in modern society all struggles necessarily have an economic dimension that is of particular importance. It is not only important that there are multiple spheres of power, but that these spheres are *related* to each other in variable dimensions that are determined in struggles. Radical contextualism risks conceiving and analysing power as independent containers, not as power relations.

Grossberg propagates the equal importance of all societal spheres, which results in a concept of multiple values that dissolves Marxian theory into a 'general theory of value' and classifies all attempts to stress a particular importance and shaping role of the economic – which has in Media and Cultural Studies especially been stressed by Marxist Political Economy – as 'economic and class reductionism', economism, capitalocentrism, essentialism, etc. Grossberg calls for respecting 'each other as allies' (Grossberg 2010: 201), but at the same time continues to uphold old prejudices against Marxist Political Economy that were most fiercely expressed in the debate between him and Nicholas Garnham, in which he concluded that he 'must decline the invitation to reconcile' Cultural Studies and the Political Economy of Culture and the Media because 'we don't need a divorce because we were never married' (Grossberg 1995: 80; see also: Garnham 1995a, b).

Grossberg calls for giving more attention to the economy in Cultural Studies. He does so himself by engaging with economics, including Marx's labour theory of value that he introduces and dismisses with the argument that the value concept needs to be broadened in order to avoid economic reductionism and to conceive, based on Marx's dialectic, the economy as contradictory. So he sets up a Marxist camouflage argument (the importance of contradictions) in order to dismiss Marx and the labour theory of value and instead use a relativist approach on cultural economy. Toby Miller argues in this context that Grossberg caricatures the political economy approach and asks him to 'rethink the anti-Marxism' because it is the 'wrong target' (Miller 2011: 322).

John Hartley: Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies

A recent book by John Hartley represents another prominent approach that advances the idea of connecting Cultural Studies to economics. Hartley describes the emergence of a ‘dialogical model of communication’ (Hartley 2012: 2), in which ‘everyone is a producer’ (Hartley 2012: 3) and discusses the implications of this model for Media and Cultural Studies. His general argument is that with the rise of online platforms that support social networking and user-generated content production and diffusion, journalism, the public sphere, universities, the mass media, citizenship, the archive and other institutions have become more democratic because ‘people have more say in producing as well as consuming’ (Hartley 2012: 14). These developments would be advanced by the emergence of ‘consumer entrepreneurship’ (Hartley 2012: 25), social network markets (Hartley 2012: 48) and microproductivity (Hartley 2012: 52).

Hartley shares with Grossberg the assessment that Cultural Studies is in crisis. It would have lost steam and adventurousness and would have gotten lost in ‘infinitely extensible micro-level’ analyses that do not ‘pay enough attention to the macro level’ (Hartley 2012: 28). Like Grossberg, Hartley ascertains that Cultural Studies ‘has not enjoyed a sustained dialogue with economics’ and has ‘remained aloof from the turbulent changes *within* economics’ (Hartley 2012: 35).

Hartley acknowledges that Marxist Political Economy has given attention to the economics of culture (he mentions Chomsky, Garnham, Miller, Schiller; Hartley 2012, 35), but claims that this approach ‘was too challenging, knowing what was wrong in advance’ (Hartley 2012: 46) and assumes ‘single-cause determinations of entire systems’ (Hartley 2012: 55).

Hartley’s version of introducing economics into Cultural Studies is called ‘Cultural Science 2.0’ and wants to achieve this aim by using evolutionary economics. It stresses that value in the cultural industries today emerges dynamically from the co-creativity of citizens and users in social networks. Hartley metaphorically uses the language of evolutionary systems-, complexity- and self-organization-theory, but fails to systematically apply concepts of this theory approach (such as control parameters, critical values, fluctuations, feedback loops, circular causality, non-linearity, bifurcation, autopoiesis, order out of chaos, emergence, openness, symmetry breaking, synergism, unpredictability, etc) to the Internet (for a different approach that is critical in intention see: Fuchs 2008). Hartley also does not seriously engage with the fact that thinkers like Friedrich August Hayek (the concept of spontaneous order) and Niklas Luhmann (the concepts of functional differentiation and self-reference) have used the language of self-organization and complexity for ideologically legitimatizing neo-liberalism (see Fuchs 2008: chapters 2 and 3). Hartley (2012: 57) only briefly asks if his approach is ‘stalking horses for neo-liberalism’. He has a negative answer to this question, grounded in the fact that also Adbusters magazine once referred positively to evolutionary economics. Just

like with one of Hartley's (2005) earlier works, one gets the impression that *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies* is 'a Powerpoint presentation by a management consultant' that has the goal 'to nourish the entrepreneurial self' (McGuigan 2006: 373).

Hartley says that cultural analysis has been shaped on the one hand by an approach that is 'critical' in the Williams/Hall tradition' and a romantic approach represented by the 'Fiske/Hartley' tradition that propagates 'as widely as possible the emancipationist potential of participatory media' (Hartley 2012: 182). The opposition of critical and romantic logically implies that Hartley considers his own approach as being uncritical. Consequently, he propagates staying in the romantic tradition and that Cultural Studies turns 'from 'critique' as a method to *evolution* as a methodological goal' (Hartley 2012: 183). The focus on evolution shall according to Hartley substitute a focus on critical studies. He argues for what one could term Uncritical Evolutionary Cultural Studies.

Hartley's bottom line is that the Internet is a self-organizing network, in which 'everyone is networked with everyone else' (Hartley 2012: 196) and that this system constitutes a new source of democracy and dialogic communication. He does not take into account the simple counter-argument that not everybody has access to this 'democratic self-organizing network': 32.7% of the world population and only 13.5% of all Africans had access to the Internet in August 2012 (data source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>, accessed on August 30th, 2012). Nor does he take into account the argument that on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc some, especially large companies, established political actors and celebrities, are 'more equal' than others, have more views, clicks, friends, connections, etc., which reflects the actual power inequalities of society (for a detailed form of this argument, see: Fuchs 2011: chapter 7; Fuchs 2014b).

Hartley (2012: 56) mentions that social network markets may have hubs and be dominated by elites, but this analysis is not systematically connected to power inequalities in society. It rather seems that Hartley assumes that such markets are nonetheless a realm of democracy because many have communicative tools available that can, if they are lucky and hard working, enable them to become part of this elite, at least for a short time. This logic is at the heart of neo-liberalism's stress on performance, individualism and personal responsibility for success, failures and downfall.

Hartley shows no sympathy with the outcasts and exploits of the social media age, people like Tian Yu, a Foxconn worker, who in 2010 at the age of 17 attempted suicide by jumping from a building because he could no longer stand the bad working conditions in the factory that produces among other gadgets iPods and iPads, and as a result is now paralyzed from the waist down, or the children, who as slaves extract 'conflict minerals' such as cassiterite, wolframite, coltan, gold, tungsten, tantalum or tin in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo that are used as raw materials for the production of ICTs. Such stories are not only

missing in Hartley's account of contemporary digital media, he rather speaks the language and conveys the same messages as business manifestos that claim that there is an emergence of 'a new economic democracy' (Tapscott & Williams 2007: 15) in times of high socio-economic inequality and youth unemployment and thereby represent the interests of the owners of the likes of Facebook and Google.

Paul Smith has edited a collected volume that also discusses, among other things, the relationship of Cultural Studies and economics.

Paul Smith: The Renewal of Cultural Studies

The Renewal of Cultural Studies is a collection edited by Paul Smith (2011b) that features 27 contributions. Most of the contributors share with Grossberg and Hartley the conviction that the economic needs to be taken serious by Cultural Studies and has in the past too often been neglected. But there is a profound difference between this volume and the books by Grossberg and Hartley, namely the relationship to Marx and Critical Political Economy. Smith holds that 'British cultural studies is a narrative of ever-increasing suspicion of Marxist thinking' (Smith 2011a: 5). Cultural Studies has 'an extreme desire not to be seen as Marxist' (Ross & Smith 2011: 252). The result would have been an 'increasing irrelevance of cultural studies' practice' (Couldry 2011: 10). Paul Smith argues that Cultural Studies has become politically irrelevant and is therefore like a 'phantom limb' (Ross & Smith 2011: 246). In the introduction, Smith (2011a) asks the question what Cultural Studies should be doing right now. An answer that he suggests and that many of the contributors in the volume share is that 'an increased attention to political economy is a sine qua non for a revived cultural studies' (Smith 2011a: 6).

Almost all the authors in Smith's collected volume share the insight that Cultural Studies has ignored labour and the economic and has to take it seriously. So for example Andrew Ross says: 'Whether or not this is a reductive narrative, it's clear that labor, work, and the politics of the workplace have been constantly neglected' in Cultural Studies (Ross & Smith 2011: 252). Nick Couldry supports this view:

After three decades of neoliberal discourse and a particular version of globalization based on inequality, exclusion, and market fundamentalism, the issue of labor foregrounded by [Andrew] Ross is clearly central. It is difficult to imagine any meaningful 'project' of cultural studies – understood politically and socially – that does not address the broader questions of how people experience the economy and society in which they work (or seek work), perhaps vote, and certainly consume (Couldry 2011: 10f).

Vincent Mosco (2011a: 230) argues that 'labor remains the blind spot of communication and cultural studies' and that therefore 'labor needs to be placed high on the agenda or projects for the renewal of cultural studies'. S. Charusheela (2011:

177) says that it ‘is a perennial claim that cultural studies does not pay enough attention to economy’.

Given this analysis, many contributors in Smith’s (2011) volume hold that Cultural Studies should explicitly re-orient itself as Marxist Cultural Studies that works based on Marxist theory, the analysis of labour and class and Critical Political Economy. So for example, Max Gulias (2011) argues that Cultural Studies needs a Marxist methodology, which would require ‘to revisit Marxist labor theory’, but much ‘non-Marxist cultural studies’ would stay preoccupied with the sign systems constituted by consumer-spectators and disregard the labour of humans in capitalism (Gulias 2011: 149). Randy Martin (2011) argues that financialization is a key topic for renewing Cultural Studies and grounding it in Marxism. Marcus Breen says that in the era of neoliberalism and capitalist crisis, for Cultural Studies ‘the time has come to reassert the primacy of political economy, by rearticulating economy with culture instead of pretending that some sort of indeterminacy will magically give cultural studies credibility’ (Breen 2011: 208).

The impression that one gets from the books by Grossberg, Hartley and Smith is that paradoxically the crisis of capitalism is accompanied by a crisis of Cultural Studies. At the same time, there are indications for a renewal of Marxism in one strand of Cultural Studies. The implication is that the time is ripe for taking Marx serious, reading Marx, using Marx for thinking about media, communication, and culture, to introduce Marx and Marxism to students, and especially to institutionalize Marx and Marxist studies in the courses about media, communication and culture taught at universities as well as in the research conducted and the projects applied for and funded. It is time to no longer introduce students to small excerpts from Marx and Engels as (alleged) examples of economic reductionism, but to rather read together with them full works of Marx and Engels, such as *Capital*, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *Grundrisse*, *The German Ideology*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Holy Family*, *The Class Struggle in France*, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Civil War in France*, *Dialectics of Nature*, the articles published in *Rheinische Zeitung*, etc. Marx is too often seen and treated as the outside and outsider of the study of media, communication and culture. It is time that he takes central stage, which requires resources, institutions, positions – and therefore the struggle to change academia.

Smith’s (2011b) book shows that besides the class/labour-relativist approach of Grossberg and the celebratory approach of Hartley, there is also a true interest in Marx and the notions of class and labour in Cultural Studies. Speaking about Cultural Studies, Toby Miller (2010: 99) notes that although labour ‘is central to humanity’, it is overall ‘largely absent from our field’. He argues that in the cultural industries, a cognitariat has emerged that has ‘high levels of educational attainment, and great facility with cultural technologies and genres’ and is facing conditions of ‘flexible production and ideologies of “freedom”’ (Miller 2010: 98). He

therefore suggests the equation: culture + labour = precariat. Andrew Ross (2008, 2009) in a similar vein stresses the role of precarious labour in the cultural industries. Creativity would for many come 'at a heavy sacrificial cost – longer hours in pursuit of the satisfying finish, price discounts in return for aesthetic recognition, self-exploitation in response to the gift of autonomy, and dispensability in exchange for flexibility' (Ross 2008: 34). Employees in the IT industry would often describe their workplaces as 'high-tech sweatshops' (Ross 2008: 43, for related work see for example: Gill, 2002, 2006; Maxwell 2001, Maxwell & Miller 2005/2006,). Such engagement with labour and class within Cultural Studies complements the concern within the Political Economy of the Media and Communication with issues relating to class, exploitation, value and labour in the context of the media, culture and communication that have been strongly inspired by Karl Marx's works (see for example: Huws 2003; McKercher & Mosco 2006, 2007; Mosco & McKercher 2008; Burston, Dyer-Witheford & Hearn 2010; Mosco, McKercher & Huws 2010; Mosco 2011b; Fuchs & Mosco 2012).

The problem of Cultural Studies is, as Robert Babe says, that its 'poststructuralist turn [...] instigated the separation' (Babe 2009: 9) from economics. A reintegration requires first and foremost 'setting aside poststructuralist cultural studies' (Babe 2009: 196) and seriously engaging with Marx and Marxism. Engaging with Marx for understanding the media and culture requires an engagement with the concepts of labour and value.

Media, Communication and Marx's Labour Theory of Value

Media contents and media technologies do not come out of nowhere. They are objectifications of the labour of human beings working under certain conditions. Neither these human beings nor their working conditions are generally visible to media users. There is a certain difference in media content production because journalists' names and faces are most of the time known to the public, whereas the work of camera operators, cutters, designers, paper workers, etc. rather remains invisible. There is another significant difference in user-generated online content where the conditions of production are known to oneself and can be communicated to others. Nonetheless, the production of media content and technologies is a complex process that involves a lot of different forms of work that are to a certain degree not immediately visible and are hidden inside of things and artefacts.

Why are labour, capitalism and class important topics? The recent global crisis of capitalism has shown that class relations, precarious labour and unemployment are important aspects of contemporary capitalism. The gaps between the rich and the poor, between wage levels and profits and between the hours worked by those who have jobs and the number of unemployed people have vastly increased in the past decades in many countries. The unemployment rate of young people aged less than 25 years was 22.9% in the 27 EU countries in 2012 with particularly

high rates of around 50% in Greece and Spain (data source: Eurostat). At the same time, the average working hours per week are well above 40 hours for those who have full-time jobs (data source: Eurostat). Being a highly skilled knowledge worker with university education does not necessarily solve the problem: In the third quarter of 2012, 19% of EU citizens aged less than 25 who have attended a university were unemployed (data source: Eurostat). The unemployment rate of this sector of society was 53.2% in Greece and 39.5% in Spain (data source: Eurostat). The crisis of capitalism has to do with the deepening of class inequality. From 1995 to 2011, the wage share, i.e. the share of the wage sum in the gross domestic product, decreased from 74.3% in 1975 to 66.3% in 2014 (data source: AMECO – Annual Macro-Economic Database). This is an indication that wages have been relatively falling, which has resulted in rising profits. The economy matters and is an important context for studying media, communication, culture and digital media.

Nicholas Garnham argued in 1990 that ‘the bibliography on the producers of culture is scandalously empty’ (Garnham 1990: 12) and that there is a focus on the analysis of media barons and their companies. Ten years later, he saw this problem as persisting: ‘The problem of media producers has been neglected in recent media and cultural studies – indeed in social theory generally – because of the general linguistic turn and the supposed death of the author that has accompanied it. If the author does not exist or has no intentional power, why study her or him?’ (Garnham 2000a: 84). Again ten years later, Vincent Mosco (2011: 230) argued that ‘labour remains the blind spot of communication and cultural studies’ and that therefore ‘labour needs to be placed high on the agenda or projects for the renewal of cultural studies’. A particular problem of contemporary Media and Communication Studies is the strong focus on the capital-side of the creative and cultural economy and the neglect of the labour side.

In recent years, the situation has however improved and communication labour has become the subject of a significant number of critical studies. A number of scholars has conducted important work for trying to overcome the labour blind-spot of Media and Communication Studies. Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher have edited a series of collections about communicative labour (McKercher & Mosco 2006, 2007; Mosco, McKercher & Huws 2010) as well as a monograph (Mosco & McKercher 2008). A number of conferences has contributed to the emergence of a discourse on digital labour: ‘Digital Labour: Workers, Authors, Citizens’ (Western University, London, Ontario, Canada, October 16-18, 2009, see <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitallabour/>, Burston, Dyer-Witthford & Hearn 2011), ‘The Internet as Playground and Factory’ (New York, New School, November 12-14, 2009, see <http://digitallabor.org/>, Scholz 2013), and ‘The 4th ICTs and Society Conference: Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society. Towards Critical Theories of Social Media’ (Uppsala University, Sweden, May 2-4, 2012, Fuchs and Sandoval 2014, Fuchs 2012a, b). The

journal *tripleC* has increasingly moved towards publishing Marxist works on digital media and informational capitalism, as the special issue ‘Marx is back – The importance of Marxist theory and research for Critical Communication Studies today’ (Fuchs & Mosco 2012) that featured 30 articles on more than 500 pages. The EU COST Action IS1202 ‘Dynamics of Virtual Work’ (2012-2016, <http://dynamicsofvirtualwork.com/>) points out the need to refocus the study of the creative and cultural economy on issues such as the global division of labour in this industry, the working conditions involved in the global ICT value chain, precarious cultural labour, the problem of ‘free’ digital labour and challenges to theorising digital labour’s value-creation, the challenge of prosumption (productive consumption) and playbour (play labour) for knowledge work, policy perspectives on virtual work (the role of trade unions, watchdog and civil society projects such as MakeITFair, policy problems and challenges for the regulation of virtual work, etc.) and occupational identities in knowledge work.

Examples of studies that have analysed labour in the value chain of media production include the analysis of flexible labour in Silicon Valley (Benner 2002), toxic work places in Silicon Valley’s ICT manufacturing industry (Pellow & Park 2002), value creation in the media industries (Bolin 2011), the unpaid digital labour of users (Fuchs 2010; Burston, Dyer-Witthford & Hearn 2011; Scholz 2013), labour and labour resistance in the ICT manufacturing industry in China (Zhao 2007, 2008, 2010; Qiu 2009; Hong 2011), the proletarianisation of knowledge workers (Huws 2003), software engineering in India (Ilavarasan 2007, 2008; Upadhyaya & Vasavi 2008), precarious working conditions in the knowledge industries (Ross 2009), African slave work performed in the extraction of ‘conflict minerals’ needed for ICTs (Nest 2011). In addition, a kind of activist scholarship has developed that fostered by civil society organisations such as China Labor Watch (<http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/>), Finnwatch (www.finnwatch.org/), SACOM – Students & Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour (sacom.hk), SOMO – Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (<http://somo.nl/>), Swedwatch (<http://www.swedwatch.org>) and projects like MakeITFair (<http://makeitfair.org>). This kind of scholarship has e.g. produced empirical research reports on conflict minerals in the ICT industry (Finnwatch 2007; SOMO 2007; Swedwatch 2007; Finnwatch & Swedwatch 2010) and working conditions at Foxconn in the production of iPhones and iPads (SACOM 2010, 2011a, b, 2012).

If labour, class and capitalism matter for studying media, culture and communication, then a theoretical approach is needed that can guide the analysis. The most well-suited approach is in this context Marx’s labour theory of value. But why exactly Marx’s labour theory and not another theory of labour? In Christian philosophy, the existence of alienated labour and class relations was always considered as being God-given. In classical political economy, the idea of the God-given nature of toil and poverty was given up and class relations were conceived

as social relations. This relation was however considered as being necessary for progress, its potential sublation was not seen as a historical potential enabled by the development of the productive forces. Classical political economy ignored to clarify its claim that the current state of the capitalist mode of production is eternal. As a consequence, it saw the form of labour that exists in capitalism and that is characterised by a division of labour, private property and class relations, as eternal and naturalised it thereby. In contrast, Marx was critical of such views. Therefore his approach is a critique of political economy and not only a contribution to political economy. Marx was the first author who described the historical character of work as crucial point for understanding political economy (Marx 1867/1990: 131f). When discussing what work and labour are, Marx offers the most thorough analysis that is available. In encyclopaedias and dictionaries of economics, entries such as labour, labour power, labour process or labour theory are therefore often predominantly associated with Marx and Marxist theory (see e.g. the corresponding entries in Eatwell, Milgate & Newman 1987).

What is the Marxian labour theory of value about? It is a theory that assumes that labour and labour time are crucial factors of capitalism. Abstract human labour is the substance of value; it is a common characteristic of commodities. The value of a commodity is the average labour time that is needed for producing it. Labour time is the measure of value. Value has both a substance and a magnitude and is in these characteristics connected to human labour and labour time. Value is a 'social system, which is common' to all commodities, 'the common factor' in the exchange relation (Marx 1867/1990: 128). 'A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because abstract human labour is objectified [*vergegenständlicht*] or materialized in it' (Marx 1867/1990: 129). The values of commodities are 'determined by their cost of production, in other words by the labour time required to produce them' (Marx 1867/1990: 137). The magnitude of value is measured 'by means of the quantity of the 'value-forming substance', the labour, contained in the article. This quantity is measured by its duration, and the labour-time is itself measured on the particular scale of hours, days, etc' (Marx 1867/1990: 129). To be precise, socially necessary labour is the substance of value: 'Socially necessary labour-time is the labour-time required to produce any use-value under the conditions of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in that society. [...] What exclusively determines the magnitude of the value of any article is therefore the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-time socially necessary for its production' (Marx 1867/1990: 129). 'The value of commodities as determined by labour time is only their *average value*' (Marx 1858/1993: 137). 'If we consider *commodities as values*, we consider them exclusively under the single aspect of *realized, fixed*, or, if you like, *crystallized social labour*' (Marx 1865). Socially necessary labour determines an average commodity value that 'is to be viewed on

the one hand as the average value of the commodities produced in a particular sphere' (Marx 1894/1991: 279).

Every commodity has an individual value (production time). What counts on the market and in the industry, is however the average production time. On the market in one industry, average labour times needed for producing similar commodities compete with each other. Socially necessary labour time is the average labour time that is needed in the entire economy for producing a commodity based on average skills and an average level of productivity. An individual capital has its own productivity, its workforce has a specific skill level, etc. So the average value of a commodity produced may deviate from the social necessary labour required to produce the commodity on average in the entire industry.

The law of value has to do with the speed of production and the level of productivity: The higher the productivity used to create a commodity, the lower its value: 'In general, the greater the productivity of labour, the less the labour-time required to produce an article, the less the mass of labour crystallized in that article, and the less its value. Inversely, the less the productivity of labour, the greater the labour-time necessary to produce an article, and the greater its value. The value of a commodity, therefore, varies directly as the quantity, and inversely as the productivity, of the labour which finds its realization within the commodity' (Marx 1867/1990: 131).

Workers are forced to enter class relations and to produce profit in order to survive, which enables capital to appropriate surplus. The notion of exploited surplus value is the main concept of Marx's theory, by which he intends to show that capitalism is a class society. 'The theory of surplus value is in consequence immediately the theory of exploitation' (Negri 1991: 74) and, one can add, the theory of class and as a consequence the political demand for a classless society.

Capital is not money, but money that is increased through accumulation, 'money which begets money' (Marx 1867/1990: 256). Marx argued that the value of labour power is the average amount of time that is needed for the production of goods that are necessary for survival (necessary labour time), which in capitalism is paid for by workers with their wages. Surplus labour time is all of labour time that exceeds necessary labour time, remains unpaid, is appropriated for free by capitalists, and transformed into money profit. Surplus value 'is in substance the materialization of unpaid labour-time. The secret of the self-valorization of capital resolves itself into the fact that it has at its disposal a definite quantity of the unpaid labour of other people' (Marx 1867/1990: 672). Surplus value 'costs the worker labour but the capitalist nothing', but 'none the less becomes the legitimate property of the capitalist' (Marx 1867/1990: 672). 'Capital also developed into a coercive relation, and this compels the working class to do more work than would be required by the narrow circle of its own needs. As an agent in producing the activity of others, as an extractor of surplus labour and an exploiter of labour-power, it surpasses all earlier systems of production, which were based on directly

compulsory labour, in its energy and its quality of unbounded and ruthless activity' (Marx 1867/1990: 425).

For Marx, capitalism is based on the permanent theft of unpaid labour from workers by capitalists. This is the reason why he characterizes capital as vampire and werewolf. 'Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks' (Marx 1867/1990: 342). The production of surplus value 'forms the specific content and purpose of capitalist production' (Marx 1867/1990: 411), it is 'the *differentia specifica* of capitalist production', 'the absolute law of this mode of production' (Marx 1867/1990: 769), the 'driving force and the final result of the capitalist process of production' (Marx 1867/1990: 976).

Why do concepts such as labour time and surplus value matter for studying the media? I will try to make an argument on this issue by using several examples.

Muhanga Kawayu, an enslaved miner in North Kivu (Democratic Republic of Congo) who extracts minerals that are needed for the manufacturing of laptops and mobile phones, describes his work in the following way: 'As you crawl through the tiny hole, using your arms and fingers to scratch, there's not enough space to dig properly and you get badly grazed all over. And then, when you do finally come back out with the cassiterite, the soldiers are waiting to grab it at gunpoint. Which means you have nothing to buy food with. So we're always hungry' (Finnwatch 2007: 20).

A Chinese engineer at Foxconn Shenzhen, where computers and mobile phones that are sold by Western companies are assembled, says: 'We produced the first generation iPad. We were busy throughout a 6-month period and had to work on Sundays. We only had a rest day every 13 days. And there was no overtime premium for weekends. Working for 12 hours a day really made me exhausted' (SACOM 2010, 7). In Silicon Valley, a Cambodian ICT assembler exposed to toxic substances reports: 'I talked to my co-workers who felt the same way [that I did] but they never brought it up, out of fear of losing their job' (Pellow & Park 2002: 139). Foxconn shows the corporate social irresponsibility of capitalist media corporations (Sandoval 2014). 'Apple [...] is more than a 'bad apple'. It is an example of structures of inequality and exploitation that characterize global capitalism' (Sandoval 2013: 344).

Mohan, a Project Manager in the Indian software industry who is in his mid 30s, explains: 'Work takes a priority. [...] The area occupied by family and others keeps reducing' (D'Mello & Sahay 2007: 179). Another software engineer argues: 'Sometimes you start at 8 am and then finish at 10–11 pm, five days a week. And anytime you can be called [...] Also you don't develop any hobbies' (D'Mello & Sahay 2007: 179).

A software engineer at Google describes the working situation at Google: 'Cons – Because of the large amounts of benefits (such as free foods) there seems to be an unsaid rule that employees are expected to work longer hours. Many peo-

ple work more than 8 hours a day and then will be on email or work for a couple hours at home, at night as well (or on the weekends). It may be hard to perform extremely well with a good work/life balance. Advice to Senior Management – Give engineers more freedom to use 20% time to work on cool projects without the stress of having to do 120% work’ (data source: glassdoor.com).

The Amazon Mechanical Turk is a ‘marketplace for work’ that ‘gives businesses and developers access to an on-demand, scalable workforce. Workers select from thousands of tasks and work whenever it is convenient’ (<https://www.mturk.com/>). Clients can advertise on the platform that they look for certain services for a certain wage, to which those who want to perform them can respond online. If the deal comes about, then the worker performs the task and submits the result to the client online. The work tasks almost exclusively involve informational work. A search for speech transcription tasks (conducted on November 20th, 2012) resulted in three tasks that had (if one assumes that it takes on average six hours of work time to transcribe one hour of interview time) an hourly wage of a) US\$4, b) US\$4 and c) US\$3. In contrast, typical professional transcription services (e.g. www.fingertipstyping.co.uk/prices_and_turnaround.htm, http://www.franklin-square.com/transcription_per_line.htm) charge approximately US\$ 15-25 per hour.

Facebook has asked users to translate its site into other languages without payment. Translation is crowdsourced to users. Javier Olivan, Head of Growth, Engagement, Mobile Adoption at Facebook, sees user-generated platform translation as ‘cool’ because Facebook’s goal is to ‘have one day everybody on the planet on Facebook’ (MSNBC 2008). ‘Valentin Macias, 29, a Californian who teaches English in Seoul, South Korea, has volunteered in the past to translate for the non-profit Internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia but said he won’t do it for Facebook. ‘(Wikipedia is) an altruistic, charitable, information-sharing, donation-supported cause,’ Macias told The Associated Press in a Facebook message. ‘Facebook is not. Therefore, people should not be tricked into donating their time and energy to a multimillion-dollar company so that the company can make millions more – at least not without some type of compensation’ (MSNBC 2008).

These examples outline various forms of labour associated with the ICT industry. They differ in amount to the levels of payment, health risks, physical, ideological and social violence, stress, free time, overtime and the forms of coercion and control the workers are experiencing, but all have in common that human labour power is exploited in a way that monetarily benefits ICT corporations and has negative impacts on the lives, bodies or minds of workers.

Labour time is so crucial for capitalism because labour power is organised as a commodity and therefore every second of labour costs money. This is the reason why capital has the interest to make workers work as long as possible for as little wages as possible and to make them labour as intensive as possible so that the highest possible profit that is the outcome of unpaid labour time can be achieved.

Value in a Marxist approach (Marx's labour theory of value) is the amount of performed labour hours that is needed for the production of a certain commodity. There is an individual labour time for the production of every single commodity that is difficult to measure. What matters economically is therefore the average labour time that is spent during a certain time period (such as one year) for producing a commodity. Average labour values can be calculated for commodity production in one company, a group of companies, an entire industry in a country or internationally. Capital strives to reduce the value of a commodity in order to increase profits. A decrease of the value of a commodity means a speed-up of production, i.e. the same labour time that costs a certain amount of money will suddenly produce a higher number of the same commodity, although the labour costs have not increased, which allows accumulating more profit per time unit.

The outlined examples show the importance of labour time for the ICT industry: Slave mineral workers like Muhanga Kawaywa work at gunpoint with the threat of being killed, which makes them work long hours for low or no wages so that a maximum of labour time remains unpaid. The workers at Foxconn are working long hours and unpaid overtime so that Apple and other ICT companies reduce labour costs. Foxconn workers have relatively low wages and work very long hours. Foxconn tries to lengthen the working day in order to increase the sum of hours that is unpaid. Working conditions. ICT assemblers in Silicon Valley, who are predominantly female immigrants, have quite comparable labour conditions and many of them are exposed during many working hours to toxic substances. In the Indian software industry and at Google, software engineers are overworked. They work very long hours and do not have much time for hobbies, relaxing, friends and family. Software developers at Google, in India and in other countries and places are highly stressed because they work in project-based software engineering with high time pressure. Their lifetime tends to become labour time. The Amazon Mechanical Turk is a method of getting work done in the same time as in the case of regular employment by irregular forms of labour that are cheaper. It helps companies to find workers, who work for the time a regular employee would take for a certain task, but for a lower payment. The idea is to crowdsource work over the Internet in order to reduce costs, i.e. to pay less for the same labour time as under regular working conditions. Facebook translation goes one step further and tries to outsource work to users, who are expected to perform the translation without remuneration. The idea is to transform usage time into work time.

The lengthening of working day, unpaid working times, overwork, spare time as labour time, overtime – the examples show that labour time is a crucial aspect of the capitalist ICT industry. Different forms of labour – mining, hardware assemble, software engineering, callcentre work, ewaste labour, etc – come together in the international division of digital labour (Fuchs 2014a): digital labour should best be understood as an umbrella term for all acts of labour conducted in an interconnected but mostly anonymous manner in order to enable the existence

of digital media and digital media usage. This includes forms of labour that are expressions of different modes of the organization of the productive forces (agricultural labour, industrial labour, knowledge labour) and different modes of production (as for example: slavery, feudalism, capitalism, patriarchy, communism). The phenomenon of digital labour shows that capitalism incorporates other modes of production that are sublated in the capitalist mode and that the information economy as a specific mode of the organization of productive forces does not substitute agriculture and industry, but that these modes rather are interconnected in contemporary economies (Fuchs 2014a).

The concept of the international division of digital labour (IDDL) shows that various forms of labour that are characteristic of various stages of capitalism and various modes of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production interact so that different forms of separated and highly exploited forms of double free wage labour, unpaid 'free' labour, feminised and 'housewifised' labour and slave labour form a global network of exploited labour forms that creates value and forms profits of the variety of companies involved in the capitalist ICT industry. The IDDL shows that stages of capitalist development and historical modes of production (such as patriarchal housework, classical slavery, feudalism, capitalism in general, industrial capitalism, informational capitalism) are not simply successive stages of economic development, where one form substitutes an older one, but that they are all dialectically mediated (Fuchs 2014a). The earliest form of private property was constituted in the patriarchal family. The patriarchal mode of production and housework continues to exist in the ICT value chain in the form of feminised and housewifised work of the 'free' online workers of Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter & Co and the highly controlled and exploited work of call centre agents and ICT manufacturers. Classical and feudal forms of slavery, in which workers are not double free, but rather the property of slave owners who physically coerce and almost limitlessly exploit them, persist in the extraction of conflict minerals that form the physical foundation of ICTs. Capitalism is based not only on capital accumulation, but also on double-free wage labour, which means that workers are by the threat of dying of hunger compelled to sell their labour power as commodity to capitalists, which alienates them from the process and the products of capitalist production and installs wage labour as specific form of exploitation of labour. Double-free wage labour takes on several specific forms in the ICT value chain. First, there are wage workers who work under conditions that resemble the early stage of industrial capitalism. These are manufacturing and assemblage workers, who risk their health and lives at work. Their work is no fun at all. They are subject to high levels of control, workplace surveillance and standardised work, which shows that Taylorist and Fordist factory work does not cease to exist, but continues to exist under new conditions in the information society. Also call centre agents are facing a kind of Taylorist work situation, with the difference that their labour is in contrast to ICT manufacturing and assemblage

not primarily physical, but informational in nature in respect to the circumstance that their main activities are talking, convincing with affects, typing, using phone systems and accessing databases. The IDDL also involves relatively new forms of wage labour that are forms of highly paid and highly stressful play work, as represented by the Google worker.

In his underestimated book *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams questions the Marxism's historical tendency to see culture as 'dependent, secondary, 'superstructural': a realm of 'mere' ideas, beliefs, arts, customs, determined by the basic material history' (Williams 1977: 19). He discusses various Marxist concepts that Marxist theories have used for discussing the relationship of the economy and culture: determination, reflection, reproduction, mediation, homology. These approaches would all assume a relationship between the economy and culture with a varying degree of causal determination or mutual causality. But all of them would share the assumption of 'the separation of 'culture' from material social life' (Williams 1977: 19) that Williams (1977: 59) considers to be 'idealist'. The problem of these approaches would be that they are not 'materialist enough' (Williams 1977: 92).

Williams (1977: 78) argues that Marx opposed the 'separation of 'areas' of thought and activity'. Production would be distinct from 'consumption, distribution, and exchange' as well as from social relations (Williams 1977: 91). Productive forces would be 'all and any of the means of the production and reproduction of real life', including the production of social knowledge and co-operation (Williams 1977: 91). Politics and culture would be realms of material production: ruling classes would produce castles, palaces, churches, prisons, workhouses, schools, weapons, a controlled press, etc (Williams 1977: 93). Therefore there would be a 'material character of the production of a social and political order' and the concept of the superstructure an evasion (Williams 1977: 93).

In order to illustrate his point that culture is material, Williams mentions a passage from Marx's *Grundrisse*: 'Productive labour is only that which produces capital. Is it not crazy, asks e.g. (or at least something similar) Mr Senior, that the piano maker is a productive worker, but not the piano player, although obviously the piano would be absurd without the piano player? But this is exactly the case. The piano maker reproduces capital; the pianist only exchanges his labour for revenue. But doesn't the pianist produce music and satisfy our musical ear, does he not even to a certain extent produce the latter? He does indeed: his labour produces something; but that does not make it productive labour in the economic sense; no more than the labour of the madman who produces delusions is productive. Labour becomes productive only by producing its own opposite' (Marx 1858/1993: 305). Williams remarks that today, other than in Marx's time, 'the production of music (and not just its instruments) is an important branch of capitalist production' (Williams 1977: 93).

The point that interests me here is not what labour is productive and unproductive, but the question what constitutes the economy and culture. If the two realms are separated, then building the piano is work and part of the economy and playing it is not work, but culture. Marx leaves however no doubt that playing the piano produces a use-value that satisfies human ears and is therefore a form of work. As a consequence, the production of music must just like the production of the piano be an economic activity. Williams (1977: 94) stresses that cultural materialism means to see the material character of art, ideas, aesthetics and ideology and that when considering piano making and piano playing it is important to discover and describe 'relations between all these practices' and to not assume 'that only some of them are material'.

Besides the piano maker and the piano player there is also the composer of music. All three works are needed and necessarily related in order to guarantee the existence of piano music. Fixing one of these three productive activities categorically as culture and excluding the others from it limits the concept of culture and does not see that one cannot exist without the other. Along with this separation come political assessments of the separated entities. A frequent procedure is to include the work of the composer and player and to exclude the work of the piano maker. Cultural elitists then argue that only the composer and player are truly creative, whereas vulgar materialists hold that only the piano maker can be a productive worker because he works with his hands and produces an artifact. Both judgments are isolationist and politically problematic.

In contrast, Raymond Williams (1977: 111) formulates as an important postulate of Cultural Materialism that '[c]ultural work and activity are not [...] a superstructure' because people would use physical resources for leisure, entertainment and art. Combining Williams' assumptions that cultural work is material and economic and that the physical and ideational activities underlying the existence of culture are interconnected means that culture is a totality that connects all physical and ideational production processes that are connected and required for the existence of culture. Put in simpler terms this means that the piano maker, the composer and the piano player are for Williams all three cultural workers.

Williams (1977: 139) concludes that Cultural Materialism needs to see 'the complex unity of the elements' required for the existence of culture: ideas, institutions, formations, distribution, technology, audiences, forms of communication and interpretation, worldviews (138p). A sign system would involve the social relations that produce it, the institutions in which it is formed and its role as a cultural technology (Williams 1977: 140). In order to avoid the 'real danger of separating human thought, imagination and concepts from 'men's material life-process'' (Williams 1989: 203), one needs like Marx to focus on the 'totality of human activity' (Williams 1989: 203) when discussing culture. We 'have to emphasise cultural practice as from the beginning social and material' (Williams

1989: 206). The 'productive forces of 'mental labour' have, in themselves, an inescapable material and thus social history' (William 1989: 211).

In his later works, Williams stressed that it is particularly the emergence of an information economy in which information, communication and audiences are sold as commodities that requires rethinking the separation of the economy and culture and to see culture as material. '[I]nformation processes [...] have become a qualitative part of economic organization' (Williams 1981: 231). 'Thus a major part of the whole modern labour process must be defined in terms which are not easily theoretically separable from the traditional 'cultural' activities. [...] so many more workers are involved in the direct operations and activations of these systems that there are quite new social and social-class complexities' (Williams 1981: 232).

As information is an important aspect of economic production in information societies, the culture concept cannot be confined to popular culture, entertainment, works of arts and the production of meaning in the consumption of goods, but needs to be extended to the realm of economic production and value creation. The concept of cultural labour is therefore of crucial importance.

In contemporary capitalism, pianos, compositions (via intellectual property rights) and music are all three commodities. So what unites the cultural work of the piano maker, the composer and the musician is that the commodity form mediates their works. Raymond Williams argues that this circumstance requires us to think of culture as material and economic. But he adds that in the first instance all of these practices are material because they produce use-values of different kinds.

Taking the example of music culture and transferring it to digital media, we find correspondences: there are digital media makers who produce hardware, digital media composers who create software, and digital media users who operate software on hardware in a productive manner in order to create content, communications and social relations. Those who reduce digital labour to digital content producers just like those who reduce cultural labour to the production of meaning and ideas separate in an idealistic manner two elements that necessarily belong together. Thinking the elements that enable digital media to exist together requires a common category: the international division of digital labour (IDDL) (Fuchs 2014a).

The global collective ICT worker consists of many different workers: unpaid digital labour, a highly paid and highly stressed knowledge worker aristocracy, knowledge workers in developing countries, Taylorist call centre wage workers, Taylorist hardware assemblers and manufacturers, slave mine workers. This shows that 'double free' wage labour in the ICT industry and, as Marcel van der Linden and Karl Heinz Roth (2009) argue, in general is 'no longer the strategic and privileged part of the global working class and that slaves, contract workers, (pseudo-) self-employment and others are equally important for theorising capitalism' (van der Linden & Roth 2009, 24; translation from German).

Certain scholars argue that the rise of a ‘knowledge society’ or ‘cognitive capitalism’ as well as of ‘social media’ has resulted in an outdatedness and non-applicability of the labour theory of value to contemporary capitalism. Virno (2003: 100) says that the law of value is ‘shattered and refuted by capitalist development itself’. Hardt and Negri (2004: 145) argue that the ‘temporal unity of labor as the basic measure of value today makes no sense’. Vercellone (2010: 90) writes that ‘cognitive capitalism’ has resulted in the ‘crisis of the law of value’ and ‘a crisis of measurement that destabilizes the very sense of the fundamental categories of the political economy; labor, capital and obviously, value’. The rise of knowledge in production, what Marx (1858/1993) termed the General Intellect, would result in the circumstance that labour, particularly knowledge labour ‘can no longer be measured on the basis of labour time directly dedicated to production’ (Vercellone 2007: 30). Abstract labour, ‘measured in a unit of time’ would no longer be ‘the tool allowing for the control over the labor and simultaneously favouring the growth of social productivity’ (Vercellone 2010: 90). Creativity and knowledge would today form ‘the main source of value’ (Vercellone 2010: 105).

The assumption of many Autonomist Marxists that the law of value no longer applies today is not feasible because this law is a foundation of the existence of capitalism and because the assumption is based on a false interpretation of a passage from Marx’s *Grundrisse* (see e.g. Vercellone 2007: 29f), in which Marx says that ‘labour time ceases and must cease to be’ the measure of wealth (Marx 1858/1993: 705). The misinterpretation is precisely that Marx here describes a transformation within capitalism. Instead Marx in the same passage makes clear that he talks about a situation, in which the ‘mass of workers’ has appropriated ‘their own surplus labour’ (Marx 1858/1993: 708). As long as capitalism exists, value is set as standard of production, although the value of commodities tends to historically diminish, which advances capitalism’s crisis-proneness. Harry Cleaver has pointed out that Marx’s passage is based on a framework that results from the circumstance that class struggle ‘explodes the system and founds a new one’ (Cleaver 2000: 92).

In the specific passage in the *Grundrisse*, Marx says: ‘Once they have done so – and *disposable time* thereby ceases to have an *antithetical* existence – then, on one side, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that, even though production is now calculated for the wealth of all, *disposable time* will grow for all’ (Marx 1858/1993: 708). Marx talks about a society, in which ‘production based on exchange value breaks down’ (Marx 1858/1993: 705) – a communist society.

In corporate ‘social media’, Facebook and other companies constantly monitor interests, usage behaviour, browsing behaviour, demographic data, user-generated content, social relations, etc. These are individual, affective, social, economic, political, cultural data about users. The more time a user spends on Facebook, the

more data is generated about him/her that is offered as a commodity to advertising clients. Exploitation happens in this commodification and production process, whereas the data commodities are offered for sale to advertising clients after the production/exploitation process. The more time a user spends online, the more data is available about him/her that can potentially be sold and the more advertisements can be presented to him/her. Time therefore plays a crucial role for corporate social media. Users employ social media because they strive to a certain degree for achieving what Bourdieu (1986a, b) terms social capital (the accumulation of social relations), cultural capital (the accumulation of qualification, education, knowledge) and symbolic capital (the accumulation of reputation). The time that users spend on commercial social media platforms for generating social, cultural and symbolic capital is in the process of prosumer commodification transformed into economic capital. Labour time on commercial social media is the conversion of Bourdieuan social, cultural and symbolic capital into Marxian value and economic capital.

Labour that generates content, affects, likes, social relations, networks, etc. is organised in time and space and that Facebook usage time is productive labour time. All hours spent online by users of Facebook, Google, and comparable corporate social media constitute work time, in which data commodities are generated, and potential time for profit realization.

Our discussion thus far shows that the labour theory of value is frequently used as a target of ideological critique that argues that Marx's theory is out of date. Resulting claims are that value has been generalized and pluralized (Grossberg), stems from affects or social networks (Hartley), but is not constituted by labour and measured by labour time. The implications of these approaches are diverse, but they all share the consequence that the immediateness of the radical critique of capitalism and capitalist media is either reduced in importance or altogether rejected.

Not all Autonomist Marxists share the assumption that there is an end of the law of value today. Karl Heinz Roth (2005: 60) stresses the large number of unpaid and underpaid workers in the world today. Examples that he mentions are reproductive work in the family, precarious and informal labour, slave workers, prison labour (Roth 2005), temporal work, seasonal workers, migrant workers and precarious self-employment (Roth & van der Linden 2009). Karl Heinz Roth and Marcel van der Linden (2009: 560) say that these workers constitute the global worker (*Weltarbeiterklasse*) that is 'a multiversum of strata and social groups'. Nick Dyer-Witheford (2010: 490) argues that the global worker is a) based on the globalization of capital, b) based on a complex division of labour, c) based on underpaid and unpaid labour (migrants, houseworkers, etc), d) embedded into global communication networks, e) facing precarious conditions, and f) has worldwide effects. Slave workers that are unpaid would also produce value, although their labour power does not have a price for which it is rented to an owner,

but rather is the private property of a slave master (Roth & van der Linden 2009: 581-587). Roth and van der Linden use the example of the slave worker in order to argue that exploitation and value production does not presuppose a wage relationship. They argue for a dynamic labour theory of value (Roth & van der Linden 2009: 590-600) that assumes that all humans who contribute to the production of money profit by entering a relationship with capital, in which the latter controls and owns their personality (slaves), labour power (wage workers), the means of production and subsistence (outsourced contractual labour), the products of labour (unpaid and underpaid labour) or the sphere of reproduction (reproductive labour), are part of the exploited class.

Capital has the inherent interest to maximize profit. For doing this, it will take all means necessary because the single capitalist risks his/her own bankruptcy if s/he cannot accumulate capital as a result of high investment costs, heavy competition, lack of productivity, etc. The wage relation is, as argued above, a crucial element of class struggle. Capital tries to reduce the wage sum as much as possible in order to maximize profits. If possible, capital will therefore remunerate labour power below its own value, i.e. below the socially necessary costs that are required for survival. The transformation of the value into the price of labour power and the difference between the two is, as Cleaver (2000) and Bidet (2009) stress, the result of class struggle. Labour legislation and an organized labour movement can struggle for wages that are higher than the value of labour power. If labour is, however, weak, e.g. because of fascist repression, capital is likely to use any opportunity to reduce wages as much as possible in order to increase profits. Neoliberalism is a form of governmentality that increases profits by decreasing the wage sum with the help of cutting state expenditures for welfare, care and education, privatizing such services, creating precarious wage-relations that are temporary, insecure and underpaid, weakening the power of labour organisations, decreasing or not increasing wages relatively or absolutely, outsourcing labour to low-paid or unpaid forms of production, coercing the unemployed to work without payment or for extremely low wages, etc. It is a form of politics that aims at helping capital to reduce the price of labour power as much as possible, if possible even below the minimum value that is needed for human existence. The creation of multiple forms of precarious and unpaid forms of work is an expression of the class struggle of capital to reduce the costs of labour power. The result is a disjuncture of the value and price of labour power. The disjuncture between value and price of labour power is accompanied by a disjuncture of the value and price of commodities: The financialization of the economy has established stocks and derivatives that have fictitious prices on stock markets that are based on the hope for high future profits and dividends, but are disjointed from the actual labour values and commodity prices. Contemporary capitalism is a disjuncture economy, in which values, profits and prices tend to be out of joint so that there is a high crisis-proneness.

Digital media scholars, entrepreneurs, managers, consultants and politicians often celebrate the rise of ‘social media’ like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. as the rise of a democratic and participatory economy, in which users control the means of communication and intellectual production and consumers can actively and creatively shape the economy. Seen from the view of a dynamical labour theory of value, corporate social media are in contrast forms of the exploitation of unpaid labour: all the time users spend on such platforms is recorded, analysed and creates data commodities that contain personal and usage data and are sold to advertising clients that provide targeted ads to the users. The price of the users’ labour power is zero, they are unpaid, which allows capital to maximize profits by reducing the price of labour power as much below its value as possible.

The multiverse of the global worker does not consist of separate types of work and relations of production, but rather of interdependent production relations that form a whole. Nick Dyer-Witheford (2002, 2010) therefore speaks of the emergence of a global value subject that forms a value chain that is organised by multinational corporations in the form of a global factory. He stresses that the emergence of knowledge work and the global worker does not mean an end of the law of value, but rather an expansion of exploitation and the law of value from the workplace as the ‘traditional locus of exploitation’ (Dyer-Witheford 2002: 8) to the ‘factory planet’ (Dyer-Witheford 2010: 485). The exploitation of user labour on commercial Internet platforms like Facebook and Google is indicative for a phase of capitalism, in which there is an all-ubiquitous factory that is a space of the exploitation of labour. Social media and the mobile Internet make the audience commodity ubiquitous and the factory not limited to your living room and your wage work place – the factory and work place surveillance are also in all in-between spaces. The entire planet is today a capitalist factory. The exploitation of Internet users/prosumers is not isolated, it is part of a larger value chain of computing, in which African slave workers extract raw materials, underpaid workers in developing countries (and Western countries) assemble hardware, underpaid workers in developing countries and highly paid workers in the West engineer software and precariously working service workers (e.g. in call-centres) provide support.

The global value subjects are thus ‘subject to the law of value constituted and constrained by the logics of the world-market’ (Dyer-Witheford 2002: 9). But they also have the potential power to subvert the law of value by refusals to work (protests, strikes, occupations, in the most extreme form, as in the case of Foxconn, suicide, etc.), refusals to consume (stopping to use certain products and the use of non-commercial products) and the creation of alternative forms of valuation/production that transcend monetary values and are non-profit and non-commercial in character (e.g. non-proprietary software/operating systems, non-commercial social networking sites, self-managed alternative IT companies, etc.). Göran Bolin (2010) stresses in this context that economic value is not the only

moral value that can shape the media. Nick Couldry (2010) points out that neoliberalism reduces the possibilities for the expression of voices that constitute an alternative moral value to economic logic. Expressed in another way: The value of capitalism is value, which reduces the status of the human to a voiceless and exploited cog in the machine that although perceiving itself as permanently talking, mostly has a voice and power without real effects. What must be achieved is the sublation of economic value so that (economic) value is no longer the primary (moral) value.

The law of value has not lost its force. It is in full effect everywhere in the world, where exploitation takes place. It has been extended to underpaid and unpaid forms of labour, corporate media prosumption being just one of them. Due to technical increases in productivity, the value of commodities tends to historically decrease. At the same time, value is the only source of capital, commodities and profit in capitalism. The contradictions of value have resulted in a disjuncture of values, profits and prices that contributes to actual or potential crises, which shows that crises are inherent to capitalism. This in turn makes it feasible to replace capitalism by a commons-based system of existence, in which not value, but creativity, social relations, free time and play are the source of value. Such a society is called communism and is the negation of the negativity of capitalism.

Conclusion

Graeme Turner (2012: 158) in giving answers to the question ‘What’s become of Cultural Studies?’ argues that this field has lost power as a political project and turned into a ‘genre of academic performance’ that is ‘merely self-serving’. One of my arguments in this paper has been that one of the causes of this circumstance is that Cultural Studies has had a troubled relationship to Karl Marx’s works. Early representatives like Raymond Williams and Edward P. Thompson were strongly influenced by and contributed to Humanist Marxism, whereas Stuart Hall at times was influenced by Structural Marxism and at times moved away from Marxism. There was a significant move away from Marx in Cultural Studies during the past three decades. The analysis of three contemporary Cultural Studies works showed that there is a broad agreement that Cultural Studies needs to engage more with the economic today.

How such an engagement shall look like and how it relates to the works of Karl Marx is contested. John Hartley argues for the replacement of a critical and Marxian approach in Cultural Studies by evolutionary economics. Lawrence Grossberg uses Marx against Marx in order to argue for a radically contextualist interpretation of the value concept and a theory of crisis that is based on a general theory of value. Paul Smith and others make a point for the renewal of a genuine Marxist Cultural Studies. I share the argument made by Smith and think that Marx is the linkage between Cultural Studies and Critical Political Economy that is needed

today. Today one need to take seriously not only how the economic interacts with culture and the media, but that much can be gained from reading, discussing and interpreting the multitude of Karl Marx's original works. I argue for an institutional revolution that buries prejudices against Karl Marx (see Eagleton 2011 for a brilliant invalidation of the 10 most common prejudices against Marx as well as Harvey 2010 and Jameson 2011 for contemporary interpretations of *Capital, Volume 1*) and takes his works and theoretical legacy serious in the study of the media and culture. There is a generation of students and young scholars today, who have been growing up under post-welfarist conditions and know the reality of precarious labour and precarious life. At the same time, this is a world with multi-dimensional global inequalities. Interpreting and changing this world requires thinking about class, crisis, critique and capitalism. For those who in this context are interested to critically study the role of communication, the engagement with the ideas of the thinker who has had the largest intellectual and practical influence on the study of these phenomena, is an absolute necessity. Only an engagement with Marx can make Cultural and Media Studies topical, politically relevant, practical and critical, in the current times of global crisis and resurgent critique. Such an engagement requires not just interested scholars and students (that anyway already exist), but also institutional changes of universities, funding agencies, journals, conferences, academic associations and entire research fields. Academia has experience an administrative and neoliberal turn. Marxism is not just a reaction to these changes, but also offers crucial solutions to the resulting problems.

Christian Fuchs is professor at the University of Westminster's Communication and Media Research Institute. His research interests lie in the fields of Critical Theory, Critical Information Society Studies, Critical Internet Research, critical social theory, media & society and the Critical Political Economy of Media, Communication & Society. He is author of numerous publications on these topics. He is editor of *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* (<http://www.triple-c.at>), chair of the European Sociological Association's Research Network 18 – Sociology of Communications and Media Research and co-founder of the ICTs and Society Network. He is author of many works, including the monographs *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age* (2008), *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies* (2011), *OccupyMedia! The Occupy Movement and Social Media in Crisis Capitalism* (2014), *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (2014), *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (2014). E-mail: christian.fuchs@uti.at

Notes

- ¹ <http://savemdxphil.com/2010/04/28/middlesex-university-announces-the-closure-of-its-top-rated-department-philosophy/>

References

- Babe, Robert E. (2009): *Cultural Studies and Political Economy: Toward a New Integration*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Benner, Chris (2002): *Work in the New Economy: Flexible Labor Markets in Silicon Valley*, Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Bidet, Jacques (2009): *Exploring Marx's Capital: Philosophical, Economic, and Political Dimensions*, Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Bolin, Göran (2011): *Value and the Media*, Farnham: Ashgate.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1986a): *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge.
- (1986b): 'The (Three) Forms of Capital', John G. Richardson (ed.): *Handbook of Theory and Research in the Sociology of Education*, New York: Greenwood Press, 241-258.
- Breen, Marcus (2011): 'Do the Math: Cultural Studies into Public Policy needs a New Equation', Paul Smith (ed.): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 207-218.
- Burston, Jonathan, Nick Dyer-Witheford & Alison Hearn (eds) (2010): 'Digital Labour Special issue', *Ephemera*, 10:3/4, 214-539.
- Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau & Slavoj Žižek (2000): *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, London: Verso.
- Charusheela, S. (2011): 'Where is the "Economy"? Cultural Studies and Narratives of Capitalism', Paul Smith (ed.): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 177-187.
- Cleaver, Harry (2000): *Reading Capital Politically*, Leeds: Anti/Theses.
- Couldry, Nick (2010): *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*, London: Sage.
- (2011): 'The Project of Cultural Studies. Heretical Doubts, New Horizons', Paul Smith (ed.): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 9-16.
- D'Mello, Marisa & Sundeep Sahay (2007): "'I am a Kind of Nomad Where I have to Go Places and Places": Understanding Mobility, Place and Identity in Global Software Work from India', *Information and Organization*, 17:3, 162-192.
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick (2002): 'Global Body, Global Brain/Global Factory, Global War: Revolt of the Value-Subjects', *The Commoner*, 3.
- (2010): 'Digital Labour, Species-Becoming and the Global Worker', *Ephemera*, 10:3/4, 484-503.
- Eagleton, Terry. (2011): *Why Marx Was Right*, London: Yale University Press.
- Eatwell, John, Murray Milgate & Peter Newman (1987): *The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics. Volume 3: K to P*, London: Macmillan Press.
- Finnwatch (2007): *Connecting Components, Dividing Communities: The Production of Consumer Electronics in the DR Congo and Indonesia*, makeITfair-Report: <http://germanwatch.org/corp/it-tin.pdf> (accessed 27 August 2013).
- Finnwatch & Swedwatch. (2010): *Voices from the Inside: Local Views on Mining Reform in Eastern DRC*, makeITfair Report: http://somo.nl/publications-en/Publication_3586/at_download/fullfile (accessed 27 August 2013).

- Fuchs, Christian (2008): *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge.
- (2010): 'Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet', *The Information Society*, 26:3, 179-196.
- (2011): *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- (2012a): 'Conference Report: The 4th ICTs and Society Conference: Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society', *Nordicom Information*, 34:3-4, 89-99.
- (2012b): 'New Marxian Times! Reflections on the 4th ICTs and Society Conference 'Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society: Towards Critical Theories of Social Media'', *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 10:1, 114-121.
- (2014a): *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge.
- (2014b): *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, London: Sage.
- Fuchs, Christian & Vincent Mosco (eds) (2012): 'Marx is Back. The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today', *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 10:2, 127-632.
- Fuchs, Christian & Marisol Sandoval (eds) (2014): *Critique, Social Media and the Information Society*, New York: Routledge.
- Garnham, Nicholas (1990): *Capitalism and Communication*, London: Sage.
- (1995a): 'Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce?', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12:1, 62-71.
- Garnham, Nicholas (1995b): 'Reply to Grossberg and Carey', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12:1, 95-100.
- (2000a): *Emancipation, the Media, and Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gill, Rosalind (2002): 'Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-Based New-Media Work in Euro', *Information, Communication & Society*, 5 :1, 70-89.
- (2006): *Technobohemians or the New Cybertariat?*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
- Grossberg, Lawrence (1995): 'Cultural Studies vs. Political Economy: Is Anybody Else Bored with this Debate?', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12:1, 72-81.
- (2010): *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, Durham, MA: Duke University Press.
- Gulias, Max (2011): 'A Marxist Methodology for Cultural Studies', Paul Smith (ed.): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 143-151.
- Hall, Stuart et al. (1978): *Policing the Crisis*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hall, Stuart (1992/1996): 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies', David Morley & Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds): *Stuart Hall. Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 262-275.
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2004): *Multitude*, New York: Penguin.
- Hartley, John (ed.) (2005): *Creative Industries*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- (2012): *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Harvey, David (2010): *A Companion to Marx's Capital*, London: Verso.
- Hong, Yu (2011): *Labor, Class Formation, and China's Informationized Policy and Economic Development*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Huws, Ursula (2003): *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Ilavarasan, Vigneswara (2007): 'Is Indian Software Workforce a Case of Uneven and Combined Development?', *Equal Opportunities International*, 26:8, 802-822.
- (2008): 'Software Work in India: A Labour Process View', Carol Upadhyia & A.R. Vasavi (eds): *In an Outpost of the Global Economy: Work and Workers in India's Information Technology Industry*, New Dehli: Routledge, 162-189.
- Jameson, Frederic (2011): *Representing Capital*, London: Verso.
- Kolakowski, Leszek (2005): *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Martin, Randy (2011): 'Marxism after Cultural Studies', Paul Smith (ed.): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 152-159.

- Marx, Karl (1858/1993): *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, London: Penguin.
- (1865): 'Value, Price, and Profit': <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/index.htm> (accessed 27 August 2013).
- (1867/1990): *Capital. Volume I*, London: Penguin.
- (1894/1991): *Capital. Volume III*, London: Penguin.
- Maxwell, Richard (ed.) 2001. *Culture Works: The Political Economy of Culture*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Maxwell Richard & Toby Miller (2005/2006): 'Cultural Labor. Special Issue', *Social Semiotics*, 15:3 & 16:1.
- McGuigan, Jim (2006): 'Review of John Hartley's *Creative Industries*', *Global Media and Communication*, 2:3, 372-374.
- McKercher, Catherine & Vincent Mosco (eds) (2006): 'The Labouring of Communication', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31:3.
- McKercher, Catherine & Vincent Mosco (eds) (2007): *Knowledge Workers in the Information Economy*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Miller, Toby (2010): 'Culture + Labour = Precariat', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 7:1, 96-99.
- (2011): 'Cultural Studies in an Indicative Mode', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 8:3, 319-322.
- Mosco, Vincent (2009): *The Political Economy of Communication*, London: Sage. 2nd edition.
- (2011a): 'Communication and Cultural Labor', Paul Smith (ed.): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 230-237.
- (2011b): 'The Political Economy of Labor', Janet Wasco, Graham Murdock & Helena Sousa (eds): *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 358-380.
- Mosco, Vincent & Catherine McKercher (2008): *The Laburing of Communication. Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Mosco, Vincent, Catherine McKercher & Ursula Huws (eds) (2010): 'Getting the Message: Communications Workers and Global Value Chains', *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation*, 4:2.
- MSNBC (2008): Facebook Asks Users to Translate for Free. 'Crowdsourcing' Aids Company's Aggressive Worldwide Expansion: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24205912/ns/technology_and_science-internet/t/facebook-asks-users-translate-free/#.UP7-ChjSF7w (accessed 22 January 2013).
- Negri, Antonio (1991): *Marx Beyond Marx*, London: Pluto.
- Nest, Michael (2011): *Coltan*, Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Pellow, David N. & Lisa Sun-Hee Park (2002): *The Silicon Valley of Dreams: Environmental Injustice, Immigrant Workers, and the High-Tech Global Economy*, New York: New York University Press.
- Qiu, Jack L. (2009): *Working-Class Network Society. Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Ross, Andrew (2008): 'The New Geography of Work: Power to the Precarious?', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25:7-8, 31-49.
- (2009): *Nice Work If You Can Get It. Life and Labour in Precarious Times*, New York: New York University Press.
- Ross, Andrew & Paul Smith (2011): 'Cultural Studies: A Conversation', Paul Smith (ed.) (2011): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 245-258.
- Roth, Karl Heinz (2005): *Der Zustand der Welt. Gegen-Perspektiven*, Hamburg: VSA.
- Roth, Karl Heinz & Marcel van der Linden (2009): 'Ergebnisse und Perspektiven', Marcel van der Linden & Karl Heinz Roth (eds): *Über Marx hinaus. Arbeitsgeschichte und Arbeitsbegriff in der Konfrontation mit den globalen Arbeitsverhältnissen des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin: Assoziation A, 557-600.

- Sandoval, Marisol (2013): 'Foxconned Labour as the Dark Side of the Information Age: Working Conditions at Apple's Contract Manufacturers in China', *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 12:1, 318-347.
- (2014): *From Corporate to Social Media: Critical Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility in Media and Communication Industries*, New York: Routledge.
- Scholz, Trebor (ed.) (2013): *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, New York: Routledge.
- Smith, Paul (2006): 'Looking Backwards and Forwards at Cultural Studies', Toby Miller (ed.): *A Companion to Cultural Studies*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 331-340.
- (2011a): 'Introduction', Paul Smith (ed.): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1-8.
- (ed.) (2011b): *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- SOMO (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (2007): *Capacitating Electronics: The Corrosive Effects of Platinum and Palladium Mining on Labour Rights and Communities*. makeITfair Report: http://somo.nl/publications-nl/Publication_2545-nl/at_download/fullfile (accessed 27 August 2013).
- Sparks, Colin (1996): 'Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism', David Morley & Kuan-Hsing Chen: *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 71-101.
- Students & Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) (2010): *Workers as Machines: Military Management in Foxconn*: http://sacom.hk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/report-on-foxconn-workers-as-machines_sacom.pdf (accessed 27 August 2013).
- Students & Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) (2011a): *Foxconn and Apple Fail to Fulfill Promises: Predicaments of Workers after Suicides*: http://sacom.hk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/2011-05-06_foxconn-and-apple-fail-to-fulfill-promises1.pdf (accessed 27 August 2013).
- Students & Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) (2011b): *iSlave behind the iPhone: Foxconn Workers in Central China*: <http://sacom.hk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/20110924-islave-behind-the-iphone.pdf> (accessed 27 August 2013).
- Students & Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) (2012): *New iPhone, Old Abuses: Have Working Conditions at Foxconn in China Improved?*: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/106445655> (accessed 27 August 2013).
- Swedwatch (2007): *Powering the Mobile World: Cobalt Production for Batteries in the DR Congo and Zambia*, makeITfair Report: <http://germanwatch.org/corp/it-cob.pdf> (accessed 27 August 2013).
- Tapscott, Don & Anthony D. Williams (2007): *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, New York: Penguin.
- Thompson, Edward P. (1957): 'Socialist Humanism', *The New Reasoner*, 1:2, 105-143.
- (1973): 'An Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski', Edward P. Thompson: *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 303-402.
- (1978): 'The Poverty of Theory or An Orrery of Errors', Edward P. Thompson: *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1-210.
- Turner, Graeme (2012): *What's become of Cultural Studies?* London: Sage.
- Upadhya, Carol & A.R. Vasavi (eds) (2008): *In an Outpost of the Global Economy: Work and Workers in India's Information Technology Industry*, New Delhi: Routledge.
- Vercellone, Carlo (2007): 'From Formal Subsumption to General Intellect: Elements for a Marxist Reading of the Thesis of Cognitive Capitalism', *Historical Materialism*, 15:1, 13-36.
- (2010): 'The Crisis of the Law of Value and the Becoming-Rent of Profit', Andrea Fumagalli & Sandro Mezzadra (eds): *Crisis in the Global Economy*, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 85-118.
- Virno, Paolo (2003): *A Grammar of the Multitude*, New York: Semiotext(e).
- Williams, Raymond (1958): *Culture & Society: 1780-1950*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- (1975): 'You're a Marxist, aren't you?'. Raymond Williams: *Resources of Hope*, London: Verso, 65-76.
- (1977): *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- (1981): *The Sociology of Culture*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- (1989): *What I Came to Say*, London: Hutchinson Radius.
- Zhao, Yuezhi (2007): 'Short-Circuited? The Communication of Labor Struggles in China', Catherine McKercher & Vincent Mosco: *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 229-247.
- (2008): *Communication in China*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- (2010): 'China's Pursuit of Indigenous Innovations in Information Technology Developments: Hopes, Follies and Uncertainties', *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 3:3, 266-289.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2010): *Living in the End Times*, London: Verso.

Beyond *Kulturkritik*: Along the Supply Chain of Contemporary Capitalism

By Brett Neilson

Abstract

Notions of *Kulturkritik* stemming from twentieth century accounts of mass consumption present culture as an effect of the mode or relations of production. Culture becomes the means by which capitalism imposes itself as an ideological system. This paper asks how *Kulturkritik* might be revived or revisited in the current moment of capitalist globalisation. Focusing on changes to production systems introduced by the growth of logistics and supply chain management, it argues that cultural processes of translation, signification, communication and argument have become deeply and materially embedded in the development of capitalism. Particular attention is paid to how infrastructure and technology shape relations of capital and labour. The paper asks how the subjective force of labour can exploit the vulnerabilities inherent in supply chains and confront the networked forms of organisation that enable contemporary capitalism. Overall the aim is to establish a role for culture in struggles against capitalism and to rethink the place of critique and ideology in the wake of such an approach.

Keywords: Logistics, infrastructure, capitalism, supply chains, culture, critique, ideology.

Introduction

Capitalism, crisis, cultural critique – these guiding terms of the present special issue of *Culture Unbound* have begun to interact in new ways. Theodor Adorno's essay 'Cultural Criticism and Society' provides a strategic point of departure from which to gauge just how much things have changed. Adorno (1967: 19) begins his essay by remarking that the term *Kulturkritik* has an 'offensive ring'. This is not just because, 'like "automobile"', it is pieced together from Latin and Greek, but because the cultural critic is 'necessarily of the same essence' as the 'civilization' to which 'he owes his discontent'. Adorno moves his analysis from the 'contradiction' that marks the critic's relation to culture. Caught between transcendence and immanence, the critic must juggle the passing of judgment against the view that culture is a cipher of society. The first requires an 'Archimedean position' (13). The second implies that the 'substance of culture ... resides not in culture alone but in its relation to something external, to the material life-process' (28). This paper explores an alternative that emerges not from a dialectical tension between these poles but from the proposition that culture is internal to the material life-process. At stake is not merely an affirmation of the anthropological view of culture or a refutation of the approach that sees culture as ideology. The aim is to outline the basis for a renewed cultural critique capable of grappling with the operations of contemporary capital. To this end, the paper argues that culture is embedded in and constitutive of systems of global production. Focusing on the organisation of supply chains and the position of labour in logistical systems, I approach culture as a generative process that is an essential part of current modes and relations of production.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first is wide ranging and in its textual economy follows the contemporary resonances of Adorno's comments on the word 'automobile'. Thematically this section engages with questions of capitalist transition, crisis and the contested status of critique in contemporary theoretical and political discourses. It asks what hope there is for a renewed cultural critique and suggests this can be accomplished by turning attention to the infrastructural conditions of contemporary capitalist production. The second section extends this argument by exploring the limits of classical political economy from a biopolitical perspective. I propose that the operational dimensions of capital and, in particular, the software control of global mobilities through logistical technologies, provide an appropriate ground upon which to elaborate such a perspective. This leads to engagement with anthropologist Anna Tsing's (2009) account of 'supply chain capitalism' in which I find conceptual and empirical resources for understanding and tracking the role of culture in production systems. In the third section, the focus of the article shifts to labour and its position in these systems. Emphasising the ways in which logistical practices are both productive of subjectivity and crucial to the articulation of cultural difference, I argue that the acquisition of

knowledge by workers about logistical modes of organisation is an important political project. Overall the article seeks to elaborate cultural critique toward practices of political experimentation and collaboration that work across and beyond the operations of capital. If culture is a generative and material element of the life-process so critique must be more than an intellectual proposition, an exercise in judgement or a discovery of the social in the cultural. It requires the invention of new knowledge practices and methods that intervene in the world.

Critique, Crisis, Capital

Adorno's comment about the 'offensive ring' of the word *Kulturkritik* resembling that of the word 'automobile' for its combination of Latin and Greek provides an appropriate entry point for a paper that investigates the role of logistics in the material organisation of culture and capital. This is not only because the concept of hybridisation, to recall the term of Bakhtin (1981), has provided cultural critics with a means to interrogate a variety of issues from the cultural dynamics of globalisation (Pieterse 1994) to the flexible organisation of contemporary capitalism (Hardt & Negri 2000). It is also because capitalist transitions are often characterised as involving a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism (see Lipietz 1986; Harvey 1989; Marazzi 2011). Although these denominations are unsuitable to describe varieties of capitalism that have evolved in parts of the world that never developed large scale industry, it is relevant in the wake of Adorno's comment that they position contemporary capitalism with respect to the waning of automobile manufacture. In her book *Forces of Labor* (2003), Beverly Silver charts the story of the automobile industry as a 'product cycle' that leads the development of twentieth century capitalism with its successive spatial displacements to poorer parts of the world and accompanying workers' struggles. By contrast, she finds contemporary capitalism to be characterised by 'its eclecticism and flexibility, visible in the dizzying array of choices in consumer goods and the rapid emergence of new commodities and new ways of consuming commodities' (104). The question I want to ask is this: if, as Silver argues, automobile manufacture has ceded its position within the development of capitalism, what has become of *Kulturkritik*? What is the fate of that intellectual practice that Adorno associates with the word 'automobile' but which also finds its strongest articulations within and against that variety of capitalism that was driven (or at least symbolised) by automobile manufacture?

For over a decade, there have been calls from within the cultural and social sciences to move beyond critique. The most famous of these is Bruno Latour's (2004) declaration that critique 'has run out of steam'. There are myriad versions of this claim, but the practical upshot is the advocacy of practices of collaboration or experimentation that seek to make small differences in the world rather than launch wholesale discursive or activist assaults on capitalism. To be sure, this

post-critical tendency often corresponds with the institutional realities in which the human sciences are practiced, marked by pressures to obtain industry funding and create measurable forms of impact. But regardless of whether such imperatives are primary, the compulsion is to make or do something rather than merely to engage in deconstructive interpretation. These perspectives are relevant to the interrogation of logistics and production networks because ‘running out of steam’ also implicitly registers the exhaustion of carbon fuels that have powered automobiles and other machines of manufacture and transport. In his book *Carbon Democracy* (2012), Timothy Mitchell argues that the provision of energy through the burning of carbon fuels provided the technical and social conditions for the evolution of twentieth century politics and industry. But in light of current scenarios of peak carbon and climate change claims for the exhaustion of critique reach a crescendo. In a widely read essay entitled ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’ (2009: 212), Dipesh Chakrabarty writes that ‘critiques of capitalist globalization [...] do not give us an adequate hold on human history once we accept that the crisis of climate change is here with us and may exist as part of this planet for much longer than capitalism or long after capitalism has undergone many more historic mutations’. How are we to make sense of developments in the current cultural and social sciences amid such warnings that the critique of capitalism remains a necessary but not sufficient premise for radical political practices that seek to better the world?

The turn in this essay to grapple with these questions through the analysis of logistics, labour and life is informed by attention to the operational aspects of capital that come to the fore in the recent economic crisis. It is no accident that the environmental crisis of which Chakrabarty writes has been accompanied and tempered by a global crisis of capitalism that has exposed the material limits and conduits of financial globalisation (Magnani 2013). If ever one wanted empirical confirmation to discredit arguments for economic determination – even in the ‘last instance’ as Althusser (1971) famously wrote – it is only necessary to consider the social and political ramifications of this crisis. The turbulent global economy has delivered harsh punishments to many populations, but the governmental response has generally been limited to bail-out and austerity measures that have not addressed the root causes of the situation. Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin (2013: 8) capture this predicament nicely: ‘The economic settlement that has underpinned the social and political settlement of the last three decades is unraveling, but the broader political and social consensus apparently remains in place’. Small changes seem incapable of unsettling this compact. It is not a matter of staging revolution against reform. Both ultimately are carried by a desire for change. What seems to be at stake is a blockage at the social and political level or the capture of possibilities for change by entrenched material and technical practices that remain impervious to social action and cultural expression. To be sure, this is an impasse that social movements and struggles, from Occupy to the Arab

revolutions, have chipped away at. New forms of organisation and political communication have been invented in the process. But the possibility of turning the passions and aspirations of these movements into levers for changing the wider political and social realities is elusive. A complex interplay between economic processes, science and technology, institutions, state politics and cultural ferment is at play. To shift this dynamic, we need something more than *Kulturkritik*. But what is the intellectual practice that will recognise the systematic and global character of the crisis? And can the environmental urgencies be addressed in concert with rather than in contradistinction to the economic realities? These are the questions of the moment. The horizon against which they are cast is open.

This brings me to the third of the terms that animates the discussion of this special issue: capitalism. As is well known, the word capitalism was never used by Karl Marx, who wrote rather of the ‘capitalist mode of production’. It finds its origins in the classical sociology of the late nineteenth century, and, particularly, in the writings of Werner Sombart (1902) and Max Weber (1930). These thinkers were deeply concerned with the radical challenge posed to traditional forms of social order by the reshaping of the world market and the mediation of social relations by the abstract character of value. The concept of capitalism emerged from their attempts to confront this challenge. Weber struggled to derive new criteria of legitimacy for political and social power in the face of capital’s expansion. The point is this: capital-*ism*, as a concept, implies the systematic organisation of economic processes and relations in ways that impinge upon politics and society. If, for Weber, this meant looking for a balance between the growth of the German nation-state and the world scale of ‘advanced capitalism’ (*Hochkapitalismus*), today such a balance seems elusive. The nation-state retains a capacity to regulate but such regulation seems increasingly overshadowed by the global operations of capitalism. This is particularly clear in countries hard hit by the economic crisis, such as Greece and Italy, where popular rejection of austerity measures has been met by the institution of commissary forms of power (*troikas* and technical governments) amenable to the global dictates of finance. How are we to account for a situation in which economic forces can discipline the life of entire populations but at the same time seem to be spinning out of control? In what sense can we claim that capitalism does not determine ‘in the last instance’ at the same time as we observe a reassertion of its powers in ways that seem to sidestep current practices of social and political resistance?

One way of confronting these questions without positing a disabling victory of the economic over the political is to investigate the sense in which capitalism’s operations have become embedded in technical processes and routines that provide an unacknowledged background to both economic aspects of social life and contemporary ways of being political. This draws attention to another dimension of the word automobile, associated with neither its etymological origins nor a particular capitalist product cycle but with what the British sociologist John Urry

(2004) calls the ‘the system of automobility’. With this phrase, Urry identifies ‘a self-organizing autopoietic, nonlinear system that spreads world-wide, and includes cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs’ (27). Urry is interested in how this system locks social life into certain patterns of mobility, remakes time and space, and displays the potential for small changes that might move it in another direction. I mention this system not to suggest that the mobilities it generates provide a privileged point of entry for engaging questions about the continued viability of cultural critique. Urry’s interest in automobilities reflects a wider concern with the infrastructural conditions for contemporary capitalism and environmental change that extends far beyond a fascination with the motor car. A range of authors, including Paul N. Edwards (2003), Keller Easterling (2005) and Stephen Graham (2009), emphasise the material role of infrastructure in shaping social and cultural life. There is an emergent interest in how computer code (Mackenzie 2005), algorithms (Parisi 2013) and logistical systems (Cowen 2009) merge into circulatory practices that influence not only economic processes and relations but also possibilities for political organisation and expression. Jodi Dean (2012) argues that efforts of political activism and organisation that utilise networked electronic media are part of a system of ‘communicative capitalism’ that aggregates and harvests information to produce value in ways that excite and exhaust our attention and energies. But perhaps this is too pessimistic a vision, caught in the trap of Adorno’s critic who cannot escape the civilization she despises. If so, is there an exit from this predicament? Does culture present a political dead end? Or do new possibilities rise from the ashes of *Kulturkritik*?

Operations of Capitalism

The intellectual practice of political economy has provided thinkers of the twentieth and twenty first centuries with one of their most powerful arsenals for the analysis of capitalism. It is often forgotten, however, that the most prominent figure associated with this practice, Karl Marx, styled his work as a critique of political economy. This is the case even though Marx did not articulate his thought systematically. Despite the influence of Hegel and the efforts of Engels, his writing remains discontinuous, and unfinished. In this sense, he cannot be said to have produced a version of Marxism – significantly the term, like capitalism, is absent from his work. Marx’s critique does not function like a well oiled machine, a steam engine, which demolishes all in its path. It is committed to changing rather than merely interpreting the world, as the famous quotation from *Theses on Feuerbach* insists, and it draws sensitively if inconsistently on the divergent traditions it reworks and moves between: British political economy, French social and German idealism. Perhaps here it is possible to find resources for a critical practice that neither replicates the Kantian paradigm of judgement nor becomes entwined

in the death and rebirth of the theory of ideology (Laclau 1997). What Marx calls, in the first volume of *Capital* (1867/1977: 279), the ‘hidden abode of production’, where capital not only produces but is produced, provides a material and conceptual space from which such a practice might proceed. At stake is not necessarily a political anthropology of deception and revelation by which the depth reveals the truth of the surface. It is true that Marx contrasts this ‘hidden abode’ with the ‘sphere of circulation and commodity exchange within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour power goes on’ (280). But this contrast needs to be rethought on two counts.

First, the sphere of freedom and legally contracted wage labour, which Marx tended to assume as a capitalist norm, cannot be taken for granted. Global labour historians such as Marcel van der Linden (2008) have shown how, aside from the wage, systems of bondage such as slavery and indenture have been central to capital’s global development. Likewise, feminist arguments and struggles have questioned the division between productive and reproductive labour, challenging the masculinist bias implicit in the focus on the freely contracted wage (Pateman 1988; Weeks 2011; Federici 2012). Theorists of post-Fordist economic transformations have pointed to new kinds of productivity associated with traditionally reproductive tasks such as relation building and communication (Marazzi 2011). Accounts of precarious labour have emphasised how different kinds of economic need and affective disposition can harness workers to jobs, including emotional blackmail in the case of carers (Anderson 2000) or ‘loving the job’ on the part of creative workers (Gill 2006). Both historically and in the present day there has been a deep heterogenisation of labour across time and space, and this has shattered the smoothly functioning and legally regulated ‘surface’ of freely contracted labour that Marx supposed to cover the ‘hidden abode of production’ (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013a).

The second factor that disturbs this arrangement concerns the modes of power exercised in the space of production. If, in the realm of circulation and exchange, the juridical power of the state seals the labour contract, the abode of production seems to be one in which disciplinary power, to recall a term from Michel Foucault, comes to the fore. One remembers that Marx completes the chapter where he writes of the ‘hidden abode of production’ by suggesting that when the ‘money-owner’ emerges as a ‘capitalist’ and the ‘possessor of labour-power as his worker’, the latter ‘has nothing else to expect but – a tanning’ (1867/1977: 280). If, however, we follow one of the first lectures in which Foucault questions an exclusive focus on the juridical power of the state, ‘The Meshes of Power’ (2007), the situation appears more complex. In this lecture, delivered at the University of Bahia in 1976, Foucault compares ‘the juridical type of power’ to ‘the simultaneously specific and relatively autonomous, in some way impermeable, character of the *de facto* power that an employer exerts in a workshop’. In so doing, he recalls Marx’s *Capital* where he finds awareness that ‘there exists no *single* power, but

several powers' (156). This leads to one of Foucault's first formulations of the concept of biopower, which regulates the life of populations. Writing with Sandro Mezzadra, I have correlated the 'heterogeneous subjective targets (individuals and populations)' of these two arms of Foucauldian power with 'the two sides of labor power: the "living body" produced as the "bearer" of labor power and the general human potency epitomized by the concept – or, from another point of view, the individualized experience of the laborer and his or her living in the reality of social cooperation' (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013a: 194).

This emphasis on an intertwining of disciplinary and biopolitical power in the moment of production when combined with attention to the historical specificity of freely contracted wage labour allows a more flexible assessment of the types of power that come to bear in the social relation of capital. The notion of assemblages of power is useful here because it gives a sense of the multiple and contingent ways in which different varieties of power combine to facilitate capital's turnover and make labour productive (for a detailed discussion of this concept see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013a: 189-197). It can also account for the tendency of such combinations to congeal and maintain stability over long stretches of time or in certain spaces. Although it has a history in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), my use of the concept of assemblage stems more directly from discussions of global assemblages offered by Aiwaha Ong and Stephen Collier (2005) and Saskia Sassen (2006). These thinkers highlight how such assemblages tend to reconfigure state territory and power rather than completely displacing them. There is a disaggregation of powers that were once exclusively exercised by the state and a rearrangement of them in specific configurations that mix technology, politics and actors. This accords the Foucauldian account of biopower which traces the historical movement of power away from the juridical form of the state. It also adds an element of contingency that questions totalising explanations of economy and culture deriving from organic notions of society such as those that stem from Hegelian visions of spirit or from functionalist and structuralist versions of sociology. Attention to contingency, however, can lead to a perspective that flattens out networked interactions as if the linking and delinking of elements occurs without conflict or dissensus. In the case of labour and productivity, it is crucial to show how assemblages of power are crossed by fundamental dissymmetry and antagonisms that are inherent to their material constitution.

This is where the empirical study of production networks and supply chain systems comes into play. Under current conditions, what Marx (1867/1977: 932) described as the mediation of social relations 'through things' has become the object of the thriving management science of logistics. Although the business of distribution has been subject to algorithmic calculations at least since the publication of works such as Wilhelm Launhardt's *The Theory of the Trace* (1900) and Alfred Weber's *Theory of the Location of Industries* (1929), the introduction of digital systems has greatly enhanced possibilities for trading transport and labour

costs off against each other. The so-called logistics revolution (Allen 1997) that swept through capitalist organisational cultures in the 1960s, alongside the increasing speed and social significance of financial trading and the growing pressure to extract value from human populations and natural resources, has placed new emphasis on the operative dimensions of capitalism.

The blending of production with elements of circulation and exchange is perhaps best illustrated with reference to developments in the logistics sector. Within the Fordist regime of accumulation, the assumption was that the process of adding value through production and exploitation of labour stopped at the factory gates. Although contested by feminist thinkers who argued that such production rested on the unwaged work of women (Dalla Costa & James 1972), this view also had ramifications for the role of transportation or distribution within the firm. The cost of getting the commodity to the consumer was one that simply needed to be minimised, since it was not productive of value. With logistics this changed. A system analytics approach derived from military operations research was applied to problems of transportation (Holmes 2010). This saw a number of related developments including the introduction of the shipping container, the interlinking of logistics with computing and software design, the formation of academic and industry bodies for the production and dissemination of logistical knowledge, and the invention of more efficient systems for the performance monitoring of workers. More pointedly, logistics was integrated into the production process itself and became a means of maximising profit. Linked to this were changes in the spatial organisation of firms, the evolution of global supply chains, and the search for cheap labour rates in the world's poorer regions. The assembly of goods across different global sites, with objects and knowledge travelling between locations, made the lines between production and distribution increasingly indistinct. Logistics also made the global organisation of space more complex. Geographical entities such as export processing zones and logistics parks began to appear and provided a new geography for attracting investment and organising global production. Increasingly, logistics also came to play a role in service economies and production processes not involving the manufacture of material goods. From financial operations to television production, translation services to the formation of global care chains, the logistical organisation of work and mobility became central to the expansion of capitalist markets and market logics.

In a series of publications (Neilson & Rossiter 2011; Neilson 2012; Mezzadra & Neilson 2013b; Neilson 2013), I have explored these developments in relation to the transformations of capitalism, the production of space and time, and the mutations of sovereignty and global governance. The technical and organisational systems that enabled the logistics revolution have undergone vast changes since the 1960s. The evolution of supply chain management and just-in-time production systems required the controlled feedback of logistical data into production and distribution systems. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Electronic Data

Interchange (EDI) software platforms aided efforts to digitally record, communicate and analyse every aspect of production, transport, display and sales. This resulted in more expansive and articulated logistical systems that sought to continuously map out the position and trajectory of objects in motion. The real-time integration of these systems provided an unprecedented ability to rationalise labour at every point along the chain, intensifying the pace at which the system turned over and squeezing workers for greater productivity. But the desire to match ideals of lean production to agile and adaptable logistical processes proved elusive. The reduction of costs, elimination of waste and optimisation of flow could only be pushed so far without jeopardising the robustness and flexibility of production systems. Issues of supply chain resilience sparked efforts to minimise contingency by simulating the decisions of actors on both supply and demand sides of global production regimes. Today complex techniques of scenario planning, sometimes involving the use of software adapted from financial market applications, are deployed to maximise options for smoothing out discrepancies and interruptions. The challenge of achieving interoperability between systems and building ‘fault tolerance’ into them has underscored the difficulties that underlie efforts of standardisation. Nonetheless, the internal governance of supply chains continues to demand protocols of hierarchy, codifiability, capability and coordination (Gereffi, Humphrey & Sturgeon 2005).

As Anna Tsing (2009: 151) points out, the ‘diversity of supply chains cannot be fully disciplined from inside the chain’, making them ‘unpredictable – and intriguing as frames for understanding capitalism’. Tsing’s observations are of great relevance for an investigation of how culture, after the demise of *Kulturkritik*, might play a role in the development of a politically powerful approach to the operations of capital. Central to her understanding of supply chains is an emphasis on how they link and create situations of diversity, both in their spanning of wide global vistas and their grappling with the responses of labour and capital in attempts to cut labour costs and discipline workforces. ‘Supply chain capitalists’, she writes, ‘worry about diversity, and their self-consciousness is what makes it easy to show how diversity forms part of the *structure* of contemporary capitalism rather than an inessential appendage’ (150). This is not merely a matter of the dissimilarities between firms arrayed along a supply chain or the cultural and economic conditions that pertain in the sites where they operate. It is also a question of relations between different actors in the chain and the kinds of negotiation they must perform for it to function. In her book *Friction* (2005), Tsing gives the example of a piece of coal that travels from Kalimantan to India. First it must be removed from the earth, then it travels to a port city where it is sorted and graded, from here it must be moved quickly to avoid loss of value, and when it finally arrives in India it must meet the requirements of power plant managers. Shunting the commodity along the chain requires ‘not a vague and transcendent “coalness” but rather a step by step negotiation of the possibilities at hand – for digging, sort-

ing, transport, and so on'. 'The closer we look at the commodity chain,' Tsing writes, 'the more every step – including transportation – can be seen as an area of cultural production' (51). By this she means that the work of commodity production is partly accomplished by uneasy cultural interactions between participants along the chain.

This understanding of cultural production is a far cry from Adorno's discontented engagement with the culture industry. It is also quite remote from more recent assessments of the labour precarity and 'free labor' that characterise employment in today's digitalised creative industries (Terranova 2000; Ross 2009). Tsing's ruminations draw attention to the presence of friction in supply chains and the role of culture in both facilitating and disrupting their operations. She uses the metaphor of a tyre on the road: 'Friction is not just about slowing things down. Friction is required to keep global power in motion. It shows us (as one advertising jingle put it) where the rubber meets the road' (2005: 6). This metaphor is helpful. It registers how economic processes are never frictionless but also suggests how friction can support the business of economic turnover. Logistics is a case in point, since its imaginaries are deeply invested in the possibility of smoothing out relations of production and distribution. In practice, the programs and designs of logisticians meet hindrances of all kinds and even contribute to their generation, from unruly workforces to traffic chokepoints. Tsing's vision encompasses these moments of blockage as well as exploring the role of culture in facilitating economic interactions. Less pronounced in her work is a sense of how to invent practices of political organisation that respond to the peculiar forms of networked organisation that capitalism pursues in its construction of supply chains. It is to this question that I now turn, attending to its theoretical as well as practical moments.

Strategic Position

How is it possible to combine a sense of the uncertain role of culture in the organisation of supply chains with an analysis of the variable geometry of power that bears upon the contemporary scene of production? Tsing's insistence that 'even transportation' has become 'an area of cultural production' draws attention to an important aspect of supply chains: they link not only dissimilar sites and firms but also dissimilar workforces. In dealing with the question of how labour forces arrayed along a supply chain relate to each other – a question of utmost importance for the creation of political solidarities that reach across the fractured geographies of globalisation – it is crucial to maintain a sense of the production of labour power as a commodity. This means that labour forces cannot be considered, as Taylor (2008: 18) puts it, 'an *a priori* factor in the spatial disbursement of economic processes'. There must be an account of how they are produced and reproduced across as well as within sites, drawing the necessary empirical investigation be-

yond existing research regarding the making of local labour forces (Wolff 1992; Kelly 2013). It also means that the question of cultural interactions along the supply chain becomes linked to the theoretical and practical issues surrounding the production of political subjectivity. What kind of political subject can interrupt the workings of a supply chain? Where is such a subject located? How is it produced and how might it be named? These are crucial questions for any reinvention of politics that seeks to confront the networked forms of organisation that enable the workings of contemporary capitalism.

For purposes of analysis, it is helpful to tackle this question by looking at two of its most important aspects separately, although in reality they are intertwined: the subjection of labour at any point along the chain and the opportunities for solidarity between labour forces working across these points. My earlier discussion of assemblages of power is relevant to the first of these concerns as it explains why contractual arrangements are only one factor contributing to labour conditions alongside disciplinary and biopolitical elements. Clearly there are variations between the modes of subjection operating at various worksites along supply chains. There are also social and cultural factors that impinge from outside and affect how labour power is produced at any point along these chains. As Tsing (2009: 151) recognises: ‘No firm has to personally invent patriarchy, colonialism, war, racism, or imprisonment, yet each of these is privileged in supply chain labor mobilization’. Logistical operations also provide powerful forms of global governance. The attempt to measure labour performance in real-time and use the resultant data to generate parameters for optimising labour efficiencies and costs is a prominent feature of contemporary supply chain management. Such real-time labour measurement can be understood as an attempt to eliminate the difference between living and abstract labour. Marx (1858/1973: 361) defines living labour as ‘form-giving fire’, the subjective capacity for labour carried in the worker’s body, inserted into networks of cooperation and positioned in the concrete circumstances under which labour is performed. Abstract labour is the generalised temporal measure of labour that enables its translation into the language of value and provides the regulatory nexus for the establishment of a world market for the commodity of labour power. But the distinction between living and abstract labour also has important political ramifications that can be understood in the frame of resistance and control. This means it can shed light on the qualities of power inherent in logistical practices, which have come to the fore with the globalisation of economic processes and relations. The tension between living and abstract labour, which derives from the fact that the multiplicity and concreteness of the former cannot be fully reduced to the latter, has intensified under contemporary capitalism. Logistics presents the fantasy of eliminating this gap through technical processes of coordination and measure.

Yet logistical control crosses workers in a double way. It subjects them to new forms of monitoring elaborated by key performance indicators (KPIs), standard

operating procedures (SOPs), benchmarks, audits, quotas, best practices and the like. At the same time, it positions them within global production systems in which small actions on their part can have widespread effects. John Womack (2006) writes of what he calls 'strategic position', seeking to identify the social and/or technical conditions that maximise the disruptive effect that actions taken at certain point in the chain might have. Here the negative moment of sabotage meets the constitutive moment of labour organisation, since the identification of such a point, let alone the taking of action at it, is a complex matter that often requires collaboration among workforces. This brings me to the second moment in my analysis of the production of political subjectivity along the supply chain: the question of solidarity between different labour forces. This is no easy matter given the dissimilarities of race, class and gender that typically mark the workforces arrayed along a supply chain or the fact that they often operate in different national jurisdictions and across different regimes of authority, territory and rights – for instance, in cases where key industrial activities are undertaken in special economic zones. Here the questions of cultural difference and translation are not abstract metaphors for making arguments about hybridisation or flow but practical issues that must be unavoidably confronted in the political organisation of labour forces.

Despite their crucial role in the articulation of contemporary capitalism, global supply chains are often extremely fragile entities. This is because the effort to play off leanness against agility can result in scenarios where the optimisation of a system occurs at the cost of its resilience. New opportunities emerge for labour organisation since strategic actions can resonate along the supply chain, having potentially devastating effects both up and downstream. The dock worker who engages in wildcat strikes or the courier who fails to work at key times of the year responds to vulnerabilities in the supply chains in which he or she works. Although capital can respond to such actions by rerouting or stockpiling, it can only do so at the cost of comprising the efficiency of the operations it has strived so highly to produce. Workers' collective understanding of the logistical networks in which they work can become a crucial piece of political knowledge if studied and applied systematically.

The production of such knowledge involves not only the building of strategic links between workers along supply chains but also the reckoning with divisions that separate the computational from the physical domains of logistics. The masculine domains of dock work and trucking, for instance, need to build alliances with the feminised 'no collar' labour of data entry, freight forwarding and procurement, as occurred in the successful strike that closed the Port of Los Angeles in December 2012 (Bologna 2012). The challenges mount when these differences stretch across national borders – a familiar predicament in situations of 'virtual migration' (Aneesh 2006) where workers in countries such as India perform service labour for companies and customers in distant locations. Overcoming these

barriers requires awareness on the part of logistical workers of the substantive affects of code and computational systems on their lives, both inside and outside the workplace. It also implies knowledge of those aspects of life that cannot be absorbed by the operational and ordering dimensions of logistical practices, which can represent and regulate differences in some ways but not in others. The material presence of culture with global production systems rears its head in the organisation of labour as much as in the operative dimensions of capital. A renewed *Kulturkritik* must come to grips both with code and those aspects of difference and life that persist outside it.

Conclusion

There is an affinity between the kinds of logistical knowledge workers need to accrue to further their political aims and the knowledge practices that cultural and social researchers must invent to understand the changing forms of capitalism amidst the contemporary crisis. Supply chains are not the only contemporary form of global capitalism. There is also the increasing reach of financialisation (Martin 2002; Marazzi 2010) and the pull of extraction that has forced new kinds of economic and social settlements in Africa (Ferguson 2006) and Latin America (Svampa 2012). Understanding the mutual implication and separate development of these different kinds of capitalist operations is an analytical and political priority (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013b). But a focus on supply chains allows an analysis of how the heterogeneity of global space and time comes to figure in arrangements of technology and labour power that span vast swathes of the earth's surface. It thus begs questions of global cultural and social analysis in ways that reach beyond both the 'Archimedean position' of the judging critic and an 'immanent criticism' that cannot 'resolve the contradictions under which it labours' (Adorno 1967: 31). The sphere of logistical organisation may seem remote from the material realm of culture but in reality it must grapple with it at every turn. Cultural investigations in this sphere demand new practices of experimentation and collaboration in the space that links the gleaming circuits of information technology to hard and often dirty toil. What is made is a kind of knowledge that facilitates political organisation and industrial disruption.

Logistical disputes have been mounting around the world, as recent struggles against companies like IKEA and Amazon attest (Uninomade Collective 2013; Leisegang 2013). These practical struggles have a life apart from theoretical arguments but the intervention they make suggests the need for criticism to engage with the system of production and exchange itself rather than its ideological representations. A merely cultural analysis of contemporary production systems, which does not take account of their material and informational processes, will be unable to discern the operative elements of capital that have come to the fore in the current crisis. Similarly it will not be able to grapple with the environmental chal-

lenges that shadow and confront anticapitalist politics. It is no accident that the logistics sector is booming despite the current economic turmoil. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013) describe logistics as ‘a booming field, a conquering field’ that was always after a ‘bigger prize’ than financialization – the ‘fantasy that capital could exist without labor’ (88-90). Shattering this fantasy is not merely a matter of reinventing cultural critique. It requires a cultural intelligence that remains critical in a syncretic and inventive way while working beyond and across the material and technical elements that hold capital in place.

Brett Neilson is Professor and Research Director at the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney. His research focuses on the changing relations between capital, space and time under current processes of globalisation. He is the author, with Sandro Mezzadra, of *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, Duke University Press, 2013. E-mail: b.neilson@uws.edu.au

References

- Adorno, Theodor (1967): ‘Cultural Criticism and Society’, *Prisms*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 19-34.
- Allen, W. Bruce (1997): ‘The Logistics Revolution and Transportation’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 533, 106-116.
- Althusser, Louis (1971): *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Anderson, Bridget (2000): *Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*, London: Zed Books.
- Aneesh, A. (2006): *Virtual Migration: The Programming of Globalization*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail (1981): *The Dialogic Imagination*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bologna, Sergio (2012): ‘Epica Los Angeles: Vince lo sciopero dei portuali’, *InfoAut: Informazione da parte*: <http://www.infoaut.org/index.php/blog/precaricato-sociale/item/6339-epica-los-angeles-vince-lo-sciopero-dei-portuali> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2009): ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’, *Critical Inquiry*, 35: 2, 197-222.
- Cowen, Deborah (2010): ‘A Geography of Logistics: Market Authority and the Security of Supply Chains’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 100:3, 600-620.
- Dalla Costa, Mariarosa & Selma James (1972): *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community: A Woman's Place*, Bristol: Falling Wall Press.
- Dean, Jodi (2012): *The Communist Horizon*, London: Verso.
- Deleuze, Gilles & Félix Guattari (1987): *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London: Athelone Press.
- Easterling, Keller (2005): *Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and its Political Masquerades*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Edwards, Paul N. (2003): ‘Infrastructure and Modernity: Force, Time and Social Organization in the History of Sociotechnical Systems’, Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey & Andrew Feenberg (eds): *The History of Sociotechnical Systems: Modernity and Technology*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 185-226.
- Federici, Silvia (2012): *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle*, Oakland: PM Press.

- Ferguson, James (2006) *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Foucault, Michel (2007): 'The Meshes of Power', Jeremy W. Crampton & Stuart Elden (eds): *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 153-62.
- Gereffi, Gary, John Humphrey & Timothy Sturgeon (2005): 'The Governance of Global Value Chains', *Review of International Political Economy*, 12:1, 78-104.
- Gill, Rosalind (2006): *Technobohemians or the New Cybertariat? New Media Work in Amsterdam a Decade after the Web*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures: <http://www.networkcultures.org/uploads/17.pdf> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Graham, Stephen (ed.) (2011): *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails*, London: Routledge.
- Hall, Stuart, Doreen Massey & Michael Rustin (2013): 'After Neoliberalism: Analysing the Present', *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture*: <http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/pdfs/s53hallmasseyrustin.pdf> (accessed 19 May 2013).
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2000): *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Harney, Stefano & Fred Moten (2013): *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, Brooklyn, NY: Minor Compositions.
- Harvey, David (1989): *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Holmes, Brian (2010): 'Do Containers Dream of Electric People? The Social Form of Just-in-Time Production', *Open*, 21: 30-44.
- Kelly, Philip F (2013): 'Production Networks, Place and Development: Thinking through Global Production Networks in Cavite, Philippines', *Geoforum*, 44: 82-92.
- Koselleck, Reinhart (1982): 'Krise', Otto Brunner, Werner Conze & Reinhart Koselleck (eds): *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch- sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vol. 3, Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 617-650.
- Laclau, Ernesto (1997): 'The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology', *Modern Language Notes*, 112:3, 297-321.
- Latour, Bruno (2004): 'Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry*, 30:2, 225-48.
- Launhardt, Wilhelm (1900): *The Theory of the Trace: Being a Discussion of the Principles of Location*, Madras: Lawrence Asylum Press.
- Leisegang, Daniel (2013): 'Amazon und die Strategie der tödlichen Umarmung', *Eurozine*, April 10th: <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2013-04-10-leisegang-de.pdf> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Lipietz, Alain (1986): *Mirages and Miracles: The Crisis in Global Fordism*, London: Verso.
- Mackenzie, Adrian (2005): 'The Performativity of Code: Software and Cultures of Circulation', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 22:1, 71-92.
- Magnani, Elisabetta (2013): 'From Financing Labour to Labouring Finance: Subjectivity in Financial Times', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 5:2, 129-142.
- Marazzi, Christian (2010): *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*, Los Angeles; Semiotext(e).
- (2011): *Capital and Affects: The Politics of the Language Economy*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Martin, Randy (2002): *Financialization of Daily Life*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Marx, Karl (1858/1973): *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- (1867/1977): *Capital*, Vol. 1, New York: Vintage Books.
- Mezzadra, Sandro & Brett Neilson (2013a): *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mezzadra, Sandro & Brett Neilson (2013b): 'Extraction, Logistics, Finance: Global Crisis and the Politics of Operations', *Radical Philosophy*, 178, 8-18.
- Mitchell, Timothy (2012): *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, New York: Verso.
- Neilson, Brett (2013): 'Life and Code: Logistics, Culture and Economy', Tony Bennett (ed): *Challenging (the) Humanities*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 99-116.
- (2012): 'Five Theses on Understanding Logistics as Power', *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 13:3, 323-40.

- Neilson, Brett & Ned Rossiter (2011): 'Still Waiting, Still Moving: On Labour, Logistics and Maritime Industries', David Bissell and Gillian Fuller (eds): *Stillness in a Mobile World*, London: Routledge, 51-68.
- Ong, Aiwha & Stephen J. Collier (eds) (2005): *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Parisi, Luciana (2013): *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics and Space*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Pateman, Carole (1988): *The Sexual Contract*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen (1994): 'Globalisation as Hybridisation', *International Sociology*, 9:2, 161-184.
- Ross, Andrew (2009): *Nice Work if You Can Get it: Life and Labor in Precarious Times*, New York: New York University Press.
- Sassen, Saskia (2006): *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Silver, Beverly (2003): *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sombart, Werner (1902): *Der Moderne Kapitalismus*, Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt.
- Svampa, Maristella (2012): 'Resource Extractivism and Alternatives: Latin American Perspectives on Development', *Austrian Journal of Development Studies*, 28:3, 43-73.
- Taylor, Marcus (2008): 'Power, Conflict and the Production of the Global Economy', Marcus Taylor (ed.): *Global Economy Contested: Power and Conflict across the International Division of Labour*, London: Routledge, 11-33.
- Terranova, Tiziana (2000): 'Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy', *Social Text*, 18:2, 33-57.
- Tsing, Anna (2009): 'Supply Chains and the Human Condition', *Rethinking Marxism*, 21:2, 148-176.
- Tsing, Anna (2005): *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Uninomade Collective (2013): 'The Logistics of Struggles: The Italian Case', *Uninomade*, February 2nd: <http://www.uninomade.org/the-logistics-of-struggles/> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Urry, John (2004): 'The 'System' of Automobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21:4-5, 25-39.
- Van der Linden, Marcel (2008): *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History*, Leiden: Brill.
- Weber, Alfred (1929): *Theory of the Location of Industries*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, Max (1930): *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London: G. Allen & Unwin.
- Weeks, Kathi (2011): *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Post-work Imaginaries*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wolff, Diane (1992): *Factory Daughters: Gender, Household Dynamics, and Rural Industrialization in Java*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Womack, John (2006): 'Working Power over Production: Labor History, Industrial Work, Economics, Sociology, and Strategic Position', XIV International Economic History Congress, Helsinki: <http://www.helsinki.fi/iehc2006/papers2/Womack.pdf> (accessed 20 May 2013).

Imagined, Real and Moral Economies

By John Clarke

Abstract

This article explores three different inflections of the idea of economy: imagined, real and moral. Each offers a distinctive way of thinking about economies and each raises the possibility of providing critical purchase on the formations of ‘actually existing capitalisms’. The article begins from the idea of imagined economies given the proliferation of such imaginaries, not least in the wake of the financial crisis. In political, public and policy discourse, economies have become the focus of intense fantasy and projection. The resulting imaginaries underpin a range of economic, public and social policies. Importantly, they articulate a foundational distinction between economic and other sorts of policy. The idea of imagined economies opens the space for a certain type of critical engagement with contemporary political economy. In a rather different way, ideas of the ‘real economy’ have also been the site of critical work – distinguishing between ‘real’ relations and practices involved in the production of material objects (and value) in the contrast with virtual, digital, financialised economies. This article treats the ‘real economy’ as one further instance of an imagined economy. Like the concept of the ‘real economy’, E.P. Thompson’s exploration of a ‘moral economy’ also offers a standpoint from which critical analysis of the current economic, political and social disintegrations might be constructed. Thompson’s articulation of a moment in which collective understandings of economies as fields of moral relationships and obligations dramatises the contemporary de-socialization of economies, even if it may be harder to imagine twentieth and twenty first century capitalisms as moral economies that the current crisis has disrupted. Again, the article treats ‘moral economies’ as another form of imagined economy, in part to make visible the shifting and contested character of what counts as ‘economic’.

Keywords: Imagined economies, everyday thinking, crises, contradictions, fractures, consent, conjuncture.

Introduction

This article emerges from the unfolding crises inaugurated by the global financial crisis of 2007-8. The crisis itself triggered many different, and contending, diagnoses. Most of these offered more or less plausible accounts of economies and how they worked, failed and might be reformed or reconstructed. As The Crisis morphed into multiple crises, such accounts of economies continued to proliferate, whether linking household irresponsibility to the global credit crisis, or demanding austere approaches to public finances. In the process, distinctions between types of economy were elaborated (between virtual and real economies, or between immoral and moral capitalisms, for example). They form part of the contemporary proliferation of such imaginings, providing framings through which different political and social desires may be projected and pursued. Each of them also reinscribes a supposed foundational distinction between the economy and 'the rest': the social, political, cultural, etc. In these circumstances, I suggest that it may be worth paying attention to all this 'economy talk' and to consider what might be at stake in *imagining* economies. This is a potentially productive point for the intersection of cultural studies and political economy (see also Jessop 2011/2013) and this article explores both its potential and some of the pitfalls and problems that it might engender.

The first section explores what it means to talk of imagined economies, which leads to an exploration of some of the contemporary ways in which economies are being imagined. The third section discusses the relationships between imagined economies, real economies and moral economies, while arguing that – in this context at least – conceptions of real and moral economies need to be understood as varieties of imagined economies. The conclusion poses the question of what it means to think about imagined economies conjuncturally.

Imagined Economies: Coming to Terms

So, the immediate provocation for this article lies in the contemporary proliferation of 'economy talk' in which diagnoses of the present, demands for change and desires for the future are recurrently articulated. Nevertheless, the choice of 'imagined economies' as an analytical starting point is hardly a spontaneous or innocent response to this moment. Rather it is a direction of inquiry motivated by the conjunction of several factors.

First, the idea of 'imagined economies' emerges as an alternative pole of thinking to all those accounts of the 'real', 'fundamental' or 'material' character of the world that lay claim to the economy as foundational, and which seek to discipline thinking by the force of this claimed reality. This fundamentalism works through different rhetorical tropes: in conceptual architectures (the base/superstructure distinction lives on with its real/epiphenomenal implications); in terms of tem-

poral structures of thinking (the economy in the first instance, everything else then follows); and in terms of political urgency, from austerity to growth, from crisis to transformation, politics must begin with the economy. This order of precedence alarms me, not least because of its presumption of a separate or separable 'economy', a point to which I will return below. This challenge to such reductive forms of realism draws on Gibson-Graham's profound critique of ways of thinking about capitalism (1996).

Secondly, the concept of imagined economies has links to a growing interest in how to analyse *apparently* unified, homogeneous and solidified entities as imagined. Conceptions of the imaginary character of such formations points to the articulation of acts of imagining and the work of installing such imaginaries as taken for granted realities: the creation of contradictory *unities in difference*. This last phrase - unity in difference - is Marx's, used in the *Grundrisse* when he is describing the circuit of capital. It seems to me to be a useful way of thinking of articulated entities which are neither a simple totality nor a merely heterogeneous collection of disparate parts. It has contemporary echoes in the interest in such terms as configurations, assemblages, ensembles and so on (see the discussion in Clarke 2008 around welfare states). This line of thinking connects Benedict Anderson's provocative interrogation of the nation as an imagined community (1991) to Cameron and Palan's exploration of the imagined geographies of globalisation and other geographers examining other spatial imaginaries.

Thirdly, the idea of imagined economies produces a fascinating, if somewhat uncertain, echo of an earlier conceptualisation. In his famous essay on Ideological State Apparatuses, Louis Althusser developed a conception of ideology as people's 'imaginary relationship to their real conditions of existence' (1970/1971: 162). This is a compelling, if somewhat elusive, formulation that places a particular (Lacanian) view of the 'imaginary' at the core of thinking about ideology. This seems a good place to explore its implications, and its elusiveness, a little further.

Finally, in everyday life in the UK and elsewhere, such imagined economies address their subjects in a variety of economic identities and relationships: as a worker, taxpayer, consumer, welfare dependent and/or entrepreneurial self. Such modes of address – or interpellations in Althusser's sense – summon their recipients as economic subjects in the first instance, and as subjects who think economically, are able to calculate in such terms and grasp the relationships between the global, the national, the household and the self as sites of economic practice (and desire).

Each of these elements contributes to the character and tendency of this article, shaping both the interest in imagined economies and the way in which they are examined. They also contribute rather diverse resources to the way that economies (and other domains and entities) are understood as being imagined. By imagined I mean the discursive or ideological representations of what an economy is: this includes both 'economies' in the large sense and more particular specifications of

things and people as economic (agents, data, devices, techniques, technologies, etc, see Newman and Clarke 2009, chapter 5). This view of imagined economies shares much with the analysis developed by Bob Jessop from the standpoint of Cultural Political Economy:

Imaginaries are semiotic systems that frame individual subjects' lived experience of an inordinately complex world and/or guide collective calculation about that world. Viewed in these terms, an economic imaginary gives meaning and shape to the 'economic' field and, in certain conditions, may become the basis for economic strategies, state projects, and hegemonic visions ...

Imagined economies are discursively constituted and materially reproduced on many sites and scales, in different spatio-temporal contexts, and over various spatio-temporal horizons. ... where an imaginary has been successfully operationalized and institutionalized, it transforms and naturalizes these elements into the moments of a specific economy with specific emergent properties. (Jessop 2011/2013: 6-7)

What follows will explore imagined economies as operating at many levels/scales and across many sites, but with particular attention to the ways in which they may connect the projections of large scale political and policy discourse and the forms of everyday thinking. In a Gramscian sense, we can see such grand schemes attempting to selectively address and organize elements of popular or 'common-sense' thinking, naturalizing the dominant (or would be dominant) modes of economization in the process. This implies paying attention to the mundane imagery through which the economic is narrated in the many everydays, as well as to the grand or more abstracted statements about the power of the economic. Such mundane economizations might include the continuing discussions about whether 'we can afford welfare', to Margaret Thatcher's attempted reimagining of the national economy as a household purse (itself an interesting inversion of Foucault's reminder of where the concern with 'economy' originates). In this sense, this article is a modest contribution to a larger project that David Ruccio has called 'de-centering economic knowledge' (2008: 896). Ruccio argues that there are many forms in which economic knowledge circulates:

The fact is, there are diverse representations of the economy – what it is, how it operates, how it is intertwined with the rest of the natural and social world, what concepts are appropriate to analyzing it, and so on – in all three arenas: within the official discipline of economics, in academic departments and research centers other than departments of economics within colleges and universities, and in activities and institutions outside the academy. And the diversity of economic representations that exists in these arenas simply cannot be reduced to or captured by a singular definition, including the all-too-common statements about 'how economists think' or what the 'central economic question is' that one finds in the textbooks that are used very year, around the world, to teach hundreds of thousands of students how to think about the economy – in other words, how to represent the economy, to themselves and others. (2008: 895-6)

This concern with how economies/the economy are imagined and represented necessarily opens the space of plural, diverse and/or heterogeneous imaginaries that circulate in the domains of popular or public knowledge (with more or less

authority attaching to them). The analysis developed here also aims to stretch the discursive/ideological analytical focus on representation by exploring some of the ways in which imagining economies might be associated with desire and doubt, or anxiety and aspiration. Imagined economies are also objects of fantasy: both in the Freudian meaning of being fantastic projections, and in the more mundane sense of articulating possible desires and dreads. An overly rationalist view of representation risks missing these potential lines of articulation that have the capacity to connect (and, necessarily, to disconnect) political projects and popular sentiments.

Imagined economies are always the focus of attempts to make them come true, to make them real, to make them materialise. Such political projects seek to install the imaginaries in plans and strategies, to locate them in apparatuses, institutions, relationships, and practices. There is, of course, no guarantee that attempts to make them come true are successful. Or, at least, such attempts do not necessarily match up to the fantasy, the image, the desire. At this point, I will merely note two sets of conditions that tend to get in the way of the successful realization of imagined economies. First, they are difficult to realize because they tend to engender antagonisms, tensions and contradictions. Second, they are hard to realize because they are rarely alone in the world. Rather they are contested by other imaginings of the economy. Both of these conditions are profoundly consequential, even if the forms they take are conjuncturally specific.

Imagining Economies

This section considers some of the imagined economies that are currently circulating in public, political and governmental discourse within the UK. This is a convenient conjunctural framing that limits some of the range of time and space that can be explored in one article, but I do not assume that these examples of imagined economies are in practice limited in time and space. Indeed they have a significant character as *travelling* imaginaries, not least in accruing some of their symbolic power and material effectiveness by claiming either long historical value (if not eternal truth) or global scope. Nowhere is this more significant than in the starting point for this discussion: the very possibility of imagining an economy as a thing in itself.

There is something distinctive, even if taken for granted, about imagining an economy as a domain separate from, and increasingly superordinate to, other fields of life (the social, the political, the cultural, etc). This is an astonishing accomplishment but one that underpins – provides the imaginary foundation for – the various economies that I will discuss. Larry Grossberg (2011) has written about this as one of the organizing distinctions of ‘euro Atlantic modernity’ which provides a basis for thinking about how the appearance of the economy as disembedded is the result of political-cultural work that produces the paradox of ‘em-

bedded disembeddedness'. Although this separation of the economy is profoundly significant for much economic, political and social thinking, it is perhaps equally remarkable that it has been sustained and reproduced in the face of its problems, perverse effects, contradictions and recurrent implausibility. Establishing this space of the economic creates the conditions for things called economies to be imagined in different ways, involving different architectures, elements, dynamics, figures and embodiments.

The following section explores some of the imagined economies that have been circulating in political, public and popular discussions of crisis – itself understood as various forms of economic crisis – in the UK, although other places are necessarily implicated, at least the ways in which the relations between places are grasped as economic relationships: global markets; international financial systems etc. The crises that were inaugurated in 2007-8 have had multiple effects, one of which is to make 'economy talk' more visible as debates over the causes and consequences of crisis – and how to respond – proliferated in political and popular settings. This was obviously the landscape for ideological political work conventionally understood (Gamble 2010; see also Clarke & Newman 2010) in which different conceptions of the crisis contended to command and direct the political field. But it was also a moment in which more everyday or popular understandings became more visible and more contentious as anxieties, frustrations, and doubts about authority and expertise also circulated – and which political projects attempted to contain, enroll and articulate. As a consequence, what follows tries to be attentive to the organized character of imagined economies – how they work as economies – while also establishing the conditions for thinking about how they might not work, how crises may unsettle their apparent coherence and how popular doubts might emerge in and around such instabilities.

The Economy as the Market

Perhaps the most salient imagined economy is that of the market. The market identifies the economy as transactional, formulated in everyday terms of the economy as the site of shopping, choice making, free exchange and more. The market itself is imagined as a mechanism, a dynamic, and an agent (the 'invisible hand'). As such, the market is both neutral (it has no built in biases, except against those without the resources to take part in exchange) and virtuous (market forces promote the desirable outcomes of increased efficiency, innovation and continuous improvement). The market is simultaneously natural and necessary: on the one hand, it is taken to represent the default condition of human sociality (or least modern sociality). On the other hand, it is necessary – without it, inefficiency flourishes, social biases creep in, or political dogma rules. Thomas Friedman (2007) has written compellingly about the rise of 'market populism' as the contemporary (Anglophone) imagining of the economy and the drive to universalize it.

And yet we might note two quirks about the market economy. Despite its compelling qualities (natural, necessary, foundational, universal), it everywhere requires to be supported, nurtured, developed – while being protected from ‘interference’ – and these nurturing processes require the care-taking work of states. In this register, the market seems strangely vulnerable for such a powerful and dynamic force. Perhaps more strikingly, the crisis of 2008 revealed a deeper and more troublingly sense of vulnerability: occasionally, it seemed that the ‘invisible hand’ had lost its grip. It became infected by strange attacks of the tremors or a sort of palsy – unleashing unpredictable and destabilizing failures of control and coordination. Elsewhere, I have suggested that such moments might reveal a degree of ‘gender trouble’ in the way markets are imagined (Clarke 2010). Normally, the market appears as a dynamic and virile force: exhibiting a powerful capacity for making things happen. In this guise, the market appears as a potent force suffused with masculine qualities. But in the moment of crisis, other qualities and characteristics came into view, looking rather like affective disorders. Markets appeared as a pale shadow of their formerly virile selves, no longer relentlessly expanding but slipping into a period of decline, decay and, above all, depression. Depression is an interesting concept in relation to markets because it condenses two rather different, but significant sets of meanings. On one hand, we encounter the hard evidentiary science of economics – in which depression refers to a specified trend in economic activity, measurable by a set of particular indicators. Depressions – like the Great Depression of the 1930s – are profound and prolonged slumps in economic activity. On the other hand, depression is also a powerful and widely used descriptor of particular mental disturbances or emotional moods.

In the prolonged and proliferating condition of crisis, descriptions of markets as nervous, anxious, and unsettled became frequent signifiers of economic trouble and troubled economies. Markets appeared vulnerable and susceptible to bouts of panic and hysteria in which they are infected by a sort of viral irrationality. These mood swings of markets – moments of manic recovery offset by plummeting spirits – led to states of depression. In contrast to the virile, expansive and penetrative markets of the past, these enfeebled markets seemed to be discursively feminised. Their instability and irrational dispositions were recurrently coded in the language of emotional and affective conditions that are – in Western cultures – understood as feminine. These were markets that suffered from strangely Victorian ‘female complaints’: attacks of the vapours, or fits of hysteria. In contrast to the hard calculative logics that supposedly drove market expansiveness, contemporary markets appear to be excessively vulnerable entities.

The Economy as National Economies

Led by the important work of Timothy Mitchell, there has been a growing interest in how the economy was imagined and institutionalised as a series of national economies, each of which was understood as a closed and (largely) coherent sys-

tem, that was knowable, countable, potentially manageable and which could be compared to other such economies. This is the dominant modern form of imagining the economy as a national economy, borrowing, Mitchell (2007) suggests, a systems model from physics and a conception of the national space as a bounded entity from political theory. Despite the troubles associated with both of these conceptions (the system and the nation as coherent bounded space), the imaginary of a series of national economies has been a powerful foundation for economics, for national governmental preoccupations, for international relations and for the quotidian understandings of 'our' economy: its achievements and failures, its rise and fall, its needs and problems, its promises of future improvement. It remains a profound (if problematic) reference point for thinking economically. Mitchell observes that:

In the twentieth century, new ways of administering the welfare of populations, of developing the resources of colonies, organizing the circulation of money, compiling and using statistics, managing large businesses and workforces, branding and marketing products, and desiring and purchasing commodities brought into being a world that for the first time could be measured and calculated as though it were a free-standing object, the economy. Economists claimed only to describe this object, but in fact they participated in producing it. Their contribution was to help devise the forms of calculation in terms of which new kinds of socio-technical practice were organized, to monitor these forms of practice as though they formed a self-regulating system, and to put forward rival accounts of how the system worked. 'Economy' no longer referred to a way of exercising power and accumulating knowledge; it now referred to an object of power and knowledge. (Mitchell 2008: 1116-7)

This stable unit of economic calculation has subsequently been re-imagined as an element in a wider global economy, characterised by the twin dynamics of openness (the loosening of the boundaries of the nation space) and competition (between nations, but also between multi- and trans-national entities whose lack of national character marks them as both more modern and more powerful). This does not mean that the national economy has disappeared. On the contrary, it remains central to both governmental and political calculation. Its performance is extensively reported; news of its rising or falling fortunes is eagerly or anxiously anticipated; and its performance can be rated and evaluated comparatively and competitively. But the national economy is not what it used to be: its apparent solidity, boundedness and forms of closure no longer hold firm in the face of other economies and other economic dynamics. One critical axis of this re-imagining is the vision of an economy composed of entrepreneurial, competitive, dynamic corporations/organisations. The restless and unstable character of these organizations – and the relationships between them – changes the problematic of knowledge and calculation. However, that is not my main interest here; rather I focus on the strange paradox of entrepreneurial visions of autonomy. Strangely, these fundamentally entrepreneurial entities require increasing levels of public subsidy and support in order to survive, much less succeed. Many of the transformations of the welfare state (particularly in the UK) have involved the invention of new forms of

subsidy to capital, an angle of analysis that offers a different view of the welfare state as a mechanism of redistribution. Kevin Farnsworth has described this as a move from ‘social welfare’ towards ‘corporate welfare’ (Farnsworth 2012). A variety of changes, such as public-private partnerships, the outsourcing or sub-contracting of services and the subsidization of low wage employment, involve forms of ‘income transfer’ to corporations who have become major ‘welfare beneficiaries’. Ironically, such transfers and subsidies seem to be free of the risks of undermining independence or creating moral decline that are associated with transfers to the poor.

This is an economy in which people are invited to imagine themselves as corporations in miniature: as entrepreneurial selves, or at least as hard working responsible families. It is worth noting the characteristic oscillation here between individuals and families, each of which is summoned at different moments as the fundamental building block of economies and societies. Indeed, such entrepreneurial individuals and hard working families form a crucial point of articulation between the economic and the social: here is a characteristic articulation of work, community and fairness offered by Labour’s Gordon Brown on the brink of becoming prime minister:

The Britain I believe in is a Britain of fairness and opportunity for all.

Every British citizen with every chance to make the most of themselves – every community fair to every citizen – if you work hard, you’re better off. If you save, you’re rewarded. If you play by the rules, we’ll stand by you.

These are for me the best of British values: responsibilities required in return for rights; *fairness not just for some but all who earn it*.

(Brown speech 11 May 2007;

<http://www.gordonbrownforBritain.com/2007/05/11>. Emphasis added.)

This articulation of fairness as something to be *earned* is central to contemporary imaginings of the economy as an economy of work.

An Economy of Work

Both nationally and globally, being ‘economically active’ is a central and ever more avidly enforced thread of contemporary politics and policy. Being active or ‘making a contribution’ is understood as being accomplished through work or, more precisely, waged work. The drive towards ‘workfare’ (Peck 2001) or labour market activation (e.g., Van Berkel and Borghi 2008) involves extending the reach of waged work to groups that might once have been at least partially insulated from the enforced expectation of waged work (lone mothers, disabled people, the elderly who were conditionally supported through decommodifying policies). In the UK such groups have become the object of intensifying work expectations, driven by a conviction that the experience of work will cure all ills. To

engage in waged work is to become an ‘independent’ person (rather than a passive dependent); it is to access a world of job satisfaction; it is to experience the satisfaction of ‘making a contribution’; it is to engage in sociality rather than suffer isolation; it is to become a good role model for future generations; and, of course, it reduces the pressures on public spending.

Work is imagined as the engine of economic success (individual, corporate and national). It is understood as the primary connecting device that links the economy with social life (sustaining the family, enabling consumption, etc). Work is expected, demanded and enforced (increasingly fiercely). This work takes many forms – ideally it is the act of waged work, but workfare policies also value ‘job search’, ‘preparedness for work’ and ‘work experience’: the ambiguous condition of about-to-be-waged work (see the *Financial Times*’ discussion of a recent case brought against the ‘unwaged slavery’ of the UK’s work experience scheme: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/429f2832-7501-11e2-8bc7-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2-PEE09Qgy>). One might argue that this fetishization of work involves a double contradiction. On the one hand the intensification of commodifying logics visible in the frantic desire to make people ready for work, or to substitute ‘workfare’ for welfare, increasingly encounters settings in which work is less and less available, an outcome linked to the propensity of governments to give up any claim to be able to manage their economies or to make work. On the other hand there is an ideological-discursive contradiction here between the rhetorical insistence on the value of Work (or even ‘work experience’) and the increasingly contingent, fractured, fragile and precarious world of employment that those arriving in the labour market experience. But the fantasy of work rolls on, occupying a powerful organizing role, as Weeks argues in the US context:

The category of the work society refers not just to the socially mediating and subjectively constitutive roles of work but to the dominance of its values. Challenging the present organization of work requires not only that we confront its reification and depoliticization but also its normativity and moralization. Work is not just defended on grounds of economic necessity and social duty; it is widely understood as an individual moral practice and collective ethical obligation. Traditional work values those that preach the moral value and dignity of waged work and privilege such work as an essential source of individual growth, self-fulfilment, social recognition, and status continue to be effective in encouraging and rationalizing the long hours US workers are supposed to dedicate to waged work and the identities they are expected to invest there. This normalizing and moralizing ethic of work should be very familiar to most of us; it is, after all, routinely espoused in managerial discourse, defended in the popular media, and enshrined in public policies. The ethic's productivist values are promoted on both the political Right and Left, from employers seeking the most able and tractable workers, and politicians intent on moving women from welfare to waged work, to parents and educators eager to prepare their children or students to embrace the values that might best ensure their future economic security and social achievement. (2012a; see also Weeks 2012b)

As Weeks and others have argued, the work ethic has proved one of the persistent anchoring points for the social organization of modern capitalism. Waged work is

the mode of insertion – both real and imagined – into labour processes and social relations of production for many; it is the point of articulation – through the wage and the historic gendered division of labour – with the private, familial, domestic realm; and it is the device which distinguishes the included, the deserving and the entitled from those whose relation to social, economic and political community is more tenuous by virtue of their not working. As a consequence, it is recurrently deployed as a political device to traduce the workless, the shiftless, the scrounger, the cheat – all those who prey on the ‘hard working, responsible families’ understood as the foundation of the moral order.

The Economy as the City

A more specific variant of the contemporary national/global economy might be the *imagined financial sector*, in the UK in the form of the City, the City of London. As Doreen Massey (2007) has observed this is ‘the City’ which stands for the city of London and, in widening circles of representation, stands for the national economy and, we are regularly reminded, the national interest. The City earns its reputation, position and apparent power from a globalised economy, that which stands over, against and outside us... And provides the discipline and conditions of success and failure for the national and global economy. A City of London lobbying group mobilises this fusion of places (speaking as and for The City) in the following way:

The CityUK:

Who we are

TheCityUK champions the international competitiveness of the financial services industry. Created in 2010, we support the whole of the sector, promoting UK financial services at home and overseas and playing an active role in the regulatory and trade policy debate....

TheCityUK has three major objectives:

Championing the competitive position of the financial and related professional services sector

Focusing on tax (policy and rates), regulation (policy development and supervisory delivery), and skills (access to talent domestically and through immigration).

Regaining the trust and confidence of the UK public and policymakers for the sector

Demonstrating value to the economy of the jobs generated and tax paid – and also of the social utility of the sector.

Supporting the business interests of members in chosen markets around the world

Promoting the UK overseas as a world class centre for financial and related professional services.

<http://www.thecityuk.com> (accessed 28.08.2011)

As with other varieties of imagined economy, this is neither a completely stable nor uncontested vision. Even before the crises arrived, popular suspicion of the

City was well entrenched: for example, there was popular scepticism about people who are ‘clever’ with money; conceptions of bankers as ‘fat cats’; and a deeply embedded suspicion about the City as a critical element in North/South divide in Britain. As the extract from the City UK group implies, the financial debacle of 2007-8 destabilised old certainties and added new popular doubts, anxiety and anger to the older streams of scepticism: ‘regaining the trust and confidence of the UK public’ remains an interesting challenge, even if the policymakers have proved easier to re-enroll.

All of these imagined economies combine the claim to describe (this is what the economy is, it has these parts, it works like this, it is captured by this data, etc.) with the promise of a better future, to be achieved either through the normal self expanding dynamic (the logic of growth) or, more rarely, through the act of reform. If only we make capitalism moral, regulate the financial sector better, put bankers on the rack, or invest in the real economy, then we can all get back to normal. ‘Normal’ is itself an imagined condition, of course. One distinctive variant of this promise of progress is made visible in Jamie Peck's sharp comment on the dynamics of neoliberal political reason, which he treats as an always failing fantasy, but as a fantasy that tends to ‘fail forwards’:

Neoliberalism... has only ever existed in ‘impure’ form, indeed *can* only exist in messy hybrids. Its utopian vision of a free society and a free economy is ultimately unrealizable. Yet the pristine clarity of its ideological apparition, the *free market*, coupled with the inevitable failure to arrive at this elusive destination, confer a significant degree of forward momentum on the neoliberal project. Ironically, neoliberalism possesses a progressive, forward-leaning dynamic by virtue of the very unattainability of its idealized destination.... Beneath the mythology of market progress lies a turgid reality of neoliberalism variously failing and flailing forward... (2010: 7)

This is a helpful way of capturing a distinctive ideological and political dynamic, and this dynamic quality has clearly been in play in the efforts to establish neoliberal solutions to a neo-liberal crisis. But it is also a reminder that visions, projects and strategies are not without contradictions, tensions and antagonisms – and, as a consequence, they tend to be shadowed by doubt, scepticism and alternative imaginings even when their institutionalized dominance appears unchallenged. In the following section, I explore briefly two of the key words around which alternative economies have been imagined: real economies and moral economies.

Real Economies, Moral Economies, Imagined Economies?

Threatening the City as a way of imagining an economy as a financial services sector is also often contrasted with a different economy: the *real* economy. The Financial Times Lexicon defines it as: ‘The part of the economy that is concerned with actually producing goods and services, as opposed to the part of the economy

that is concerned with buying and selling on the financial markets' (<http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=real-economy>). Such an apparently clear-cut distinction underpins much of the extensive written and online discussion about real economies, although this division of the economy into two parts is not entirely coherent or stable. Do concepts and measures of growth, productivity, profit and jobs belong in the 'real' economy? Do they only belong there? How are they articulated with the financial/virtual economy? Although such issues – and more – are extensively discussed, I want to concentrate here on the mobilisation of the idea of the real economy as a critical counter and point of reference for public and popular discourses on the economy (though I was intrigued to discover that it is also an organisational title for an economic development consultancy in the UK: <http://www.therealeconomy.co.uk/index.php>).

To me, the idea of the real economy evokes a strangely nostalgic imaginary, at least in the UK. It attempts to summon up the making of real objects, real commodities, in manufacturing processes (performed by horny handed sons of toil?). It references an economy that has been almost destroyed or at least displaced, whether intentionally or carelessly, by the financialised economy. The objects – the product of real labour – are available to be used, to be consumed, thus embodying authentic use value. As a result, they are virtuous rather than virtual. The real economy imagined in this way offers a certain sort of political-cultural leverage. It enables a critique of speculation, and the dominance of finance capital, as involved in a virtual, unreal and possibly anti-social economy. But it has some limits, too. Nostalgia is rarely a reliable foundation for a political mobilization (since it conceals the conditions and contradictions of its original referent) and this 'real economy' is certainly prone to reproducing the romance of work/labour as a central feature (Weeks 2012b).

This imagined real economy intersects in some ways with what E.P. Thompson called the moral economy, and I have recently been drawn back to this conception in work with Janet Newman on the politics and policies of austerity (Clarke & Newman 2012). Thompson's use of the idea was located in a specific social formation and its disruption, producing a moment in which food rioters in 18th century England laid claim to collective understandings of how economic relations were structured by moral obligations. Rioters – and those who judged them – understood this field of moral ties as legitimation for public anger and action. The current instabilities of the dominantly imagined economy have made it more possible to pose questions about questions of whether the moral, political and economic can – and should – be related. We can trace these questions in the public discourses addressing the failures, betrayals, abandonments and irresponsibilities that seem to have been at stake in bringing about the present troubles.

The moral economy of the English crowd, Thompson claimed, involved cross-class understandings and sentiments about the social relations of food production and distribution that legitimated claims making and action (aka riot) about the

proper cost of basic food. I am not suggesting that an equivalent moral economy is now visible and certainly not one that is collectively articulated across classes. Nevertheless, it seems that fragments or echoes of such ways of imagining economies have re-appeared on the landscape: albeit voiced by a diversity of actors. As a result, the present conjuncture is characterised by traces of heterogeneous imagined moral economies, in which different fractures of obligation, interdependence, and mutual imbrication have been named: selfish bankers, indulgent consumers, irresponsible public servants, evasive tax payers, incompetent governments and inept international institutions. These fragments point to two related issues. The first is a problem of boundary management: the economy, imagined as separate, turns out to be a leaky system. It is by no means self-contained, but appears to have social, political and moral conditions and consequences. The second is the tendency of dominant political discourses to try to capture and contain these instabilities in the language of morality. Although many political leaders expressed similar themes, few did so at the sustained length of French President Nicolas Sarkozy when he addressed the World Economic Forum in 2010. Here are some extracts from his speech:

The crisis we are experiencing is not a crisis of capitalism. It is a crisis of the distortion of capitalism.

Capitalism has always been inseparable from a value system, a civilization project, and a certain idea of mankind.

Purely financial capitalism is a perversion which flouts the values of capitalism. But anti-capitalism is a dead end that is even worse. There is no solution in anticapitalism. There's no system other than the market economy.

But we will save capitalism and the market economy by radically reforming it – dare I use the word? –, by giving it a moral dimension. I know saying this will raise a lot of questions...

What do we need, in the end, if it isn't rules, principles, a governance reflecting shared values, a common morality? (Sarkozy 2010)

Here and in similar representations, the imagery of a (re-)moralised economy appears as a strategy for recognizing and containing popular outrage, anger and discontent. Despite the emphasis on the problems of moral and political direction, subsequent political discussions have tended to transpose 'morality' into more or less technical disputes about the best, most appropriate, or most easily achieved forms of regulation for the financial sector. Continuing forms of popular disaffection – from increasing scepticism and cynicism about both bankers and politicians to collective action against austerity politics and policies – suggest that such strategies of attempted containment and displacement have not been wholly successful.

Although they appear as different analytical standpoints from which to view the present crisis, both the 'real economy' and the 'moral economy' are also interesting alternative imagined economies. Like the imaginaries discussed earlier,

they provide accounts of how the economy works, does not work and should work. They ‘tell the time’ – narrating the imagined (and desired) orderings of the economy: its past, present and projected future. They rest on – and reproduce – the imagined separateness of the economy (even if they might be more attentive to its social effects). In short, they perform the same imaginative political and cultural work that is involved in the production and circulation of economic imaginaries.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to sketch a series of imagined economies that jostle together in the present. I think this field is important for three reasons. First, it suggests that everyday understandings of the economy may be more diverse than the usual references to dominant or hegemonic neo-liberal thinking. Second, the effort to establish particular imagined economies often encounters problems of coherence, stability and boundary maintenance. Third, maintaining the imaginary of a separate and superordinate ‘economy’ distinct from other domains looks like hard work, as the problematic conditions and perverse consequences of a ‘disembedded’ economy become more visible in times of economic, financial and fiscal crisis. Jessop has also pointed to some of these troubles in the world of imagined economies:

by virtue of competing economic imaginaries, competing efforts to institute them materially, and an inevitable incompleteness in the specification of their respective economic and extra-economic preconditions, each ‘imagined economy’ (of whatever kind and at whatever scale) is only ever partially constituted. There are always interstitial, residual, marginal, irrelevant, recalcitrant and plain contradictory elements that escape any attempt to identify, govern, and stabilize a given ‘economic arrangement’ or broader ‘economic order’. Such elements can interfere with the smooth performance of imagined economies (and also provide a reservoir of semiotic and material resources to be mobilized in the face of instability or crisis). More significantly, underlying structural contradictions and strategic dilemmas and the inevitable incompleteness of any economic imaginary condemn all such economies *en régulation* to fragility and instability. (2011/2013: 6-7)

Such fragility and instability evoke the intensification of political and ideological labour that typically accompanies crises (Hall et al. 1978/2013). In the present, they are marked by the shifting and unsettled relationships between different domains – conventionally marked as the economic, the social and the political. As a result, lines of fracture and friction emerge as ‘economic’ relations, forms and processes are brought into new configurations. These are more visible as the would-be dominant economic imaginaries fail to cohere, stabilize or even make sense. Popular perceptions of broken ‘moral’ commitments and obligations – broken by corporations, markets and politicians – create conditions of possibility for political mobilization, even if these are largely being folded into the regressive discourse of earned/unearned rewards and deserving/undeserving people by cur-

rent conservative neo-liberalisms, or into nationalist outrage about those others who come to take ‘our jobs’. Jessop points to the heterogeneity of economic imaginaries in any particular conjuncture, rather than just presuming the dominance of the dominant. This signals the problem of how to analyse this multiplicity – a problem elegantly stated in Raymond Williams’ insistence on thinking about the conjuncture as always containing residual and emergent elements alongside the dominant (as a counter to the temptations of ‘epochal analysis’ (1977)).

This might also be posed as a question of whether these fractures and tensions point to a paradox of neo-liberalism? If we take neo-liberalism as, in part, a project to expand the scope and reach of the economic, subordinating the social and political to ‘economic’ logics in the process, does this project produce perverse conjunctural consequences? Do people fail to live these new imaginary relations to their emerging conditions of existence? Such dislocations might reflect both the thinness of these imaginaries and the increasing instability, fragility and precarity of their real conditions of existence. Some of the responses are what Williams (1977) would call ‘residual’: the persistence of concerns and questions that cannot be answered in the current dominant framing (e.g., the continuing pertinence of some aspects of welfarism and collectivism, an insistence on the obligations and responsibilities of governments, even a belief that economies contain or are enabled by mutual obligations and responsibilities). But there are also ‘emergent’ responses that try to imagine the possibility of other worlds in which the economy might be ordered differently, in which the mal-distribution of valued resources could be corrected and in which ‘the social’ was not imagined as both separate from, and subordinate to, the economy. These are threads of possibility that emerge at the point of imagining the economic, the social and the political differently. But what makes these emergent alternatives more interesting and potentially important is that they do not start from imagining economies. Instead they pose themselves on the terrain of the social: how can we live, how can we live together, how can we live with/in nature and so on. In the end, do they offer us ways of escaping ‘economic thinking’?

Acknowledgements

This article owes a deep debt (and there’s a profoundly economic – and moral – concept) to Larry Grossberg who invited me to contribute to a panel on cultural studies and economies/economics at the Crossroads in Cultural Studies conference in Paris, July 2012, and to present a talk in the Cultural Studies program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in March 2013 – and has carried on talking to me about these issues. I am also grateful to the participants at both events for their generous and thought provoking comments: I wish the paper did them justice.

John Clarke is an Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the Open University, UK. His research centres on the cultural and political struggles in the remaking of relationships between welfare, state and nation. His most recent publication is *Disputing Citizenship* with Kathleen Coll, Evelina Dagnino and Catherine Neveu: Policy Press 2014). E-mail: John.Clarke@open.ac.uk

References

- Althusser, Louis (1970/1971): 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)', *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 127-186.
- Anderson, Benedict (1991): *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.
- Berkel, Rik van & Vandho Borghi (2008): 'The Governance of Activation', *Social Policy and Society*, 7:3, 331-340.
- Cameron, Angus & Ronen Palan (2004): *Imagined geographies of globalization*, London: Sage Publications.
- Clarke, John (2007): 'Subordinating the Social? Neoliberalism and the Remaking of Welfare Capitalism', *Cultural Studies*, 21:6, 974-987.
- Clarke, John (2008): 'Reconstructing Nation, State and Welfare: The Transformation of Welfare States', Martin Seelieb-Kaiser (ed.): *Welfare State Transformations: Comparative Perspectives*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 197-209.
- Clarke, John (2010): 'After Neo-liberalism? Markets, States and the Reinvention of Public Welfare', *Cultural Studies*, 24:3, 375-394.
- Clarke, John & Janet Newman (2010): 'Summoning Spectres: Crises and their Construction', *Journal of Education Policy*, 25:6, 709-715.
- Clarke, John & Janet Newman (2012): 'The Alchemy of Austerity', *Critical Social Policy*, 32: 3, 299-319.
- Clarke, John, Janet Newman, Nick Smith, Elizabeth Vidler and Louise Westmarland (2007): *Creating Citizen-Consumers*, London: Sage Publications.
- Farnsworth, Kevin (2012): *Social versus Corporate Welfare: Competing Needs and Interests within the Welfare State*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frank, Thomas (2001): *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism and the End of Economic Democracy*, New York, Anchor Books.
- Gamble, Andrew (2009): *The Spectre at the Feast: Capitalist Crisis and the Politics of Recession*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (1996): *The End of Capitalism(as we Knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Grossberg, Larry (2011): *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke & Brian Roberts (1978/2013): *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, London: Macmillan.
- Jessop, Bob (2011/2013): 'Recovered Imaginaries, Imagined Recoveries: A Cultural Political Economy of Crisis Construals and Crisis-management in the North Atlantic Financial Crisis' <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/cperc/docs/E-2012%20Jessop-CPE-Swansea-Recovery.pdf> (accessed 24 January 2014) subsequently published in Benner, Mats (ed.): *Before and Beyond the Global Economic Crisis: Economics, Politics, Settlement*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Massey, Doreen (2007): *World City*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Mitchell, Timothy, (1998): 'Fixing the Economy', *Cultural Studies*, 12:1, 82-101.
- (2006): 'Rethinking Economy', *Geoforum*, 39, 1116-21.
- Newman, Janet & John Clarke (2009): *Publics, Politics and Power*, London: Sage Publications.
- Peck, Jamie (2001): *Workfare States*, New York: Guilford Press.
- (2010): *Constructions of Neo-Liberal Reason*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Ruccio, David (2008): 'Economic Representations: What's at Stake?', *Cultural Studies*, 22:1, 892-912.
- Sarkozy, Nicolas (2010): Opening Speech at the Fourth World Economic Forum, Davos, 27 January: <http://www.voltairenet.org/article163780.html> (accessed 29 October 2013).
- Thompson, E.P. (1971): 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50: 76-136.
- Weeks, Kathi (2012a): 'The Problem with Work': <http://libcom.org/library/problem-work-kathi-weeks> (accessed 29 October 2013).
- Weeks, Kathi (2012b): *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Post-work Imaginaries*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Williams, Raymond (1977): *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Labour Against Capitalism? Hegel's Concept of Labour in Between Civil Society and the State

By Anders Bartonek

Abstract

The concepts and phenomena of civil society, political economy and labour are ambivalent matters in Hegel's political philosophy. They simultaneously contain productive and destructive potential in the realization of the political community. This article investigates Hegel's concept of labour against the backdrop of his theory of civil society in order to bring forth the ambiguous role of labour in relation to the 'capitalism' of civil society. According to Hegel, labour is both economically productive and the activity by which the society and its members can transcend the mere capitalistic dimensions of society. Labour can therefore simultaneously be understood as capitalistic and non-capitalistic in Hegel's political philosophy. The cultivating dimensions of labour in Hegel's theory offer a counterpart to the mere capitalistic forms of labour. Labour can therefore be used as a promising platform for the discussion of the relation between economy and culture and for the revitalization of capitalism critique.

Keywords: Labour, Hegel, capitalism critique, philosophy of right, political economy, civil society.

Introduction

The concepts and phenomena of civil society, political economy and labour are ambivalent matters for Hegel (1770-1831) since they simultaneously contain productive and destructive potentials within the realisation of the political. Hegel early on perceived the potency of the liberal economic principles within the awakening civil society and its leading bourgeoisie, and he integrated civil society and economics as a relatively independent part of the state in his political theory. The productive potential of political economy, or rather the potential of its productivity, plays an indispensable role in his conception, making it possible to understand society as a common product of all members through societal labour and to grasp labour as the activity dialectically mediating all members of society through the division of labour, hereby making grounds for their mutual recognition. At the same time, the destructive threat of civil society consists in its loss of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) because of the predominance of egoism as the motivator for the actions of the (negatively) free individual agents.

In Hegel's system, civil society is to be found as the mediator and difference between family and the state, where the family incorporates the idea and first immediate form of ethical life and the state its fulfilment. In the state the difference between individuality and the common shall be entirely sublated, or, with Hegel's words, *aufgehoben*. However, this phase of alienation incorporated by civil society is necessary for the historical and dialectical formation of the state, and therefore the productivity of civil society must be acknowledged. With regard to this focus on the connection of political philosophy, history, political economy and labour, Hegel was an important predecessor to Marx. For example, Lukács (1948/1973) points out that Hegel's philosophy was an indispensable source of inspiration for Marx and his theory of political economy, on the class struggle, and on the substantial role of labour for human culture and society.

This article investigates Hegel's concept of labour against the backdrop of his theory of civil society (mainly according to the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* from 1821) in order to bring forth its ambiguous status in relation to the 'capitalism' of civil society. Labour is, according to Hegel, both economically productive *and* the activity by which the society and its members can transcend the mere capitalistic dimensions of society and thereby become politically established within the boundaries of the ethical state. Labour could thereby simultaneously be understood as capitalistic and non-capitalistic in Hegel's political philosophy. Labour, understood as an anthropological category, can generally speaking be seen as caught in the crossfire between economy and culture (also understood as an anthropological concept), especially as it is conceptualised as a part of *Sittlichkeit* by Hegel. *Sittlichkeit* is translated into 'ethical life' in the English version of Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, but *Sitte* also means tradition or custom. Labour, being an essential human cultivating act, can be viewed to be

both (1) an activity exclusively occupied by economy and its measures of profit, and (2) the activity by which humans turn human, namely by turning nature upside down (when ploughing the field), processing and refining the outer and inner nature and making it 'human', lastly cultivating themselves when together recognising each other in the product of their labour (Hegel names this *Bildung*).

At the same time Hegel can be said to resist this dichotomy: economically productive labour is also cultivating, it differentiates, refines and multiplies the needs, tastes, abilities and work methods of the individuals in society. Still, Hegel can also be understood to view economically and mechanical labour as threatening the cultivating dimensions of labour. In this sense, economy would be a form of culture threatening the cultivating dimension of labour. To summarise, labour can, departing from Hegel, be used as a promising platform for a discussion of the relation of economy and culture, and in particular to be formulated as a concept incorporating a critique of capitalism as culture-destruction and anti-cultivating *and* simultaneously as a concept able to revitalise the activity of cultivating itself. To show this is the aim of this article.

In the current discussion on the meaning and future of labour the positions often are dichotomized into the simplified alternatives of either criticising and rejecting or entirely embracing labour. On the one hand many a critiques of labour seem to ignore or only in a minimal way acknowledge the important role that labour arguably plays and must play for human beings. But although a critique often is legitimate, here labour is considered only to be a problem. On the other hand, there is a widespread tendency in politics and political theory to uncritically define labour and full employment as the self-evident goal of society. Here, the current forms of labour are not questioned, labour is not considered to be a problem at all. To avoid these options I return to Hegel. As already sketched out, Hegel's theory represents both an emphatic critique of labour in its sheer capitalistic forms *and* makes a strong case for labour as an indispensable act of cultivation. This is why Hegel can be made a useful resource for our current debate on labour and capitalism.

The Productive Negation of Civil Society

Hegel does not systematically use the term 'capitalism' (although the term 'capital' occurs in his texts), but it nevertheless seems possible to interpret his theory of civil society and the concept of 'system of needs' as an attempt to grasp the essence and mechanisms of the early capitalist society. Thus, analysing Hegel's relation to civil society – containing both criticism and recognition –, can also be understood as an approach to Hegel's implicit view on capitalism.

Hegel's political philosophy is inherent in his philosophy of spirit, which on a macro level is divided into three parts: the subjective spirit, the objective spirit, and the absolute spirit. These parts are conceptualised as three phases of the entire

development of the *Weltgeist*, the World spirit, heading towards self-fulfilment and absolute self-knowledge. The political dimension belongs to the stage of objective spirit in Hegel's conception, in which the spirit is incorporated and realised in different objective stages, institutions and forms. In *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* Hegel additionally divides the political into three dimensions: *Abstract Right*, *Morality*, and *Ethical Life* (Hegel 1821/1991). The part on *Ethical life* finally contains three chapters: on the family, on the civil society and the last on the state. Ethical life thus develops through three stages, where civil society is the middle part, at the same time the mediating concept and dynamic link between family and state. The family is conceptualised by Hegel as the first and immediate form of ethical life and ethical spirit, which is lost in civil society – in which individual freedom and egoism, and not solidarity, are the operating principles – and finally is re-conquered in the state, being the final *télos* of the political in Hegel's philosophy. In this movement of ethical life, civil society plays the role of what can be called a *productive negation*. Civil society is for Hegel the systematically and dialectically necessary destruction of the community of family, a destruction, which makes the fulfilment of ethical life possible on the state level, that is, for the community on the whole. Ethical life must be destroyed on the particular level (family) in order to be established on the common level (the state).

Civil society is also an important platform for the realisation of individual and personal freedom. Hegel considered himself being part of a time in which freedom already had become reality on at least three levels: (1) the reformation and its protestant subjectivity, (2) the proclaimed freedom and human rights by the Enlightenment and in relation to the French Revolution, and finally, (3) the economic and industrial revolution and its founding of the individual (self) interest (Ritter 1974; Riedel 1969 and 1974; Waszek 1988: 23). Hegel – according to his philosophical program of grasping his own time in concepts – acknowledged this emergence of freedom, and in his theory he was trying to favour its fulfilment. In order to establish ethical life on the state level, the individuals have to be set free from earlier forms of societal power relations. The split of family stages individual freedom in civil society, a freedom yet not the fulfilment of ethical life, but the necessary step headed towards it in the state. Hegel tries to evoke the development of ethical life from out of and with help from its loss in civil society.

In the chapter *System of Needs* in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* the most mature version of Hegel's theory of political economy can be found. Hegel was the only German philosopher of his generation showing interest in the English and Scottish Enlightenment and political economy (Hegel 1821/1991: § 189; see also Waszek 1988; Lukács 1948/1973: 26 ff., 501; Priddat 1990). Hegel was not only a defender of the state, but essentially a thinker and defender of civil society (Avineri 1972: 133; Riedel 1969 and 1970). A main achievement of Hegel's political theory is to have integrated economic theory – in Hegel's time being the most modern branch of theory adequate to modern and already real forms of society –

in a positive philosophy of the state. But Hegel also essentially transformed economic theory and its concepts and mobilised them philosophically (Lukács 1948/1973: 26 ff., 496). The concept of labour, for example, receives, as will be shown, a more substantial and cultivating meaning in Hegel's theory. He remained not within economical criteria, although his philosophy was crucially inspired by modern economic theories of labour, division of labour and its dialectical production of the society as a system of needs. Without these theories Hegel would not have been able to design his philosophy of labour as a cultivating *Bildung*, which is a theory of the human self as a product of its labour. This is a form of labour that transcends the mere economic scope of labour.

Hegel conceptualises the system of needs as founded on the self-interest of individuals mediated within the division of labour. The concrete person or egoistic individual is the main principle and foundation of civil society. Every individual follows only its own interest, ignoring everything else. The individual's relation to others is merely strategic (Hegel 1821/1991: §§ 182 and 187; see also Avineri 1972: 134). But nevertheless, the relation to other individuals is essential for it. Its needs are only satisfied in relation to and with help from the division of labour, that is, with the help from others. In reality the individuals are intertwined and anonymously interdependent with each other. Through the division of labour the individuals become more efficient and skilled within their speciality and the work becomes easier and its result more extensive. But this also increases the societal interdependence: no one can survive alone anymore. Hegel writes:

The concrete person who, as a particular person, as a totality of needs and a mixture of natural necessity and arbitrariness, is his own end, is one principle of civil society. But this particular person stands essentially in relation to other similar particulars, and their relation is such that each asserts itself and gains satisfaction through the others, and thus at the same time through the exclusive mediation of the form of universality, which is the second principle (Hegel 1821/1991: § 182; see also §§ 192, 198, and 200; Avineri 1972: 91).

Hegel is hereby acknowledging the achievement of Smith's theory, recognising the formation of rational patterns within the constellation of seemingly randomly interacting egoistic individuals. Hegel recognises, with help from Smith, a dialectical transition in civil society and that the subjective self-interest is transformed into the contribution to the satisfaction of the needs of everybody. In so far as the individual is working for himself, he is also unintentionally working for everyone. Hereby a common and permanent social product is formed.

In this dependence and reciprocity of work and the satisfaction of needs, subjective selfishness turns into a contribution towards the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else. By a dialectical movement, the particular is mediated by the universal so that each individual, in earning, producing, and enjoying on his own account, thereby earns and produces for the enjoyment of others (Hegel 1821/1991: § 199; see also § 189 and Lukács 1948/1973: 516; Riedel 1970: 48 ff.; Avineri 1972: 146).

The egoistic actions of the individuals therefore have a different result than intended. They unintentionally run errands for the World spirit and work for his mission. The actions are only seemingly particular, but end in the creation of a common social product. In Hegel's theory this is accounted for as the 'List der Vernunft' (cunning of reason) (Lukács 1948/1973: 550).

The principle of civil society is difference, not only as being the negation and difference between family and state (Hegel 1821/1991: § 181), but also as having a differentiating tendency (Hegel 1821/1991: § 191). The mechanisms of civil society have the merit, that they cultivate the individuals in differentiating and multiplying their needs and the means to satisfy them within the division of labour. Their abilities are refined (Hegel 1821/1991: §§ 182-208, especially § 191). But society, as civil society, is risking to fall apart, since the individuals are striving against the unity of the collective through their egoism. But for Hegel this is necessary for the dialectical movement to work: the stronger a negation is (and its cultivating aspects), the richer is the state resulting from it. Hereby Hegel tries both to acknowledge the mechanisms of civil society and to conceptualise them such as culminating in a political community transcending civil society (see Avineri 1972: 134). Hegel's conception requires the loss of ethical life in order to regain it on a societal and higher level in the state. Hegel acknowledges Smith's insight into the natural principles of society, namely that the individuals' free and egoistic actions unintentionally result in a social common product and the wealth of nations. This dialectical transition, when the individual's egoistic disregard of the common results in the formation of a refined collective, gives the civil society the function of a *productive negation*. Of course, for Hegel, this dialectical transition also means that the individuals must overcome their natural egoistic instincts and, thus, that the transition has to go further than in Smith's theory. The individual, being a member of the state, has to be aware of it being a part of society and its division of labour, and actively and consciously work for the sake of the whole. This was not a part of Smith's conception. Nevertheless, for Hegel, the freedom of the individual and its egoistic actions – being the negation of the family's community and the negation of ethical life as such – have a productive effect for ethical life, they establish and refine the common, mainly through labour. The negation is productive because it is not merely a destructive negation, but is rather an essential moment in a dialectically productive movement of ethical life. Ethical life develops *because of* this loss of ethical life, not despite its negation. Still, it is doubtful whether this transition can fully recover from the destructive effects of civil society. Even if the negation is productive precisely because it has a destructive dimension, it is difficult for Hegel to stage a full reconciliation between society and state. Therefore he systematically mobilises *The Police* and *The Corporation* as transition functions in his political philosophy (Hegel 1821/1991: §§ 231-256), trying to make grounds for the ethical life and non-egoistic community of the state by transcending civil society.

Following Arato, one can say that ‘Hegel’s social theory presents modern society both as a world of alienation, and as an open-ended search for social integration’ (Arato 1991: 301), but the question is: is it possible to mobilise the negation for the benefit of the whole? Exactly here one of the main questions for Hegel’s political philosophy gets distinct. How can modern individual freedom be developed in its own right without restrictions, but at the same time transcend itself and transgress into the fulfilment of ethical life in the state? Hegel’s idea is that the individual will transcend itself when developing and sharpening itself as person, not by softening itself. This would mean that the capitalism of civil society must destroy the immediate cultural forms of ethical life and community in order to help fulfilling them on a societal and dialectically mediated level. Hegel hereby makes this loss of ethical life meaningful. Being conceptualised as the mediator between family and state, civil society shall be risking ethical life in order to conquer it. In this context, labour is essential. Labour for Hegel is the founding principle of civil society and modern politics (Riedel 1970: 47). Through labour individuals form their society, history and themselves as self-conscious members of society. Like civil society, labour is to be understood in this twilight of destruction and reconciliation. Labour is productive only by risking the ethical life it unintentionally is developing. According to Hegel, labour at the same is supposed to overcome and negate this negation and therefore can be viewed to have a potential in overcoming the destruction. Labour as a cultivating activity inherits the destruction of nature and risking ethical life in civil society, but simultaneously holds the potential for creating a synthesising reconciliation.

The Ambiguity of Labour

The concept of labour is present in all of Hegel’s political writings, yet it plays an ambiguous role in Hegel’s conception. Labour (1) produces and plays an essential part in the loss of ethical life in civil society, but simultaneously (2) is given the potential of overcoming this loss and to lead society towards the reestablishment of *Sittlichkeit*. Labour in this sense is to be placed in between the loss of ethical life in civil society and in its direction towards the fulfilment of ethical life in the state. Labour in this sense is both capitalistic, insofar as it is motivated and driven by egoistic individual and anti-collective interests, and anti-capitalistic, since Hegel gives it an ego-transcending character, and is able to produce the common and not only is reduced to create and strengthen the economic particular. Labour analogously is on the one hand destroying cultivation and *Sittlichkeit*, but on the other hand it is a cultivating activity with the possibility to criticise and to transcend this destruction of culture. Labour, in the meaning of this cultivating activity, needs to deal with labour as a destructive force. This opposition corresponds to the relation between labour (1) as differentiating and particularising and (2) as speculative and unity-creating. Although these meanings are intertwined insofar as the first is a

necessary negation of the common in order for the common unity to be established, Hegel nevertheless has a hard time securing the productive constellation of these dimensions of labour: they are not easily reconciled. On the one hand labour in the first sense differentiates itself in multiple forms of satisfying needs in correspondence to the strengthening of individuality in civil society. On the other hand labour is the movement towards the common, through the necessary detour of the negation of itself. Labour as *Bildung* always means transcending the particular and forming the common (Hegel 1821/2004: § 187), which according to Hegel in part already is in play in civil society in the way that labour at least already unintentionally transcends the particular and creates society as the common social product. But as already mentioned, labour needs the help functions of police and corporation in order to reach state-maturity. Instead labour in the speculative and difference-transcending sense is installed through reason and bridges the gap of negation, although negation is a systemic necessity also here.

Labour, according to Hegel, consists in the realisation of an idea put into play by a working subject in the objective material, and returning to the working actor as a realised idea and results in a widened self-consciousness. The idea is alienated in the object – the actor gets frantically out of himself –, but is fulfilled through the rise from the object and the return to the actor. Labour is unity-creating in the sense that its end is to make the working actor self-identical, that is to sublimate the negation of labour and create an again undivided subject identical with the object (Hegel 1830/2007: § 428). In his discussion of Hegel's theory, Colón León points at the important differentiation between the product of labour – the concrete thing that is being produced; the formed and owned object – and the result of the labour process: the now self-identical subject itself as result of the sublated labour (Colón León 1993: 144). Kojève also points out that within Hegel's concept of labour the working human being is transforming both the given object and transforming itself when transforming the object (Kojève 1947/1980: 52).

In order to understand this movement of the idea in and through labour it is necessary to analyze Hegel's concept of labour all the way back to his early Jena writings and lectures, especially the lecture from 1805/06, known as *Jenaer Realphilosophie*. Here, Hegel defines labour as the activity through which an I or a consciousness is turning itself into a thing (*sich zum Dinge machen*) (Hegel 1805/06/1974: 219; see also Schmidt am Busch 2002). This means, that the subjective and still unproven idea of the human being, is transforming itself into a thing with objective existence through labour, when forming and objectifying itself in the object. Labour in this sense is the satisfaction of a need, where the satisfied need or instinct is '*aufgehobne Arbeit*', that is, sublated labour. The will manifests and fulfils itself objectively through labour and when the need is satisfied, labour is not only over, but the subject relies now on the result of labour: being a refined subject. Labour contains here the immediate and individual relation to, formation of and consumption of nature, but also the incipient social la-

bour when producing tools: thus, when producing a tool, labour turns social, since the range of the tool transcends the need of the individual (Colón León 1993: 13).

In the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* the part on *Property* is important for understanding Hegel's concept of labour within the objective spirit of the political. Hegel discusses the subject's right to property and its way of taking objects into possession through labour:

The will alone is infinite, absolute in relation to everything else, whereas the other, for its part, is merely relative. Thus to appropriate something means basically only to manifest the supremacy of my will in relation to the thing and to demonstrate that the latter does not have being in and for itself and is not an end in itself. This manifestation occurs through my conferring upon the thing an end other than that which it immediately possessed; I give the living creature, as my property, a soul other than that which it previously had; I give it my soul (Hegel 1821/1991: § 44 Addition).

Property in this sense is particular, but the formation of the object is essential for the self-consciousness of the members of society.

In later passages in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* also important for the understanding of Hegel's concept of labour, he describes how the spirit only can overcome its objective and natural limitations by projecting himself into and forming the object and thereby giving himself and his idea objective existence. The *Bildung* of labour is the transition towards the liberation from natural existence. In labour the idea of the subject receives reality (Hegel 1821/1991: § 187). Within this *Bildung*, labour and the individual subjects strive and elevate themselves towards universality. Hereby, the particularity of labour is transcended. Labour is essentially a social phenomena for Hegel, corresponding partly to the egoistic principle of civil society and the division of labour. The common results from the egoistic individuals ignoring the common (Hegel 1821/1991: §§ 182, 189, 192, 196). But the *Bildung* and refinement of labour, making the individuals richer human beings and the society a highly developed one, consists in the more speculative and unity-creating kind of labour, taking a necessary detour through negation.

What can be said about the relation between these two dimensions of labour, namely the differentiating and particularising on one hand, and the unity-creating and speculative on the other hand? They clearly mark two different dimensions, but are also essentially intertwined. The speculative dimension of labour as *Bildung*, is already at work in civil society in the movement of particular labour towards the social and common product of civil society. It is also unity-creating in the sense that the working subject turns self-identical as a result of the labour process. But although labour in civil society is supposed to establish the common through, not despite, the differentiating of the division of labour, the particularising principle of civil society tends to jeopardise the capitalism-transcending potential of labour. Also, the labour of civil society tends to be mechanical and dumb. Still, as Riedel points out, labour has freedom aspects either way (Riedel 1970, 52). But in civil society, according to Hegel, the negative freedom is only a

formal freedom and therefore insufficient. It is clear that Hegel explicitly criticises labour as merely executed for individual reasons, although he acknowledges the fact that it indirectly has productive effects for the society as a whole. But labour still has difficulties to rise automatically from the differentiating principle of civil society. Therefore, as already mentioned, Hegel constructs various forms of help functions (Police and Corporation), in order to transcend civil society's negation and make the individuals 'members of the state', conscious of, and active for the sake of the common (Hegel 1821/1991: §§ 257-360).

This bird's-eye view is needed for Hegel in order for his evolving World spirit (*Geist*) to be able to transcend its objective dimension (consisting largely in the political sphere) and to reach its absolute dimension. I hereby return to the macro level of Hegel's philosophy and his concept of the World spirit. A differentiation must be made between (1) the concrete individual act of labour, (2) the societal labour striving towards the state, and (3) the labour of the World spirit. In order to transcend the objective spirit as such (and the political), Hegel seemingly is forced to leave the concrete individual and societal forms of labour (including the state) behind in order to reach the highest form of the reason. Hegel therefore conceptualises the development of the World spirit as such as a process of labour, which has the same dialectical principle as every individual act of labour and the development of social labour, which in civil society is supposed to establish the link between the family and the state within *Ethical life*. The dialectic of concrete labour consists in the subject's negation of itself in the object and the formation of it, resulting in the sublated negation and the establishment of the self-identity of the subject. The societal development from family to state has the analogue form of the family's negation in civil society, which eventually is sublated in the state. Finally, the dimension of objective spirit on the macro level in Hegel's system, containing the entire political philosophy of Hegel and being the negation and the real incarnation of the subjective form of the World spirit, is to be sublated into the absolute form of spirit. The objective dimension on a macro level corresponds to the concrete idea of labour as it is set into work (incarnated) in nature or an object on the individual level. The civil society is the objective and negative dimension on a societal level. These moments all represent the objective dimension. But in order to rise from its objective dimension, the activity of the World spirit is conceptualised as a labour equipping the spirit with the ability to return from its objective form, which is the negation of itself (the prior subjective form). This is the speculative concept of labour, which, according to Hegel, is manifested through the spirit of philosophy. This speculative concept is already at play in the self-identity of the working subject as the result of the labour process, but now it has the result of the absolute spirit becoming self-identical. Labour is hereby constituting and realising reason in the shape of Hegel's World spirit (Arndt 2003: 15; see also Lim 1966: 87 ff.). Yet, although the concept of World spirit is necessary for the understanding of Hegel's theory on the unity-creating aspect of la-

bour, it is not necessary to refer to it when developing the concept of the capitalism-transcending dimensions of labour; its dialectics is at play in every concrete act of labour as being the realisation of an idea.

To summarise, this conflict between the ‘capitalistic’ and particularising labour and the speculative and difference-transcending labour (both on a societal and macro-systematic level) can’t be dissolved easily in Hegel’s work. Both are clearly present in his theory, and they also are essentially interconnected, but hard to melt together entirely. The differentiating and negative dimension of labour is a systemic moment of speculative labour, being its productive negation. But civil society still strives towards the collective unity of the state. Yet, at best the particularising dimensions of labour should fully culminate in the unity of the individual self-identity, in the state and in the absolute spirit.

Conclusion

But how can labour be understood as a cultivating activity which incorporates a critique of capitalism? Firstly, with help from Hegel’s theory, the destructive and alienating aspects of labour are getting visible. When grasping the difference-producing principle of civil society, Hegel makes the problems (and merits) of civil society distinct. Additionally, through Hegel’s analysis, the inherent tension in labour is brought to light, that is, the tension between the destructive and cultivating aspects. According to Hegel’s thinking, these dimensions can’t be separated from each other: even a cultivating labour is changing and therefore in a way destroying objects and also destroying prior forms of the identity of the working individual. The moment of negation and difference is inherent in cultivating labour. In order to be a cultivating activity, labour has to produce the transcending of differences. The difference between these different dimensions of labour is that the cultivating labour is set to overcome the mere destructive aspect of labour. The working human being is supposed to be strengthened through labour, and not empty himself of energy.

This is also the case with society: it should be made stronger through labour. But because of the differentiating development of society through labour and its division, the risk for society to fall apart is present. Nevertheless, the transcending of differences has the consequence of labour transcending its economic dimension. Of course, labour is essentially economic, but it is not exclusively economic, and for Hegel, the individual must leave its mere economic motifs behind. Hegel defends the unity and identity creating dimensions of labour, which have the result of a capitalism critique. All forms of labour having this difference-transcending dimension inherit a capitalism critique since they stop to dwell in an unreflected individualist and anti-collective stand.

Still, Hegel’s collectivist political conclusion of the state can be questioned. May it be possible for labour to be cultivating without culminating in a collectivist

unity-model of the political as in Hegel? Yet, according to the reading of Hegel's concept of labour in this article, capitalism critique must not end in a general critique of labour. The critique of capitalism and of certain forms of labour can rather return to the question of labour and emphasise its cultivating dimensions in order to attempt to oppose capitalism. Such a balanced position is needed today, simultaneously able to criticise labour and to emphasise its importance.

Anders Bartonek, born 1977, is lecturer at the department of Philosophy at Södertörn University College in Stockholm. His research interests are the Critical philosophy and negative dialectics of T. W. Adorno, German idealism, theories of individuality, the political philosophy of G. Agamben, and the philosophy of labour. E-mail: anders.bartonek@sh.se

References

- Arato, Andrew (1991): 'A Reconstruction of Hegel's Theory of Civil Society', Drucilla Cornell (ed.): *Hegel and Legal Theory*, London: Routledge.
- Arndt, Andreas (2003): *Die Arbeit der Philosophie*, Berlin: Parerga.
- Avineri, Shlomo (1972): *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Colón León, Virgilio (1993): *Der Begriff der Arbeit in der Philosophie Hegels*, Frankfurt am Main, Dissertation.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1805/06/1974): 'Jenaer Realphilosophie', *Frühe politische Systeme*, Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein.
- (1821/1991): *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- (1821/2004): *Die Philosophie des Rechts. Vorlesung von 1821/22*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- (1830/2007): *Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Kojève, Alexandre (1947/1980): *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Lim, Sok-Zin (1966): *Der Begriff der Arbeit bei Hegel: Versuch einer Interpretation der 'Phänomenologie des Geistes'*, Bonn: Bouvier.
- Lukács, Georg (1948/1973): *Der junge Hegel*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Priddat, Birger (1990): *Hegel als Ökonom*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Riedel, Manfred (1969): *Studien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- (1970): *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft und Staat bei Hegel*, Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand.
- Ritter, Joachim (1974): *Subjektivität*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Schmidt am Busch, Hans-Christoph (2002): *Hegels Begriff der Arbeit*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Waszek, Norbert (1988): *The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of 'Civil Society'*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

The General Illumination which Bathes all the Colours: Class Composition and Cognitive Capitalism for Dummies

By Gigi Roggero

Abstract

For many years, the concept of cognitive capitalism has been an important subject for elaboration, discussions, and polemics. In this essay, we will not summarize the various theoretical details of the debate; instead, we will try to clarify the political nature of the concept and examine what is at stake from a theoretical point of view. Then, we will give some provisional and explorative answers to some of the central questions on cognitive capitalism: What does it mean? In what sense is it useful as a tool for the struggles? What kinds of class composition and antagonist subjectivity are embodied in this concept?

First, we will explain why cognitive labour does not identify a particular sector of the class composition. We will use the term ‘cognitivization’ (becoming cognitive of labour) to elaborate on the process of redetermination of the whole class composition.

Secondly, we will summarize a genealogy of cognitive capitalism and its peculiarities. Based on our readings, it is not a stage of development, but the site of a new battlefield in the ongoing class struggle.

Thirdly, we will point out the tension underlying cognitive capitalism, i.e., the tension between cooperation and capture, autonomy and subordination.

Finally, we will point out the problem of re-thinking a central category from *operaismo*: the class composition.

Following this pathway, we can underline the main theoretical and political question: What are the points of rupture in cognitive capitalism?

Keywords: Cognitive capitalism, cognitive labour, *operaismo*, class composition, cooperation, capture, autonomy, revolution.

0.

For many years, the concept of cognitive capitalism has been an important subject for elaboration, discussions, and polemics. In the essay we¹ will not summarize the various theoretical details of the debate (see Vercellone 2006 or Roggero 2011); instead, we will try to clarify the political nature of the concept and examine what is at stake from a theoretical point of view. Then, we will give some provisional and explorative answers to some of the central questions on cognitive capitalism: What does it mean? In what sense is it useful as a tool for the struggle? What kinds of class composition and antagonist subjectivity are embodied in this concept?

It can be argued that a university is a good place to discuss cognitive capitalism but this is not dependent on its centrality as an institution of education. In fact, knowledge production is becoming more and more widespread via the ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ networks of social cooperation, and it is becoming less and less the monopoly of any institution. In addition, we cannot say that a university is a good place for discussion, because it is not. Instead, in the ‘global university’ (Ross 2009) we can observe the process of primitive accumulation of knowledge, the central commodity in contemporary capitalism. In the field of social cooperation, concepts are transformed into keywords in order for them to be appropriated and built into intellectual enclosures. After this, researchers who refer to those concepts pay a fee (at least a symbolic one, i.e., a reference) to the ‘owners’ of these concepts. Furthermore, in the academic writings, the collective research (the ‘we’) becomes individual property (the ‘I’). This is how the political economy of knowledge works.

The purpose of this short introduction is to make clear what the term ‘cognitive capitalism’ entails. This thesis rises from the struggles and political attempts to destroy the capitalist system. Mario Tronti gave a terrific explanation half a century ago:

We do not start from concepts. The starting point is the reality historically determined by the capitalist social-economic formation. For the Marxist, the object of the analysis is the capitalism. But the *concept* of capitalism presents itself at the same time as the concrete *historical reality* of the capitalist society. The object of study is at the same time the reality to fight. From here, from this positive contradiction, the *happy drama* of the Marxist theorist, who wants to destroy the object of its own study; even, he has to study the object just to destroy it: the object of his analysis is his own enemy. And this is the historically specific character of the Marxist theory: *its own tendentious objectivity*. This is the material situation of the worker, who has to fight against what he produces, and wants to eliminate the conditions of its own work, and to smash the social relation of its own production. (Tronti 1963: XXXV)

It is only by starting from the struggles and coming back to the struggles that the concepts can be embodied and become expressions of the creative *potentia* of the multitude. This means that there is no theoretical practice outside the political practice. From a revolutionary point of view, there is no production of knowledge

that is not immanent to the living labour composition and its historical determination. This is a methodological problem, but with an immediately political point.

On this basis, we will only try to give some stenographic and introductive answers to the aforementioned questions, and to various points of criticism of the concepts that have been made over recent years. There is a central point in this debate: the notion of *class composition*. *Operaisti* elaborated the distinction between *technical composition*, based on the capitalistic articulation and hierarchization of the workforce, and the relation between workers and machines, and *political composition*, the constitution of class as an autonomous subject. *Operaismo* forged these categories in a very particular context, marked by the space-time coordinates of the Taylorist factory and Fordist society, and consequently a specific figure of the worker, i.e., the ‘mass worker’. When we talk of the deep changes in the forms of labour and production (summarized in the concept of cognitive capitalism), it is clear that we have to rethink the concept of class composition. In which ways? This is the question that we will try to pose at the end of this article: we have not yet precise answers, but our task is at least to provide some possible basis for this collective research.

1.

We will start by clarifying what we mean by cognitive capitalism and cognitive labour. These terms do not refer to a new stage in the historical process that is supposedly marching towards the transition beyond capital, its *Aufhebung* (in Hegel’s terms, the dialectical contradiction of overcoming and at the same time preserving). Therefore, cognitive capitalism is not a new stage in the historical process of moving beyond capitalism nor is it the final goal in overcoming capitalism despite the fact that some readings of contemporary capitalism risk arguing this (see for example Gorz 2003). Cognitive labour does not identify a sector of the technical composition of labour such as the ‘knowledge workers’ or the ‘creative class’, or the forms of labour in specific areas of the world. The cognitization (becoming cognitive) of labour is a global process which implies a new quality of the capital relation, and the specific forms of contemporary exploitation and class antagonism. In this process, knowledge is not only a source (raw material) but also a means of production, and its mode of production can qualify the forms of accumulation and the contemporary class composition at a global level. To use Marx’s words in *Einleitung*: ‘In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it’ (Marx 1993: 107). Nowadays the cognitization of labour is this ‘general illumination’, that explains all the specific elements, new or old, that are determined or re-determined by that process of exploitation and struggle.

Various scholars contest the idea of the passage to cognitive capitalism because there are still factory workers. On the one hand, talking of cognitive capitalism does not mean asserting the disappearance of factories and factory workers. The point is that factory work itself is changing in this new 'general illumination', when knowledge-as-commodity becomes central in the new paradigm of accumulation. That is to say, factory work is changing its role in the capitalist hierarchy of accumulation, and it is changing its forms of organization (the Taylorist technical division is no longer the dominant one). In fact, the underlying idea of this kind of analysis often risks arguing for the existence of a 'normal' work and a normal form of exploitation, coinciding with the industrial exploitation. On the other hand, to contest the passage to cognitive capitalism in this way means negating the possibility of a periodization, i.e., the historical determination of struggles and capitalist development. In the same way, one has to negate the passage to industrial capitalism because the artisanal or the agriculture workers do not disappear. In brief, talking of cognitive capitalism and labour does not entail imagining a unique form of work, but it points out the hegemonic lines of accumulation and exploitation. Of course, there is a co-presence of different times and forms of work, but they get their specific common physiognomy in the general illumination of the cognitization process.

There have been some scholars talking of 'plural capitals' (Chalcraft 2005), which is a suggestive but quite problematic concept. In fact, there are no plural capitals, because there is only one capital, i.e., a total (not at all totalitarian) social relationship that subordinates and hierarchizes the specific and peculiar relationships. We can say that talking of 'plural capitals' does not make sense, because the capital is constitutively plural in that it feeds on heterogeneous forms of labour and production. To be stenographic, capital is a mode of production that designates value to different forms of production. Moreover, the concept of plural capitals risks negating the possibility of a unification of the struggles within and against the capitalist social relationship, that is, *ab origine*, a global tendency.

2.

Capital is a social relation, or rather an antagonistic social relation. Many critics of the *operaismo* and *post-operaismo* revolutionary practices fail to see this antagonistic social relation. They see only a subject of the history, i.e., the capital; since it has the power, you cannot start from the living labour point of view. From this perspective, there are no struggles or autonomy, but only total dominium and heteronomy. This is a sociological rather than political point of view; it is the point of view of power, and not of the working class. It is the image of totality, and we know that this is pure ideology.

So, what is the genealogy of cognitive capitalism? Didier Lebert and Carlo Vercellone trace it through the following three processes that determined the crisis in the Fordist regime of regulation: '1. The critique of the scientific management

of work [...]; 2. The expansion of welfare guarantees and collective services [...]; 3. The constitution of a diffuse intellectuality as a result of the “democratization of teaching” and of the elevation of the general standard of education’ (Lebert & Vercellone 2006: 29-30). Therefore, the transition to cognitive capitalism is not a result of the simple necessities of development that are internal to the system. On the contrary, it is the result of a fierce period of struggle that threw Fordism into crisis. Again, Lebert and Vercellone explain the conflictual relationship between the two terms that compose the concept of cognitive capitalism:

1) The term capitalism designates the permanence, within the metamorphosis, of the fundamental variables of the capitalist system: in particular, the guiding role of profit and of the wage relation, or more precisely the different forms of dependent labor from which surplus value is extracted; 2) the cognitive attribute brings into relief the new nature of labor, of the sources of valorization and the property structure upon which is founded the accumulation process and the contradictions which this mutation generates. From this perspective, what matters is to grasp the historicity of the knowledge phenomenon, identifying its polyhedral dimension and the contradictions that characterize its dynamic. (Lebert & Vercellone 2006: 22)

To assert the ontological primacy of class struggle over capital development means claiming the irreducible partiality of the point of view. It also means pointing out the character of the specific capitalist social relation: the working class is the *potentia* that wants to exercise power; capital, on the other hand, is the power that exploits *potentia*. The former is the master and the latter is the slave. However, there is no possible dialectical *Aufhebung* between them. In fact, the dialectic, which also necessitates the universal subject, dies in the irreducible partiality of the workers’ struggle. There is only the actuality of autonomy and the possibility of break and separation.

Cognitive capitalism is a reaction to the global working class insurgency of the 1960s and ‘70s. It is a reaction to the struggle and sabotage, the flight from the chains of the factory and waged labour. Does this mean that we have won and communism exists despite the appearance of a capitalist society? This is another current critical view of *operaista* and *post-operaista* thinking, the incurable optimism of the will. The problem is that often this critique risks losing sight of the Marxian concept of capital as a social relation, that is to say, the antagonist ambivalence of the processes of capitalist development. In fact, there is a constitutive duplicity in all Marxian concepts; they are also placed in a relation of force determined by resistance and command, cooperation and exploitation, living labour and dead labour. These abstractions are historically situated and embodied in specific collective subjects and power relations. In a famous chapter of *Capital* (Chapter 10: ‘The working day’; see also James 2009), Marx (1977) explains how the struggles over the length of the working day force the masters to innovate and restructure the productive organization. There is never a unilateral development. There is always the class struggle that moves the capitalist social relation.

The problem now is to strip this method of any possibility of a historicist reading, i.e., the idea of an objective arrow of historical development. We have underlined the idea that heterogeneity is a peculiarity of global capital, and a constitutive aspect of the contemporary living labour composition. However, within the capital's heterogeneity there are some hegemonic lines of force that recompose the process of accumulation and command, i.e., it is, following on from Marx, what we term the 'general illumination' or *tendency*. This is not a deterministic outcome of the history and its so-called 'stage of development', but a dependent variable of the class struggle. Indeed, we stated above that cognitive capitalism is not the last stage of capitalism; we should now say that the tendency is a set of differences becoming based on the present composition of forces. Therefore, its elements are continuously composed, decomposed and recomposed by a concatenation of points of continuity or discontinuity. Therefore, the tendency is to identify a field of non-progressivist possibilities within the framework of the heterogeneity of the composition of living labour and the differential temporalities that capital captures and translates in the empty and homogeneous language of value. The struggles and the relation of the forces decide the prevalence of one or another. The line of tendency, thus, does not indicate a plane of irenic or objective development; on the contrary, it is the identification of a battlefield and its antagonistic forces.

3.

The concept of *capture* needs some explanation. Our hypothesis is that capital is less and less able to organize the cycle of productive cooperation 'upstream,' and increasingly it has to capture the value 'downstream'. In fact, when knowledge becomes central as a source and means of production, there is a transformation in the forms of accumulation, and there is a change in the relationship between living labour and dead labour. Of course, according to Marx, knowledge was crucial too, but due to its objectification in capital, it became completely separated from the worker. The incorporation of the knowledge of living labour into the automatized system of machines entailed the subtraction of labour's capacity or its 'know-how' and expertise (Marx 1993, see the famous 'Fragment on machine'). Today the classical relationship between living labour and dead labour tends to become a relationship between *living knowledge* and *dead knowledge* (Roggero 2011). In other words, the category of living knowledge refers not only to the central role of science and knowledge in the productive process but also to their immediate socialization and incorporation in living labour. Romano Alquati (1976) had already anticipated this process in the 1970s, thereby prefiguring the rise of a new intellectual proletariat. On the one hand, the cognitive worker is reduced to the condition of the productive worker, and, on the other hand, he tends to become *partially* autonomous from the automatized system of machines. This leads to a situation in which the general intellect is no longer objectified in dead labour (at least in a

stable temporal process). That is, knowledge can no longer be completely transferred to the machines and separated from the worker. The previous process of objectification is now overturned as the worker incorporates many of the aspects of fixed capital. He incessantly produces and reproduces, vivifies and regenerates the machine. At the same time, a permanent excess of social and living knowledge continuously escapes dead labour/knowledge.

In this framework, there is a necessity to reduce living labour/knowledge to abstract labour/knowledge, that is, the imperative to measure work despite the objective crisis of the law of value (see Negri 1979, and Vercellone 2010), forces capital to impose completely artificial units of time. To use Marx's words, it is a '*question de vie et de mort*'. The law of value does not disappear, but it becomes an immediately naked measure of exploitation, that is, a law of surplus value. It has to *capture* the value of the production of subjectivity. As Read argues, this is 'in both senses of the genitive: the constitution of subjectivity, of a particular subjective comportment (a working class which is both skilled and docile), and in turn the productive power of subjectivity, its capacity to produce wealth' (Read 2003: 102).

Therefore, the political problem is not to explain the truth of Marx's words, but to re-think Marx's analysis in the context of the contemporary transformations of labour and production. Indeed, in Marx's time, the general intellect was really fixed in the automatic system of machines. Since the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a process of subjectivation of general intellect, and a continuous re-appropriation of the dead labour from the living labour.

4.

The traditional Marxists urge us to pay attention because cooperation is not something that takes place autonomously. In fact, there is a long tradition of what Rosa Luxemburg (2003) called the 'Marxism of the universities chairs', that is to say, the attempt to reduce the reading of Marx to philology, disembodied from the struggle and the class compositions. Nowadays, as noted at the beginning of this essay, this tradition takes the form of enclosures of knowledge (the Marxist school, the French thought, the Italian theory, etc.), makes their claim as private property and earning rent. On the contrary, they see exclusively the heteronomy of living labour and the autonomy of capital, the only and invincible master of history. However, these critics miss the target. When we say that there is a *partial* autonomy of living labour/knowledge (i.e., the autonomy within and against the capital social relation), we are stressing the changing of the socialization of the forms of production. In the collective study and co-research in the Olivetti industry at the beginning of the 1960s, Romano Alquati (1975) pointed out the emergence of a new definition of unproductive labour: this category is no longer useful from a technical point of view, but it is from a political one. Unproductive labour is a function of control and means of capturing of living labour. In fact, facing the

socialization of production, the company has to multiply its hierarchical roles, they are useless in the organization of the productive cycle but they have the political goal of creating divisions and segmentation within the working class. This is the autonomy of living labour. Of course, it is relative (the capital command does not disappear), but it reveals the consequence of overthrowing the process of accumulation and the loss of ability to organize the productive cycle. Mainly, it reveals how production is *becoming common* of production; production is currently entirely based on the process of social cooperation that capital has to capture but is less and less able to organize.

When we talk of the common we are not referring to a natural good; it is always a matter of production. More precisely, it is concerned with substance and that which is at stake in production relations. On the other hand, talking of the common does not mean celebrating the incipient coming liberation. In fact, the common has a double status (Roggero 2010). It is both the form of production and the source of new social relations; it is what living labour/knowledge produces and what capital exploits. This tension between autonomy and subordination, between self-valorisation and expropriation, draws the lines of the battlefield of class antagonism nowadays. In other words, suggesting that production is becoming common does not coincide with an objective process of liberation from the exploitation because the capture of the common is the new form of capitalist exploitation of living labour. To use these categories in a provisional way, we could say that there is partial autonomy in the technical composition of class, but the problem of the autonomy of the political composition of class remains. Moreover, this autonomy cannot exist in a strong sense without destruction of the capitalist apparatuses of capture.

Now, when there is a deep changing of the relation between constant and variable capital, a sort of partial re-appropriation of the machine from the workers, and knowledge becomes central in the socialization of production, is it still possible to use the concepts of technical and political class composition? Our answer is: yes, but we have to revise them. The embodiment of a growing part of constant capital in the living labour/knowledge certainly does not mean a deterministic line of liberation. It produces terrific ambiguous effects, for which the sufferance goes with the *potentia*; the pathologies created by the internalization of the command continuously segment the social cooperation. In a certain way, based on the centrality of subjectivity in the contemporary forms of production and capture/accumulation, the political composition comes before the technical composition. To put it another way, the technical composition sustains the mechanisms of segmentation of the workforce and its differential inclusion in the labour market within a context in which the general intellect is embodied in the cooperation of living labour/knowledge.

The goal is to understand how the stratification within the technical class composition becomes a *dispositif* of the production of subjectivity. From this point of

view, concepts such as ‘knowledge workers’ or ‘creative class’ are not only socio-logical, but also political. They aim to produce a process of identification of the workers in competitive sectors, and a segmentation of a common composition. The main problem that needs to be addressed is how collective processes of dis-identification from this sectorial belonging, and identification in a common composition can be created. We also need to re-think the relationship between technical and political class composition, or the production of a common composition against the capitalist segmentation and exploitation. This is not a matter of consciousness, but a material process of the struggle.

5.

Finally, the question that we must ask is what is the material base of the break with capital, that is to say, the revolution? The base is precisely the materiality of class composition, in the tension between autonomous subjectivation and capitalist command. The problems of the revolutionary organization are entirely within this antagonistic tension. The base is the relation between forces of production and relations of production. This is not, as some critics have suggested, a re-edition of a dogmatic Marxist argument confusing historical materialism with historical determinism. To accuse the Marxian concept of modes of production of being a form of ‘economism’ means abandoning the materiality of the social relations. It means having an ‘economistic’ interpretation of the concept of production. According to this point of view, the capital is no more a social relation, but only one among the many actors that society must control. We must ask where the non-capitalist relations come from if they do not germinate within and against the social relationship. Is it from a metaphysical event, from the abstract consciousness of the intellectual, or from a secret reason of history? We are completely in the reign of utopia. Nevertheless, the flipside of utopia is the image of a totalitarian capital; there is no autonomy but only heteronomy, there is no resistance but only command. *Adieu* revolution!

In fact, production is radically changing and is more and more based on, and innervated by, the common. As underlined above, the relation between forces of production and relations of production is a non-dialectical one: it is a relation between *potentia* of the common and capture, a relation of force without the possibility of synthesis and mediation. This is the material basis of the actuality of revolution. This will not happen following the spontaneous line of the forces of production, but it depends of the capacity of organizations and the living labour’s struggle. It will not be a peaceful development of class composition, but the collective break from the capital apparatuses of capture. It is a problem of class re-composition and rupture with the command.

At this stage, the two critical stances of my analysis should be quite clear. On one side, there is a reading of global capital through the re-propositioning of the dialectic between the centre and the periphery. The former shows the image of its

own future, according to a progressive line of development. The second stance is a critique of this historicist idea and considers heterogeneity as a constitutive element of the contemporary living labour composition. Coming from this critical approach, there is a risk of concluding that what we call a *common composition* is impossible. In this way, talking of heterogeneity becomes a trap. This risk coincides with the simple description of the class stratification, that is to say, a sociology of the capitalist segmentation. Therefore, the differences are certainly irreducible to homogeneity, but they can find the space of their *potentia* and freedom in their common composition. There is, thus, a radical difference between universalism and the common; the common is the base and the product of differences and multiplicity, it is never the starting point as imaged by the Enlightenment and socialist traditions. It remains, however, what is always at stake in the struggle.

Gigi Roggero is involved in the militant collectives Commonware (www.commonware.org) and edu-factory (www.edu-factory.org). He is part of the editorial board of 'WorkingUSA'. He is a precarious researcher. Among his various publications, he is author of *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and The Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America* (2011, Philadelphia: Temple University Press). E-mail: conricerca@hotmail.com

Notes

- ¹ In the text I use the plural first person because the contents of the article are part of a collective research and common theoretical and political debate. This collective research has precise names: UniNomade (www.uninomade.org), Commonware (www.commonware.org), and edu-factory (www.edu-factory.org). This is just a methodological and political point: the production of knowledge is never individual, but is always immanent to a process of cooperation.

References

- Alquati, Romano (1975): *Sulla Fiat e altri scritti*, Milano: Feltrinelli.
----- (ed.) (1976): 'L'università e la formazione: l'incorporamento del sapere sociale nel lavoro vivo', *Aut Aut*, 154.
Chalcraft, John T. (2005): 'Pluralizing Capital, Challenging Eurocentrism: Toward Post-Marxist Historiography', *Radical History Review*, 91, 13-39.
Gorz, André (2003): *L'immatériel*, Paris: Galilée.
James, C. L. R. 2009. 'Marx's Capital, the Working-Day, and Capitalist Production', *You don't Play with Revolution: The Montreal Lectures of C. L. R. James*, Oakland, CA: AK Press.

- Lebert, Didier & Carlo Vercellone (2006): 'Il Ruolo della Conoscenza nella Dinamica di Lungo Periodo del Capitalismo: L'Ipotesi del Capitalismo Cognitivo', Carlo Vercellone (ed.): *Capitalismo Cognitivo: Conoscenza e Finanza nell'Epoca Postfordista*, Rome: Manifestolibri.
- Luxemburg, Rosa (2003): *The Accumulation of Capital*, New York: Routledge.
- Marx, Karl (1977): *Capital*, Vol. 1. New York: Vintage Books.
- (1993): *Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Negri, Antonio (1991): *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, New York: Autonomedia.
- Read, Jason (2003): *The Micro-politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Roggero, Giggi (2010): 'Five Theses on the Common', *Rethinking Marxism*, 22:3.
- (2011): *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ross, Andrew (2009): 'The Rise of the Global University', The Edu-factory Collective, *Toward a Global Autonomous University: Cognitive Labor, The Production of Knowledge, and Exodus from the Education Factory*, New York: Autonomedia.
- Tronti, Mario (1963): 'Introduzione', Karl Marx, *Scritti inediti di economia politica*, Rome: Editori Riuniti.
- Vercellone, Carlo (ed.) (2006): *Capitalismo cognitivo. Conoscenza e finanza nell'epoca postfordista*, Rome: Manifestolibri.
- (2010): 'The Crisis of the Law of Value and the Becoming-Rent of Profit', Andrea Fumagalli & Sandro Mezzadra (eds): *Crisis in the Global Economy: Financial Markets, Social Struggles, and New Political Scenarios*, New York: Semiotext(e), 85-118.

The Alternative to Post-Hegemony: Reproduction and Austerity's Social Factory

By Kylie Jarrett

Abstract

In the transitions to advanced liberal States and post-Fordist economic paradigms, it is argued that the distinction between work and sociality has become blurred. This marks the emergence of the “social factory” where sociality is industrialised and industrialisation has become increasingly centred on immaterial, social activity. It is further argued that this regime has generated a new articulation of socio-economic relations based on biopower and systems of control alongside the irruptive agency of multitude. Consequently, it is often suggested that the concept of hegemony can no longer adequately explain manifestations of power and resistance. The argument is that we live today in a state of post-hegemony. This paper challenges the theoretical and pragmatic underpinnings of this position at a number of levels, arguing that the lived politics associated with the imposition of Austerity economics across Europe, but particularly as manifest in Ireland, undermine the assertion that hegemony is no longer a relevant conceptualisation of power dynamics. In particular it uses feminist thinking to challenge the epochalisation inherent to arguments of post-hegemony, arguing instead for a return to engagement with the reproductive logic of hegemonic discipline.

Keywords: Immaterial labour, hegemony, activism, feminism.

Introduction

When global financial markets collapsed on their ephemeral underpinnings in late 2007 for some this was the inevitable exposure of capitalism's contradictions and limits. It was hoped by many on the political Left that from the ensuing fiscal crisis would emerge an alternative economic or, ideally, social system. I write this though from Ireland in 2013 where this is far from the case. Instead of life in a new socialist utopia, Irish citizens struggle under imposed 'austerity measures' that in six years have reduced available public funds by €28.5 billion through spending restrictions and the introduction of taxes, levies and charges (*The Irish Times* 2013). These cuts have been made in order to service a socialised debt accrued by State guarantees of failing private enterprises within the Irish banking and finance sectors.

Dominant in the public discourse of Austerity Ireland is the primacy of 'fixing the economy' over and above all other concerns such as social welfare, public service provision or social equity. Perverse pleasure is taken in receiving positive commentary in the quarterly compliance reviews of the European Union/International Monetary Fund/European Central Bank (the Troika) that have overseen the imposition of Austerity (a nominalised agent in most discourse, hence the capitalisation). Through a 'successful' return to international bond markets in July 2012, Ireland has become the poster child of the wider Eurozone's resilience and model for the effectiveness of Austerity in restoring stability to national markets.

However, the effects of these measures on individuals, communities, or Irish society are not commonly encountered in political discourse (Titley 2013). This is despite Irish Central Bank figures indicating that 1 in 10 homeowners are in financial distress and facing repossession (*The Irish Times* 2012; Pope 2013), where already mismanaged public services such as health and education are unable to function effectively in their reduced budgets (Burke 2010) and where reductions in social welfare payments and services to vulnerable citizens such as carers, the disabled and the unemployed have increased levels of poverty and deprivation (Caritas Europa 2013). A survey by international charity Oxfam (2013) indicated that in 2012 one in four Irish people were left with €100 or less each month after covering necessary bills, taxes and charges, with a further 602,000 left with no disposable income at all.

While there is public protest against these measures and the socialisation of debt more generally, political unrest in Ireland has been muted compared to other countries in which similar Austerity models are being instituted. Writing in the *Greek Left Review*, Irish academic Helena Sheehan describes Greek protestors chanting, 'We are not Ireland. We will resist', commenting: 'It stung. Those of us who are resisting felt acutely our failure to mobilise sufficient numbers to put up

the resistance the situation required' (2013: n.p.). There seems little but the orthodoxy of neoliberal finance capitalism at play in mainstream Irish politics.

In coming to terms with these events in my adopted nation, I increasingly need to invoke the concept of 'hegemony'. Only the maintenance of some generalised consent explains the widespread compliance with the regime of Austerity recognised by Sheehan. However this runs counter to various contemporary theoretical trends shaped by insights of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, but particularly as articulated in the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in which hegemony has been relegated to a historical footnote, supplanted by regimes of biopower, systems of control and the dynamics of communicative capitalism. It is argued that in the 'social factory' of biocapital, in which the boundaries between life/culture and alienated labour have been blurred, also lie re-organised political economy and governance systems beyond power exerted through mechanisms that sustain hegemony. According to this argument, today we live (and theorise) in a state of 'post-hegemony', where biopower is exerted through mechanisms of immanent communication rather than disciplining discursive representation and in which the articulation of difference associated with counter-hegemony has been defused as a form of political resistance (for instance Swiffen 2009; McStay 2011; Beer 2009; Arditì 2007). It is presumed or argued that the concept of hegemony has lost its purchase and can no longer serve as an explanatory tool for how power and/or social antagonism manifests.

Contrarily, I suggest that we cannot fully understand, and therefore intervene, in contemporary political economies and societies unless we take into account the reproduction of dominant dispositions, ideologies and through that, the maintenance of the capital relation. We cannot engage politically unless we factor in the disciplinary reproductive logic of hegemony. This paper will therefore criticise the concept of post-hegemony as articulated within discussions of the social factory, multitude and regimes of biopower. In particular it will focus on the epochalisation inherent to these arguments that obscures the long history of the exploitation of biopower. This aspect of my argument draws on feminist insights into the importance of reproductive labour, and takes inspiration from Angela Mitropoulos' (2012) underscoring of *oikonomia* and generational lineage, in order to reassert the role of hegemonic reproduction in the social factory. While not seeking to resolve the problems of how best to generate counter-hegemonic resistance, struggles over Austerity in Ireland will be used as an example of how understanding hegemony continues to be a vital tool for an engaged politics.

Biopolitics and the Social Factory

Foucault's discussion of the emergence of biopower, articulated in the three-volume *History of Sexuality* (1976/1998: 1984/1992: 1984/1990) and in lectures given at the Collège de France in the late 1970s (2008), is the axis from which

arguments about the contemporary social factory and post-hegemonic power have been spun. Foucault traces the emergence of a form of governance based not in the right of seizure exerted by a sovereign power but in the administration, management and optimisation of populations conceived as a social body. This power works through two techniques. The first is associated with disciplining the capabilities of the machinic body (emphasising individual corporeality) to maximise its capabilities. The second is focused on the supervision of the ‘species body’, effected through series of interventions and regulatory controls at the level of the population (Foucault 1976/1998). Foucault associates biopolitics with the development of liberalism as a framework of governance and with the emergence of modern biology and its notions of ‘self-regulation and self-preservation’ (Lemke 2011: 48). In particular, he emphasises the importance placed on ‘human capital’ within the economic logic of neoliberalism and the consequent focus of social and cultural policies such as education on ‘the more or less voluntary formation of human capital in the course of individual’s lives’ (Foucault 2008: 228). It is through mobilisation of both these techniques for exerting power that life processes, intimate interpersonal behaviour and individual morality have become legitimate and viable objects of socio-political intervention and been incorporated into systems and techniques of governance.

While the concept of biopolitics has been developed or used variously in divergent fields (Lemke 2011), relevant for this paper is the relationship of a Foucauldian inflected concept of biopower to contemporary Marxist critiques recognising the increasing importance of immaterial, affective, communicative and/or cognitive inputs in the circuits of capital. Many Marxist theorists associated with the Autonomia political movement and theoretical paradigm, but in particular Hardt and Negri (2000: 2005: 2009), mobilise a similar understanding of the incorporation of life into mechanisms of power. Mario Tronti’s term ‘the social factory’ is used to describe the conclusion of developments associated with post-Fordism through which various life processes, once deemed exterior to the commodity relation, have become integral to the economic calculations of capital (Negri 1989). Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) offers the examples of software, audio/visual production and advertising as emblematic industries where the cognitive and affective investments of workers and consumers alike add intangible value to commodities. The socially meaningful practices of digital media consumers of products such as YouTube, Facebook or computer games exemplify this trend as these constitute unpaid content, but also generate revenue through transformation into consumer data that is extensively mined and sold to advertisers in the form of the audience-commodity (Terranova 2000; Fuchs 2008; Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter 2009). This *industrialisation of sociality* also takes the form of the ‘presence bleed’ associated with mobile communications technologies that blur boundaries between work and intimate personal life (Gregg 2011). It can also be found in the logic of ‘workfare’ programmes, lifelong training initiatives and in

the expanding phenomenon of unpaid corporate internships (Ross 2013). In these instances, often pleasurable and (quasi-) voluntary social activity manifests the alienating, expropriating and commodifying logics of industrial capitalism (Negri 1989).

The social factory is also associated with the *socialisation of industry* in that there is an increasing reliance on social relationships and cognitive capabilities within factory walls. Great importance is attributed to non-material processes such as communication and affective interaction in the contemporary workplace. This is recognised in economic calculations of ‘human capital’ that include the intellectual and affective property embodied in the capacities of workers. Even in manufacturing and primary industries, increasing computerisation of industrial processes has foregrounded so-called ‘soft’ skills, particularly those associated with symbol manipulation, intellectual achievement and interpersonal communication. In this context, labour-power (as potential energy) is no longer only associated with the force of the living body but with subjectivity, cognition and affect (Virno 2004). This incorporation of social skills into capital in both traditional leisure and paid work contexts signals the increasingly blurry boundaries between sociality and industrialised processes. As Dyer-Witheford summarises the ‘world of the socialized worker is thus one where capital suffuses the entire form of life’ (1999: 81).

The concept of the social factory describes the logic of the 2013 Irish tourism initiative The Gathering (<http://www.thegatheringireland.com/>), designed by the State to attract the tourism and investment dollars of the broad Irish diaspora. This campaign encouraged communities and individuals to create events to be attended by international guests or visiting expatriates, attempting to enrol the entire population in crafting an entertaining celebration of normative Irish culture and traditions. The tag line of the campaign – ‘invite them home’ – directly refers to interpersonal relationships. In doing so, it encapsulates the incorporation of sociality within a national economic plan to increase tourism numbers and generate domestic employment in tourism-related ventures, as well as to build potentially lucrative business linkages. According to government data released at the Irish Economic Forum (*Merriionstreet.ie* 2013), tourism numbers grew by an extra 291,000 visitors between January and August of 2013, up 6.5% from the same period the previous year. This included an increase of 16.5% in US visitors, most closely associated with the Irish diaspora. Noted in the report were business opportunities emerging from strengthened links with this diaspora and also increased civic pride and social capital, with ‘73% of those polled said organising a Gathering had inspired people to work together to the benefit of the community’. In its intermingling of interpersonal relationships and social and community cohesion with quantified assertions of economic value, The Gathering embodies the subsumption of the entire Irish social body into a capitalist logic.

But in contemporary Ireland it is in Austerity that the social factory is exemplified. This regime blurs life and work not only by demanding an effective extension of the working day as each individual labours for less pay and/or longer hours, regardless of productivity. Its logic also permeates non-work aspects of life from the biological – as public medical care becomes more expensive or laborious to access due to cuts in medical services – to the affective – as family-based care labour becomes pressured by cuts to carer allowances and respite care facilities, the imposition of longer working days, and reduction of real incomes through increased taxation and charges. Through claims by current Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny that ‘we went mad borrowing’, or those by former Táinaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) Brian Lenihan that ‘we all partied’, individual consumption decisions, coded as moral choice, become the collective cause and, by implication, the solution to the economic crisis (see Kennedy 2011; Titley 2013). Indeed the cultural ‘morality’ of various indebted states has become a key component of recent European governance in which countries involved in bailouts are represented as having immature cultural systems that promote irresponsibility and idleness (Mylonas 2012). A commitment to probity across all facets of life, to stoicism in the face of physical and/or emotional pain, is demanded by Austerity economics. Austerity is a ‘whole of life’ phenomenon. Austerity is the social factory.

The End of Hegemony?

Despite the relationship to state economics depicted here, the social factory is nevertheless associated with the decline of power exerted as hegemony. As Negri writes, the socialised worker is ‘a producer, but not only a producer of value and surplus value; s/he is also *the producer of the social cooperation necessary for work*’ (1989: 80, original emphasis). Drawing on Marx’s notion of the general intellect, Hardt and Negri (2005; 2009) expand upon the agency of this cooperation, attributing a degree of autonomy and immeasurability to social production that generates powerful tensions in the processes of capital (2009: 270). There is therefore a contradiction between the needs of capital and the qualities of socialised labour, and it is from this tension that Hardt and Negri generate their optimistic view of the radical potential of such work. They suggest that the excessive energies associated with cooperative, socialised production may manifest as a multitude – a heterogeneous collectivity – with the power to generate a common pool of knowledge and most importantly activity in contradiction of capitalist structures. Biopower can thus be associated with the systems of population management identified by Foucault but also with the emergent, potentially transformative agency of workers: it is implicated in radical critiques and political activism as much as with fears of containment and contamination by corporate and state interests.

The political agency, and management, of multitude is typically associated with regimes of post-hegemonic control rather than regimes of hegemonic domination. Deleuze's (1995) reflections on the politics of control have been central to this position. He argues that contemporary social systems are 'no longer exactly disciplinary' (1995: 174) in that they do not operate through confinement but instead through constant communication that generates a system saturated with the dictates of power – a state of control or, as Hardt and Negri would suggest, *Empire* (2000). Deleuze's position underpins Nicholas Thoburn's (2007) advocacy of a post-hegemonic Cultural Studies. Drawing on the work of Laclau and Mouffe, Thoburn typifies hegemonic power as the construction of a system of equivalences that are always only partial. This in turn suggests the potential for transformative politics in the creation of alternative or broader chains of equivalence within the network of relatively autonomous social relations that constitute the realm of politics. However, for Thoburn, this model fails to appreciate the concept of the social factory and its negation of the relative autonomy of social spheres and, subsequently, the potential for alternative politics to emerge from the cultural and social superstructure (see also Swiffen 2009). He argues that social change can only emerge from critical interrogation of, and changes to, the relations of production such as those associated with multitude rather than from changes in structuring discourses as in counter-hegemonic resistance.

Other arguments about post-hegemony draw on the distinction Foucault makes between disciplining techniques and the techniques of biopower in *The History of Sexuality*. Scott Lash (2007) outlines the qualities of this 'mutation' in the exertion of power. He claims that the extensive politics of hegemony have given way to a politics of intensity characterised by four key qualities. The first is a transition from the epistemological regime, where hegemony was enacted through the Symbolic realm in the form of discourse, to an ontological regime of power. Domination, and resistance, Lash says, increasingly occur in the Real, which is 'not at all knowable through cognitive judgement' (58) but only through intensifications of affect. Consequently, the ontological being is no longer only a site of resistance but also one of domination. 'In the age of hegemony, power only appropriated your predicates: in the post-hegemonic present it penetrates your very being. Power, previously extensive and operating from without, becomes intensive and now works from within' (59).

Following from this is Lash's related argument that there has been a shift from a regime of 'power over' to 'power as generative force'. Here he draws on Hardt and Negri's use of the term 'potentia' to describe power associated with 'force, energy, potential', indeed with life itself (59). This self-organising vitalism is that captured within the biopolitics of immaterial labour, as well as with multitude as a political force. Rather than being imposed from above as in hegemony, power 'comes to act from below: it no longer stays outside that which it "effects". It becomes instead immanent in its object and its processes' (61). In post-hegemonic

contexts, power's determining ethics are therefore generated from inside the empirical facticity of the Real and the vitalism of the body. Accordingly, and related to Derrida's argument, Lash suggests there has been a shift from an extensive politics of collective representation based in the normative models of the Symbolic to a regime of immanent, intensive communications. Power is not enabled by discursive representation of its legitimacy but through the immediacy of the performance of its functions in a society of control in which distinct spaces of discipline have collapsed. It functions through a 'reflexive and autopoietic self-production' (Lash 2007: 66; McStay 2011) that is chronically generative of social order. Thus, in Lash's estimation, although 'it takes place increasingly through the media, domination was never so immediate. So unreflective. So without a separate sphere of discursive legitimation' (2007: 66).

Hegemony in Practice

Upon completion of his description of the mechanisms of post-hegemonic power, Lash notes: 'The observations above do not really do justice to the power-as-hegemony position' (68). In the context of his argument, this acknowledgement is curious but it is accurate. As Johnson (2007) argues, the description of post-hegemony Lash and others espouse inadequately represents the complexity of society even while drawing important features of post 9/11 societies into a theoretical frame. What puzzles Johnson is that the end result of this theorising 'is viewed as the end of hegemony rather than as a new hegemonic moment' (2007: 102). I have the same concern that these conceptualisations inadequately capture the ways power in practice continues to mobilise disciplining discourses to sustain hegemonic ideologies. On a pragmatic level, it seems difficult to understand both the politics of Austerity and the resistance to it emerging across Europe without recourse to the idea of hegemony, and in particular without referring to the construction of alternative discursive formations. An example from Ireland will illustrate.

Central to the politics of the Irish Austerity State is the argument that 'there is no alternative' (TINA) to Austerity generally and, more recently, to the reduction of public sector costs in order to meet budgetary benchmarks imposed by the Troika. Thatcher's famous but simple expression of assumed consensus has widespread purchase across the Irish media and in public discourse, appearing explicitly and implicitly in the lead-up to Budget announcements, in the limited discussions around debt default or in the general framing of the decision to socialise bank debt (*Politico.ie* 2010; Brennan 2010). The constant reiteration of TINA naturalises debt and Austerity measures as simple 'common sense', part of the organic background of contemporary politics and thus beyond critique. Consequently all questioning of Austerity, and even of particular measures, is cast as irrational. As Titley (2013) describes, dissent or the proposition of alternatives is

constructed as taboo for it is seen to dent market confidence, raise spectres of unrest and show a limited grasp of reality. In political discourse in Ireland, to question the imposition of Austerity is simply not sensible.

That there is no alternative to Austerity can only be described as a hegemonic discourse and arguably *the* hegemonic discourse of contemporary Ireland – Titley refers to it as the ‘ur-mantra’ (2013: 199). This normalising and normative declaration of ‘common sense’ establishes a singular view of economic circumstances and solutions, renders contrary positions illegitimate, and in turn legitimates material manifestations of social power by the Irish State and its agencies. This declaration has material effects as it is the logic upon which the social and economic order is organised, providing the legitimating framework for a series of brutal national Budgets that have had very real consequences for individual citizens and the social fabric. At the same time, it is also encountered repeatedly at a representational level in the discourse of media commentators, politicians and of the general population who, even while rejecting particular economic proposals, nevertheless accept that cuts must be made. Contrary then to arguments that control is exerted in the social factory only and primarily through the Real, power exerted through symbolic means is also alive, well and effective in Austerity Ireland.

The discursive properties of power relations are also demonstrated in acts of resistance. In 2013, an alliance of public sector workers emerged in Ireland challenging the imposition of another reduction in wages and, importantly, further degradation of labour conditions. This coalition was constituted by emergency service and health care professionals involved in the 24/7 Front Line Services Alliance, various groups of educators, and diverse sets of office workers associated with the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union. It set out to mobilise workers to reject an agreement between the government and public sector unions that traded continuing employment security for increased hours, reduced conditions and direct pay cuts. Coming after a previous reduction of wages and conditions, the goal of this proposal (to which, it was claimed, there was no alternative) was to save a further €1 billion from the public sector pay bill by 2015.

Contrary to the positions of their own union executives, this coalition of rank-and-file union members not only argued for rejection of the proposal on economic grounds, but also articulated an alternative narrative about the nature of the cuts. Protest was articulated around principles of collective solidarity – ‘Do not vote for someone else’s pay cut’ become one of the rallying cries – and groups were united in a refusal to accept that these cuts were an indisputable necessity. The effects of reduced conditions on the ability of public sector workers to actually serve the public, an argument absent from formal and mediated discussion of the proposals, also became a feature of these protests (for instance, Workers’ Solidarity Movement 2013). While the position taken by this coalition did not challenge a key structural feature contributing to Austerity – the socialisation of private bank debt

– its defiance of the consent assumed in TINA, along with its emphasis on social effects, marks a war of position with dominant ideas.

This coalition bears some of the characteristics of multitude in that this is a temporary, irruptive alliance of emergent, grass-roots movements with a diversity of politics and goals. But this heterogeneous multitude was nevertheless an *organised* coalition who actively sought solidarity between varied union members and temporary points of consensus from which an alternative narrative was generated. Organisers used social media and face-to-face meetings to articulate their point of difference from institutionalised discourses and this ‘old-fashioned’ grass-roots campaign was initially successful, with a wide spread rejection of the proposal across many unions in the ratification vote. In light of this organised resistance, the government was forced to re-enter negotiations with unions, producing yet another proposal marginally reducing the cuts and changes to conditions. At the same time though, the State also engaged in an overt exercise of symbolic violence, successfully passing legislation to impose by fiat greater pay cuts and reduced conditions upon members of any union who failed to vote for acceptance of the revised proposals. Confronted with this aggressive tactic, it is perhaps no surprise that in a second vote in September 2013 all public sector unions except one ratified the proposal.

Even though emerging from Austerity Ireland’s social factory, this alliance of public sector workers is comprehensible only as an example of counter-hegemonic agency. In the context of TINA, the quite literal withdrawal of consent to the further imposition of Austerity measures by public sector workers was the manifestation of a direct challenge to the hegemonic logic of the Irish State. By also attempting to shift the discourse to questions of the effect on public services such as health, education and policing, this coalition proposed a new framework for conceptualising Austerity. That the government was forced into an overt exertion of its coercive power in order to counter the growing validity of this counter-hegemonic position indicates not only the existence, but also the effectiveness and viability, of counter-hegemonic organised action. The degree of symbolic violence needed to repress this resistance shows this protest to be a small victory for anti-Austerity campaigners, albeit a pyrrhic one.

This example also emphasises the importance of activism in relation to symbolic dominance. Even agreeing with Thoburn and Deleuze that the important site of struggle is production relations does not preclude the existence of various cognitive, discursive and affective structures that materially support those relations, and as such may serve as important sites for marshalling resistance. The struggle of Irish public sector workers is certainly over material conditions but just as certainly contains symbolic dimensions. The shift from framing reductions in labouring conditions as an indisputable economic necessity to an unnecessary, socially damaging intervention continues in the ongoing industrial action by the only union to reject the revised agreement – the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ire-

land (ASTI). Despite Government threats of compulsory redundancies for unionised workers, and a concerted mediated campaign to describe this resistance as socially irresponsible (see Malone 2013; O'Regan 2013; O'Rourke 2013 for example), ASTI members and their supporters continue to point to the detrimental effects of the demanded reforms on the education of young people (Wall 2013; McGuire 2013; Dunphy 2013). In this example, the struggle may be occurring in the Real and is about material conditions, but it also contains non-material, cognitive elements that are primarily about redefining the meaning of Austerity. How much purchase these counter-hegemonic arguments will secure in the long-term is unknown, but currently they are serving as an anchoring and rallying point for this particular struggle to change material conditions.

In other national contexts, the practicalities of resistance can similarly be associated with counter-hegemonic struggle. Costas Douzinas' (2010: n.p.) description of the 2008 anti-austerity 'riots' in Greece as an 'event' fundamentally other to 'politics as usual' draws on ideas of multitude. Nevertheless he still claims that the continued effectiveness of this campaign relies on a return to more traditionally organised political negotiation by a vanguard, albeit with 'new politicised subjects and the re-arrangement of the rules of political participation' (n.p.). After the irruptive power of multitude, real political change requires engagement with some organisational structuring, including leaders charged with articulating a counter-hegemonic position (Thorburn 2012). As Couze Venn suggests about other plural political movements: 'A sense of hegemony and counter-hegemony is still ambivalently at work ... motivated by the exigencies of practical politics' (2007: 122). It is at this practical level of heterogeneous anti-Austerity political activity – where actors must organise against prevailing ideologies and structures – that the concept of post-hegemony fails to offer a convincing interpretive framework.

The Problem of Consent

This inability to capture lived reality lies in the failure to address in the foundational principles of post-hegemony the question of consent and how that is secured or lost. What is typically described instead is totalising domination by the constant communication of a biopolitical machine. This is Lash, Thoburn and Deleuze's position for instance, but when placed in the context of even the limited Austerity protests described above, this does not make sense. While the TINA discourse may penetrate the entire social body, it cannot be evenly distributed. If there was only a regime of control, protest such as that of the Irish public sector workers could never emerge. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how the agency of multitude is ever able to *actively* generate a counter politics unless the illegitimacy of dominant conditions is first experienced and alternative modes made conceivable, forcing irruptive energy in particular directions.

Unless a population has been rendered entirely passive, the stability of even a pervasive system of control, such as that associated with biopolitics, needs to be reproduced and perpetually secured. Without such mechanisms for establishing consent, or for imposing discipline where consent is not forthcoming, there is only power's exhaustive penetration that in turn leaves limited or no capacity for resistance of the type emerging across European states. In Austerity Ireland, the constant repetition of TINA is one such tool, asserting a culturally desirable social position, and, in casting alternatives as absurd, providing negative reinforcement as well. It simultaneously assumes hegemony, and asserts discipline. In Lash's argument however, a close correlation is drawn between social reproduction, disciplining and hegemony at the same time as this is rejected in favour of what can best be described as an immanent subjectivation at the level of the individual body and Self. However, there seems little difference between the post-hegemonic subject for whom legitimation 'is no longer separate from what it is meant to legitimate, it becomes automatic' (Lash 2007: 66) and the disciplined subject who has internalised social norms so that they align themselves voluntarily with the needs of power. Lash's depiction ignores Althusserian insights and (mis-) represents hegemony as a form of domination *always* imposed by external institutions rather than as an effect of subjectivities fundamentally shaped by the interaction between each socialized individual, their affective and biological propensities and the normative structures of their contingent sociopolitical context.

Thus, while biopower may work to 'establish life and to penetrate all of its aspects in order to rule it' (Atzert 2006: 63), the properly Foucauldian, or perhaps Weberian, question of what brings an individual to accept domination by any governance structure must still be asked. If the exertion of power is to be made sensible and/or contestable there must be mechanisms that legitimate, or fail to legitimate, the exploitation of an individual's biopower so that an individual or group can become complicit with, or seek to challenge, that relation. Consequently, determining what discursive mechanisms secure consent, particularly at the level of disciplined subjectivity, and how they may be disrupted remains a core political project, but one that cannot be articulated in the framework provided by post-hegemony.

Continuity of Hegemonic Discipline

It is notable that most articulations of the post-hegemonic position were published in 2007, just before the global financial collapse and the imposition of new socio-political-economic regimes of Austerity across a variety of advanced liberal countries. The post-crash moment though is marked by overt mechanisms for asserting and securing the social order and greater, more obvious struggles of position such as those manifesting in the alliance of Irish public sector workers and, in particular, in the use of legislation to quash this protest. But as this example also demon-

strates, there are multiple forms and gradations of control simultaneously being effected within Austerity states. Both coercive policing (punitive legislation) and subjectivation at the symbolic level (TINA) are being used to sustain hegemony. The systems of communication and affect described by Lash and Thoburn are also in play – the extensive penetration of TINA works at the level of fear – but these are merely the mobilization of one suite of techniques working alongside, sometimes in opposition, sometimes in concert, with hegemonic discipline, counter-hegemonic articulations of difference, and the imposition of coercive violence. Thus while the techniques, goals and struggles of any given socio-political, economic or cultural moment may take on new contours, and the particular qualities of the ideal subject shift in accordance, this does not mean the end of political domination through hegemonic discipline (in whatever multiple forms that may take).

It is this continuity between hegemonic discipline and the conditions of the biopolitical social factory that I wish to underscore as I draw attention back to the reproductive logic of power relations and the necessity of understanding those in order to generate alternative political positions. Such continuity is rarely recognised for a key assumption of post-hegemony theories is of an epochal change *from* hegemonic regimes of symbolic domination *to* post-hegemonic regimes of biopolitical control. Indeed, it is only in the maintenance of the idea that there has been such a seismic shift that allows for the claim of a fundamentally transformed relation of power and the insistence on this as *post*-hegemonic. As both Mitropoulos (2012) and Thomas Lemke (2011) argue, this is contrary to Foucault's theoretical framework in that it tends either to posit directly, or imply obliquely, 'historical succession and systematic replacement' of techniques of power, rather than the 'simultaneity and interconnectivity of heterogeneous technologies' (Lemke 2011: 74). Governance through biopower, even if taken as somehow not involving hegemony or discipline, can be 'but merely one element among others' (Foucault 1976/1998: 136).

Moreover, the supposed shift to post-hegemonic society is also premised on a fundamental and false binary between 'productive' and 'reproductive' activity – between 'invention and discipline' in Lash's reckoning. He says: 'If the hegemonic order works through a cultural logic of reproduction, the post-hegemonic power operates through a cultural logic of invention, hence not of reproduction but of chronic production of economic, social and political relations' (2007: 56). This is also contrary to Foucault's ideas. Despite the distinction he may have drawn between discipline and regulatory population control in *The History of Sexuality*, in his model of power discipline *is* inherently productive, generating the knowledge categories, states of being and subjectivities inhabited by its subjects. Indeed he argues that it is *only* through such a productive capacity that a particular power relation can become established in liberal models of governance. It is an unfortunate consequence of the canonisation of the idea of a passage from conditions of

confinement to one of biopolitical control (Mitropoulos 2012) that the creative capacities attributed to reproductive disciplining activity by Foucault have been lost.

But more importantly there is a historical inaccuracy in assuming that a clear division once existed between realms of sociality and those of capitalist accumulation, so that it is *only now* in the context of the social factory that power and economic relations are able to permeate the social and ‘work from within’ (Lash 2007: 59). As many feminist researchers and sociologists of economics have informed us, domination has never been confined solely to the realms of the social nor relations of production to those categories of activity organised around the wage relation. Throughout the history of capitalism there has been a necessary co-existence of affective, immaterial, biological and/or cognitive labour with those forms of work identified as ‘productive’ (see Dalla Costa & James 1972; Fortunati 1995; Federici 2004; Zelizer 2005; Hochschild 1983/2003). The obvious example is that unpaid reproductive, affective domestic labour has provided the structural foundation upon which the capitalist economy has been built. The implication that capitalism has until recently impacted *only* within the walls of the factory denies the already social labour of women and men that has contributed directly and indirectly to capitalist relations. Feminist theories of labour tell us that it is certainly not new that power exerts itself through living matter and affective relations.

Yet, in discussions of contemporary biopolitics, it is quite common to see only a brief, perhaps token, mention of feminists such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James who, in the words of Kathi Weeks (2011: 123), ‘opened the door to a new conceptualization of the structure of capitalist social production, to which the category of the social factory was an early contribution’. Their contribution to understanding labour is typically raised and then dismissed in favour of a statement of the novelty of the social factory, both as a theoretical construct and as a lived reality. Thus, while I may have claimed earlier that Austerity Ireland functions as a social factory, the same is true of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ Ireland that predated and precipitated the economic collapse and of any precursor version of Ireland under capitalism (or indeed colonialism). Each has demanded and received the incorporation of various aspects of social life into its economic logic.

The dramatic growth of Ireland’s Celtic Tiger years for instance was not only a fiscal project, but also involved the re-organisation of cultural and social norms (see Kirby et al. 2002; Coulter & Coleman 2003). The entire social fabric was penetrated by the economic logic of that era and inevitably personal and domestic relations incorporated the social and cultural instabilities and personal desires demanded by the structures of high-finance capitalism. This involved an orientation away from the localised logics of established social institutions such as the Catholic Church to international markets and the entrepreneurial social, economic and physical mobility associated with them (O’Riain 2000: 183; Peillon 2002). Cultural norms perpetuated the desire for high levels of individual consumption and

for the property ownership that fed Ireland's housing boom. Appropriate personal attitudes were also policed, with Taoiseach Bertie Ahern musing in a 2007 speech to the Irish Council of Trade Unions that he didn't understand people who were critical of the economy and wondered why they simply didn't commit suicide (*RTÉ* 2007). To live (at all) in the Celtic Tiger was to put your labouring body but also your desiring self uncritically to work in generating and perpetuating its economic logics. The same absorption of social, cultural and interpersonal life into the economic system is true of any socioeconomic formation in which base and superstructure mutually reinforce each other. As Ryan says of her studies of the life-choices of Irish people between 1999 and 2001, individual choices and economic values, public and private spheres, 'cannot be considered in isolation from each other' (2003: 155).

It is fundamentally false then to assert that the incorporation of biopower is an entirely contemporary phenomenon that, ipso facto, requires a radically transformed relation of power. When the already existing incorporation of bodies and subjectivities into capitalist regimes are taken into consideration, to suggest that regimes of biopower *necessarily* require the exertion of power or resistance in forms other than hegemony becomes untenable. Biopower and biopolitical control clearly have taken, and still can take, the form of hegemonic disciplinary power and counter-hegemonic struggle.

Reproduction and Genealogy

If hegemonic discipline is compatible, if not co-extensive, with governance of the social factory, and if consent is still necessary to establish and maintain a system of control, then we would do well to reinvigorate our investigation of these techniques and technologies of power. In particular it becomes important to understand hegemony as involving processes of subjectivation through which legitimacy is generated, maintained and normalised but which are not encountered as alien forces. It is to explore the Althusserian subject who is already implicated in ideology and 'fraught with the paradox of capture' (Beller 2013: 182; Althusser 1971/2008). In this I am echoing Mitropoulos who, while recognising the important contributions made by Autonomist readings of Marx, also suggests a need to explore issues of restoration and reproduction in contemporary capitalism. She says that such analysis must be 'accompanied by closer attention to the specifically genealogical character of the persistence and/or re-imposition of capitalism, that is to say, of particular forms of sociality that are also the modes for the legitimate redistribution of property and right' (2012: 92).

Mitropoulos advocates continued investigation of those processes that assure generational lineage, a metaphor which, by drawing upon concepts of biological reproduction, focuses attention upon the reproduction of capital within familial, domestic relations: *oikonomia*. This reproduction is more than the generation of

living creatures. It is also about the reproduction of subjectivities and the orientations conducive to the perpetuation of social roles, including ‘demarcations of race, gender, sexuality and nation’ (200) that constitute ‘the productive labourer’. Mitropoulos draws our attention to a question associated clearly with the interrogation of hegemonic domination: what is being restored at the frontiers of capital? She depicts colonisation not as dispossession but as involving the installation of proper capitalist order over ‘all those instances where the legibility of property rights is (or has become) acutely uncertain’ (113). Wherever capital is re-imposing limits, such as in the symbolic violence inflicted on non-compliant public sector workers in Ireland, it is demanding ‘the restoration of genealogical lines, in their simultaneously sexual, legal and economic senses’ (113). The question then to be asked of political practices such as the imposition of and resistance to Austerity is

the extent to which they expand the conditionality of the genealogical or make other ties viable. What forms of generation – beyond the genealogical nexus of race, sexuality, citizenship, class and gender, that is, beyond the adhesions of desire to re-/production of capitalism – might be furnished with plausible infrastructures in the composition of political demands for reform or movements for radical transformation? (114).

While she does not use the term here, these questions are about tracing the mechanisms of hegemonic domination, legitimation and antagonism. For an activist politics, her framework begs us to ask what alternate subject positions or forms of agency are being articulated in the varied discourses of Austerity whose generative potential might be capitalised and expand upon for transformative purposes? A lead can be taken from Douzinas’ (2013: 137-154) mapping of the various transformations of subjectivities in a range of anti-Austerity protests in Greece that attempts to understand how people came to temporarily or permanently abandon the control of biopolitical capitalism. In the Irish context, there are lessons to be learned from the emergence of a diverse, but organised, political agency within protests against public sector pay cuts, as well as the nature of the individual subjectivities collected within. Located outside the genealogical lineage of the Irish State, their own trade unions and widely mediated popular opinion, what moved these workers towards experiencing and expressing that resistance is important to understand. Did it emerge from an economic rationality as further pay cuts threatened lifestyles, or did the illegitimacy of dominant thinking develop from ideological, affective or even professional concerns, amplified by particular agents? Knowing this process will allow us to see how, when and why the reproduction of hegemonic ideas fails and so provide activists with tools for instigating such failure. It seems important to understand empirically how these individuals manifested a ‘plausible infrastructure’ of resistance, both materially and discursively. Tracing the generation of these subject positions will provide political ground

from which further meaningful and urgent resistance can be stimulated and organised.

The Return to Hegemony and Social Reproduction

To return to questions of hegemony and social reproduction in this way is about recognising the embedding of all subjects in a rich array of cultural and social institutions that fundamentally shape that subjectivity and give form to political agency. It is about acknowledging the genealogical question of ‘to whom and what we owe our existence’ (Mitropoulos 2012: 93) rather than merely willing a return to a mythical autonomous, unified, self-possessed subject who exists prior to capitalism (or ideology generally) (Weeks 2007: 234). It is about identifying the dominant arrangements of power/knowledge in order to re-arrange them so we can generate new subject positions that articulate resistant politics.

And despite the exploration of acts of resistance here, a focus on the reproduction of hegemony also addresses how, despite assumptions about the emergence of progressive politics from multitude, a population can remain more or less complicit with economic and political regimes that damage society. This returns us to life in the social factory of Austerity Ireland and to the sense of failure Helena Sheehan finds in the passivity of the general population. To understand this political context, it is important to identify the mechanisms legitimating hegemonic ideas and perpetuating consent. An obvious site to explore is the astonishingly complicit mainstream broadcast and print media of Ireland in which state economic orthodoxy is rarely challenged and which provide an ideal site for the reproduction of Austerity ideologies. It may be possible to relate the colonial legacy of social and economic dependence on higher-order cultural institutions such as the Catholic Church to the widespread compliance with now secular equivalents such as the Troika. The deep enmeshing of Catholic morality in everyday Irish life and social systems may be that which enables claims that ‘we all partied’ to effectively chasten and discipline a population. It may also be possible to identify the less intense material immiseration felt by middle-class Irish citizens relative to their Greek counterparts to account for disparities in the intensity and extensity of struggle against Austerity’s economic logic. Which of these socio-historical, socio-economic and cultural conditions, or combinations of any or all, have produced the hegemonic legitimacy of Austerity Ireland is not entirely clear and much more extensive investigation than I can offer in this theoretical critique would be required to grasp the inter-related mechanics that have produced the relatively compliant subjects of contemporary Ireland.

What is clear though is that to attempt to understand the politics of Irish Austerity without recourse to the concept of disciplining hegemony is to fail to understand them in their specificity, or to provide useful grounds for intervention. The concept of multitude fails to provide access to mechanisms for motivating social

change outside of the elusive properties of emergence within the general intellect (Camfield 2007; Thorburn 2012). For those like Sheehan who are urgently seeking to mobilise a vulnerable population to bring about material political change, this is too much of a tenuous proposition on which to hang such pressing hopes. Identifying mechanisms of social reproduction as proposed above draws attention to sites where that reproduction is incomplete or partial and which therefore can be leveraged in antagonistic struggle. But this can only happen when we discard the concept of post-hegemony and immanent control and instead understand the affective and logical genealogies of contemporary political subjects. Further empirical interrogation of the incomplete reproduction of dominant ideology, as it is manifesting in the alliance of Irish public sector workers for instance, can offer insight into how and when cracks in legitimating discourses appear and how those fissures can be rearticulated and organised in the production of counter-hegemonic narratives and, ultimately, of effective resistance to Austerity. We need to ask not only how subjects are produced but, after that, how they may be alternatively articulated. Such work is vital for those of us seeking to manifest change in the economic politics of Austerity.

Finally, I want to assert that the renewed focus on mechanisms of social reproduction advocated here should not be dismissed as ‘merely cultural’ analysis. Drawing a cue from Butler (1997), I want to reject the implication that understanding processes of subjectivation is somehow not properly Marxist or nothing to do with economic equity and the redistribution of material resources. The production of subjectivity is elemental in maintaining the structures of capitalism and there are profound material consequences and causes of the various subject positions we (are called upon to) occupy as citizens, consumers, activists, workers, individuals, family members, etc. As Johnson (2007: 99) says: ‘Hegemony is not about cultural politics only. There can be no rule by cultural means alone. Yet culture enters into every move of the powerful or those who seek emancipation.’ The failure to recognise that the social factory, and the contributions to capital this term encompasses, has a very long history has obscured the entwined relationship of material conditions and symbolic frameworks. Attendance to the practices of hegemonic power and the regimes of legitimacy within a culture forms part of a materialist analysis and is just as urgent in the biopolitical social factory as ever. It is certainly necessary in Austerity Ireland.

Dr. Kylie Jarrett is Lecturer at the Centre for Media Studies at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. She has recently published *Google and the Culture of Search* with Ken Hillis and Michael Petit and is currently using feminist labour theories to explore consumer activity in digital media. E-mail: kylie.jarrett@nuim.ie

References

- Althusser, Louis (1971/2008): *On Ideology*, London: Verso.
- Arditi, Benjamin (2007): 'Post-hegemony: Politics Outside the Usual Post-Marxist Paradigm', *Contemporary Politics*, 13:3, 205-226.
- Atzert, Thomas (2006): 'About Immaterial Labor and Biopower', *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 17:1, 58-64.
- Beer, David (2009): 'Power Through the Algorithm? Participatory Web Cultures and the Technological Unconscious', *New Media & Society*, 11:6, 985-1002.
- Beller, Jonathan (2013): 'Digitality and the Media of Dispossession', Trebor Scholz (ed.): *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, Oxon: Routledge, 165-186.
- Brennan, Donagh (2010): 'As the Story is Told: There is No Alternative', *Politico.ie*, 30 November: http://politico.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6956:as-the-story-is-told-there-is-no-alternative&catid=257:there-is-no-alternative&Itemid=1064 (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Burke, Sara (2010): 'Boom to Bust: Its Impact on Irish Health Policy and Services', *Irish Journal of Public Policy*, 2:1: <http://publish.ucc.ie/ijpp/2010/01/burke/08/en> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Butler, Judith (1997): 'Merely Cultural', *Social Text*, 15:3-4, 265-277.
- Camfield, David (2007): 'The Multitude and the Kangaroo: A Critique of Hardt and Negri's Theory of Immaterial Labour', *Historical Materialism*, 15, 21-52.
- Caritas Europa (2013): *The Impact of the European Crisis*, <http://www.caritas-europa.org/code/en/publications.asp> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Coulter, Colin & Steve Coleman (eds) (2003): *The End of Irish History? Critical Reflections on the Celtic Tiger*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Dalla Costa, Mariarosa & Selma James (1972): *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, London: Falling Wall Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1995): *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Douzinis, Costas (2010): 'The Greek Tragedy', *Critical Legal Thinking*, 17 November, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2010/11/17/the-greek-tragedy/> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- (2013): *Philosophy and Resistance in the Crisis*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dunphy, Shane (2013): 'In the Classroom, "Reforms" Do Not Spell Improvements', *Irish Independent*, 29 September, <http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/shane-dunphy-in-the-classroom-reforms-do-not-spell-improvements-29618442.html> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick (1999): *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-technology Capitalism*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick & Greig de Peuter (2009): *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Federici, Silvia (2004): *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, New York: Autonomedia.
- Fortunati, Leopoldina (1995): *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labour and Capital*, New York: Autonomedia.
- Foucault, Michel (1976/1998): *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: 1*, London: Penguin.
- (1984/1992): *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality: 2*, London: Penguin.
- (1984/1990): *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality: 3*, London: Penguin.
- (2008): *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979*, Michel Senellart (ed.), Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fuchs, Christian (2008): *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Gregg, Melissa (2011): *Work's Intimacy*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2000) *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- (2005): *Multitude*, London: Penguin.
- (2009): *Commonwealth*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

- Hochschild, Arlie (1983/2003): *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Berkeley and LA: University of California Press.
- The Irish Times* (2012): 'Mortgage Arrears Increase Again', 13 December, <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2012/1213/breaking16.html> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- (2013): 'The Debt Deal Dilemma', 19 February, <http://www.irishtimes.com/debate/the-debt-deal-dilemma-1.1253144> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Johnson, Richard (2007): 'Post-Hegemony? I Don't Think So', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24:3, 95-110.
- Kennedy, Sinead (2011): 'Discipline and Punish', Crisis Jam, *Politico.ie*, 5 December, <http://politico.ie/crisisjam/8122-state-were-in-discipline-and-punish.html> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Kirby, Peadar, Luke Gibbons & Michael Cronin (eds) (2002): *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*, London: Pluto Press.
- Lash, Scott (2007): 'Power after Hegemony: Cultural Studies in Mutation?' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24:3, 55-78.
- Lazzarato, Maurizio (1996): 'Immaterial Labor', Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt (eds) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 133-146.
- Lemke, Thomas (2011): *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, New York: New York University Press.
- Malone, Noel (2013): 'Education People: A Principal's View of the Action', *The Irish Times*, 7 October 2013: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/education-people-a-principal-s-view-of-the-asti-action-1.1550736> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- McGuire, Peter (2013): 'Hey, Teachers', *The Irish Times*, 28 September 2013: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/hey-teachers-1.1542731> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- McStay, Andrew (2011): 'Profiling Phorm: An Auto-Poietic Approach to the Audience-as-Commodity', *Surveillance & Society*, 8:3, 310-322.
- MerrionStreet.ie* (2013): 'Significant Impact of Gathering Ireland 2013 Outlined at Global Irish Economic Forum', 4 October 2013: <http://www.merrionstreet.ie/index.php/2013/10/significant-impact-of-gathering-ireland-2013-outlined-at-global-irish-economic-forum/?cat=67> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Mitropoulos, Angela (2012): *Contract & Contagion: From Biopolitics to Oikonomia*, New York: Minor Compositions.
- Mylonas, Yiannis (2012): 'Media and the Economic Crisis of the EU: The "Culturalization" of a Systemic Crisis and Bild-Zeitung's Framing of Greece', *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 10:2, 646-671, <http://www.triplec.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/380> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Negri, Antonio (1989): *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-first Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- O'Regan, Michael (2013): 'Quinn Warns Teachers They are Endangering Job-for-life Status', *The Irish Times*, 25 September 2013: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/quinn-warns-teachers-they-are-endangering-job-for-life-status-1.1538783> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- O'Riain, Sean (2000): 'The Flexible Developmental State: Globalization, Information Technology, and the "Celtic Tiger"', *Politics & Society*, 28:2, 157-193.
- O'Rourke, Colm (2013): 'Haddington Road Only Way Out of Chaos', *Irish Independent*, 6 October 2013: <http://www.independent.ie/opinion/columnists/colm-orourke/haddington-road-only-way-out-of-chaos-29637606.html> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Oxfam (2013): *The True Cost of Austerity and Inequality: Ireland Case Study*, Oxfam.org, September, <http://www.oxfamireland.org/blog/austerity> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Peillon, Michel (2002): 'Culture and State in Ireland's New Economy', Peadar Kirby, Luke Gibbons & Michael Cronin (eds): *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*, London: Pluto Press, 38-53.

- Politico.ie* (2010): 'There is No Alternative', 30 November 2010: http://politico.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=257&Itemid=1064 (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Pope, Conor (2013): 'Keys, Please', *The Irish Times*, 23 March 2013: <http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/homes-and-property/keys-please-1.1335911> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Ross, Andrew (2013): 'In Search of the Lost Paycheck', Trebor Scholz (ed.): *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, Oxon: Routledge, 13-32.
- RTÉ (2007) 'Ahern apologises for suicide remark', RTÉ News, 4 July 2007, <http://www.rte.ie/news/2007/0704/90808-economy/> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Ryan, Anne B. (2003): 'Contemporary Discourses of Working, Earning and Spending: Acceptance, Critique and the Bigger Picture', Colin Coulter & Steve Coleman (eds) *The End of Irish History? Critical Reflections on the Celtic Tiger*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 155-174.
- Sheehan, Helena (2013): 'To the Crucible: An Irish Engagement with the Greek Crisis and the Greek Left', *Greek Left Review*, 23 January 2013: <http://greekleftreview.wordpress.com/2013/01/23/to-the-crucible-an-irish-engagement-with-the-greek-crisis-and-the-greek-left/> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Swiffen, Amy (2009): 'From Hegemony to Biopolitics', *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies*, 31:2-3, 237-252.
- Terranova, Tiziana (2000): 'Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy', *Social Text*, 18:2, 33-58.
- Thoburn, Nicholas (2007): 'Patterns of Production: Cultural Studies After Hegemony', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24:3, 79-94.
- Thorburn, Elise Danielle (2012): 'A Common Assembly: Multitude, Assemblies, and a New Politics of the Common', *interface*, 4:2, 254-279.
- Titley, Gavan (2013): 'Budgetjam! A Communications Intervention in the Political-Economic Crisis in Ireland', *Journalism*, 14:2, 292-306.
- Venn, Couze (2007): 'Cultural Theory, Biopolitics, and the Question of Power', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24:3, 111-124.
- Virno, Paolo (2004): *A Grammar of the Multitude*, LA: Semiotext(e).
- Wall, Martin (2013): 'ASTI Rejects Haddington Road Deal, Backs Industrial Action but TUI Accepts', *The Irish Times*, 20 September 2013: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/asti-rejects-haddington-road-deal-backs-industrial-action-but-tui-accepts-1.1534718> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Weeks, Kathi (2007): 'Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics', *ephemera*, 7:1, 233-249.
- (2011): *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Workers' Solidarity Movement (2013): 'The Human Cost of Cuts to the Public Services – Thoughts of a Public Sector Worker', 20 March 2013, <http://www.wsm.ie/c/human-cost-cuts-public-services-worker> (accessed 14 January 2014).
- Zelizer, Viviana A. (2005): *The Purchase of Intimacy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Compulsory Creativity: A Critique of Cognitive Capitalism

By Steen Nepper Larsen

Abstract

Contemporary capitalism can be labelled cognitive capitalism. In this dynamic, demanding and extremely transformative mode of production, knowledge becomes a strategic force of production and an important commodity, while concepts and ideas become items. This article sheds light on some of the implications of the emergence of a cognitive capitalism. In response to modern oxymorons, such as compulsory creativity and mandatory originality, this article offers various attempts to interpret and criticise how human inventiveness and a whole range of externalities get attuned to economic and market strategies, depriving them their natural, social and individual qualities. The aim of this article is to renew and sharpen a critique of the new type of capitalism and to foster some normative bricks that might be able to inspire alternative ways of thinking and living.

Keywords: Cognitive capitalism, creativity, critique, commodification, immateriality.

Introduction to Cognitive Capitalism

...the capturing of positive externalities and their validation in the creation of private profit.

Yann Moulier Boutang: *Le Capitalisme cognitif* (2007/2011: 58)

In modern capitalism, it is a *conditio sine qua non* that the dedicated human resource manager (HRM) encourages employees to do their best and release their human potentials for the benefit of the company. The human employee is comprehended as an active good, always capable of achieving more. In other words, the worker is an itinerant catalogue of dormant potentials and competences, an asset possessing extra resources, and the whole human being goes to work in flesh and blood.

The so called positive externalities, which are initially placed outside the productive sphere, such as desire, passion, compassion, language creativity and communication, and the common goods, such as sun, wind, rain and even pollination, are all of major economic interest and become integrated into private production. As levers for accumulation and profit, the non-economical phenomena get economised. Both human nature and the patterns of social interaction invoke immense interest, and attempts to attune both of them to the company's mission get implemented. In fact, according to Moulier Boutang (2007/2011: 20, 104, 146-147), the current challenge of cognitive capitalism is to capture and fertilise these externalities (also defined as the 'travail gratuit' or 'free work'), which lie in wait outside production and beyond the economic sphere.¹

The workers become equipped with specially designed CV narratives. They all wish to possess suitably unique qualities, so that they will prove irreplaceable when the next merger or rationalisation process takes place. The work force has become personalised, and the work individualised. Society no longer consists of nameless, unskilled and easily interchangeable 'hands', but of a growing proportion of highly refined and valuable knowledge workers.

Whereas the company is absorbed in branding on large-scale markets for enforced attention economy, the workers have to invest huge amounts of energy in effective and strategic personal branding. The message is the same everywhere: perform and compete, or go away and get lost!

At all levels, there is an increasing demand for the renewal of intellectual skills. Workplace-related courses are being offered and consumed at a rate never seen previously. From the factory floor to middle managers and top management – everybody has to accept the demand for inventiveness and have the courage to change old habits. And it is never acceptable to claim that one knows enough. Authorities that look backwards or worship tradition seem to be traces from an ancient and obsolete past.

Connectivity, change, renewal and innovation have become four important concepts and ideologies for private enterprise and state administration and, if the employee is not engaged in a continual development process, he or she will soon be displaced.

The HRM agent is a kind of a midwife, at the same time an intervener and a gentle redeemer. The employee has to be creative and original within an ever-present triangular framework, whose demands are: self-realization, self-development and self-governance.

Working today involves navigating contract steering, result expectations and documentation claims. Besides this, there is an on-going evaluation process directed towards everything and everyone. The watchword is lifelong learning from cradle to grave. Everyone seems to have an obligation to be creative. All around the imperative sounds: *Be creative!* Like an inevitable fixated truism, it is claimed that not only is it possible to be creative, but that everybody *ought* to be creative. Imperceptibly and wordlessly, this compulsion gets transformed into an inclination.

The workaholic Dane stands on the threshold of cognitive capitalism in which good ideas and productive thoughts can be transformed into gold at the stock exchange. There is currently extensive global competition to attract the best brains. Knowledge becomes a strategic force of production and an important commodity. Concepts become items with different price tags attached, and originality is desired and demanded at all levels and in all sizes. In the current international division of labour, it has become our 'obligation' in the affluent part of the Western hemisphere to produce and sell concepts, programmes and steering systems in order to survive and 'cope' effectively with the big thing called globalization.

Increasingly fewer people work in material production (making clothes and shoes, breeding pigs and cows, collecting mushrooms and cabbages) whilst increasingly more people deliver immaterial goods (experience and attention economy products, designs, knowledge devices). As seen from its own eyes, tomorrow's capitalism is clean, clever and smart. The polluting production and 'dirty' jobs are exported to other regions where the labour force is cheaper.

The aim of this article is to shed light on some of the implications of the emergence of a cognitive capitalism. In the midst of modern oxymorons like compulsory creativity and mandatory originality, this article presents various attempts to interpret and criticise how human inventiveness and a vast range of externalities get attuned to economic and market strategies, depriving them of their natural, social and individual qualities. The focal point of the text is to analyse the relation between creativity and capitalism in order to articulate a critique of cognitive capitalism and to foster some normative bricks that might be able to inspire alternative ways of thinking and living. This article also discusses the etymology of central concepts like creativity and innovation and analyses recent Danish political discourse on creativity claims.

The Performative National Competitive State

The state has become a nationally competitive state, and, if we briefly analyse the texts that advocate the policy of the *zeitgeist*, we learn that the 400 members of The Danish Innovation Council (who, incidentally, were hand-picked by the government), proudly proclaim in the report *Innovative Danmark* (Innovative Denmark) that approximately 90 per cent of Danes use their own ideas and take initiative at work without being led top-down. 'It is getting close to a total mobilization of the creativity of the workforce' (2005: 9 my translation). The report employs a simple and commercial definition: 'Profoundly, The Innovation Council defines innovation as something new, which has a value at the market place' (2005: 40 my translation). The logic is simple and compelling: 1) Creativity is a spark plug for 2) innovation, making it possible to renew and increase output on 3) the market, thereby increasing the company's success at the micro-level and enabling Denmark to become a 'winner nation' at the macro-level. One, two, three – jump: the same formula for the individual and for the nation, both welded into the same compulsive contemporary teleology.

The International Thomson Business Press produces a collection of books called *Smart Strategies Series*. In this series, one finds Neil Coade's congenial definition of creativity in *Be Creative. The Toolkit for Business Success*: 'My definition of creativity is the bringing into existence of a product or service which is the outcome of imaginative thinking' (1997: 1).

Once again, creativity gets situated in the invisible mental depths of the magnificent and attractive *black-box* of the human's capacity to think. On the following page, a simple model with two important and typical inferential arrows can be studied: 'Creativity (idea generation) → Innovation (new product/process development) → Market (product launch)' (1997: 2). Coade condenses the very same logic that the politicians and the wishful Danish councils currently tend to canonise.²

In the report *Danmarks kreative potentiale: kultur- og erhvervspolitisk redegørelse* (A review of Denmark's creative potentiality), produced by the Erhvervs- og Kulturministeriet (the Ministry of Business Affairs and the Ministry of Culture) in 2000, it was already stated that enhanced global competition in experience and attention economic products demanded an intensified collaboration between the business and the culture sectors.³ Culture and art are understood as an inevitable 'source of creativity and innovation in economic life' (2000: 18 my translation). The need to establish creative and inventive alliances between culture and business springs from the fact that the talent to tell good stories, the will to develop new design products, and the skills to honour man's immaterial needs have become important competitive parameters for the domestic business. 'The global waves of changes' and the new markets require injections of creativity: 'For many, creativity is the key to invent new ways to be able to communicate to the

market. New ways to insert value into the products. New ways to make enterprise' (2000: 22 my translation). The companies 'possess a need to mobilise their cultural and creative competences to survive in the competition' (2000: 23 my translation).

The Danish nation state and the government – in spite of the political strategy and ideology to let the market sphere decide without political interference – seem paradoxically to have once more found an ambition (See Larsen 2002a). The tendency is no longer a clear de-governmentalisation, but rather a national competitive *re-governmentalisation*, thinking and acting according to a large concern model. The state is deeply engaged in a giant human resource management experiment. The neo-liberal revival wishes to mobilise the dormant potentials of all inhabitants, and the technocratic fantasy strives to render the nation's resources transparent. At the same time, the focus shifts from the citizen to the consumer, while quasi-market relations show their faces. Society risks getting distorted and falling into decay. The preference of the consumer is viewed as the Archimedean point, and the market is seen as the meta-truth of societal interaction; however, it is impossible for the market to solve all problems. Demanding and fastidious consumers able to buy cannot function as the privileged central perspective of society.

Contemporary capitalism is an invisible and complex society without a centre; a society lacking self-confidence in long-term substantial and rational planning. The phantasmagoric market ideology attempts to compensate for this unspoken truth. The market functions as a paradoxical *tranquilliser*.

Beside many other aspects, the market is colour blind to the fact that there is no identity between knowledge and money, neither between innovation for sale and innovation *as such*, nor between creativity and effectuate production destined to strive and long for a profit telos.

Oxymorons

How is it possible to form critical thought in the midst of this consensus-loaded and confused landscape? The will to philosophise has its origin in human wondering, and philosophy is love of wisdom and the will to question the apparent obviousness. Facing the highly effective, conflict-laden modern work life and its many short-lived buzzwords, it is impossible not to wonder. It is a challenge to launch a critical diagnosis of contemporary values and idioms. In the words of the philosopher Hannah Arendt: 'A life without thinking is quite possible; it then fails to develop its own essence – it is not merely meaningless; it is not fully alive. Unthinking men are like sleepwalkers' (1971: 191). The meaningful and vigilant life is intimately interwoven with the possibility to think, and it is the determination of philosophy that it 'can transform occurrences outside yourself into your own thought' (1971: 166). Critical and awaking thinking has its point of departure in a

curious questioning and interrogating of ‘the manifestations of thinking in everyday speech’ (1971: 176).

First of all, it appears to be the case that many words are on the move, and their meanings are going through radical transformations. For the philosopher, it is important to become acquainted with the parents of the new. Therefore, he or she is always preoccupied with studies in the field of the diverse history of words and ideas.

The word ‘creative’ baptises the ability to make something new and unexpected. It has a Latin origin: *creare, creatum* – create, creating. Innovation and innovative mean renewal and renewing (respectively), and, once again, the sources are Latin: *innovare, innovatio*. Classic metaphysical theology claimed and believed that God created everything out of nothing – *creatio ex nihilo* – and without his unfathomable omnipotence nothing of what exists would ever have become as it is. Today’s innovative strategy planners declare that man, as the crown of creation, possesses precious inner creative potentials, which the company and the nation have a right to demand are released. God’s almighty creativity has been spread out and has become a democratic right and compulsory potential. At the beginning of the 21st century, every human being has to function and navigate on the unholy marketplace as a profane god (written with a small g) and realise the potential gifts in a productive and convenient way. The traditional concept of God takes God to be infinite, eternal, unalterable, independent and omniscient. Today, the downscaled and profaned self-deification is interpreted as historical, alterable, provisional, dependant and divided into partial knowledge-keepers; but, first as foremost, it is interpreted as insecure and contingent.

Only those who obey the obligation to be creative can hope to out-perform the ambitious, competitive and threatening Chinese and Indian workers. The modern man has to master his self-governing competences and take the responsibility to act; being destined and doomed to freedom and with the technologies of the self, he/she has to ‘foster’ a strategic optimisation of the self. People become private ‘users’ (consumers) of eugenics (via scanning, genetic mapping, or pre-natal embryonic research) and, in the long run, they create humans that are desired and affordable, forcing them to become their own semi-religious and self-centred creators in the workplace and in the societal sphere.

Denmark has to adjust itself to become the world’s most innovative society. The Danes have to be mobilised and optimised. One has to notice the martial and calculative metaphors of the present vocabulary. The premises seem to be that the global competitive fight is an open war in which only the strategically best will survive.

According to Karl Marx’s intriguing and paradoxical view, work in the productive sphere is both a necessary evil and a primary human need. In today’s laborious society, the former has almost vanished as a weak memorial trace, at least in post-industrial capitalism. Instead, the biggest evil now appears to be the societal

fate of not being usable or exploitable. Unemployment is directly related to a loss of recognition, to social and economic catastrophe and, not least, to individual fear and anxiety.

Secondly, it is astonishing that contradictory terms come about in the first place. According to rhetorics, contradictory phrases such as ‘hate-love’ and ‘sour-sweet cream’ are labelled oxymorons. Creativity is charged with a mixture of inclination and compulsion. The unconditional claim: *Be creative!* is such an oxymoron.⁴ The desire and the propensity to be creative gets intimately adjusted to the company’s strategic interests in creativity. It thereby becomes difficult to know precisely where the individual use value of creativity stops and the exchange value of the original and creative talents begins. In principle, people today are nearly always at work; not simply because they can always be reached by email and mobile phones, but also because they try to invent creative solutions to workplace problems and tasks even when they are officially off work. In ‘Answering the question: What is Enlightenment?’, Immanuel Kant famously wrote that a person is incapable of managing his own affairs and lacks autonomy if he does not know how to use his own intellect without being led by another (Kant 1784/1991). Today’s normative rule of conduct must be: A person is incapable of managing his own affairs and lacks autonomy if he does not know how to use his creative potentials and innovative skills without being led by another.

Thirdly, it is necessary to reflect upon the question of how contradictions and conflicts can be grasped and studied in a consensus-ridden society. It could be argued that, when knowledge, thinking and creativity are treated like commodities and handled as limited resources, there is something wrong in the state of Denmark, for knowledge is in principle never a private property nor a limited resource. Just like language, love and happiness, knowledge grows whilst being spent and spread. Perhaps it is even against the nature of knowledge to treat it as a commodity with a price.

The Creativity Concept

The *Dictionary of The History of Ideas* states: ‘The proliferation of meanings of the word ‘create’ [...] have been extraordinary: ‘causing to grow’, ‘ability to produce’, ‘ability to call into existence’, to construct, to give rise to, to constitute, to represent, to invest, to occasion, to form out of nothing’ (1973: 577). But it is doubtful if the anchor place of this active verb (to create) and the noun (creativity) can be conceived as an inner, mental property and character of the individual. Both George Herbert Mead (1934: ‘Section 28. The Social Creativity of the Emergent Self’) and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1996: 1, 8, 23) support this critique and emphasise that creativity has less to do with personal potentials and more to do with social dynamics, contextual options and claims, and that creativity stems from practical situations and unforeseen events. However, in spite of this,

people continue to talk about themselves and their fellow men as if they all possess potential resources, waiting day and night on stand-by. To comprehend the value of innovation simply as its market value is also a dangerous reduction. Imagine if innovation – and creativity – were free to deal with something beyond the market place – like wisdom, beauty, experience, curiosity and happiness – and help harsh work routines to disappear and qualitative use values to materialise.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* § 49, Immanuel Kant writes: ‘The imagination (as a productive cognitive faculty) is, namely, very powerful in creating, as it were another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it’ (1790/2000: 192). In the paragraphs that follow, Kant defines the concepts ‘talent’ and ‘genius’ and proclaims that man is not predestined to imitate and copy. Man is namely both autonomous and ‘schöpferisch’ (the old German word for being creative).

Many years earlier, Kant wrote: ‘Creation (Die Schöpfung in German, Larsen) is not the work of a moment. After creation made a beginning by producing an infinity of substances and materials, it is efficacious with constantly increasing degrees of fecundity throughout the total succession of eternity. Millions and numberless millions of centuries will pass, during which new worlds and new world systems will constantly develop and reach completion, one after the other, in the expanses far from the central point of nature [...]. Creation (Die Schöpfung, Larsen) is never complete. True, it once began, but it will never cease. It is always busy bringing forth new natural phenomena, new things, and new worlds’ (Kant: ‘Part Two. Section Seven: Concerning Creation in the Total Extent of its Infinity Both in Space and Time’ in *Universal Natural History and Theory of Heaven* (1755/2000: no pagination). It is worth noticing that Kant anticipates man’s ‘destiny’ in contemporary capitalism while portraying him as the second creator doing a never-ending job (‘always busy bringing forth new natural phenomena, new things, and new worlds’) on Planet Earth. In the pre-modern world, God was the only creative force and, though man was created in his image, he was created (*natura naturata*) and not creating like God (*natura naturans*).⁵ In the modern world of cognitive capitalism, man has to be creative to avoid being dismissed from the workplace.

Taking a quick glance in three different international dictionaries that give voice to general historical consensual definitions of creativity, one can envisage that the concept is connected to the co-term ‘originality’ and is loaded with the power to break routines: ‘When original thinking is desired, assumptions should be questioned and routines broken’, and ‘Originality is, after all, the most widely accepted dimension of creativity. Creative things are always original’ (*International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 2001: 2893 and 2894). ‘**Creativity** (Latin), ‘creative power’, ability to original creative analysis and structuring of the material and social environment (Hillmann: *Wörterbuch der Soziologie*, 1994: 451-452).⁶ ‘**Creativity**, the ability to make or otherwise bring

into existence something new, whether a new solution to a problem a new method or device, or a new artistic object or form' (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1992: 721)

But upon examining its etymological roots, denotations and connotations of the concept of creativity also lead to two entries stating that creativity always has to solve concrete problems in pragmatic settings. Creativity is first and foremost divergent thinking and contextual awareness: '**Creativity** (*psychology*) that aspect of *intelligence* characterized by originality in thinking and problem solving. Creative ability involves the use of divergent thinking, with thoughts diverging towards solutions in a number of directions' (*Collins Dictionary Sociology*, 2000: 119). 'Cognitive theories of creativity focus on the intellectual structures and processes that leads to insights, solutions, and ideas that are original and useful' (*International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 2001: 2892). In line with these definitions, it can be said that contemporary cognitive capitalism does not celebrate creativity in itself (*an sich*), but its ability to produce 'original and useful' material goods and immaterial commodities (such as ideas, knowledge and brands).

Cognitive Capitalism and Creativity

Capitalism seems stronger than ever, and its ability to transform and commodify social relations does not encounter many obstacles. However, it appears as though its base – the private commando over surplus production – is crumbling, because it is utterly dependant on concepts such as knowledge, creative body-thoughts, invention, linguistic fantasy, culture, confidence, sanity, engagement, democracy and communicative action.

Although industrial capitalism transformed living labour to dead labour on a grand scale (via an externalisation of the experience and knowledge of the workers to be encapsulated in the machines and the technological steering-systems), immaterial and cognitive capitalism seems to be immediately dependant on living labour, and not least to the unpredictable and attractive creativity bound to human existence and intelligence, as its primary source of value.⁷

The economic autistic indication of value tends to become the measure of everything, even though it is destructive and impossible. Only time will tell whether there are built-in absolute borders in and for cognitive capitalism and whether it will be its own *Totengräber* (gravedigger). For the time being, capitalism does not appear to be fragile. In the meantime, I will dare to draw twenty alternative views of societal development and contrast them to the scenarios stemming from the one-eyed utilitarian-neoliberal model.

Today's capitalism takes advantage of 'the exploitation of living immaterial labor' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 29). The challenge is to establish how this exploitation and suppression can be opposed.⁸ Such a critique has to challenge and pro-

voke contemporary cognitive capitalism and its new regime of accumulation, whose motto – taken from Marx’s first volume of *Capital* (1867/1976: 412) – remains: ‘Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!’

Man’s Ideas and Productivity Generously Foster and Feed Capitalism

Productive relations delimit and restrict the free development of productive forces. When knowledge is treated as a strategic resource, a commodity and a private property, when creativity becomes a compulsion and a competitive parameter of the nation state, and when innovation is stripped of any qualitative content and only estimated for its market value, it is not out of the question to examine whether or not Marx’s point is still valid and possesses imaginative power.

Man’s ability to produce knowledge and the capability to foster creative and innovative social processes are absolutely necessary for the development of productive forces. But these capacities are governed by private ownership, by the merciless market and by the strategic-political performance paradigm. And besides, everything happens in the holy name of self-realisation and becomes subdued to the dominating logic of strategic behaviour of the subject.

The majority of productive forces (though admittedly not all of them) might be developed more freely without these ownership relations and economic and political rationales. Inherent in knowledge, creativity and innovation, there seems to be something transgressing. It is immanent in the ‘nature’ of knowledge that it must be divided and shared and not just restricted to an exclusive and private object. Everybody ought to have access to knowledge and, the more it circulates, the more it grows. The same holds for happiness and love. None of the three disappear while they are given away.⁹ In principle, though not in real life, we already live in a post-scarcity society.

Creativity is more than Fuel for Capitalism

Both as a theoretical concept and as a concrete social and individual praxis, creativity has to be rescued and donated its own right without focusing primarily on its potential economic possibilities and implications. Its non-economic existence has to be defended. It cannot simply be accepted that all diverse non-economic phenomena always-already and servile have to become parts of an economic machine. Knowledge, creativity and innovation are like critical and normative voices in a hyper-rationalised and hyper-economised world. The perpetual ambition of this article is to allow a cool analytical way of thinking cope with and line up beside a warm critique of society in order to renew the concept of critique and to shed light on the differentiations inhabiting a diagnosis of the contemporary society’s values and norms.

No position of discourse or interpretation is ever neutral. The task is to intervene in the public sphere and to fertilise possibilities for an open, international debate on society's development.

Critical research is a passionate and advocating affair with which critical judgements intertwine.

Rather refreshingly, Paolo Virno writes, 'Der Mensch ist ein Lebewesen, das Imstande ist, seine Lebensform zu verändern, indem es von gefestigten Regeln und Gewöhnheiten abweicht' (2007: 244) ('Man is a living creature capable of changing his life-form when he deviates from the strict rules and conventions'), and he continues by providing a precise definition of creativity, which contrasts other broader and vaguer definitions. He states, '...die Formen des sprachlich artikulierten Denkens, die es erlauben, das eigene Verhalten in einer kritischen Situation zu verändern' (2007: 246) ('...articulated thinking in a lingual form, which makes it possible to change one's behaviour in a critical situation') (see also Hentig 1998/1999). Notice that Virno understands creativity as something situated and context-bound and, at the same time, as a qualitative and existential force to change the situation and oneself. This understanding establishes a distance to the airy and abstract figures of pure potentialities that neoliberal spokespeople and cognitive capitalists often idealise and refer to.

To Rescue the Concept Creativity

Imagine if it were the lions who branded delicious boxes of human flesh from distant countries, if the sharks displayed diving-trips down under, or the eagles offered guided tours to the Alps. Picture the scene in which you were unable to create possible worlds in language and were denied the opportunity to expand your taste experiences and regions. Imagine if you were destined to cud-chewing, day and night, for centuries, for ever.

In order to rescue the concept of creativity, one must recollect the knowledge and wisdom from a vast field of thought, including philosophical anthropology, evolutionary biology and cognitive semantics. The human species is plastic, curious and creative: 'nature plus', develop a 'second nature', which is not reducible to one type of nature.

To be a human being is to be changeable by nature, but it was never written into human genes nor inscribed in human linguistic patterns that there had to be a compulsory creativity within cognitive capitalism. The wise words of Kant have to be remembered: man is the animal equipped with reason, motive and argumentation, and capable of saying no.

Biopolitics and Bio-counter-power

A rescuing critique of the phenomenon of creativity interlocks the anthropological specificities of man with the unpredictable social dynamics we inhabit, maintain and come to change. Creativity is far more than an inner mental resource, an outer strategic trump, an element within national educational planning or a convenient lever to enhance the effective economic competition.

Capital establishes widespread connections to the talkative and listening person embedded in everyday life, active in the work sphere and an eminent language user, having to live in the overbearing interlaces of the experience economy, biopolitics and life-economics.

The 'old' capitalism laid violent hands on the common grounds and fields and expelled the original inhabitants in order to breed flocks of sheep to acquire wool for production (Karl Marx wrote about these so-called enclosures in Chapter 24 of the first volume of *Capital* (1867/1976)). The valorisation of capital spread through diverse materials such as grain, cotton, venison, coal, iron, gold, diamonds, ivory, fish, whales, water (transformed to steam and energy); not to forget productive child labour and the efforts of the working masses.

The 'new' capitalism does not differ radically from the old one when it comes to principles, nor the diverse movements through matter, bodies and souls, but it also benefits from the fact that schools and families socialise youngsters to function as productive and flexible cogs in the industrial and virtual machines (see Gorz 2003/2010 and Larsen 2011). The individual is tremendously effective in disciplining his or herself to wage-labour and being creative on his/her own initiative or on command. Therefore, capital finds always-already available and keen workers who are willing to help capital blossom, and capital knows how to address and meet man's cognitive and productive skills and consumptive desires. It seems to be attractive to join the show with the biggest yield. But we should not forget that capitalism has other faces: child prostitution, trafficking, drug dependency, powerful monopolies and oligarchies, wars on oil and other precious and strategic resources, excessive fishing and harvesting, weapon production, and unhealthy food (to give a few examples).

Mental Capital and Neuro-capitalism

The animal with the large brain is convenient for capital. Capital is dependant on many 'things' that are initially difficult to capitalise without striking a blow (even though it happens all the time and often under cover). Just to mention a few: life, air, water, ideas, dreams, hopes, love, happiness, sunshine, respect, confidence, passion, ethics, will, fear, collaboration, interaction, language, communication, compassion, curiosity, empathy, knowledge, beauty, help, events and unpredictable and thinking bodies. Despite this, capital attempts to commodify these exter-

nalities or to transform them into something that can be recognised within an economically coded horizon. Capital seeks to reterritorialise what has been deterritorialised or risks slipping away from its field of action. The modern *enclosure* vocabulary deals with copyright, patents and various agreements on whether or not it is legal or illegal to try to headhunt important and knowledgeable ‘workers’ from various companies. Cognitive capitalism is profoundly dependant on human knowledge and creativity and it views mankind primarily as a potential resource. This human potentiality seems to summon paradise on earth, but it has its costs and dark sides.

When creativity gets attuned to the needs of production, the human ability to shape something new gets moved from the playground, the art schools and the educational settings. Besides this, it is not only the entrepreneur, the manager, the leader or the devoted, strange and lonely inventor who has to be creative in today’s society. The expectation is that we all have to come up with creative solutions and ideas at the speed of light in order to direct the invisible cognitive, creative and innovative processes to be realised with a visible market effect.

Transformation of the Concept Creativity

Creativity used to be conceived as an anthropological capacity, as a renewing force in society, as an integrated part of a successful human self-realisation project and as a potential for opposition and resistance. Critical thinkers even saw creativity as something to be rescued from capital(ism), market and state. Today it seems to have become ‘something’ we are destined to fertilise in a life-long perspective. Compulsory creativity gets directly interwoven with neo-liberal steering techniques like evaluation procedures, control and contract measurements (Larsen 2004). Creativity – talents for serendipity and unforeseen decision-making – become appreciated assets and commodities.¹⁰ The task is to design and produce material and immaterial goods to honour the insatiable demand for new products, experiences and entertainment. The creative outcome can be coined ‘customised thought-items’.

Previously, creativity was conceived as an external factor, occasionally being capable of servicing production and functioning as an economic lever. Now creativity has moved up front, where it plays the role of the first priming composition of the food chain in the accumulation process. In the rich and spoiled part of the Western hemisphere, nobody ever seems to question that one must live on creativity, or else die.

The powerful creativity discourse can be depicted in a scheme in which ‘quotations’ of the anonymous contemporary creativity lingo are inserted:

- Creativity is inexpressible, rare, irrational, groundless – beyond measuring, intention and planning (‘Creativity cannot be predicted, either it is there or not there’).

- Creativity gets fertilised; it could be described as a fragile and brittle plant ('The creative young talents have to be raised and cultivated'; 'The creative talent was blossoming').
- Creativity is a gift; rare and precious ('This creative employee is outstanding').
- Creativity is a resource; a field for vivid economic and political interest ('Creative economics'; 'The creative resources of the nation has to be mobilized' – like the striking assertions and mantras mentioned at the beginning of this article).
- Creativity is reserved for certain groups (parts, segments) of the population ('The creative kid'; 'The creative class'; 'The creative leader'; 'Artists and architects are creative').
- Creativity as a property of teams and interwoven with social relations ('The creative Brazilian soccer team'; 'Denmark as a creative nation').

In general, creativity is valorised in a positive way and is actively related to praiseworthy events and acts that manage to surprise and please us. Creativity is situated *in someone* and expressed *in something*, and, in cognitive capitalism, people apparently do not mind committing themselves to the naturalist fallacy: creativity *is* able to do something; creativity therefore *ought* to do something.

Creativity is a trigger, ignition and dormant potential. Creativity is an utmost viable process phenomenon. It brings something new into existence; it changes the world and its inhabitants. Creativity is a richly connoted dynamic noun. It deals with and implies changes of forms and states, transformation and energy transfer.

How to Act as *Homo Intellectus* and to Form a Culture of Generosity?

This is a transformation phase celebrating profane determination. *Homo intellectus* is selected to bridge the gaps between creativity, innovation and the market in a number of intelligent ways. It has become the optimum meaning of capitalist cognition and its presupposed destination to take care of a direct transformation from idea to earning, *from thought to invoice*.¹¹

Two counter-moves seem possible: 1) Exogenous counter-power, demonstrating that a sizable amount of creative skills and innovative solutions do not primarily have to facilitate the market. This praxis of resistance tries to liberate the human streams of energy and place societal needs higher than private economic ones. 2) Endogenous counter-power. Many waking hours are spent at the workplace or in educational institutions, following dreams and exposing creative skills. It is also worthwhile fighting in this sphere, 'even though' one might get a higher wage and better marks by remaining passive. The critique of cognitive capitalism cannot afford to pretend to be 'holy' and pure in advance; it is not enough to stand on the side-lines.

Reflective governance has become systemic reason and internalised ‘nature’. Bio-power and bio-politics get fused as empirical reality and existential tonality for those who fulfil their duty (and more) towards it. In order to not to get swallowed or lose one’s freedom to think and move, it seems important to learn to read the signs, to notice the differences and to acknowledge the resemblances between the dominating governance and management rationales. Some of them have to be laid bare, some to be ‘hacked’ (de- and refunctionalised), some even have to be fought against. Attempts at counter-thinking have to be strengthened. Contra-productive capitalism – using violence, power and smart strategies to economise with non-economical features – has to be publically undermined. Knowledge belongs – like language – to everyone and no one (see Larsen 1995). Today, a ‘Kultur der Generosität’ (culture of generosity) is missing, along with the power to lift itself far beyond the strategic exchanges of equivalences and the linguistically masked and dressed up exploitation of man’s creativity.¹²

The passion for non-utilitarian thinking must be guaranteed the best conditions and the right to have non-regulated experiences must be protected. It becomes a lifelong task to fight abuse of externalities: thinking, knowledge, being together, carnal pleasures...and creativity. Like Marx, it is necessary to continue to criticise the societal machine when it digests the knowledge worker without anyone protesting. Back in 1850-1860, what used to be the activity of living labour suddenly seemed to become a result of the activity of the machine. Today, most of us never have to be attached to noisy and unprotected machines. The production and extraction of surplus value happens much more smoothly and gently when we work, network and learn. Previously, the factory and dangerous Spinning Jenny expressed a clear language of exploitation; today, forms of suppression and exploitation are much more subtle and delicate. They even become something as strange and incomprehensible as internalised ‘nature’.

A Civilizing Influence of Capital?

The knowledge-intensive (e.g. intellectual) workforce possesses a use-value as well as an exchange-value dimension. The use-value for the carrier and owner of the potential intellectual workforce consists of an opportunity to position oneself as a powerful player on the labour market with a high exchange value – in an actual and virtual joyful capability to be able to form the world’s matters and signs.¹³ The use-value for the buyer of the highly skilled, educated and trained workforce is ‘densified’ in its ability to contribute to value production, by way of the valorisation of capital.

To protect the use value of one’s own knowledge and skills and to try to give it another *telos* than the one governing production and market affairs might be one sort of resistance opportunity.

But quite many of these types of workers appear already to be so privileged that they feel it gets close to an autonomous and meaningful hobby to master and pursue their daily work. When going to work donates life meaning and fosters pride in what is accomplished and created, implying that one receives recognition, it might be the case that modern work has been so unrecognisably humanised throughout the last part of the 20th century that what Marx once labelled ‘the civilizing influence of capital’ has been an active player behind the backs of the wage labours.

However, it should never be forgotten that cognitive capitalism feeds on the productive passions and creative impulses of the workers, like Yann Moulier Boutang documents and many current critical voices testify.¹⁴

Creativity does not have to be inscribed in influential business models (like Coade’s cyclical model described above). Instead of igniting technological innovation and being directed towards the market, creativity can try to break away from this beaten track and be engaged in strengthening social ties and inventing new ways of doing things. Instead of doing the job to maximise the production of exchange value creativity, inventiveness and serendipity can donate new use-values, civilise the feeling of togetherness, and find new ways to qualify the productive forces to serve mankind. The challenge is to treat and honour creativity as a friend of excellence and a power to liberate social processes, instead of seeing it simply as a money-making device.

A critique of cognitive capitalism calls on both knowledge and perceptions to be able to differentiate, judge and navigate a concrete situation. To critique is not simply to equate expressions of distaste or to point derisively at something one dislikes. Creative critique is *Möglichkeitssinn* (a German word for the skilled sense to find and shape meaningful opportunities) and a conceptual form-determination of what has to be criticised. Critique gets activated by the phenomenon that needs critique.

Marx’s Eternal (?) Actuality

Marx’s words in *Grundrisse* (1857-1858/1973) are still valid. It is not wealth, understood as accumulated exchange value, command over other people’s work and private ownership to ever more circulating capital that gives society its real measure and quality: real wealth is the elaborated individual productive force and the free and self-determined time in which one can live like a human being.

But Marx has to be supplemented: contemporary cognitive capitalism does not possess a sole and exclusive right to annex creativity, which is exposed individually in indeterminate singular form, or in the social field in various plural forms. Creativity is more than and different from a simple lever for further accumulation and strategic and national politically induced competitive, market and production-related behaviour. Creativity is not an object and not a fixed tool. Neither is crea-

tivity to be grasped as a rational, intentional, voluntary and inner-mental potentiality. Creativity is subjected to certain borders, for man did not create the Big Bang, the cosmos, nature, evolution, life or death – or even for that matter him- or herself – with consciousness or creativity.

Steen Nepper Larsen (b.1958) is associate professor at GNOSIS – Mind and Thinking, Campus Emdrup, Aarhus University, Denmark, and Co-author and co-editor of *Sociologisk leksikon*, Cph.: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2011 (www.gnosis.au.dk). E-mail: stla@dpu.dk

Notes

- ¹ See Larsen (2008) for a categorical attempt to conceptualise and criticise cognitive capitalism. A thorough presentation of Moulier Boutang's critical thinking is also to be found in this book and in Kristensen and Larsen (2008).
- ² As well as the Innovation Council, a so-called Globalization Council has been formed.
- ³ At this time, the Danish Government was not like it is today, nor was it liberal-conservative (as it was in 2005); in 2000, the government was social democratic and social liberal. It should therefore be noted that consensus manifests itself across the political spectrum when it comes to how to comprehend and treat creativity as primarily an ignition with tremendous economic implications. See Larsen (2006 & 2012).
- ⁴ The neologism cognitive capitalism can also be interpreted as an oxymoron, through the direct connection between something living, organic, thinking and human and a societal exploitation and accumulation form. The oxymoron stems from the fact that capitalism on its own is not able to be creative; only human beings, alone or as parts of social networks, have the capacity to be creative.
- ⁵ See Henriksen's interview with the author about the historical roots and the actuality of the creativity concept (2011).
- ⁶ My translation from German: **Kreativität** (lat.), "Schöpferkraft", Fähigkeit zu originärer schöpfer. Analyse u. Gestaltung der materiellen u. soz. Umwelt'.
- ⁷ Moulier Boutang (2007/2011: 163): 'Without the power of the living (*le vivant*, human activity) which is radically distinct from machinery and from coagulated dead labour, none of this can take place'. He continues to describe how cognitive capitalism benefits from invention power of the cooperation between large numbers of brains. Today exploitation is, 'basically, not that of the consumption of labour power, but its willingness to make itself available', and 'its capacity to provide answers to non-programmed questions'.
- ⁸ Sloterdijk (2007: 171) sheds light on how modern thought strives for and gets attracted to 'unendliche Möglichkeiten des Auch-anders-sein-Können' ('infinite possibilities of also-being-different').
- ⁹ In *Empire*, Hardt & Negri (2000: 407) assert that the creative power of the multitude (its multiple *posse*) is currently being suppressed. Its virtual force to free creation beyond the demanding exchange forms of money and capital is being blocked off by Empire. According to the authors, collective resistance does not lie dormant; it is brewing irresistibly. 'By the virtual we understand the set of powers to act (being, loving, transforming, and creating) that reside in the multitude' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 357). I do not think it is necessary to accept this grand profane narrative and utmost peculiar semi-sacred emancipation story of the multitude

(see Larsen: (2002b)) to accept the argument that creative talents could take other prosperous forms if they were not subdued by capital/the state/Empire.

- ¹⁰ It has to be emphasised that a lot of people never get the opportunity to be creative, neither in Denmark nor abroad; they still have to do what they are told. Furthermore, quite a few are expelled from the work sphere, suggesting that their potential creativity is unlikely to be seen.
- ¹¹ This happened to be the slogan of the Ministry of Research (full name: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation) in Denmark until 2011.
- ¹² The concept of a ‘culture of generosity’ is inspired by the chapter title ‘Vollendeter Kapitalismus: Eine Ökonomie der Generosität’ (Completed Capitalism: An Economy of Generosity) in Sloterdijk (2006: 60).
- ¹³ Lazzarato (2004: 190): ‘Contemporary capitalism does not arrive with factories, these follow, if they follow at all. It arrives with words, signs and images’.
- ¹⁴ Lotringer (2004: 6): ‘The more creative and adaptable the workers are – the more self-valourising – the more surplus of knowledge they can bring to the community at large [...]. Everything has become “performative” [...]’. See also Larsen (2008), and Kristensen and Larsen (2008).

References

- Arendt, Hannah (1971): *The Life of the Mind*, San Diego, New York & London: A Harvest Book.
- Coade, Neil (1997): *Be Creative: The Toolkit for Business Success*, London & New York: International Thomson Business Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1996): *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, New York: Harper Perennial.
- Erhvervs- og Kulturministeriet (2000): *Danmarks kreative potentiale – kultur- og erhvervspolitisk redegørelse (A Review of Denmark’s Creative Potentials)*, Copenhagen: Ministry of Business Affairs and Ministry of Culture.
- Gorz, André (2003/2010): *The Immaterial: Knowledge, Value and Capital*, London: Seagull Books.
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2000): *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Henriksen, Carsten (2011): ‘En nation af kreativitetsslaver’, *Asterisk*, 11:59.
- Hentig, Hartmut von (1998/1999): *Kreativitet. Høje forventninger til et svagt begreb*, Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel.
- Innovationsrådet (2005): *Innovative Danmark* (Annual report), Copenhagen: The Council of Innovation.
- Kant, Immanuel (1755/2000): ‘Universal Natural History and Theory of Heaven’, translated by Stephen Palmquist, *Kant’s Critical Religion*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Kant Immanuel (1790/2000): *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Kant, Immanuel (1784/1991): ‘An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?’, London: Penguin Books.
- Kristensen, Jens Erik & Steen Nepper Larsen (2008): ‘Økonomiens metamorfoser og kapitalismens hamskifte – om vidensøkonomi og kognitiv kapitalisme’, *Kritik*, 41.
- Larsen, Steen Nepper (1995): *Sproget er alles og ingens. Erkendelse og spekulation*, Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.
- (2002a): ‘Staten uden ambitioner’, *Dansk Sociologi*, 13:1.
- (2002b): ‘Filosofiske betæneligheder. Kritik af *Empire*’, *Dansk Sociologi*, 13:4.
- (2004): ‘Evalueringsfeber’, *Dansk Sociologi*, 15:1.

- (2006): 'Innovation som total national forløsning i den neoliberale stat', *Fagbladet Ingeniøren*, February 17.
- (2008): *Kategoriale tydinger af den kognitive kapitalisme – med særligt henblik på at begribe samtidens trang og hang til kreativitet*, Copenhagen: GNOSIS (Vedhæftninger 3): gnosis.au.dk/fileadmin/www.gnosis.au.dk/forskning/gnosis_vedh_ftninger/kategoriale.pdf (accessed 15 January 2014).
- (2011): 'Is Capitalism dying out?' (review of Gorz (2010)), *ephemera*, 12:3..
- Lazzarato, Maurizio (2004): 'From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life', *ephemera*, 4:3.
- Lotringer, Sylvère (2004): 'Preface', Paulo Virno: *The Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Los Angeles: Semiotexte.
- Marx, Karl (1867/1976): *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume 1*, Harmondsworth: Penguin/New Left Review.
- (1857-1858/1973): *Grundrisse. Foundation of the Critique of Political Economy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin/New Left Review.
- Mead, Georg Herbert (1934): *Mind, Self, and Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Moulier Boutang, Yann (2007/2011): *Cognitive Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Sloterdijk, Peter (2006): *Zorn und Zeit. Politisch-psychologischer Versuch*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Sloterdijk, Peter (2007): *Der ästhetische Imperativ. Schriften zur Kunst*, Hamburg: Philo & Philo Fine Arts.
- Virno, Paolo (2007): 'Witz und innovatives Handeln', Gerald Raunig & Ulf Wuggenig (eds): *Kritik der Kreativität*, Wien: Verlag Turia + Kant.

Dictionaries

- Collins Dictionary Sociology* (2000): Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Dictionary of The History of Ideas* (1973): New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Hillmann, Karl-Heinz (1994): *Wörterbuch der Soziologie*, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag.
- International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences* (2001), Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1992): 15th ed., Chicago: Chicago University Press.

You are Not a Loan: A Debtors Movement

By Andrew Ross

Abstract

Written from the participant perspective of the author, the article documents the debt resistance movement that is one of the enduring offshoots of Occupy Wall Street. Addressing the household debt crisis in the wake of the financial crash, it focuses in particular on student debt, approaching an aggregate 1.2 trillion in the U.S., with defaulters numbering in the tens of millions. The emergence of The Occupy Student Debt Campaign is analyzed, along with the initiatives of its successor, Strike Debt, including the Rolling Jubilee and the Debt Resisters Operations Manual. The article concludes by arguing that debt will be the frontline of anticapitalist struggles in the 21st century, just as the struggle over wages dominated the twentieth century.

Keywords: Populism, Occupy Wall Street, financial crisis, movement activism, student debt, financialization.

Introduction

Debt activism has been one of the most striking manifestations of anti-capitalist sentiment in the years since the 2008 financial crash. Because the crushing levels of household and public debt affect all but the wealthiest slice of society, anti-debt organizing has assumed a populist tone all across the industrialized world. In this essay, I will analyze some of these populist tendencies, drawing on my own experience in the debtors' movement that sprang up along with Occupy Wall Street (OWS) in the fall of 2011.

The prairie-fire momentum of OWS in its heyday was an open invitation to commentators looking to proclaim another people's awakening in the vein of the U.S. populist movement of the late nineteenth century.¹ In the wake of the 2008 crash, popular protest fomented elsewhere – in the Arab Spring and the anti-precarity agitation all across Europe – but the American populace appeared to be in a deep slumber, as if a spell had been cast by the necromantic bankers who had seized control over Washington policymakers. Occupy's exuberant outbreak, taking its cue from the "Wisconsin uprising" in the spring of 2011, and the Spanish summer of the *indignados*, was the long-awaited response to the financial crash three years earlier. Its leading slogan – "We Are the 99%" – was a direct expression of populist sentiment, summoning up the broadest of coalitions in its assault against the centers of financial power.

Indeed, the first time I heard the chant of "We Are the 99%," I had a flashback to a story I had heard about William Jennings Bryan, the god of midwestern populism. Bryan, going into the hard-fought presidential election of 1895 with a full head of steam, was invited to talk to students at Yale. His audience was hostile, and at one point, he scornfully declared that "ninety-nine out of every hundred" of them were "children of the idle rich." At which point, the crowd started chanting "Ninety-nine! Ninety-nine! Ninety-nine!" and he was forced to leave the stage. Bryan was surely wrong to describe their parents as the "idle rich." Many of them had been energetically engaged in class warfare of their own for some time. Much of their wealth flowed from active manipulation of the credit extended to the debt-burdened farmers on whose behalf Bryan inveighed so vociferously against the gold standard he proclaimed was about to "crucify mankind on a cross of gold." Family farmers in their frontier sodhouses, tenant sharecroppers in the South, and artisans looking to reclaim their self-mastery were all drowning in the sea of debt created by the citadels of finance in the East.

Bryan lost the election, but the populist upheaval he led was clearly defined by the spirit of debt resistance. The Gilded Age saw levels of income inequality unparalleled until the last decade or so. Is it any surprise, then, that Occupy, and its Strike Debt offshoot in particular, was propelled, once again, by the great injustice of populations delivered into servitude by the lords of credit? Will the renewed

attention to the burden of indebtedness blossom into a coalition of class fractions, with anything like the wide appeal that nineteenth century Populism generated?

The Progressive movement, which coopted the energy of the Populists, was borne along by elites, like Theodore Roosevelt, who saw that reforms were needed if the power of financial capitalism was to survive intact. As Don Fabrizio, the Sicilian aristocrat in Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, laconically put it: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." Today's counterpart is the celebrity investor, Warren Buffett, who openly acknowledges that the 1% has been successfully waging class warfare for some time, and that plutocrats like him should be paying more of their share of wealth in taxes. Indeed, Buffet, in his 2004 annual report to Berkshire Hathway's shareholders, warned that the U.S. was becoming more of a "sharecropper society" than an "ownership society" (Noon 2005). Buffet's position, which could be described as "speaking truth from power," is a familiar structural response to economic populism, and his proposed solution – tax increases for the super-rich – takes the form of a minimal concession: *We will pay more taxes but only as long as you don't tamper with the system by which we lay our hands on the wealth in the first place.*

Few economists would dispute Buffet's admission that this system of wealth accumulation had served his class very handily. Analysts who have investigated Occupy's claims about the 1% have concluded that, of all the factors responsible for the upward redistribution of wealth, financial manipulation of debt ranks very high (Saez 2012). But the imposition of debt is not just a mode of wealth accumulation, it is also a form of discipline and social control, with acute political consequences. This was most notable in the case of the IMF "debt trap" visited upon so many postcolonial countries as part of Cold War client diplomacy. In the global North, debt has been institutionalized for so long as a "good" consumer asset that we forget how homeownership was promoted as an explicitly anti-socialist policy in the U.S. in the 1920s. Subsequently, the long-term mortgage loan became the basis of anti-communist citizenship; William Levitt, the master merchant builder, pronounced that "no man can be a homeowner and a Communist." In the postwar decades, a first class citizen was someone who had entered into a long-term relationship of debt with a bank (a circumscribed ethnic population, given that most people of color were denied access to mortgage loans). Over time, the threat of a ruined credit score effectively limited the political agility of our "nation of homeowners."

Each slump in the housing market serves up a dose of discipline to the little people who believe they can successfully break into the speculation game so long monopolized by financial elites. But the most recent crash in 2008 revealed a much deeper crisis of household debt – a calamitous nexus of interconnected liabilities, stemming from the inability to make payments on several fronts, from healthcare bills, student loans, and consumer credit. 76% of American households are now in serious debt, and one in seven are being pursued by debt collectors.

Nor are those without personal loan agreements off the hook. Municipal debt has been structured in such a way that its costs are now routinely passed on to the most vulnerable populations in form of public employee wage cuts, slashed services, and regressive taxation (Larson 2012). In towns across the country, predatory Wall Street lending practices are producing, albeit on a small scale, the kind of austerity policies visited on electorates in Southern Europe, and global South populations before them under the regime of “structural adjustment.”

Because of its possessive reliance on the almighty dollar, American government debt bears little resemblance to the sovereign debts of the Eurozone countries that are being held in the grip of austerity. Nor does household debt bear any resemblance to public debt. Nonetheless, the claim that ordinary people have somehow been living beyond their means has been cynically marshaled in the imbroglia over raising the “debt ceiling” on Capitol Hill in order to introduce deficit-reduction measures that pass on the mounting costs of wars, regressive tax cuts, corporate welfare, bank bailouts, and ill-guided monetary speculation.

In the years since the financial crash, the disparity between the generosity shown to Wall Street (more than three trillion dollars of public money spent already, with an additional \$12.2 trillion committed by the U.S. government) and the conspicuous lack of relief for household debtors has made it quite clear whose debts are expected to be honored and whose are not. Occupy’s debt resistance activists were able to draw on a profoundly felt sense of injustice when we began our work in the fall of 2011. In the absence of any relief, we judged that the conditions would likely ripen for a full-blown debtors movement.

Debt-Financed Education

If such a movement emerges in the years to come, the student debt crisis and the activist response to it will prove to have been a key trigger. Even in the immediate pre-recessionary years, when debt was still considered a worthy asset and employment a plausible prospect, it was easy to see that the mounting student debt burden was a formidable obstacle to any smooth passage for students into the upper strata of middle-class economic life. When the aggregate burden surpassed consumer debt in 2011, and then reached the 1 trillion dollar threshold a year later, alarmist talk about the student debt bubble became a regular feature in the business media.

From the outset, Occupy locations around the country filled with harrowing public testimony about the agonies and tribulations of student debtors. Many found solace in pungent slogans like “Banks Got Bailed Out, We Got Sold Out!” Tumblr and other websites swelled with the stories of others who felt too constrained by guilt to stand up in the face-to-face agora of Occupy. This public ritual was a way of exorcizing the shame that privately afflicts debtors, and defaulters especially. The act of casting aside the shame and humiliation that accompanies

indebtedness (especially acute for borrowers aspiring to enter the middle class) was an important kind of “coming out” for debtors, and it has been a powerful affective component of the political moment. The alternative--suffering the consequences of debt and default in private--is a thinly documented trail of tears, leading to depression, divorce, and suicide for ever increasing numbers. By 2012, the average student debt was more than \$27k, having doubled since 2007. Defaults had also doubled in that same period of time. Of those who graduated in 2005, 41% are either delinquent or in default.

As a college professor, I had known for several years that my paycheck depends on my students going deeply into debt, often for decades to come. But like my colleagues, I chose not to dwell on it, a decision that seemed justifiable given that faculty salaries have been stagnant as a whole for some time now. We are hardly to blame for skyrocketing college costs. Yet, knowing that my students were trading a large chunk of their future wages for the right to walk into my classroom, did I have additional moral duties toward my students? Did I share any of the responsibility, or blame, for their decision to pile on loan after loan? Was I obliged to speak out against the profiteers who were plying them with high-interest credit?

Despite my own ambivalence – faculty have little to do with the fiscal affairs of their institutions – I felt compelled to respond. In November 2011, I helped to launch the Occupy Student Debt Campaign (OSDC), which invited debtors to pledge to refuse payments after one million others had signed up. Millions were already defaulting in private, and so our pledge offered a more self-empowering way of taking action and focusing public attention on the issue. Attracting pledgers was not easy – the morality of paying back debts still runs very deep in our society. Ironically, one million debtors did default, privately and not collectively, over the course of the year. While our pledge was premature, I learned a lot about the psychology of debtors in the course of our campaign.

On one of my campus visits, a student told me how her father had been laid off, and the family had fallen behind in its mortgage payments. A co-signer of her loans, for which the family home was collateral, her father had also been using home equity loans to pay some of her college bills. That source of credit was now closed off, and the family’s balance sheets were deep in negative territory. At the same time, her parents were landed with some of her grandmother’s hospital bills. To bring relief to a household that had been hit by what she called “a perfect storm of debt,” she had considered dropping out. Instead, she had turned to her two credit cards as an alternate source for funding her degree, opening up yet another door for creditors to come knocking. Fading fast were the college dreams of her younger sister. Newly graduated from high school, she was about to join her mother on payroll at their local Wal Mart supercenter to help tide over the family.

This student’s predicament was a lesson to me in the interdependency of debts, especially those related to the cost of maintaining basic social needs – in housing,

health, and education. Foreclosing the future of young people is a callous act, and a self-destructive path for any society. But allowing Wall Street financiers to feed off their predicament is beyond any moral compass

In contrast to reform initiatives calling for loan forgiveness (the guilt-laden term suggest the debtor has done something wrong), our OSDC campaign favored a write-off of current student debt, in the jubilee tradition, whereby elites periodically forgive unsustainable debt burdens. But this single corrective act by itself won't alter the formula for the debt-financing of education. So the campaign adopted some principles aimed at reestablishing an affordable education system. On our rough estimate, it would only take \$70 billion of the federal budget to cover the tuition costs at every two- and four-year public college. This happens to be the sum which the Pentagon wastes annually in "unaccountable spending," according to a recent audit. That comparison alone shows just how skewed our national priorities have become since the era of the GI bill, when the doors of higher learning were opened to working class families. If the U.S. is to have any kind of durable middle class in the 21st century, then it will have to join the long list of countries – including China, Mexico, Brazil, France, Argentina, Germany – that manage to provide free public education at the tertiary level.

In addition, OSDC argued that education loans should be interest-free—no one should profit from them. So, too, all universities including private ones, which benefit from public largesse in all sorts of ways but not least through the federal loan program, should adopt full fiscal transparency. Students and their families surely have a right to know how college administrators spend and allocate their tuition checks.

U.S. campus activism against tuition hikes and indebtedness was sporadic but insistent in the year following the debut of OWS. The most high-profile actions in North America occurred in Quebec, where the student movement won widespread public support in their ultimate victorious campaign to combat tuition increases. The Quebecois symbol – a red square – and the accompanying slogan, *carrement dans le rouge* (squarely in the red), were quickly adopted by education debt resisters in the U.S. The Occupy group All in The Red, staged several (casseroles) marches and actions in New York City in solidarity with their counterparts in Montreal. In Mexico, the *Yo Soy 123* student movement mounted a powerful public protest against political corruption in the period before and after the general election, while Chilean students successfully sustained several months of strikes in opposition to top-down efforts to privatize higher education.

Striking Debt

In June 2012, several Occupy groups (OCSD, Occupy Theory, and Occupy University) sympathetic to the student resisters, formed a new Strike Debt initiative (www.strikedebt.org), aimed at building a debt resistance and liberation move-

ment. The Quebecois red square was reinterpreted to signify the four corners of debt – education, healthcare, housing, and credit card – and a new slogan was rolled out: “You Are Not A Loan.” We held a series of “debtors’ assemblies” every Sunday in New York City parks. Largely unstructured, these were open invitations to speak out. The crowds were small enough for public intimacy, and the atmosphere, while informal, was electrifying. It was heart-rending to hear speakers bear witness about how debt had blocked their aspirations and forced them into decisions they regretted. Many spoke of depression, some of divorce, while others described the kind of future – owning a home, having children – they believed was now hopelessly unattainable. Parents stood up to agonize about their responsibility, as co-signers, for the loans of their now unemployed offspring. A fellow activist reminded us of an even more harrowing predicament: she had contracted a life-threatening ailment, and the bitter prospect of dying young was sharpened by the knowledge that her low-income parents would inherit her debts. Another expressed shame of another kind: to discharge his debts quickly, he had taken a job in the finance industry, but was sickened by the predatory nature of the loan-making he was asked to work on.

Strike Debt quickly amassed a nucleus of committed activists, some of them from the drastically reduced OWS core. By September 17th (S17), Occupy’s anniversary, the weekly Strike Debt assembly had emerged as one of the strongest OWS tendencies, with aspirations and a sense of momentum that did not rest on, or simply look back to, the achievements of the Zuccotti Park phase. On S17, we launched our first public service project, the *Debt Resistance Operations Manual (DROM)*, based on collectively research conducted in the course of the summer. Written in plain English, it offers practical advice to debtors of all kinds about how to escape from beneath their debt burdens and evict the power of creditors from their lives. While it condones individual action, the *DROM* also encourages collective acts of debt resistance as the only way of rectifying the inequalities generated by the debt economy.

Conceived as an act of mutual aid, the *DROM* has circulated far and wide. A second, expanded edition was produced, and it is being translated into other languages, and customized, in other countries, for economic landscapes that differ from that of the U.S. (*Debt Resistance Operations Manual* 2013). Making available this kind of advice is part of our commitment to public education about how the debt system functions. Wall Street’s self-serving response to criticism is that the finance business is just too complicated for lay people to understand. Every public revelation about how the system is rigged helps to erode the powerful ideology that loans always have to be repaid. This belief – that loan repayment is a highly moral test of personal responsibility – is the glue that holds the financialized economy together.

Our second project, the Rolling Jubilee, offered a more innovative kind of public education. This campaign raised money to buy distressed debt for pennies on

the dollar. Instead of collecting on the debt, as the collection agencies do, we abolished it, relieving debtors of all obligations. The Rolling Jubilee proved a phenomenal success, raising \$500,000 in a matter of weeks. Given how cheaply debt is sold on the secondary market, that sum will allow us to eliminate up to ten million dollars of debt. Debtors would be surprised, but elated, we hoped, when the letters from Strike Debt begin to arrive, informing them they no longer have to worry about medical bills they have been unable to pay. More generally, this “people’s bailout” helped to expose the predatory nature of this murky marketplace. How many borrowers, hounded by collection agencies, knew how cheaply their harassers had bought out their loans? How many knew that original lenders get to “charge off” their defaulted accounts and take a tax break – another kind of bailout – before bundling them into portfolios for sale on this shadowy, secondary market?

More profoundly, our Rolling Jubilee team received tens of thousands of messages from people whose spirits were raised by this example of mutual aid in action. Their heartfelt messages reminded us that political change rests on emotional stirring among ordinary people, just as much as it is driven by debates among full-time progressives. The Rolling Jubilee was not designed as a feasible, long-term solution to the debt crisis in and of itself. Instead, it was a “bailout by the people, for the people,” a chance to offer others support and solidarity where the government has failed them. Debt relief, by any means necessary, is a lifeline to desperately overburdened people.

Just before the launch of the Rolling Jubilee, other Occupy remnants sprang into gear to bring relief to the communities hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy. The spontaneous self-organization of Occupy Sandy proved to be more rapid, flexible, and effective than anything provided by government agencies. Not a few concluded that local, community-minded initiatives of this sort were the best expression of the Occupy ethos of mutual aid, and proof that the Zuccotti Park prototype could be spun out into a resilient outreach program, far beyond the traditional OWS constituency. Strike Debt organizers played a leading role in setting up and running field operations, and our research report revealed how other sources of relief in the form of loans, offered through FEMA or from private banks, would drive the victims further into debt – a classic case of disaster capitalism in action. Models for debt-free reconstruction were floated at community meetings.

Both the Rolling Jubilee and Occupy Sandy generated immense goodwill, and their example sparked new ideas and action plans. Relationships were established with European anti-debt groups (Citizen Debt Audit Platform in Spain, and *Democratie Réelle Maintenant* in Paris) committed to fighting austerity policies or to conducting citizen audits of sovereign debt. Faith communities, in particular, responded with enthusiasm to the Rolling Jubilee, sensing an opportunity to revive the biblical tradition among their own congregants. Strike Debt chapters began to spring up in other cities (and in the U.K), and the New York organizers set

forth a long-term goal of building a “debtors union” with national, and even international scope.

Reclaiming the Future We Need

There are many ways to “strike debt”: demanding all kinds of people’s bailouts; collectively refusing to pay illegitimate loans; targeting and shutting down collections agencies or for-profit colleges; regulating loan speculators out of business; reinstating limits on usurious interest rates (which were struck down in the late 1970s); fighting for free education and healthcare; defending foreclosed homes, and more. But these “strikes” need to be accompanied by constructive alternatives. The result of debt cancellation, even on a mass scale, will be negligible unless it was coupled with a far deeper restructuring of our economic system around socially productive credit. That is the prize our eyes are on – an alternative economy, run for mutual benefit and not for profit.

Progressives don’t always see why organizing around debt should be a priority. After all, it is the Right that traditionally harps on debt, and is currently using deficit reduction as an excuse to push through cuts to public goods provisions it has labeled as “entitlements.” Yet, to paraphrase Marx, people do not get to choose the conditions under which they make history. Most of us are in hock because life-sustaining necessities are increasingly debt-financed. Nor is debt resistance disconnected from more staple progressive concerns like campaigning for higher wages. There has always been a tight relationship between wages and debt—from the debt peons and debt slaves of antiquity to today’s transnational migrants, toiling to work off their transit and recruitment fees. For most people today, debts are the wages of the future, and can even be seen as a form of wage theft. Moreover, given that predatory lending of all sorts – from subprime mortgages to payday loans – disproportionately affects low income and people of color communities, debt resistance naturally dovetails with broader struggles for racial equality and economic justice.

Strike Debt and our allies believe that the struggle over debt is one of the front-line conflicts of our times, and that the new version of the American Dream will be to live free of debt. Initiatives like the Rolling Jubilee are a glimpse into that future, and are showing us – once again – that the first task of any political movement is to meet and touch people where they are. Through our work, we have learned that the popular appetite for debt refusal exists, no less than the desire for an alternative economy. Indeed, debt refusal may be the only way of salvaging popular democracy. The historical record shows that oligarchies have developed out of democracies when the creditor class is allowed to dictate policy, creating the conditions for debt peonage and slavery (Hudson 2011).

“Odious debt” is the legal term applied in the case of authoritarian rulers borrowing without citizen consent and for their personal benefit. But the scope of

odious debt should surely be extended to individuals and households targeted by predatory lenders in unjust ways. In addition, when populations are compelled to privately debt-finance the provision of basic social goods, we might consider these to be “anti-social debts,” what the Chinese call the “three mountains” of education, housing, and healthcare, all weighing heavily on the shoulders of the people. Their explosive growth is more and more perceived in Beijing as a threat to that country’s stability. In the U.S., our inability to meet these costs has been turned into a source of lavish profit for the finance industry. Any representative government that permits banks to impose these harms on an unprotected populace has all but forfeited its democratic legitimacy.

When capitalism has exhausted its capacity for profit-taking in the present, it circulates ever more paper claims on the future (Dienst 2009). Financialization is a way of appropriating our future time and labor far in advance of how and where we choose to conduct our lives. If we are to have the future we need then we will first have to reclaim the future from the creditors.

Andrew Ross is a Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, and the author of *Bird On Fire; Nice Work if You Can Get It; Fast Boat to China; Low Pay, High Profile; No-Collar;* and *The Celebration Chronicles*. His forthcoming book is *Your Money or Your Life: The Case for Debt Refusal*. E-mail: ar4@nyu.edu

Notes

- ¹ Todd Gitlin (2013) was only the most prominent of those who placed Occupy within the lineage of US Great Awakenings.

References

- Debt Resisters Operations Manual* (2013): New York: PM Press/Common Notions.
- Dienst, Richard (2009): *The Bonds of Debt*, New York: Verso.
- Gitlin, Todd (2012): *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street*, New York: HarperCollins.
- Hudson, Michael (2011): “Debt and Democracy – Has the Link Been Broken?”: <http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2011/12/michael-hudson-debt-and-democracy-has-the-link-been-broken.html> (accessed 15 January 2014).
- Larson, Ann (2012): “Cities in the Red: Austerity Hits America,” *Dissent*, November 16, 2012.
- Noon, Chris (2005): “Berkshire Hathaway CEO Blasts ‘Sharecropper’s Society,’” *Forbes Magazine*, March 7, 2005.
- Saez, Emmanuel (2012): “Striking It Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States (updated with 2009 and 2010 estimates)”, March 2, 2012: <http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-UStopincomes-2010.pdf> (accessed 15 January 2014).

What Difference do Derivatives Make? From the Technical to the Political Conjuncture

By Randy Martin

Abstract

In the aftermath of the great bailout of capital in 2008 (and still ongoing) finance has often been seen as external and parasitical to the real economy. Instead, finance and other forms of capital have become more closely articulated and interwoven. A critical social logic of the derivative is offered here, following on Marx's analysis of the commodity, to consider what is meant by dominance of finance, what difference finance makes and the politics of debt. The derivative provides key insights into the apparently detached process by which money seems to beget more money, and at the same time discloses the internal socialization and interdependence that is at the root of a politically generative mutual indebtedness.

Keywords: Derivatives, financialization, debt, socialization, capital, commodities, Marx, sociology.

Introduction

The capitalism in which finance prevails presents all manner of challenges – at once conceptual and political. In what follows, a critical look at derivatives will provide a portal through which to engage the antinomies of finance. Derivatives give form to that contradictory relation between the move to money as such, and the moves deeper into social materiality and interdependence. Unpacking derivatives, not simply as a technical device of finance, but as a key to the social logics and relations that inhere in the current conjuncture of capital, will address three cardinal riddles of finance. First, what does financial dominance mean for an understanding of how capitalism works (or doesn't); second, what historical difference does this prevalence of finance make; and third, how to understand the social and political implications of the preponderance of financial debt?

Following Marx a critical social logic begins with the way wealth presents itself, today most emblematically in the form of the derivative, an instrument for pricing risk, and then moves to the mutual interdependence, now evident in debt, which discloses the historical agency of associated producers. Analytically speaking, the internal logic of the derivative shifts attention from understanding the world selectively on capital's own terms to value instead the labor that is constitutive of society; the socialism that is immanent to capitalism. Before moving to the three conundrums of finance, some conceptual groundwork needs to be established regarding crisis, Marx and the meaning of derivatives.

Contrasting Crises

The financial crisis evident in the implosion of subprime lending and the subsequent bailout of certain corporations did much to fix attention on the politics of debt without yielding much by way of unity of analysis or course of action. Rather, two contrasting vistas are evident. In one, finance seems to exist in a world apart from most people's everyday lives. In this realm, money is made from money, seemingly out of thin air that never comes down to earth. Finance in this regard is speculative, fictitious, metaphysical and immaterial. And yet from that very ground upon which finance supposedly does not tread, people are feeling great pain, not least because they are collectively paying for what has been taken from them, in this case trillions in public monies being used to underwrite the rescue of purportedly deserving capital. This is the other perspective on finance that is identified as all too real: it bites, cuts, makes itself felt and known in every nook and cranny of experience the world round. These material effects are not restricted to public sacrifice for private gains, but extend to all manner of weighing what is worthy and valuable, from childrearing, education, healthcare, retirement; really any kind of life outcome to which people might be oriented. From

this perspective, far from being an unproductive deviation from the actual economy, finance is as real as it gets.

For long-time critical observers of these dynamics, all this might look like business as usual. Capital accumulates by denying access to means of subsistence that subsequently forces labor into mutual association, as was a consequence of the feudal enclosures of the European peasantry that extended from the 13th to the 17th centuries (Perelman 2000); then flees the demands that are made from any other than itself on the surplus that results (Brown 1987); and furthers the compression or annihilation of space by time (Harvey 1999). The complication would come if this flight is one from the commodity itself. Accordingly, capital is no longer productive, but cannibalizes itself (Soederberg 2011). Bypassing the hidden source of its wealth, labor power, it becomes merely speculative, and replaces surplus value with a series of bets in which the gain of one is the loss of another in a game of zero-sum. This is one understanding of what Marx called “fictitious capital,” the promissory notes that serve as “capital for the banker,” used for multiple loans in excess of actual deposits, that he saw as at once, “illusory” bearing its own “laws of motion” and representing the capital of “the public” as its own (Marx 1894/1967b: 463-75).

Like much in Marx, there is more to the story than a technical distinction among forms of money and capital. Not only does capital socialize labor – interchangeable and interdependent--but finance is a means by which capital itself is socialized, what he termed concentration and centralization, or the elimination of private property within capitalist relations:

This result of the ultimate development of capitalist production is a necessary transitional phase towards the reconversion of capital into the property of producers, although no longer as the private property of the individual producers, but rather as the property of associated producers, as outright social property. On the other hand, the stock company is a transition toward the conversion of all functions in the reproduction process that still remain linked with capitalist property, into mere functions of associated producers, into social functions. (Marx 1894/1967b: 437).

Whereas for any individual financial hedge there appears only a winner and a loser, for capitalist accumulation as a whole, the realms of production where surplus value is made, and circulation where value is realized, move closer together. Seen from the perspective of the socialization of labor and of capital, the expansion of finance would variously disburse, implicate and elaborate relations of production and circulation internal to one another. More specifically it could be said that finance poses precisely this contradiction; namely, between what appears as capital for itself, money that makes money through speculation or pure circulation, and capital for (or really through) others that generates all manner of mutual entanglement, encumbrance, and debt in multiple forms and consequences. Most simply put the politics in *Capital* lies in how to get from mutual interdependence to free association; from debt as a burdensome chain, to indebtedness as a basis for creating society by and for those who collectively generate its wealth.

Marx's Mutual Indebtedness

How might this double movement be understood, toward what appears as the merely speculative on the one hand, and heightened indebtedness (with its attendant ambivalent meanings) on the other? Here, it makes sense to follow Marx's lead in his analysis of the commodity in the opening chapter of *Capital*, something at first sight easily understood as a thing-in-itself, that abounds in metaphysical niceties, which turn out not to be metaphysical at all, but direct us toward an understanding of the social basis of wealth and of life together. The commodity bears the labor that made it possible, but the single commodity is but a moment of an immense accumulation, not simply of capital, but of human activity treated as if it existed for and through its capacity to generate a world of exchange, one where the subsistence of each is contingent upon and mediated through an expansive, profit-taking universe of commodity production.

What Marx termed the "society of producers" laboring populations that exist for and through one another is the social basis for the alternative logic that lies within and against capitalism, its immanent condition of socialism (M Brown 1986). Much of course disrupts, displaces and redirects the political trajectories of this immanence; no particular outcome or trajectory is guaranteed. Mutual social indebtedness is for capital, an often intolerable excess of accumulation, in particular when expressed as calls for justice, equality, or new demands that emerge from various social movements that make their own claims on society's wealth.

This in a nutshell is the internal contradiction Marx finds in the accumulation of capital, that the pursuit of wealth in the form of burgeoning quantities of commodities also expands and deepens the interdependence and capacities to express the social from those very populations that capital depends upon but disavows and denies. The terms of political contestation are formed between capital's denial of its debt to labor and labor's recognition of its own mutual indebtedness. While productive activity goes by many names today, more and more labor continues to be performed – albeit under various guises and conditions, as those activities that comprised social reproduction and intellectual labor (the so-called knowledge economy) become increasingly integral to the overall accumulation process. The ascent of finance needs to be understood in the context of this expanding realm of the kinds, scope and scale of activities – both across the globe and within the recesses of the human psyche – that constitute the continuation of the immense accumulation that drives capitalism.

Derivatives Now

If the commodity itself proliferates where capitalism initially prevails, derivatives lead the charge when finance dominates. Derivatives can be construed narrowly as technical instruments of contemporary finance, but also as emblematic of the

complex of historical logics of motion and social relations that shape present circumstances. In the first, technical sense that obtains within financial services, derivatives are conventionally understood as contracts to exchange a certain amount of something at a determinate future time at an agreed upon price. For example, a furniture manufacturer in Europe is making tables for a U.S. retailer that will be ready in six months and will charge a million Euros at an exchange rate of a euro and a half to the dollar. But should that rate change if the dollar appreciates or goes up against the Euro, the manufacturer stands to lose money when the tables are ready for shipment. The agreement to exchange at a fixed rate acts as insurance that hedges against this risk. By so doing, the risk, or possibility of a deviant but predictable outcome is also priced through a contract that can be exchanged, and therefore becomes an instrument of investment. The sale of tables can be subject not only to currency fluctuations, but also to the possible cancellation of the order, or a bank's inability to pay, or any number of other circumstances for which derivative contracts can also be generated. Each potential failure to execute the contract at full notional or face value can be hedged through a derivative contract. As a consequence, the sum total of all derivative contracts far exceeds the actual or underlying price of the assets being traded. As global transactions have increased, more and more kinds of risk are priced – from exchange and interest rates, to changes in temperature and the weather. The total notional value of derivative contracts between parties and traded on exchanges has grown enormously (some 25% per year in the past twenty years) to stand now at over a quadrillion and a half dollars or nearly twenty-times the world's gross domestic product (Bank of International Settlements 2012).

While derivative contracts for agricultural prices have been in existence for thousands of years, derivatives in their current guise date from the seventies and began to be traded extensively on formal exchanges in the 1990s. The quantity of publicly traded derivatives is exceeded by Over the Counter contracts made directly between parties. The contracts do not terminate the exchange; only small percentages are actually paid when they come due. Rather, the contracts are kept open or in ongoing exchange through what are called clearinghouses. The result is a continuous circulation of debt instruments and a further integration of local production into global markets. The advent of increasingly complex mathematical models since the early 1970s when Merton, Black and Scholes crafted the first formula for pricing derivatives, and more and more computational capacity to process ever more intricate trades more quickly are among the technical factors that has driven this process of expansion (Finel-Honigman 2010).

Of course this standard account from within finance treats growth and expansion as axiomatic to continued business activity. Investment entails risk, techniques have been devised to ameliorate that risk and even profit from it, supply meets demand and growth results. In this regard, derivative markets are just like every other, and while the notional values are extraordinary, the actual amounts

outstanding through derivative exchanges is considerably smaller (\$27 trillion at the end of 2011, and the trades themselves generating revenue in the tens of billions), and less than global markets for financial assets like bonds or stocks, which together exceed \$200 trillion (McKinsey 2011). What makes derivatives significant is that they trade in risk, but also manufacture risk; they disclose the internal logic of financial expansion as well as the social entailments of mutual indebtedness. Hence, like Marx's account of the commodity, starting with derivatives gets us to the internal workings of social interdependence that is the basis for society. As with Marx, this basis is ultimately social and not economic, it is immanent and not causal; it is an internal relation, and not a platform upon which the rest of society is built.

The trick for any critical analysis of finance is how to get from the technical to the social and historical aspects (LiPuma & Lee 2004). Staying within the technical finance remains tautological and deterministic, to say nothing of exclusive to those who make the deals and master the mathematical models. Money that makes money avoids labor, and is either magical in doing so, deceitful in swindling people who do not know any better, or so complex that this world must be left to the experts. The result is a highly moralistic approach to finance, a wishful impetus shared across the ideological spectrum to punish the transgressors and bad actors, and to set things to right by reasonable regulation. As scandal follows scandal, such moralism does little to rectify what has taken place or reveal much about how the malfeasance persists – a few apples will be pruned and the orchard can return to its prior splendor. Here a critical social logic of derivatives can be more fruitful analytically and politically.

There is a rich and varied Marxist literature on the precipitants and consequences of the financial crisis (Albo, Gindin & Panitch 2010; Foster & Magdoff 2009; McNally 2010; Panitch, Albo & Chibber 2010; Wolff 2009) where the failures of accumulation provide the occasion for a stirring call to political mobilization. Marxist analysis of financialization also provide searing accounts of a profit squeeze (Tabb 2012) or a speculative syndrome of “Madoffization” (Monaghan & O’Flynn 2012), while the question of how mutual indebtedness itself might create opportunities for political mobilization is left open. The events of recent years have made what were taken as special insights into potentially public considerations – this at least has been the tantalizing if unrealized promise of crisis. Clearly there have been all manner of responses from the rebellions in the Arab world to mobilizations of students and Occupy activists to similarly global displays of reaction whether Tea Party or coarsely labeled fundamentalisms. The riddles of what to make of the present, of what continuities and ruptures are evident, of what opportunities are present have now become especially freighted and call for further attention.

Financial Dominance

Two general claims are made for finance – roughly speaking a synchronic one that it dominates or colonizes other spaces of social and economic life, and a diachronic or conjunctural claim that this power of a particular kind of capital is relatively new and has been consolidated over the past forty years. The distinction is of course heuristic, there is no clear demarcation between what belongs to space and what to time, yet it remains useful to conceive of how financial logics are asserted throughout society and how they have come to be. There are several measures of what dominance entails. The most general would be the value of assets held by financial versus industrial firms, as this would be a standard indicator of how economic activity is distributed. Since the early 1970s, the vault of financial activities has exceeded the value of industrial products (Guttmann 1994). On the eve of the financial crisis in 2007, 40% of profits came from financial services, up from 7% at the end of the Second World War (Krippner 2011). The impact on the global economy of the failure of collateralized debt obligations tied to subprime mortgages is taken as further evidence of the extent to which finance prevails over productive activity. This increasing prominence of financial motives and markets is described as financialization (Epstein 2006). Dominance however is a stronger claim than relative growth or redistribution from one sector of the economy to another. Rather there is a sense that finance colonizes or orients all other activity. This comports with other accounts of a post-industrial society, in which the emphasis on producing physical or material commodities centered on key industries of steel, oil and automobiles gives way to immaterial or nonphysical entities (Bell 1973; Moulier Boutang 2011).

While these broad indicators are useful in drawing attention to the increasing space occupied by finance, they may not go as far in clarifying what this shift signifies. The notion that the locus of economic activity has moved from one sector to another is belied by the increasing integration between industrial production and circuits of credit and debt that are part and parcel of the recent ascent of finance. The most profitable division of General Motors came to be its financing of automobiles through the General Motors Accounting Corporation (GMAC, now Ally Bank). A similar trend held for General Electric, through GE Capital. Yet in neither case is this simply a matter of shifting from industrial production to finance, but rather an extension of credit to labor to compensate for declining wages and benefits, and integration through firms of various operations of capital.

Marx had observed the tendency for increased concentration or monopolization of a given line of business in fewer and fewer enterprises, and a centralization of various economic activities among ever-larger conglomerates (Marx 1867/1967a). He saw finance, then expressed through the emergence of the joint stock corporation, as furthering this socialization or interdependence of capital as well as the associated functions of the producers. Cars and refrigerators are, after all, con-

sumer products--use values that are realized not simply over the duration of their operation, but over the period in which they are paid for with interest. Labor's capacity to serve as a medium of circulation for this credit economy renders it part of the realization of value but also of the extension and elaboration of financial services. Participation in these debt relations means that labor is also exposed to and must manage the risks that these markets bear. Labor is thereby exposed not only to risks of unemployment, declining wages, or ill health that emanate from work; now it is subject to risks of capital circulation and realization, to which it provides a second shift, as deferred wages, but compelled to pursue for access to expanded costs of reproduction like education and retirement. The labor of this second shift consists of all the research, information, and deliberation that adds value and maintains circulation for financial capital. Expanding these terms of participation, as was the case for home ownership through subprime mortgages, subjects labor more fully to the circulation of capital and its volatile processes of realization.

Labor's incorporation into the circuits of realization of capital points to the way in which financialization is itself a framework for crafting new frontiers of accumulation internal to capitalist social relations. Just as colonialism and enclosure of common feudal lands forced populations into market relations that channeled them into wage labor, and consumer markets and personal credit delivered workers to the products of their production, financialization extended the risk operations of capital to labor within the very spaces of social reproduction, the home, school, health care, retirement, once treated as separate and secure from market machinations. Just as for capital, financialization does not simply transfer production into circulation but brings the two closer together, not only consumption and activities of social reproduction, but the activity of labor itself becomes part of larger financial circuits (Martin 2002).

The Social Logic of the Derivative

The social logic of the derivative has a special role to play in rendering capitals commensurate with one another. The derivative not only subjects local production to global market vacillations, but places labor in the crosshairs of potential risk exposures. Indeed, part of the reason that unemployment has remained so stubbornly high after 2008 is that employers are using their existing work force as a buffer against future or potential market risks, like increased taxes, tightening credit, or a change in the regulatory environment. The reluctance to hire is then translated back to the existing workforce as an expectation of higher productivity. Indeed, increased profit rates have been extracted through productivity demands that make labor bear these market risks (Bryan & Rafferty 2006). The derivative in this respect does not simply hedge against a potential outcome, but treats that possible future outcome as something that can be acted upon in present real time.

These protocols of risk assessment are not therefore restricted to the operations of financial services, but have become a more generalized approach to the management of any organizational process. School children are continuously tested; those in need of social services are tested; credit profiles are continuously adjusted – populations are sorted and ranked according to their expected outcomes of risk and failure and public policy operates through and is crafted accordingly. It is not simply that resources once separated as public and private are now allocated through market mechanisms, but that each instance of exchange is already assigned a risk market before the activity in question – childhood, hunger, ill health, even death – comes due (Blackburn 2002). In this respect, financialization is not a total departure from earlier processes of accumulation. Rather, it deepens, extends, and intensifies an array of spaces whose autonomy and integrity it violates, whose boundaries it crosses, through an imposed and imposing association.

Now as in other processes of association, interdependence does not mean homogenization, flattening, or smoothing out, as was claimed in the conventional account of globalization (Friedman 2006). This is both because the energies and efficacies of slavery and colonialism, industrial manufacture and wage labor, are far from spent, but also because derivatives themselves constantly parse and separate, and make much from what other would be minor differences in price or fluctuations in market circumstances. Financialization then, is ultimately not simply more finance everywhere, but also more socialization, more interdependence, more mutual debt.

Marx keenly observed that occasions and opportunities for accumulation were pursued around the world and those spatial arrangements were themselves transformed in the process – the aphorism “all that’s solid, melts into air” captures this poignantly (Marx & Engels 2002). The solidity that appears to have melted for many (clearly for many more it was never there to begin with) is the sense of security that government would protect them from the excesses of the marketplace, and that a horizon of ever expanding affluence would animate a secular dream space called the middle class would deliver them to a steadily more promising future. Recall that the Communist Manifesto offers a paean to the dissolution of small property holders, and this theme of class decomposition is explored as well in the 18th Brumaire where Marx ties the weak socialization of the French peasantry to the authoritarian and violent, even self-destructive rampages of the Bonapartist state (Marx & Engels 1848/2002; Marx 1852/1969). To the contemporary dysfunctions of government and the dimming horizons of white male middle class privilege, we might inquire as to what socialization of the sort imagined here means for relations of state and class. Doing so would compel a confrontation with what is decomposing and what being formed in the present conjuncture that would deepen an understanding of what it means for finance to dominate.

Perhaps the most potent critical analytic trope for naming the dominance of markets over every aspect of life is neoliberalism (Harvey 2007). As much as the

term has served as a rallying cry for all that ails us, its use has tended to collapse an ideology that markets rule, with an acceptance of their victory in doing so and popular accommodation to this formation of power. The danger of proclaiming neoliberalism's success in these terms is in effect a critical version of Thatcher's "there is no alternative" (TINA). Maintaining the critical optic while crafting analytic openings to opposition and alternatives would entail challenging the key terms of privatization and deregulation. Financialization in general and derivatives in particular may be of some service here, especially in the aftermath of the massive bailouts. Far from government getting out of markets, the imagined border that polices the distinction between polity and economy appeared to be violated when public coffers were offered as collateral to market failure. The U.S. government, through the Troubled Asset Relief Program, purchased stock – expecting to profit without imposing mandates of ownership. And yet this act was far from a single magnanimous gesture, indeed the positioning of government on the part of presidents of both parties as the enemy of free enterprise has been used largely to replace entitlement programs with support of investors by means of regressive tax cuts (although certainly progressive for capital and its largest beneficiaries).

Toward Disintermediation

This shift from defined benefit to defined contribution public policy approaches – terms that come from the world of pensions which indicate the shift from a guaranteed annual income at retirement (which most pensions were at the end of the 1960s) to the advent of self-management through investment portfolios whose paltry returns for most are hardly a means of retirement. Now these once public goods of health, education and affordable housing, are themselves treated as investments, and citizenship is converted to a gambit of pay-to-play. Derivatives are of course all around these various investment-based goods, with student loan default swaps and securitizations of supplemental health care, to say nothing of collateralized debt obligations that borrow default rankings and trade them for different risk profiles. If privatization was really about crafting certain kinds of publics and social participation through government intervention, plowing the fields of finance proceeded not by deregulation, but through massive pilings of rules. During the reign of neoliberalism, through Republican and Democratic administrations alike, the Federal Register, official rulebook of the United States has swelled in girth (Roubini & Mihm 2010: 200-215).

But the fact that there are more rules than ever before, something consistent with the effervescent spirit of capitalism, becomes for finance, a factor of production, part of its materiality that can be factored as regulatory risk that banks could exchange on the basis of different appraisals of their legally versus actually required money reserves. The institutional effect of deregulation in financial services, whether for savings and loans in the 1980s or erasing the boundary between

commercial and investment banking (codified in the depression era Glass-Steagall legislation), was to affect something called disintermediation. Disintermediation entails removing the exclusionary mandate of institutions that can legitimately broker financial dealings. Hence, many kinds of institutions can lend money, generate financial contracts (like OTC derivatives), or construct and sell bonds.

Disintermediation is a financial term for socialization of capital, for it means that the field of economic activity becomes more porous, open to more and more actors working from ever more complex webs of rules and risks. In light of this, privatization and deregulation could be renamed as processes of political and economic disintermediation, respectively. Investor-based, defined contribution, means-tested protocols for participation in decision-making aided and abetting through government acting as a medium for redistribution of wealth to the wealthy through tax cuts, renders those whose decisions affect the common good, *de facto* state actors. Government, however is not simply getting out of the economy, but creating conditions of political disintermediation, where those best positioned to do so make political decisions as to how public funds (deferred or reallocated tax monies) are to be allocated but also what kinds of decisions will serve as the models upon which the expected life course will proceed. Private or charter schooling, home ownership, private health care and retirement accounts would be part and parcel of this.

Derivative Class

While financialization socializes capital in particular ways, it also promotes a specific class. Indeed, the professional managerial class (PMC) displays many of the contradictory features of the *petit bourgeoisie* of Marx's day (Wright 1997). In the fable of post-industrialism after WWII, the PMC would serve as the class to end all classes, the clean, non-contentious, fully corporate and integrated individual in the white collar and gray flannel suit. The government policies that would allocate suburban homes to returning G.I.'s would also build the public educational infrastructure that would train a new generation of knowledge-based professionals. While clearly racially and gender based, this was to be a new social compact that claimed those who gained credentialed expertise through access to higher education would come to govern the terms of their employment as professionals whose careers guaranteed steady progress in status and income. While more can be counted in the ranks of the PMC than ever before, the compact around professional autonomy is eroding – not only for the professoriate who see tenure receding in their rear-view mirrors, but for physicians working in managed care and attorneys casualized through the dismantling of partner-based firms. Even financial services left many of its children behind when the going got rough. This is on the one hand, a story of security turning to risk *par excellence*, but it is also an account of the proletarianization or socialization of the professions. The performance-based

test-driven, continuously assessed measures of life now define the professions more than their purportedly less noble kindred occupations. Doctors, lawyers, financiers all face the specter of do-it-yourself challenges to the monopoly of legitimate knowledge that once was managed autonomously and is now increasingly managed for them (Martin 2011; Brook 2012).

In this, the fate of professionals is tied less to their particular expertise than to the increasingly common protocols by which their work is attributed with worth. The irony of course is that theirs was the technical knowledge that made their own colonization possible, and theirs was the popular enthusiasm that made escalations of risk and reward the coin of the realm. At this point the derivative needs to be brought back in as a key figure in moving across these realms of autonomy lost and risk measurement found. Certainly professionals are not suddenly unified as one, doing the same thing at the same time, but something has happened to their means of ascertaining their worth, of governing the sobriety of their senses that relates certain attributes of their experience in ways that are leveraged across their respective situations.

The stars, celebrities, market-makers, and outliers have stripped away the grey flannel and oriented their gaze away from the norm, median and central tendency of their heretofore rational existence and oriented them toward the few that got away. While the wealthiest may still hold their islands, the figure of this success is projected as the hypermobile, unattached, and impermanently anointed Davos Man, a specter of volatility where privilege has its memberships but these come pre-stamped with expiration dates and must be used immediately (Rothkopf 2008). In opposition to this sensibility of placeless elite, living spaces, streets and squares are inhabited by the multitudes act to reinvest what has been spirited away.

Financial Difference

Seen from the perspective of the derivative, dominance is both far and near, hugely scaled and intimate, so much explanatory power is being asked of these massive aggregations of small differences, minor fluctuations, and persistent volatilities. Certainly this narrative can quickly become a bit breathless. How could something derivative matter so much, could it really make all this difference? Just as there is a danger in over-consolidating an account of dominance so that resistance is futile, there is a temptation to proclaim an entirely new world from what could seem the top of a stack of turtles. There is certainly something new in these times, but much that is old and continuous as well. New forces are launched but few ever really disappear. Despite centuries of proletarianization, several billion souls remain tied to the land for their subsistence, and irrespective of the soaring knowledge economy, many, including those tethered to a keyboard still work with their hands. How then to make good on this caution regarding the ever

forward march of time that casts its own amnesia on all the other temporal traces in its midst?

A key strategy here has been to remember what Marx saw and said when he regarded his world, and to extend his approach to imagine ways of understanding a capitalism that is itself in motion. While the imperative to accumulate is undimmed and the socializing effects making the world over to wealth are ever more expansive, capitalism itself is not an internally closed machine, a system that continues to run until it breaks down. For many around the world, capitalism never worked to begin with, or continues to fail them through exploitation and misery, or simply a denial of access to its vast resources and the politics of how they might be devised and deployed. The system metaphor, which is not part of Marx's own analytic vocabulary but has been spirited into many a Marxist account by means of conventional social science, betrays the functionalism of well-purposed parts serving to maintain the overall operation of the whole. Rupture, burst bubbles, crisis, even revolution would be conceived as catastrophic moments of total departure that set history on a new course (Parsons 1955; Edwards, Reich & Weiskopf 1972; Brenner 2006).

Marx's own dialectics grasps social relations in "fluid motion" but with a particular trajectory of transformation in mind so as to not collapse social and political revolution (Marx 1867/1967a). History is made from the received weight of encountered circumstances. In the straightforward circuit of accumulation, these historical encumbrances disappear, the commodity labor power is concealed and the surplus it generates expressed in the increased magnitude of capital. In one way, derivatives follow this logic. They are detached from their underlying commodities or assets and traded independently as attributes of those original commodities. But in another respect, the underlying continues to weigh like a "nightmare on the brain of the living" in Marx's vivid phrase (Marx 1852/1969). Production is amplified not curtailed through derivative trading, and conversely, when the derivative risk is realized, the underlying is also effected. This was certainly what the subprime dynamics demonstrated; namely, that collecting risk attributes stimulated housing construction, but also shut it down when prices fell short.

Risking Space and Time

If derivatives are a central instrument of risk management, then the generalized turn to acting upon risk differentials speaks to this more engaged relation between what has been and what could be, between continuity and change. In this the derivative augurs a different temporal sensibility than the smoothly progressive time of commodity accumulation, of one magnitude added to another that underpins the conception of growth. Clearly much economic activity is still oriented by and calibrated through linear progressive time. Households, firms, nations remain ro-

bust social and statistical categories. Calendars and second hands have yet to be abolished. Rather, if linear time is the underlying pulse of the capitalist calculus, variations of speed, duration, and scale act upon what were once treated as the stable markers of past, present, and future (Zerubavel 1981). The promise that the future would be different and better than the present, that it would be allochronic or an other time, had been capital's claim for progress, but also for its own version of utopia – that market growth would deliver populations from want and universalize prosperity (Fabian 1983). The insistence on deficit reduction over stimulus would seem to reflect a flight from a utopian future and a universalistic claim that all could get to this better place together. Instead, utopian claims are inverted, and future promises must be sacrificed to present debts.

The derivative makes certain aspects of the future actionable in the present. Rather than abiding an anticipatory mode scanning the temporal horizon for opportunity, trying to get out ahead in the race, the future does not exist as something absolutely different from the present, but actions taken now are meant to form what that future could be. Pre-emption hence becomes a key policy logic, whether this applies to the Federal Reserve Board's altering of interest rates on signs of changes to inflation and unemployment, or the invasion and occupation of countries before a threat to security can manifest (the doctrine for the Global War on Terror) (Martin 2007). This radical constructivism, intervening with a targeted intervention on some risk factor in order to prevent or mitigate the negative effects of an unwanted occurrence before it takes place has been described as a kind of performativity (MacKenzie 2006). The pre-emptive signal in the present is meant to bring about the desired future state. Needless to say, derivatives not only manage risk, they also amplify risk opportunities. The Federal Reserve and the Federal Government has become more interventionist in pursuit of economic and political security. Yet doing so has had perverse effects.

Algorithms of Volatility

Modeling behavior, even on the basis of complex algebraic equations, imagines the future to consist of an array of discrete outcomes and independent variables that have no will or at least parallel capacity to read the signs around them. Yet volatility creates not only more risk that can be priced and acted upon, but also more uncertainty, and unknowable circumstances that elude the methods of forecasting and recognition. The collective effect of so many acting upon and anticipating signs and signals amplifies uncertainty and generates opacity – in contrast to the model of decision that posits a lone rational actor who stands outside and is independent of observable phenomenon, and can therefore predict the future. To the spatial unevenness of development in different parts of the world in which the capacities of the margins are sacrificed to the enrichment of the center, the derivative logic adds variegated times where present, near and long-term collide.

The future is not one unbroken horizon, it is not approached steadily, and it does not open before us. The actionable future stitches together many durational terms, as it continues to trade in these multiple times, deferring closure, keeping the deal in motion. Finance, however does not simply consolidate these various time frames, it also disburses and disarticulates the beginning and ending of when a good is made, and when it can generate a revenue stream. As such, the derivative breaks-up the integrity of all manner of productive units, keeps them flowing, but also maintains and depends upon the underlying values' capacity to generate something productive.

Derivative Materiality

Derivatives are not less material or physical, but they violate what had been the integrity of material and physical forms in space and time. One symptom of this violation is the collapse of the distinction in the financial world between investment and speculation (Bogle 2012). Supposedly, investment was a decision to allocate capital on the prospect of a long-term perspective for growth, and speculation was an orientation toward short-term gain. The villains would be shareholder value, mergers and acquisitions, short-selling, and the bevy of greed-mongering financiers whose only interest was in arbitrage, not in creating real worth in companies.

There is no doubt a moralistic tenor to these assessments of current woes that conceals an analytic challenge. The distinction between investment and speculation is typically made in hindsight with the former associated with the growth it predicts, and the latter tarred with loss. But if the derivative slices and dices not only whole units into bits and pieces but the flow and order of time as well, then the very distinction between short and long term upon which investment is separated from speculation would tend to implode as well. Development, after all is a combination of smoothly expanding volume (growth) and linear time (progress), in which primitives are to imitate the mature moderns in order to achieve the promised land of the future. Origins can be many, but the developmental path will not diverge.

If it was not apparent in the emergence of financial dominance over the past forty years, after the global bailout of finance, these promises and the populations enclosed through them have met a sturdy indifference. It is important, however, not to maintain all focus on the vagaries of capital. The long march of colonialism that drove capitalist expansion worldwide proceeded through these various enclosures: of communal lands to propertied estates, open territories into bounded nations states, and persons into the self-possessed beings called individuals. And yet colonialism bears its own counter-history, its often transgressive and creative process whereby the colonies are re- or mis-appropriated, where associations are directed toward ends other than the dull mandates of accumulation. The United

States and Haiti both emerge through national de-colonization which would inspire liberationist impulses for centuries to come. Socialist, communist, anarchist movements arise through various Sunderings of the integrity of wage labor. Movements around identity, difference, need, desire, sense and nature, would all erupt as the private sphere of social reproduction was itself ruptured by socializing productive activity in a refusal of the voiceless subject without political agency, but also an expansion of the sphere of the political as such.

From Decolonization

The three vectors of decolonization named here: of the times and spaces of territory, production, and social reproduction, constitute the conjuncture in Fredric Jameson's (1984) formulation of what would become the various social movements of the 1960s. In Giovanni Arrighi's (1994) seminal study of the successive historical conjunctures of financialization as the geo-political axis of capital accumulation shifted from The Netherlands, to England to the United States, two dramatic internal shifts take place. One is an explosion of financial activity that proves ruinous to the extant social order, and the other is a dramatic strain on the social compact that attached to the particular middle class. The current inflection of this strain would attach to what was discussed earlier in terms of the professional managerial class and its attendant expansion in number and decomposition of its forms of solidarity and autonomy. The international financial architecture devised by John Maynard Keynes and his cohort at the end of the Second World War known by the New Hampshire resort of Bretton Woods where the plans were drafted was certainly an effort to introduce financial colonization of the globe through the sovereignty of a single currency, the dollar. The seventies recession and the fall of Bretton Woods that brought the sixties impulses to a close provided a basis for financialization. While OPEC and Eurodollars are assigned culpability for making dollar sovereignty unsustainable, the larger inability to contain the flows of currency can also be taken as decolonization in its own right.

By decentering the account of financialization the expression in financial flows of the wider currents in social relations starts to emerge and the appraisal of the politic landscape of the past forty years also shifts appreciably. Rather than unmitigated failure and defeat at the hands of a triumphant neoliberalism, the optic of a derivative logic provides a far more uneven assessment. The decolonization of territory, labor and social reproduction seemed to have passed with the heady days of the early seventies (with the victory in Vietnam, a renaissance of socialist theory and practice, radical and substantive reforms driven by the equality and difference agendas of gender, sexuality, race, environmental and other movements). Yet the longer view is that these contestations and movements never went away, and that they continue in their expressions, albeit without the same clarity of assess-

ment and valuation that accompanied their earlier appearance under the sign of unalloyed freedom (i.e. movements for liberation) (Young 2001).

This last problem, of how to value existing mobilizations, if there is evidence that the horizons of the political have not in fact receded, returns us to the question of the derivative, but now as an analytic term. One purpose in seeing financial derivatives as a response to movements of decolonization is that it allows us to re-value what otherwise might be dismissed as fragmentary, disunifying, or generally insufficient in the political responses to the circumstances at hand. Just what would such a derivative approach to a valuation of the political consist of? Attending to that question, necessitates a return to and re-invention of the question of debt.

Financial Debt

As with finance itself, the sums and magnitude of debt now receive increasing public attention. Student debt in the U.S. at over \$ 1 trillion has surpassed credit card debt, ignited a debt refusal movement with a more militant tone than the debt forgiveness appeals to Congress that have made the rounds over the past decade (Occupy Student Debt Campaign 2012). The idea of a debt moratorium, championed by Fidel Castro and other so-called debtor nations during the 1980s has both been complicated by the United States itself assuming the mantle of the largest debtor, but also of a geographical fluidity across countries of publics who are asked to make sacrifices of development, retirement, infrastructure or other markings of the social economy to the perquisites of capital accumulation. In many ways, debt bondage has replaced development as the promised route out of poverty. Payday lending, microfinance, credit profiling, all become part of the expansion of large financial services and carry with them a critique of what they see as the moralism of public assistance. They trumpet their own moralistic claims that indenture to profit-taking investors is a more noble form of self-sufficiency (Roy 2010). The sorting of legitimate and illegitimate debt justifies the limits to small business underwritten by large multinationals in lieu of general social benefits. Already those who had championed microfinance are suggesting that at 150 million small enterprises, the approach may have reached its limits as to how many more can be drawn into its debt circuits (Rosenberg 2011). Similar moral assignments of blame were heard through the subprime debt process that those who signed mortgage agreements did so as responsible adults, or that they had no business assuming more debt than they could pay, or that their profligacy made the world unsafe for everyone else.

Moral Economies

Two temporalities of moralism tend to separate debts of capital from those of labor. The large bank and corporate bailouts triggered the concern of moral hazard; namely that publicly funded bailouts would reward bad behavior and prompt the bad actors to repeat their mistakes rather than taking their licks from the purifying stream of market discipline. Yet these consternations are invariably voiced after the fact of massive public assistance. Corporate aid is treated the general will, as if were action not taken, the whole economy would be effected. With deals struck behind closed doors and little evidence presented as to how the public good would be served by the rescued firms, the transparency said to be part of democratic deliberation is absent and the rectitude of the decision is a *fait accompli*. For what is typically referred to as consumer debt, all norms of culpability remain in force, as these are the actions of willful knowing individuals, not those blindsided by the invisible hand of the market. Yet there is a persistent anxiety among those who refuse to assist the poor and laboring debtors; namely that in doing so they would cease to act as individuals and morph into an unruly and contentious mass.

The fear of contagion, of bad debt suffocating and sullyng the sterile efficiency of markets is known as moral panic (Hall 1978). Whereas moral hazard is backward looking, moral panic is pre-emptive; a fear of what is to come that must be punitively thwarted before it gets out of hand. The specter of debts being spoken of not from their disparate sources of origination – as so much credit card, or student loan, or mortgage, or microfinance, or sovereign debt, or government debt – but as social debt as such indicates where a derivative logic may lead us. The derivative both removes values from their originating sources and aggregates the total value to which they are attached. The notion of a global face value of debt begins to get at what it would mean for the derivative dialectic to enter fully into the public discourse.

Claiming Surplus

The derivative as a social logic directs attention at the debt that can be seen, of the ledgers that make explicit what people owe one another. The financial bailout presented the spectacle of enormous wealth – first the \$787 billion in Troubled Asset Relief Program, and eventually what would become the equivalent of the entire U.S. tax base of \$14 trillion dollars offered on behalf of what was considered a social necessity (Sourcewatch 2012). The terms of exchange for this massive wealth transfer would be permanent austerity for all manner of social expenditure. The Occupy movements, but also the ongoing debate over continued Bush era tax cuts, certainly rendered the question of whose debt a political issue (Graeber 2011; Dienst 2011). But perhaps the more suggestive avenue of debt politics is not in the direction of blame and refusal – as much as these have brought the issue to

the fore – but in a consideration of what it means to be able to suddenly muster trillions of dollars and to undertake a public deliberation over what might be done with a social surplus that was never acknowledged as such to be one. Permeating all aspects of social life with metrics of risk not only shifted burdens for social production from government security programs onto individuals as managers of their own fates (Hacker 2006); it also created a vast second shift of risk productive activity as well as a nascent literacy in the face of a manufactured illiteracy around what finance is and does.

In one respect, the derivative is the pure idiom of the numerate vision of social life: that all outcomes and appreciations can be calculated, foretold, made legible, and acted upon. Once wealth is presented in the aggregate and a language exists for making claims upon this mountain of debt made in common, questions of inequality and therefore of redistribution can be brought to the fore. That which is invisible can be rendered transparent; that which is frozen in the vaults of private equity, hedge funds, proprietary trading, can be released to liquidity. This is certainly a way of understanding the politics of debt refusal on the one hand and the refusal to lend, invest or employ that marks the current capital strike. The difference is that now the illiquidity of capital confronts the fact of a social surplus that was explicitly assigned to get the economy moving again.

A Politics of Excess

But the derivative is not simply a process of making money appear as self-expansive and therefore to direct collective attention to the universe of number. The derivative also unbundles what was bound and treated as an integral, indivisible unit, an isolated monad, and interweaves, associates and renders these circulating attributes as implicated in one another's fates. This is not a matter of the debt that can be seen, but of a debt that is sensed. Identity, or derivative attributes of selfhood, it can be observed is borne through bodies, not simply marked on the surface, but detectable in ways of moving, of shared sensibilities, but also of creative and emergent stylistic innovations. Certainly these attributes that comprise styles are also crucial to the expansion of cultural commodities, the imperative to look to identity through personal collection and social consumption.

If for capital, this cultural turn has been a factor in the expansion of consumer debt, also apparent is the expanded realm of political demands, of equal rights surely, but also of recognition of difference that augur an expansion of social forms as such. Taken together as part of the broader movements of decolonization, a significant outcome is the expansion of social indebtedness as what eludes, escapes, and exceeds measure. Hence, the anxieties over the mobilizing masses, the concerns of contagion that attach to moral panics, register an unseen debt and expanding sociality to sets capital to flight. If accessing the social surplus prompts a resolution of the liquidity crisis through which more just distributions of wealth

might be made; there is also the risk of an insolvency crisis, an inability to trace through all of the circuits of debt in order to find the value there. The greatest contradiction of the derivative has been to efface the distinction between illiquidity and insolvency, to make it impossible to know whether valuable assets exist but cannot be sold, or whether say, home mortgages are so under water, the prices have declined so steeply, that all value has escaped the vault that had held it – but to where did it escape?

Conclusion

The derivative brings attention to the excess of the social as the very basis for new needs, demands, and desires that shape the political horizon. Such excess generates not a clear object that can be seen, but opacity, an unrecorded debt precisely of the sort that Marx named for the commodity labor power. Again, one direction of that labor's surplus was reclaimed as surplus value, but another becomes the basis for the continuous effort to reduce, elude, contain the debt to labor that yields the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. The derivative points to the ways in which finance, which seemed to be sheer self-expanding quantity, of money making money, also bears the internal relations of socializing labor through commodity production. If the derivative performs such a double session of the social; of surplus value and an excess of the social itself, then the politics of debt would consist in rearticulating these two moments. One is where debt is refused in order to make a claim upon it. Another where debt is embraced in order to be claimed by the abundant sociality that ultimately decides what the wealth of a given society might be if it is to be a "society of the producers." Re-aligning and re-valuing the relation between abundance and excess would perhaps open the horizon of communism that the derivative poses.

Randy Martin is professor and chair of Art and Public Policy, New York University and director of the graduate program in arts politics. He is author of *Performance as Political Act: The Embodied Self*; *Socialist Ensembles: Theater and State in Cuba and Nicaragua*; *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*; *On Your Marx: Relinking Socialism and the Left*; *Financialization of Daily Life*; *An Empire of Indifference: American War and the Financial Logic of Risk Management*; *Under New Management: Universities, Administrative Labor and the Professional Turn* . E-mail: randy.martin@nyu.edu

References

- Albo, Greg, Sam Gindin & Leo Panitch (2010): *In and Out of Crisis: The Global Financial Melt-down and Left Alternatives*, Oakland: Spectre.
- Arrighi, Giovanni (1994): *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origin of Our Times*, London: Verso.
- Bank of International Settlements (2012): <http://www.bis.org/statistics/derstats.htm> (accessed 15 August 2012).
- Bell, Daniel (1973): *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, New York: Basic Books.
- Blackburn, Robin (2002): *Banking on Death, or, Investing in Life: The History and Future of Pensions*, London, Verso.
- Bogle, John (2012): *Clash of the Cultures: Investment Vs Speculation*, New York: Wiley.
- Brenner, Robert (2006): *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945-2005*, London: Verso, 2006.
- Brooks, Robert Andrew (2012): *Cheaper By the Hour: Temporary Lawyers and the Deprofessionalization of the Law*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Brown, Brendan (1987): *The Flight of International Capital: A Contemporary History*, London: Croom Helm.
- Brown, Michael E. (1986): *The Production of Society: A Marxian Foundation for Social Theory*, Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Bryan, Dick and Mike Rafferty (2006): *Capitalism With Derivatives: A Political Economy of Financial Derivatives, Capital and Class*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dienst, Richard (2011): *The Bonds of Debt*, London: Verso.
- Edwards Richard, Michael Reich & Thomas Weiskopf (1972): *The Capitalist System: A Radical Analysis of American Society*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Epstein, Gerald (2005): *Financialization and the World Economy*, Northhampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Fabian, Johannes (1983): *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Finel-Honigman, Irene (2010): *A Cultural History of Finance*, New York: Routledge.
- Foster, John Bellamy & Fred Magdoff (2009): *The Great Financial Crisis: Causes and Consequences*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Friedman, Thomas (2006): *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Graeber, David (2011): *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, Brooklyn: Melville House.
- Guttman, Robert (1994): *How Credit Money Shapes the Economy: The United States in a Global System*, Armonk, NY: M E Sharpe.
- Hacker, Jacob (2006): *The Great Risk Shift: The Assault on American Jobs, Families, Health Care, and Retirement and How You Can Fight Back*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, Stuart (1978): *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, New York: Holmes and Meier.
- Harvey, David (2007): *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David (1999): *The Limits to Capital*, London: Verso.
- Jameson, Fredric (1984): "Periodizing the Sixties", Sohnya Sayres, Sanders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz & Frederic Jameson (eds): *The Sixties Without Apology*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Krippner, Greta (2011): *Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moulier Boutang, Yann (2011): *Cognitive Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Lipuma, Edward & Benjamin Lee (2004): *Financial Derivatives and the Globalization of Risk*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- MacKenzie, Donald (2006): *An Engine Not a Camera: How Financial Models Shape Markets*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Martin, Randy (2002): *Financialization of Daily Life*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- (2007): *An Empire of Indifference: American War and the Financial Logic of Risk Management*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- (2011): *Under New Management: Universities, Administrative Labor and the Professional Turn*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Marx, Karl (1852/1969): *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, New York: International Publishers.
- (1867/1967a): *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume I*, New York: International Publishers.
- (1894/1967b): *Capital Volume III The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole*, New York: International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (1848/2002): *The Communist Manifesto*, London: Penguin.
- McKinsey (2011): "Mapping Global Capital Markets, 2011":
http://www.mckinsey.com/Insights/MGI/Research/Financial_Markets/Mapping_global_capital_markets_2011 (accessed 15 August 2012).
- McNally, David (2010): *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*, Oakland: Spectre.
- Monaghan L and M O'Flynn (2012): "The Madoffization of Society: A Corrosive Process in an Age of Fictitious Capital", *Critical Sociology*, 39:6, 869-887 (Published Online July 2012):
<http://crs.sagepub.com/content/39/6/869.full.pdf+html> (accessed 15 January 2014).
- Occupy Student Debt Campaign (2012): <http://www.occupystudentdebtcampaign.org> (accessed 15 August 2012).
- Panitch, Leo, Greg Albo & Vivek Chibber (2010): *The Crisis This Time: Socialist Register 2011*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Parsons, Talcott (1955): *The Social System*, New York: Free Press.
- Perelman, Michael (2000): *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Rosenberg, Richard (2011): "Is Microcredit Over-Indebtedness a Worldwide Problem?",
<http://microfinance.cgap.org/2011/11/07/is-microcredit-over-indebtedness-a-worldwide-problem/> (accessed 20 August 2012).
- Rothkopf, David (2008): *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They are Making*, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Roubini, Nouriel & Stephen Mihm (2010): *Crisis Economics: A Crash Course in The Future of Finance*, New York: Penguin.
- Roy, Ananya (2010): *Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development*, New York: Routledge.
- Soederberg, Susanne (2011): "Canibalistic Capitalism: The Paradoxes of Neoliberal Pension Securitization", Panitch Leo, Greg Albo & Vivek Chibber (eds): *The Crisis This Time: Socialist Register 2011*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Sourcewatch (2012): *Total Wall Street Bailout Cost*:
http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Total_Wall_Street_Bailout_Cost (15 August 2012).
- Tabb, William (2012): *The Restructuring of Capitalism in Our Time*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wolff, Richard (2009): *Capitalism Hits the Fan: The Global Economic Meltdown and What to Do About It*, Olive Branch Press.
- Wright, Erik Olin (1997): *Classes*, London: Verso.
- Young, Robert (2001): *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar (1981): *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cultural Governance and the Crisis of Financial Capitalism¹

By Jean-Louis Fabiani

Abstract

Cultural policies in Europe were designed, albeit in significantly different ways national and ideological lines, as an additional component of the Welfare State. They were supposed to bring about democracy in cultural consumption by removing the obstacles on the road to giving access to symbolic goods. Since the '80s and the neo-liberal turn, this democratic imperative has declined, and was even labeled a complete failure, and new goals for cultural policy emerged: developing the conditions for a creative society, supporting city branding, and encouraging private sponsorship. This change in political justification created new contradictions and some disenchantment among the professionals who were, in growing numbers, employed in the cultural sector. The current crisis of capitalism has two main consequences. Shrinking budgets add new limits on cultural policy as culture tends to be identified as a “supplement of soul” when basic needs are no longer addressed and new claims for full democratic access to cultural resources.

Keywords: Cultural policy, creative society, neo-liberalism, democracy crisis, capitalism.

Introduction

Cultural policy might not be the most important dimension of government action, but it encapsulates all the contradictions of public action. The development of cultural industries in a globalized world and the generalization of a form of “soft power” (Nye 2004), that no longer needs to go through the channels of cultural diplomacy, have deepened those contradictions. The relative weakening of the nation-state has increased the limitations of a national cultural policy, particularly in the European Union, where “national exceptions” are increasingly targeted by supra-national regulations. Cultural policy is split between democratization and creation, between the autonomy of the artist and the need to meet the cultural needs of a diverse population, between the necessary rationality of public choice and the arbitrariness of taste, between the universality of aesthetic values and the heterogeneity of various identity claims. Cultural policies may differ greatly from one country to another according to the different definitions of the public interest. However, these contradictions are present everywhere, albeit in different combinations. The current crisis of capitalism reveals the limits of our optimistic views on the “creative turn”² in contemporary societies and leads us to rethink the democratic potentialities of cultural life. Richard Florida’s creative society does not look as flamboyant as it used to. What is called creative society amounts quite often to precarious labor, growing unemployment in the cultural sector, and a huge amount of social frustration among the younger generations. What does the “right to culture” mean now, more than sixty years after it was introduced by the UNESCO Declaration of Human Rights in 1948? Is it still a collective and valuable ambition? In the first part of my presentation, I analyze the inherent contradictions that undermine the very notion of cultural policy. The second part is an overview of the consequences of the current crisis.

Contradictory Models

If we remain at a very general level, defining cultural policy is very easy. It is about government action “with respect to the arts (including the for-profit cultural industries), the humanities, and the heritage” (Schuster 2003: 1). Things get more complex as soon as we reach more specific forms of action, not only because, as Mulcahy reminds us in his theoretical approach, it encompasses a vast array of activities, from fine arts to quilting and marching bands (Mulcahy 2006:321). Cultural policy addresses simultaneously the artist and the public, two social entities that can be at odds with each other since the growing autonomy of the artistic gesture and the end of the “art de plaire” conceived as the norm of aesthetic production. It combines profit and non-profit in a hardly decidable mix. It praises eternal masterpieces and popular culture in the meantime. It contributes to establishing hierarchies of taste and promotes the equivalence of all forms of cultural expres-

sion. Identity claims co-exist with the implicit acceptance of the effects of globalization. Of course, the definition of a cultural policy largely depends on the role of the state, the degree of centralization, the forms of governance, and the share of the private sector. In this respect, France and the United States can be opposed term to term. Historical and bureaucratic traditions matter: “many countries support what is known as cultural industries, or what would be known in the United States as ‘entertainment business,’ whether to preserve an old cultural heritage or to develop a nascent culture.” It is worth noting, since one of the main historical justifications of cultural policy is based on the distinction between “real culture,” viewed as a civic and emancipatory endeavor, and mere entertainment, defined as a form of passive consumption.

Mulcahy points out what I would like to define as the paradoxical nature of cultural policy, wherever it is applied. A very limited share of the nation budget is associated with a multiplicity of tasks and a rare complexity of governance, particularly concerning the decision criteria and the action evaluation. Of course, policy goals have changed over time: One of the most striking turns remains Margaret Thatcher's redefinition of British cultural policy, which has set new standards for the neo-liberal turn in this domain, but less visible reorientations have occurred in countries less sensitive to that type of ideology (Alexander 2007). This is the case in France, where the “commodification” of great museums, particularly the Louvre, has been heavily debated and the public-private partnership enthusiastically supported by the state (even with leftist governments) in the last twenty years. The “privatization” of culture has become a common goal that transcends diverse types of governance and is to some extent a consequence of the success of cultural policies that have generated new forms of action, for example, equipping small towns with a set of cultural institutions or creating very big units with huge personnel and maintenance costs. The system has also created enormous social expectations in the population about “cultural careers,” either artistic or managerial. In very different countries, the increase in cultural employment goes with the increase in cultural unemployment, but the attractiveness of artistic and cultural occupations, no matter vague they are, has not diminished. Pierre-Michel Menger's pioneering work on artistic occupations can be recalled at this stage.

Artistic labor markets are puzzling and challenging ones for social scientists....Evidence of sustained growth in artistic employment over the last 20 years is amply documented by several surveys and Census sources, and trends are quite similar in most advanced countries. In the United States, over the period 1970–1990, the number of artists grew at a rate of 127%—much more rapidly than the civilian labor force, and the rate of increase has continued to be high...Obviously, fluctuations in supply and demand of artistic labor do not provide a satisfying explanation of what appears to be highly unbalanced growth (Menger 1999).

The present development of labor markets for the arts shows an apparently irresistible trend toward flexibility. According to Menger's assumption, this explains

the underlying process characterized by the pervasive uncertainty of artistic undertakings and careers. It gives an account of how individuals, as well as organizations, handle uncertain prospects and manage the correlated individual and business risks. This model is well-known now and seems to work in very different countries.

Of course, part of the situation is the consequence of a collective illusion: Believing in the increasing cultural appetites of the population and in the necessity of carrying people to the institutions is not entirely based on witnessing a precise or rapid change, if one leaves aside entertainment industries. Public support tends to blur the real situation, and young people continue to develop sincere hopes in the “culturization” of the world. In France, the spectacular success of the higher education offer in cultural management or intermediation (around 100 master-degree-level programs now) shows that, particularly for girls, the cultural world has replaced teaching as a model for occupational future (Dubois 2013). The more the younger generations are rebuked by the low salaries and what is seen as the stressful lives of teachers, the more they dream of being involved in cultural occupations. This is again a paradox, since it is difficult to conceive a form of sustainable cultural action that would not be based on education. There is a kind of social magic here, which has to do with the ideology of creative society.

This ideology has developed along with the neo-liberal turn. The extraordinary success of Richard Florida's theses can be analyzed in retrospect as a symptom rather than a consequence of their sheer explanatory power. Florida succeeded in creating an ambiance blurring the division of labor existing and increasing in the world of “thought leadership” and of the development of “meaningful new forms,” (Florida 2002) as if “problem-solving” attitudes were contemporary to the “rise of the creative class.” The so-called super-creative core was stratified and was as much an oversimplification as the “cognitariat,” this new proletariat of knowledge, invented by Hardt and Negri in *Empire* (Hardt & Negri 2000). Rather than those big frescoes, one should prefer more detailed analyses of the changes in the workforce.

In the more recent book *Le travail créateur*, Pierre-Michel Menger (2009) discusses the legend of artistic creation as subversive, solitary, and linked to anti-utilitarianism (artistic work being posited against labor) and shows that today artists develop their projects in the environment of new capitalism, although there is no such thing as a critical view in Menger's work. They fit completely into the model of hyperflexibility, acceptance of growing inequalities, teamwork, and short-term projects. Such a paradox stems from the fact that the post-industrial worker and the artist look alike, and that they melt into the type of the new “creative worker.” The artist is no longer an exception in the world of capitalism but becomes a kind of prototype who has integrated the changes in capitalism earlier than his or her fellow citizens. The Art worlds are a laboratory where the transformations may be observed. Thus, the division of labor is seen by Menger as a

functional division that generates interdependency relationships, from cooperation to conflict, but not frozen in a direct and organized hierarchy. The traditional forms of long-lasting and disciplinary authority and command diminish. The individualization of links gives more autonomy and responsibility to the subject. In the meantime, such an organization of work increases the chances of unemployment and failure as a result of the reputational inequalities. The division of artistic work has two great principles: individualism and risk. Here, the old philosophical question of the determination of artistic value re-appears. The individual creativity, expressing a unique talent, is evaluated by the market and the public. In the Art worlds, as well as in the Sport worlds, unbelievable differences in gains are celebrated and valued. Their markets are characterized by the most astonishing apology of inter-individual competition, most of the time as “winner takes all” markets. Achievement in sports is frequently based on a killer instinct, and a form of deadly competition tends to become the norm of individual action. Even in the realm of sciences, cooperation is less praised than the solitary achievement of the genius. Thus, what is labeled creative work allows a rather radical social Darwinian vision of the world.

The artistic work offers also the best example of hyper-flexibility at every level of occupational activity: The traditional model of salaried work is disorganized. The worker multiplies short-term contracts; she becomes an autonomous professional, but at her own expense. The final question is: Are the artists the forerunners of a new social structure oriented toward the needs of new capitalism? The portrait of the artist as a worker might also be the sketch of the portrait of the worker as an artist, and of course, most of the time, as an unsuccessful artist.

This has to be compared with Boltanski and Chiapello’s thesis in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (Boltanski & Chiapello 1999/2005). Although this book was written before Boltanski’s rather flamboyant return to a critical stance, the book contains more potential for reintroducing political issues (Boltanski 2011; Fabiani 2011b). I would simply like to point out the importance of the “artistic” critique in the ideological justification of new capitalism. Capitalism has the genuine capacity to integrate the artistic view of the world. Freedom, liberation, and authenticity are recognized as the core values of new capitalism. Here we are not far from the idea of the artist as a forerunner of capitalist justification or legitimation. However, Boltanski and Chiapello have added a new set of inescapable questions concerning the convergence of an artistic worldview and the reorganization of capitalism. Are not the ideas of freedom and authenticity void of their artistic meaning in the realm of new capitalism? Is the search for profit compatible with authenticity and with individual responsibility? Artistic critique is not yet the strength of social critique. But one can recognize quite a few signs of anxiety as a connected and entirely flexible world develops. The spread of new capitalism does not bring about the expected re-enchantment of the world that it seemed to promise. On the contrary, it seems to lead to huge difficulties in projecting oneself into the future.

The connected world is mainly connected to the present and to short-term involvements and relationships. The efficiency of the system may seem to provide the individual with more opportunities (more encounters, more exotic sex, more travel, more professional experience), but it increases the level of frustration. Of course, the implicit acceptance of risk and the taken-for-granted ideology of the successful genius now constitute a very powerful tool of symbolic domination. Individuals believe less and less in the powers of collective struggles, although the most successful artistic endeavors, as in the movie or television industries, are still characterized by the power of guilds or by the existence of strong unions. But it does not suffice to guarantee the smooth functioning of the system. More and more people, although increasingly connected and willing to be self-employed entrepreneurs, think that they cannot come to grips with their environments. Quite often, autonomy means anxiety, loneliness, and devaluation of the self. The world has become completely precarious. Short-term work assignments correspond to short-term life involvements when it comes to marriage and children. Richard Florida has defined gay educated people as a sort of cultural avant-garde, and his “gay index” has become the indicator of creativity in urban settings. However, the mobilizations for gay marriage in the most developed countries clearly show that contrary to the creative imagery, many gay people aspire to stable forms of social life. In addition, younger generations, who should more willingly accept the constraints of new capitalism, are more affected by dissatisfaction with life.

In its ideological history, capitalism has been constantly associated with freedom and autonomy. They are the main objects of its self-justification or legitimization process. And with new capitalism we seem to have reached a peak in this process. However, new capitalist liberation has very high costs. It has destroyed securities developed in the Welfare State (especially the security of employment), and it has developed diverse new forms of control, the most important undoubtedly the controls exerted by the self, giving a new meaning to the process of disciplinarization developed by Michel Foucault (1978). With new capitalism, we are like artists. We may play the role we want to play. Achievement reigns versus ascription. We are completely mobile and flexible; we can forget all our former links and develop new projects as much as we want. This process has generalized the commodification of all activities including culture and leisure, and, perhaps even worse, the commodification of human authentic qualities. It becomes difficult in our world to distinguish clearly between authentic and non-authentic values, since we have to constantly produce our own authenticity, to play it or to perform it, so to speak. Being commodified, the authenticity of goods becomes a sign of their inauthenticity, but in turn, capitalism is able to integrate the critique of inauthenticity and to provide the market with new “authentic” goods that will be quickly replaced by others. How can one be “authentic” and in the meantime completely flexible and available for all the mobility and changes of the self required in that world? The worker is an artist, in as much as he or she can play all

the roles needed by new capitalism. However, he or she has the duties of an artist (being versatile enough to satisfy the audience) but not necessarily the recognition of artistic prowess (being multiple by the deepening of the self or by the quest for intensity). The democracy of talents allowed by the new capitalism might be a world of simulacra or a huge ideological illusion.

Freely using Boltanski and Chiapello's ideas, we have thus reached a critical point about creative society. At least, we have seen that there was a contradiction between the dreams of a connected, creative, and free society and the reality of short-term commitments. Of course, those criticisms do not take into account what Menger stressed, the growing acceptance of a higher level of risk, the recognition of the unequal distribution of talents. I tend to ignore the development of safety nets in what could be a redefined Welfare State associating flexibility and security. These safety nets are not evenly provided in each country. Post-socialist countries lack the most in this respect. This is why they are sometimes considered more vulnerable to the ideologies of creative entrepreneurship. In France, a form of cultural Welfare State emerged after the Second World War. Two of its most original features are now under attack. The first is the "*intermittents du spectacle*," these very numerous workers, artists and technicians, employed in show business on a casual basis who can collect unemployment benefits on a disdainful scheme, with fewer hours worked. The other one is the advance on earnings (*avance sur recettes*) in cinema that allows more French movies to be produced with funds collected from a tax on theatre tickets, ironically mainly bought to watch US blockbusters. Both schemes were created to alleviate the risks of cultural endeavors, and they have been quite efficient for more than sixty years. But they cost taxpayers, and do not fit the ideology of neo-liberalism. Artists are portrayed as assisted people or even parasites. Diverse governments, right and left, have not yet made radical choices, since it would undoubtedly weaken the cultural activities in France. But it shows that the cultural sector is now the heart of violent ideological fights in the name of "liberalizing" and "privatizing" artistic activities. French neo-liberalism is deeply ambivalent regarding culture: While praising the autonomy of the artists, it aims to dismantle the institutional tools that led to its development. This attitude is a very good example of a broader trend. Cultural activities should be aligned on the economy as a whole. The current crisis has increased this trend and offered new justifications for radical change. We must turn now to the analysis of the first consequences of the crisis.

The Effects of the Current Crisis

In the last sixty years, culture has been to some extent a constitutive element of the welfare state in the West. Culture has provided many new facilities to citizens. Museums, libraries, theatres, and festivals have blossomed. In spite of the strong inequalities of access to cultural goods, these institutions have become common

features of the cityscapes. They are considered an index of what a good life can be, notwithstanding the educational benefits attached to their regular use. In socialist countries, culture was ideologically central on somewhat different grounds and played a very important role in public life. After the fall of the Berlin wall, the communist cultural world brutally fell apart and had to be reshaped along new policy lines. Thus, culture is undoubtedly a central feature of the contemporary public sphere and has even, as nicely shown by Jim McGuigan, become a cultural public sphere of its own (McGuigan 2004, 2011). In all countries, cultural institutions are oriented by public funding and public policy. Cultural public policies have two major dimensions. The first is public support for the arts and the democratization of access to cultural goods. The second is the regulatory aspect of the government activities and deals mainly with the control of cultural industries. Thus, the shrinking of state and municipal budgets as a whole has had a direct and immediate impact on cultural life, since it depends so heavily on public expenditures. Luis Bonet and Fabio Donato think that the former socialist countries have an edge in this respect.

Nowadays, this is paradoxically an advantage for them, since they know how to face processes of radical change better than Western European countries. They are more aware of how to deal with instability and how to move to a very different political, social and economic system. (Bonet & Donato 2011).

This, of course, remains to be seen, but is a very interesting idea as the austerity packages are not likely to fade away in the near future. Thus far, there have been no major changes in most countries since the beginning of the financial crisis. We witnessed more adjustments to the situation than promises of structural change. In some countries, where the issue is extremely touchy, as in France, there has been no major change in public funding yet. If the crisis deepens, it is very likely that decreasing public budgets will have major consequences on cultural choices. In the past few decades, two trends have coexisted: the funding of very big institutions viewed as nation or city flagships and the dissemination of small cultural units created to serve the everyday needs of local populations. In the near future, contradictions between the two sides of the cultural policies might grow. Less money will imply drastic political choices, and is very likely to lead to the shrinking or even the closing of some institutions. A sort of cultural rust belt might even appear. This is not pure speculation. Last fall in Germany, some people expressed the wish to significantly reduce the number of cultural institutions in the country. There seem to be no possible relief from the private sector, for three reasons. The private sector can handle a few prestigious endeavors and cultural flagships but cannot handle the democratizing aspect of public policy. The crisis had an impact on firms' funding capacity, and the public-private partnership has not always been very efficient. Households must now pick up the bills for cultural bounties if they want to benefit from them. However, it is very doubtful that average households can replace traditional philanthropists.

As the first available data show, the budget cuts have direct consequences. There has been a decrease in new cultural productions and an indirect decrease in cultural consumption (EUROSTAT 2011; see also Inkei 2010). It is very likely that this situation will diminish the level of risk taking among cultural operators and increase the amount of “popular” programming. It will also make the race for private sponsorship even more intense. As we know, those trends are not new, and they have tended to shape the policy of big institutions since the neo-liberal turn. Margaret Thatcher’s policy, even as reshuffled by New Labour, has been a case in point, but it is undoubtedly a larger trend, as the numerous controversies about the “commodification” of the Louvre in France clearly show. The battle against the Abu Dhabi extension of the Louvre opposed two types of cultural actors: the new managers, who think that anything goes as long as it brings prestige and money, and the traditional curators and art historians, who think that their first aim is to preserve the heritage from the aggressions of time but also from the demands of the market.

Pierre-Michel Menger, as we already know, has shown that the number of people engaging in cultural occupations has increased more quickly than the slots available in the sector (Menger 2002). Will the deepening crisis reverse this strong and long-term trend? The budget cuts affect the weakest actors in the field first: young people who make their debuts and have no established reputation, small theatres with scarce audience, and the most “experimental” parts of artistic life. But it can be the other way, too. Poor prospects in the overall job market can attract young people to an impoverished form of bohemia by allowing them to postpone confronting harsh realities. This depends of course on the possibilities of what will remain of the welfare state. Thus, two situations can coexist: the survival of the fittest, the talented, the connected, and so on and so forth and the “artistization” of the multitude. However, impoverishment of the sector can lead to aesthetic changes. Smaller budgets can lead to new forms of “poor art” and to seeking new forms of relationships with the public. New forms of justification are about to appear. Some forms of philistinism or cultural conservatism are already flourishing. They are not new in the landscape, of course. The National Endowment for Arts is characterized by a long history of protest against the public funding of “obscene” or pornographic art that has not prevented its success (Shockley 2011). The former president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, is famous for a statement he made at the end of a play at the Comédie Française: “One does not come to the Comédie Française to get bored.” This is common, but in a time of crisis, the conservative may become more vocal as the shortage of money seems to give more weight to cutting budgets for superfluous or elite endeavors. More generally, the new constraints on public choice will generate an awareness of the limited possibilities of public action in the cultural sector. This is particularly true when it comes to heritage policy. In the last few decades, we have witnessed what I call the “heritagization” (patrimonialization) of everything as identity claims and de-

hierarchizing of cultural values have made every single object, building, or now intangible items a potential candidate for local or worldly recognition.

Against a form of cultural pessimism that is likely to occur when one thinks of the dangers ahead, I would like to end with a more positive tone. Since the neoliberal turn, the deepest meanings of the idea of a cultural policy have been lost. Absurdly believing that a Bilbao Guggenheim could be easily planted in every declining seaport of the world and bring fame to the city was the most salient effect of the so-called cultural turn. The MUCEM (Museum of the Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean) in Marseilles is a case in point (Bias & Fabiani 2011). The controversies that have arisen in this city about the public funding of the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2013 are extremely interesting, because they show the structural contradictions of cultural policy: either allocating funds to local initiatives or contributing to city-branding. Again, these disputes are not new, and they accompanied the development of the Guggenheim in Bilbao, but the funding shortage will redefine the terms of the debate. Who can define the public interest in culture? Is culture equipped with emancipatory properties? How can they be reassessed in light of the current situation? How can a cultural public sphere be consolidated? I propose to put these questions on the new agenda of cultural policy makers.

Jean-Louis Fabiani is Professor of Sociology at the Central European University in Budapest and directeur d'études à the EHESS in Paris. He is the author *Les Philosophes de la République* (1988), *Lire en prison* (1995), *Beautés du Sud* (2005), *Après la culture légitime* (2007) *L'Éducation populaire et le théâtre*. (2008) and *Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe français ?* (2010). E-mail: Jean-Louis.Fabiani@ehess.fr

Notes

- ¹ An earlier version of this text was presented at the International Conference on Cultural Policy Research as a keynote address (Barcelona, July 2012)
- ² Richard Florida's creative society (2002) is undoubtedly the most striking example of an ideological construct, with the dimension of a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to Florida, metropolitan regions with high concentrations of high-tech workers, artists, musicians, gay men, and "high bohemians", correlate with a higher level of economic development. The creative class is by such attractive: it has the power of fostering cultural and economic growth. Business is attracted by culture: the creative class is oriented towards openness and personal development. Attracting the members of the creative class is the surest way of securing continuous development.

References

- Alexander Victoria D. (2007): "State Support of Artists: The Case of the United Kingdom in a New Labour Environment and Beyond", *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society*, 37:3, 185-200.
- Biaass, Sophie & Jean-Louis Fabiani (2011): "Marseille: A City beyond Distinction?", *Nottingham French Studies*, 50, Spring 2011, 83-94.
- Bonet, Lluís & Fabio Donato (2011): "The Financial Crisis and its Impact on the Current Models of Governance and Management of the Cultural Sector in Europe", *ENCATC Journal of Cultural Management and Policy*, 1:1, 4-11.
- Boltanski Luc (2011): *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boltanski, Luc & Eve Chiapello (1999/2005): *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso.
- COUNCIL OF EUROPE 2011 Results of a 2011 Survey with Governments on Culture Budgets and the Financial Crisis and Culture. Strasbourg. Publication of Council of Europe.
- Dubois, Vincent (2013): *La culture comme vocation*, Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- EUROSTAT 2011 Cultural statistics. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Fabiani J.L.'s (2011): "Review of Luc Boltanski's On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation", *European Journal of Sociological Theory*, 14, 401-406.
- Florida, Richard (2002): *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books.
- Foucault Michel (1978): *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London: Penguin Books.
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2000): *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Inkei, Péter (2010): "The Effects of the Economic Crisis on Culture", Culture Watch Europe conference 2010 "Culture and the Policies of Change" EESC Headquarters, Brussels, 6-7 September.
- McGuigan, Jim (2004): "The Cultural Public Sphere", *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8, 427-443.
- (2011): "The Cultural Public Sphere: A Critical Measure of Public Culture?", Gerard Delanty, Liana Giorgi & Monica Sassatelli (eds): *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, London: Routledge.
- Menger, Pierre Michel (1999): "Artistic Labor Markets and Careers", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, 542-543.
- (2002): *Portrait de l'artiste en travailleur*, Paris, Le Seuil.
- (2009): *Le Travail créateur*, Paris, EHESS-Gallimard-Seuil.
- Mulcahy, Kevin V. (2006): "Cultural Policy: Definitions and Theoretical Approaches", *The Journal of Arts, Management, Law and Society*, 35:4, 319-330.
- Nye, Joseph S. (2004): *Soft Power: The Means To Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affairs.
- Shockley, Gordon E. (2011): "Political Environment and Policy Change: The National Endowment for the Arts in the 1990s", *The Journal of Arts, Management, Law and Society*, 41:4, 267-284.
- Shuster, J. Mark (2003): *Mapping State cultural Policy: The State of Washington*, Chicago: University of Chicago, Cultural Policy Center.

The Neoliberal Self

Jim McGuigan

Abstract

This article proposes an ideal type of the neoliberal self as the preferred form of life in the economic, political and cultural circumstances of present-day developed and developing capitalism. The neoliberal self combines the idealised subject(s) of classical and neoclassical economics – featuring entrepreneurship and consumer sovereignty – with the contemporary discourse of ‘the taxpayer’, who is sceptical of redistributive justice, and a ‘cool’ posture that derives symbolically – and ironically – from cultures of disaffection and, indeed, opposition. In effect, the transition from organised capitalism to neoliberal hegemony over the recent period has brought about a corresponding transformation in subjectivity. As an idea type, the neoliberal self cannot be found concretely in a ‘pure’ form, not even represented by leading celebrity figures. The emergent characteristics of the ideal type, though not set out formally here, accentuate various aspects of personal conduct and mundane existence for illustrative and analytical purposes. Leading celebrities, most notably high-tech entrepreneurs, for instance, operate in the popular imagination as models of achievement for the aspiring young. They are seldom emulated in real life, however, even unrealistically so. Still, their famed lifestyles and heavily publicised opinions provide guidelines to appropriate conduct in a ruthlessly competitive and unequal world.

Keywords: Cool culture, entrepreneurship, ideal (social) type, neoliberalism, organised capitalism, preferred self, sovereign consumption.

Introduction

This article explores the hypothesis that the leading cultural, political and economic features of a given civilisation tend to be implicated in the construction of a preferred self, that is, a discernible social type. The hypothesis does not claim that everyone or even a majority of people within such a civilisation will necessarily display the typical characteristics of a preferred self, merely that there is a social pressure to do so. Although the argument here has psychological implications, the proposition concerning a preferred self is principally a sociological proposition. The following observations are inspired by Margaret Thatcher's notorious description of her own politics in 1981 when she remarked that the method is economic but the object is to change the soul.

Substantively, the article is concerned with the transition between two phases of capitalist hegemony throughout the world during the late twentieth century, in effect, from the mid-century phase of *organised capitalism* to the presently hegemonic phase of *neoliberal capitalism*. The key ideological sources, assumptions and conjunctures of this transformative process are identified and related to their implications for selfhood, drawing upon the insights and methodological precepts of such theorists as Ulrich Beck, Michel Foucault, Georg Simmel and Max Weber within a broadly cultural-materialist framework.

The article constructs an ideal typification of the neoliberal self, emphasising how demotic neoliberalism, with the aid of celebrity role models, instructs the conduct of the young in general today. It is probably most evident in financial occupations, particularly so in what has come to be seen as an arcane and virtually sacred – or, at least, priestly – practice of stock-broking but also in the profanely popular work of the Devil, leisure-time gambling, which has become such a normalised feature of everyday life. Neoliberal selfhood is especially discernible as well in the lifestyles, aspirations and frustrations of entrants to the 'creative industries', a phenomenon that is likely to be of special interest to those of us involved in cultural analysis and media research.

Neoliberal Hegemony

Although neoliberalism is first and foremost a doctrine of political economy, it is also, rather more diffusely, a principle of civilisation that shapes the socio-cultural makeup of people through socialisation in the broadest sense.

Neoliberal political economy imagines that the free-play of market forces – the ineluctable laws of supply and demand that operate unencumbered according to the never actually existing model of 'perfect competition' – is the magical elixir for prosperity. Enlightened avarice is the motivating incentive for the self. In an inversion of Marx's labour theory of value, the Schumpeterian entrepreneur is said to be the 'wealth creator'. Some of the wealth thus created by full-blooded

capitalism is said to trickle down to the masses eventually though equalisation as such is neither a priority nor a goal. And, in any case, inequality is no bad thing since there have to be winners and losers of any genuine competition. Competitive business gives the consumer what he or she wants, matching supply with demand. Choice is vital in the sphere of consumption; the consumer is sovereign. People, moreover, should be able to provide for themselves and their families rather than being looked after by a paternalistic state. It follows, therefore, that taxpayers must not be robbed by excessive taxation. Private provision in a competitive and, therefore, efficient marketplace is always better than wasteful public provision, which tends to involve the frittering away of other people's hard-won earnings by irresponsible bureaucrats.

The *successful entrepreneur*, *sovereign consumer* and *hard-working taxpayer*, these are key players in the capitalist game today. At one time it was thought by well-intentioned but misguided people, as we are told constantly these days, that socialism might be a good idea. Whether or not there was any truth in that dated hope, according to conventional wisdom, we now know for sure that socialism never works in practice; it stunts innovation, deprives us of our individual freedom and wastes our precious money.

As David Harvey (2005: 3) argues, then, neoliberalism is not only economic policy and hard-nosed politics but it actually frames the meaning of everyday reality for people: 'Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse... [with] pervasive effects'. So, as well as promoting 'the market' not only in the economic but also in the political field (i.e. 'liberal democracy') of contemporary capitalism, neoliberalism is implicated in an ideological battle for hearts and minds over everything, most insidiously by influencing the very language that is used mundanely. As Bourdieu & Wacquant (1991: 2) maintain, there is a 'new planetary vulgate' articulated in the now tediously familiar lexicon of 'NewLiberalSpeak'.

Moreover, the unquestionable legitimacy of neoliberalism is represented daily in the news. Mainstream media seldom, if ever, actually name neoliberalism or call it into question. Instead, politics is represented naturalistically in places like Britain and the USA these days as a debate over how to be 'competitive' under 'global' conditions in pursuit of 'growth' according to the taken-for-granted market and budgetary principles of neoliberalism. These principles put into action are currently meant to clear up the mess that was, in fact, caused by neoliberal economics and politics in the first place.

Since the meltdown of 2007-8 even quasi-Keynesian measures have been tried, such as spending huge amounts of public ('taxpayers') money to save banks in neoliberal regimes, especially in countries like Britain, with the forlorn hope that this infusion of cash would actually be used to boost ailing 'private-sector' enterprise. That Friedrich Von Hayek and Milton Friedman, according to expert opinion, are supposed to have refuted the efficacy of such policy and sent it packing

long ago is not usually acknowledged when that assumption no longer holds apparently in practice. Neoliberalism is nothing if not contradictory.

Commenting on the failure of the British Conservative Coalition government's austerity programme to actually reduce the budget deficit, including draconian benefit cuts, Ha-Joon Chang (2013: 50) has said shrewdly, 'spending cuts are not about deficits but about rolling back the welfare state', thereby identifying the deep project of hegemonic transformation, which is about structural change. At the same time, the European Union's Central Bank claims to be alleviating suffering in debt-ridden Greece whilst, in effect, worsening it. Yet, in spite of notable instances of lavish state intervention as well as austerity measures, the authority of 'free-market' economics retains its credibility – albeit perhaps somewhat less securely now – in business schools, government finance departments and op-ed columns.

Capitalism had emerged historically in various financial and mercantile manifestations before the enclosures of common land during the eighteenth century. It only became truly systemic on a societal basis, however, in the nineteenth century when the principles of free trade and mass production were put into practice with gusto in Britain by the industrial bourgeoisie. With the exception of a few protectionist measures like the Corn Laws, the state was not meant to interfere in the natural workings of enterprise and trade. Government was not entirely minimalist, however: the state established legal arrangements to facilitate business – the joint-stock company, contractual regulations, restrictions on trade unions, etc. It also backed up capitalist exploitation and class domination by force when necessary by sending in the troops. Gun-boat diplomacy was another specialism of the British state and the militarily-policed empire was an immense source of raw materials and markets. Admittedly, some progressive legislation was enacted too, for instance, on abolishing slavery and curtailing child labour in order to affect a semblance of civilisation and assuage humanitarian sentiment. It is convenient to label this phase of capitalist development, *liberal capitalism*.

Liberal capitalism emerged in national pockets and, through international trade, its tentacles spread across the world. It became vulnerable, however, due to periodic downturns in the trade cycle and to the challenge of emerging labour movements, exacerbated by the rise of socialism and, then in the early twentieth century, confronted by the counter-system of communism, which for a while looked as though it might bypass the crisis tendencies of capitalism. Communism also claimed to serve its people with greater fairness and equality. In the Soviet Union, the very notion of 'socialist man' was promoted by the authorities to be a better model of conduct than the greedy individualism of capitalism's 'economic man' during the 1920s and '30s. From the Thirties right up to the Sixties and, for some post-colonial countries, a few years beyond, Soviet Communism offered a credible alternative to capitalism. Furthermore, public ownership of 'the commanding heights', state planning and management of economic resources were

also considered promising measures to combine with free enterprise in the ‘mixed economies’ of the West.

Already such developments were hinted at earlier within capitalism itself by what Rudolf Hilferding (1919/1981) called ‘organised capitalism’, originally referring specifically to cooperation in German cartels of firms so as to control the market instead of relying on bitter competition between rivals. Later, during the Depression of the 1930s, unregulated markets and irresponsible speculation were denounced universally. A period of state intervention in Western capitalism was ushered in, including Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ and the construction of social-democratic welfare states in Europe. At that time, belief in the efficacy of large-scale state intervention was shared by Keynesian liberals, social democrats, socialists, communists and fascists alike. The remarkable consensus around this expanded form of *organised capitalism* contributed greatly to the post Second World War ‘golden age’ of rapidly advancing affluence and moves towards equalisation of opportunities and rewards on both sides of the Atlantic.

The crisis of the 1970s following the OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) hikes in the oil price, however, triggered the turn away from *organised capitalism*. The USA led the way, accompanied by Britain, in dismantling the post-war settlement of egalitarian reform, including variously, institutionalised collective bargaining for higher wages and better working conditions, and ‘the social wage’ of relatively generous welfare entitlements and so on. Fordist vertical integration was broken down in industrial organisation, to be replaced by complex networking and outsourcing. Thus the devastation of deindustrialisation was under way in the former Northern and Western heartlands of capitalism. Manufacturing and heavy-industry were transferred increasingly to cheap labour markets in the developing South and East. And, there was a switch back to the pre-Keynesian and less adulterated capitalist nostrums of neo-classical economics.

This shift from *organised capitalism* to the currently hegemonic *neoliberal capitalism* worldwide is a big story of the past thirty to forty years, possibly bigger even than the collapse of ‘actually-existing socialism’ in former communist states, albeit facilitated by it. Stuart Hall (1988) always insisted in the 1980s that a local and pioneering instance of this transformation, the ‘authoritarian populism’ of successive Thatcher-led governments in Britain, represented a *hegemonic project*, not an *achieved hegemony*. His attitude now to the much broader and globalising category of neoliberalism – which subsumes Thatcherism, Reaganomics and much else besides – is somewhat less provisional. However, he still insists quite rightly, following his theoretical inspiration, Antonio Gramsci, that hegemony is never a static condition: ‘No project achieves “hegemony” as a completed project. It is a process, not a state of being. No victories are permanent or final’ (Hall 2011: 26).

‘Neoliberalism’ is a catch-all term for a complex amalgam of ideas and policies with significant variation amongst its constituent streams of thought and prac-

tice; from, say, the ‘anarcho-liberalism’ of the USA through the ‘social-market’ of the Federal Republic of Germany to the state-directed forms of East Asia. From a Centrist position, Daniel Stedman Jones has surveyed this complexity in considerable historical detail in his *Masters of the Universe – Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*. He concentrates most specifically, however, on transatlantic currents and cross-currents. In that regard, he provides a basic definition of transatlantic neoliberalism: ‘the free market ideology based on individual liberty and limited government that connected human freedom to the actions of the rational, self-interested actor in the market place’ (Stedman Jones 2012: 2). This definition has the virtue of including a conception of the individual subject within the matrix of neoliberal ideas, ‘the rational, self-interested actor in the market place’; or, to put it another way, Stedman Jones’s glimpse of the neoliberal self.

Stedman Jones disagrees, on the one hand, with the ‘inevitalist’ school of apologists for neoliberalism, the argument that it was a doctrine whose time of necessity had come, which has been expounded, for instance, by Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw (1998/2002). On the other hand, he also disagrees with ‘Marxists’ like David Harvey (2005), the late Andrew Glyn (2006) and Naomi Klein (2007), who see it as the latest phase of capitalist class struggle around the globe, responding to a longish term decline in profitability and seizing upon disasters to exploit economically (see McGuigan 2009 for a fairer treatment than Stedman Jones’s of these authors). Stedman Jones’s own account of the rise of neoliberalism is meticulously detailed but hardly a convincing explanation: for him, neoliberalism is merely a contingent and surprisingly effective reaction to the failures of state control, full stop.

It is worth noting, incidentally, that the French historian of systems of thought, Michel Foucault was on to the significance of the neoliberal episteme very early. His lectures at the College de France in 1978 and 1979 were supposed to be about what he called ‘the birth of biopolitics’. Yet, in practice, he devoted most of his lecture time to the topic of neoliberalism as a doctrine of political economy and a form of governmentality. Foucault did, however, eventually get around to remarking briefly yet very insightfully on its implications for the self. There are two main reasons for being interested in these lectures now. First, Foucault spotted the historical profundity of a revival of (neo)liberal thought in the 1970s and his observations concerning it were extremely prescient. Second, Foucault realised that neoliberalism was not confined to economics and governmental politics in the conventional sense but that it represented a scheme for reordering the social and a design for refashioning the conduct of the self.

Foucault spoke about the Germanic school of thought that arose during the 1930s on the Right of politics but not in the Nazi camp, the ‘Ordo liberals’, named after their journal, *Ordo*. They rejected National *Socialism* and were fundamentally opposed to welfarism. Contradictory perhaps as it may seem, Ordoliberalism

was fated to frame the policies of the post-war ‘economic miracle’ in the Federal Republic.

In honour of Walter Lippman, Ludwig Von Mises, Von Hayek and others, including Raymond Aron, had held a colloquium in Paris towards the end of the 1930s, at which the term ‘neoliberalism’ was used apparently for the first time (Stedman Jones: 31). They set up the *comite international d’etude pour le renouveau du liberalisme* (CIERL) to promote it. Already faced with creeping socialism, in their opinion, there was a need to *renew* the liberal principles of nineteenth-century capitalism for changed times. This call for renewal was made before the Second World War and nearly ten years ahead of the 1947 setting up of the Mont Pelerin Society in Switzerland by Von Hayek and Friedman, which made the key transatlantic connection and is normally credited with launching neoliberalism as a political movement, not just a crackpot doctrine of political economy.

For Foucault (2004/2008: 226), the announcement of neoliberalism in the late-1930s and elaborated upon since then was calling for a return to the pre-twentieth century’s *homo oeconomicus* but with a freshly subjective inflection: ‘*Homo oeconomicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself’. For such a figure, according to Foucault, education is not conceived of being so much about learning as about ‘investment’ (2004/2008: 229). Notions like ‘human capital’ come into play which, Foucault notes, require a ‘mobile’ and flexible self (2004/2008: 230) plus the constant orientation to ‘innovation’ (2004/2008: 231) and ‘growth’. In sum, neoliberalism is about ‘[t]he application of the economic grid to social phenomena’ (2004/2008: 239). He goes on to say:

What is the function of this generalization of the ‘enterprise’ form?... [I]t involves extending the economic model of supply and demand and of investment-costs-profit so as to make it a model of social relations and of existence itself, a form of relationship of the individual to himself, time, those around him, the group, and the family. (Foucault 2004/2008: 242)

Harbouring no great fondness for the state himself, Foucault concludes that the game of neoliberalism is to set the market against the state and, ultimately, to treat the state and all its doings as a marketplace. How prescient indeed he was.

Wendy Brown (2005) has also noted the percipience of Foucault regarding the emergence of neoliberalism, the application of economic reasoning to everything and the construction of a distinctive subjectivity. Following Foucault to the letter, Brown sees neoliberalism as a governmental regime that sets the rules of conduct in all spheres of life and, moreover, she believes it needs little in the way of ideological support to sustain the operations of power. In this respect and on the question of ideological ballast, she understates the contemporary role of mass-popular culture in securing consent to neoliberal hegemony. In my own work on the culture of ‘cool capitalism’ (McGuigan 2009), the incorporation of disaffection is stressed. Signs and symbols of ostensible dissent are joyfully inscribed into capi-

talism itself through mass-popular forms and practices. This ideological-cultural complex is an important supplement to the prosaic construction of *homo oeconomicus* and serves as a means of disarming critical opposition, you might even say, poetically.

Social Typification

Louis Althusser's (1970/1984: 44) gnomic statement, '*Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects*' was always too generalised and undifferentiated a theoretical proposition. Yet, it does capture something of how we relate to the world. Althusser claimed that we imagine our relation to the world *through ideology* as a universal feature of human existence. At the same time, however, he wished to explain the ideological reproduction of the conditions and exploitative relations of production specifically under capitalism. He wanted 'ideology' to do too much, to serve as a replacement term, in effect, for 'culture' as well as a critical concept. But, Althusser's version of ideology deprived it of the inherently critical promise of correcting distortion.

Alternatively, in order to question neoliberalism *as ideology*, then, critique is obliged to point out the error of its ways. A preferable concept of ideology, then, is as *distorted communication motivated by unequal power relations*, a conception inspired by Jurgen Habermas's (1970) optimistic yet quite possibly unrealisable ideal of *undistorted communication*. This particular concept of ideology is not strictly attributable to him. Habermas preferred to dispense with the very notion of ideology in his theoretical scheme, opting instead for a consensus rather than correspondence theory of truth. Whether fully attainable or not, some idea of undistorted communication, similar to the concept of the public sphere, is an essential aid to and necessary feature of the critique of ideologically distorted communications in the present author's opinion. Still, there is an important feature of Althusser's (1970/1984: 36) Lacanian formulation that is worthy of retention, that '*Ideology is a "Representation" of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence*'.

There seems to be little doubt that actual, everyday understanding of ourselves in the world is, at the very least, partly a matter of imagination, ranging from mere egotism to the extreme delusions of mental illness. A person's self-image is always unlikely to correspond exactly with how others see us. Some young women, however, risk their lives trying to attain what they regard as a socially approved ideal, as in anorexia. Conformism might normally be deemed sane whereas non-conformity is often considered insane. Yet, under certain conditions, madness may lie with conformity.

In order to fit in socially some people are neurotically 'other-directed', as David Riesman (1950/2001) and his colleagues argued famously on the brink of the 1950s when discussing what they saw as the growing conformism of American

life. Such work gave rise to a spate of ‘characterological’ studies in US social science, which was to result in both wild speculation and earnest empirical research on such notions as ‘the culture of narcissism’ (Lasch 1979), ‘the minimal self’ (Lasch 1984) and, recently revived, discussion of the ‘me generation’ or ‘generation me’ (Twenge 2006) of American youth, this later notion approaching closest to the idea of a neoliberal self. Much of the fascination with self-identity today, however, is too psychologistic in that it fails to address the relation of micro-changes in subjectivity to macro-change in culture and society, something which did, of course, preoccupy Riesman and Lasch.

A recent *Guardian*/ICM poll came up with findings about what is now being called ‘Generation Self’ on young people’s social attitudes that are especially alarming for Left-liberals in Britain. *Guardian* journalists, James Ball and Tom Clark (2013: 6) posed the questions: ‘Has Britain raised a new “heartless” generation of children of Thatcher – and, arguably, of Tony Blair? Does this mark the slow death of solidarity?’ It would be prejudging very complicated issues at stake concerning how selfhood today relates to and possibly corresponds to prevailing conditions that are established by polity and economy in the social world to simply adopt what can too easily become a merely moralising complaint about youthful selfishness. This is hardly a fresh complaint anyway and it lacks a sufficiently historical explanation for patterns of behaviour in everyday life.

The construction of the self from early childhood is mediated by the acquisition and use of language. Our sense of self is developed and further sustained through various media of communication, including modern electronic and digital media. It is significant that Manuel Castells (1996), the guru of the sociology of information and communication technologies (ICTs), should open his celebrated ‘information age’ trilogy by discussing the relation between ‘the Net’ and ‘the Self’. For him, this relation is not simply an enhancement of communicability between people but also a contradictory and, in some respects, troubled relation.

‘The Net’ obviously refers to the Internet, the web of information flows facilitated by telematics. However, it is not just this technological capacity. It is also to do with the various ways in which people relate to one another in their personal and working lives, how businesses are structured, how everything is organised through complex network structures, Castells’s ‘network paradigm of society’.

‘The Self’ refers to subjectivity and identity, our individuality. Castells’s network paradigm poses all sorts of questions concerning selfhood today. What sense(s) do we make of ourselves in a social world of hyper communication? Are we all in happy mutuality, forever exchanging emails and mobile phone calls, incessantly chatting with one another? Why is it, then, that widespread experiences of alienation and anomie persist and, in some cases, may be chronic?

As Raymond Williams (for instance, 1974) argued long ago, the experience of ‘mobile privatisation’, the simultaneity of much greater actual and virtual mobility, on the one hand, with an increasingly cocooned, individualised and perhaps

isolated social existence, on the other hand, is a characteristic feature of modern life. Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2006) have formulated yet another new paradigm in the light of the kind of developments in communications that Williams originally spoke of, both in terms of the exchange of messages and travel: ‘the mobilities paradigm’.

In his co-authored book with Anthony Elliott, *Mobile Lives*, Urry claims to ‘show how the mobilities paradigm can be extended to analysis and critique of self-identity and ordinary daily life’ (Elliott & Urry, 2010: x). Furthermore, it is argued, ‘an intensively mobile society reshapes the self’ (2010: 3). For exploring the lived experience of the mobile subject, Elliott and Urry’s methodological strategy is to tell stories either briefly or at some length about actual or imagined individuals, whom we must consider, presumably, to be socially representative types, not in any sense atypical. There is, for instance, the case of ‘Simone... a British-based academic, originally from Brazil, who travels a great deal for her work’ (2010: 1). And, then there is ‘Sandra Fletcher... [who is] sophisticated and smart – a high-profile advertising executive’ (2010: 25). A favourite source of fictionalised lives for Urry (2007) to recount is David Lodge’s comic novel, *Small World*, which is about a network of academics who keep meeting up with one another at various conference locations around the world. Such exemplifications of the mobile existence, of course, do little more than illustrate the exceptionally privileged and socially cocooned experience of successful academic careers. This particularistic strategy results in a misplaced concreteness methodologically that undermines the credibility of qualitative social science. It is novelistic and too specific. For analytical purposes, satisfactory identification of a prevalent social type, such as the type under present consideration in this article, the neoliberal self, should be framed at a much higher level of abstraction than merely describing the peculiar characteristics of individuals, either real or imagined.

The Neoliberal Self

If liberal capitalism cultivated puritanical habits in early entrepreneurs and workers, as Max Weber (1905/2002) argued, then, neoliberal capitalism has reversed matters by cultivating a hedonistic spirit that is no longer dysfunctional to business (Boltanski & Chiapello (1999/2005)). Such hedonism is connected to a ‘cool-capitalist’ cultural formation that performs an astonishing ideological trick, comparable to Robert Tressell’s ‘Great Money Trick’ (1914/2004), by incorporating signs and symbols of disaffection, affecting a rebellious posture, as in the case of Apple, to popular and extremely profitable effect (McGuigan, 2009). The neoliberal self to be formulated here is consistent with ‘the recasting of identity in terms of flexibility, adaptability and instant transformation’ in the words of Elliott and Urry (2010: 7). According to them, the free movement of networked individual-

ism is the Utopian ideal today, best exemplified by ‘the “fast lane” mobilities of the ultra-rich or global elite’ (2010: 22).

The ideal type of the neoliberal self presented here follows Weber’s methodological argument, with all its qualifications, concerning the ideal type as an artificial heuristic device. To quote Weber:

The concept of the ideal type can direct judgement in matters of imputation; it is not a ‘hypothesis’, but seeks to guide the formation of hypotheses. It is not a *representation* of the real, but seeks to provide representation with unambiguous means of expression... It is formed by a one-sided *accentuation* of one or *several* perspectives, and through the synthesis of a variety of diffuse, discrete, *individual* phenomena, present sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes not at all; subsumed by such one-sided, emphatic viewpoints so that they form a uniform construction *in thought*. In its conceptual purity this construction can never be found in reality, it is a *utopia*. *Historical* research has the task of determining in each *individual case* how close to, or far from, reality such an ideal type is... If employed with care, this concept has specific uses in research and exposition. (Weber in Whimster, 2004: 387-388)

Sociologists from Simmel, through Riesman to Bauman who have deemed it necessary to engage in the depiction of social types usually in order to classify different kinds of situated response to various societal pressures currently experienced have tended to observe Weber’s methodological strictures concerning the ideal type. Take, for instance, Georg Simmel’s use of the ideal typification procedure to characterise the lives of the stranger, the poor, the miser, the spendthrift, the adventurer and the nobility (in Levine 1971: 141-213). These are abstract formulations that do not exactly conform to any particular empirical instance. They are defined, in the Weberian sense, by essential features that are accentuated in order to bring out the most salient aspects of a given form of life. For example, the stranger type is not ‘the wanderer who comes today and is gone tomorrow’ but, instead, is someone ‘who comes today and stays tomorrow’ (1971: 143). Such a typification has obvious relevance for thinking about outsidership in the migrant experience. There is a problem, however, with Simmel’s social types; they are virtually ahistorical archetypes.

Historicisation is methodologically necessary in the construction of an ideal typification of the neoliberal self. This is not just a timeless subject positioning that is hailed by bourgeois ideology, in the Althusserian sense, an ideology which has tended to be defined in the broadest terms by its origins in the philosophy of ‘possessive individualism’ (MacPherson 1964).

To be sure, individualism does still matter but today this is better understood not so much as the bourgeois ideal of personal freedom but as compulsory *individualisation* instead. As Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2001/2002) have argued, individuals are compelled now to make agonistic choices on which way to go at nodal points along their life-course trajectory – there may be no guidance – and also they are required to take sole responsibility for the consequences of choices made or, indeed, not made. Individualisation is a matter of

institutionalised obligation, not free choice. It is as though the post-Second World War philosophy of existentialism that flourished in Parisian cafe society has lately achieved mass-popular diffusion. Now that the old collective supports and scripts no longer apply, everyone is abandoned to their fate like an angst-ridden French philosopher. Individualisation is a contradictory phenomenon, however, both exhilarating and terrifying. It really does feel like freedom, especially for women liberated from patriarchal control. But, when things go wrong there is no excuse for anyone. That would be *mauvais foi*. The individual is penalised harshly not only for personal failure but also for sheer bad luck in a highly competitive and relentlessly harsh social environment. Although the Becks deny it, such a self – condemned to freedom and lonely responsibility – is exactly the kind of self cultivated by neoliberalism, combining freewheeling consumer sovereignty with enterprising business acumen.

Such a self is not unappealing. It is actually quite attractive, especially for the young, initiated as they are into a cool-capitalist way of life that does not appear to insist upon conformity and even permits a limited measure of bohemian posturing, personal experimentation and geographical exploration ('the year out', for instance). And, of course, such neoliberal latitude, including male and female 'metrosexual' selfhood, say, is to be compared favourably to the regimentation and 'conservatism' of socialism, according to neoliberalism's ideological demolition of socialist conviction in the conventional wisdom of the day.

In fact, generational tension is a distinct feature of the neoliberal imaginary, including the rejection of 'dinosaur' attitudes concerning all sorts of matters cherished by an older generation. The universalising and collectivist principles that were established by the welfare state after the Second World War are called into question incessantly today by neoliberal politics in a manner that makes sense to peculiarly individualised young people. Public provisions from the distribution of a tax allowance for childcare irrespective of income and winter-fuel benefits for all the elderly to universal healthcare in general are under siege. Young people are unlikely to understand, on what appear to be egalitarian grounds, why wealthy people's entitlements should be the same as the poor. Means-testing is surely the answer if you are oblivious to well-off taxpayer complaints about paying for the poor's health as well as their own when they do not get anything for it. That was why the architects of the welfare state insisted on the universal principle for institutions like national-health services because otherwise the legitimacy and actuality of good quality public healthcare for everyone – that is, egalitarianism – would be imperilled by the well-off opting out, leaving an inferior service for the poor. In this sense, the neoliberal self is connected to a generational structure of feeling, a selfhood counter-posed to the old social-democratic self, though not exclusively so since adherence to youthful up-to-dateness, for instance, is more common now amongst older generations too, albeit not to the same extent when it comes to, say, instant enthusiasm for the latest communications gadget.

The consumption aspect of the neoliberal self is the most obvious, involving the subjectivity cultivated by the cool seduction of promotional culture and acutely brand-aware commodity fetishism. Naomi Klein (2000) said most of what needs to be said about it at the turn of the Millennium. Other authors have added to the critical picture since then, such as Alissa Quart's (2003) *Branded – The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* on viral marketing among young girls and Juliet Schor's (2004) *Born to Buy – The Commercialised Child and the New Consumer Culture* on the cool seduction of children. Anya Kamenetz's (2006) *Generation Debt – Why Now is a Terrible Time to be Young* is especially important for understanding the plight of young adults, including graduates with their high and very often frustrated expectations, caught between an Olympic training in consumerism and the bitter prospect of life-long debt dependency, poor job and retirement prospects, high rents and unaffordable house purchase.

These factors contribute massively to the circumstances and pressures under which the neoliberal self is situated in relation to production; that is, in addition to the inculcation of an intensely competitive ideology of working life these days. The consumption aspect of the neoliberal self does not simply equate to the feminine in the terms of some older binary opposition and the production aspect is no longer necessarily masculine due to a progressive loosening of gender constraints. Masculine consumerism has been cultivated and there is a certain feminisation of work. Women have also progressed upwards in labour hierarchies, though not proportionately so at the very highest levels.

The twenty-first century world of neoliberal capitalism is not at all the same as the nineteenth-century world of liberal capitalism. There is much widespread affluence and, in many respects, capitalism really has delivered the goods to a great many people. The complacency that is cultivated by affluence and which still persists quite strongly in richer countries has, of course, broken down for many young people over the past few years, especially in the poorer countries of Southern and Eastern Europe. But, on a much grander scale, inequality across the Earth has actually worsened over the past thirty to forty years, the rich have become richer, most of the poor have remained poor and some of them have become much poorer. The astounding rate of exploitation in the early twenty-first century at a global level – with sweated labour conditions, long hours of drudgery, fierce workplace discipline in unhealthy environments and still comparatively meagre rewards in so-called 'developing countries', including booming China and India – would have shocked Marx and Engels.

The massification of a reduced quality of higher education has placed a young middle-class generation firmly into the neoliberal trap as well, significant numbers of whom work in the precarious occupations of the apparently burgeoning 'creative industries' in wealthier countries. The paradoxical life conditions of such professional-managerial groups have been written about insightfully by Andrew Ross (2009). Personal initiative and frantic networking in the precarious labour mar-

ket of short-term contracts, where enterprising ‘creativity’ is at a premium, according to Ross, represent an ironic fruition of the counter-cultural campaigns for job enrichment dating from the 1960s and ‘70s. This phenomenon is also commented upon by Boltanski and Chiapello in their discussion of the questionable success of the artistic critique of capitalism. They go so far as to argue that the politically liberationist themes of May ’68 have been channelled into a business ‘theory’ that extols the idealised figure of the portfolio worker in the professional-managerial class who finds self-fulfilment by multitasking and forever switching from one challenging project to yet another challenging project instead of sticking within the dwindling securities of old routines. As Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005: 199) put it, for *cadres* instilled with ‘the new spirit of capitalism’, in effect, ‘Autonomy was exchanged for security’. Such figures are highly mobile in their relentless pursuit of success: ‘Great men [sic] do not stand still. Little men remain rooted to the spot’ (1999/2005: 361). For Boltanski and Chiapello, inequality is not about ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’, in what is really a neoliberal affectation of social conscience. Inequality is relational: there are winners and losers. There are winners because there are losers. There are exploiters and exploited.

There are also many caught in the middle, occupying ambiguous and shifting ground, on the edge of success and failure. Axel Haunschild and Doris Ruth Eikhof (2009) have applied a concept from German industrial sociology to research on theatre work, *Arbeitskraftunternehmer*, self-employed employment. It is not, however, the application of this concept to theatre work that is most revealing. After all, working in the theatre has always been precarious and discontinuous, with regular periods of ‘resting’ for young actors until most give up the ghost and go off to do something less stressful. It is the application to creative labour in general that is really significant. Precarious forms of labour are increasingly the norm across the professional-managerial occupations, rather like the casual work experienced by many proletarians traditionally that was struggled against and reformed by labour movements in the past, such as on the docks where workers were hired at the gate on a day-to-day basis.

People subjected to such uncertainty and unpredictability especially in so-called ‘creative’ and allied careers, though not only there, must fashion the kind of self that can cope where trade-union representation has been eliminated or severely restricted. This kind of self is a neoliberal self, figuring a competitive individual who is exceptionally self-reliant and rather indifferent to the fact that his or her predicament is shared with others – and, therefore, incapable of organising as a group to do anything about it. Such a person must be ‘cool’ in the circumstances, selfishly resourceful and fit in order to survive under social-Darwinian conditions. Many simply fall by the wayside, exterminated by the croak-voiced Daleks of neoliberalism.

However, the mass-media of communication hardly ever report upon the down-side of the neoliberal experience that is sketched in here, not even for the

young adults in the eye of the storm. There is some concern about costs of study and youth unemployment but much more commonly, thanks to advertising, music media and Hollywood movies, young adults are seen to be cool, laid-back and endlessly partying. We are also shown constantly how their lives are blessed by the fun-filled and fabulous use of newer, continually up-dated and improved communications technology, especially Apple products – iPods, iPhones and iPads – with all their great and proliferating apps.

Mobile technology is not only for leisure; it's for work too, at one time mainly represented by the be-suited business commuter/traveller, normally a man and only occasionally a woman as well, who, in the recent past, had a Blackberry and insisted on speaking into it very loudly on trains. Nowadays, the typical figure is just as likely to be casually dressed, typically on the younger side, quite probably male but possibly female too in an airport lounge on wifi with earplugs and an Apple gadget, well-connected and at the same time cocooned privately in alien public space.

Today, it is impossible to talk of an ideal self without mentioning the role of the celebrity, larger-than-life figures to be admired and maybe even emulated, in an old-fashioned term functional as role models of aspiration. Boltanski and Chiapello's (1999/2005: 390) '*network-extender*' was illustrated helpfully in a review on the original publication of *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, 'dressed-down cool capitalists like Bill Gates or "Ben and Jerry"' (Budgen, 2000: 151). That was a few years ago. Presently, we might wonder, how many would-be Mark Zuckerbgs are there wanting to bring us all together as in an old Coca Cola ad?

It should be remembered that Zuckerberg's invention of Facebook started out as a sexist service for young guys at Harvard to assess and rank the attractiveness of their female co-eds. He still affects the slacker demeanour of a teenaged student with his perpetual hoody, T shirts, jeans and seeming lack of interest in material consumption. Yet, Zuckerberg earned \$21.6 billion from the ludicrously bloated and legally dubious stock-market flotation of May 2012 on the assumption that Facebook could be turned into the principal platform not for convivial public use of the Internet in general, as some idealists imagined but, instead, as the best medium potentially for advertising in particular. Zuckerberg apparently remains, however, a dedicated adherent to Boltanski and Chiapello's artistic critique of a disenchanting capitalist civilisation. One of his favourite quotations is said to be Picasso's 'All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once you grow up' (Haliday, 2012: 31).

Such youthful billionaires of digital commerce proclaim officially, in a neo-hippy manner, their wish to do good. After all, the Google motto is 'Don't be evil', though critics find plenty of reason to dispute that shop-worn official claim. The fact of the matter is that these services for keeping in touch with both significant and insignificant others, conducting research while staying at home or moving about, genuinely 'empowering' the customer in many ways, no doubt, are

also, and most importantly from a business point of view, advertising and market research tools designed for subtle manipulation and surveillance of consumers instead of sites for the secular communion that a great many uncritical users, ignoring the ads if they can, mistakenly assume these ‘cool’ outfits to be. At the same time, the open-source movement battles for an on-line public sphere in the face of heavily funded and efficiently organised corporate and governmental closure of new and social media’s potential.

And, finally we come to the most profitable corporation in the world today, Apple, and its lost leader, the late Steve Jobs who died in October 2011 to spectacular expressions of grief amongst aficionados. Unlike the clever but too nerdy Bill Gates, Steve Jobs was the epitome of the cool capitalist and became through his staged launches of mobile gadgetry the folk hero for the neoliberal self.

Jobs’s entrepreneurial achievements add up to an extraordinarily profitable journey through ‘six industries: personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, and digital publishing’, in the words of his biographer, Walter Isaacson (2011: xix). In terms of ‘creative’ achievement, however, he was at best a *bricoleur* – bringing together and combining the talents of others, from his original collaborator, Steve Wozniak to his later designer, Jonathan Ive – rather than meriting the authorial status that is persistently attributed to him in routine panegyrics.

Steve Jobs maintained an apparently counter-cultural persona right up to the bitter end. He was a college drop-out, Vegan, disciple of Zen and former lover of Joan Baez who, like Zuckerberg, was apparently unconcerned about personal wealth and ostentation, though he amassed billions for himself and his company, Apple. He dressed down and his rhetoric transcended tedious management speak. He and the products he promoted, the Apple Mac and exciting mobile gadgets from light-white laptops through iPods and iPhones to iPads were represented in advertising and commercialised sub-cult attitudes as ‘cool’, even rebellious compared to a tradition of business machines inscribed in the once powerful and static IBM – International Business Machines. Yet, Apple sequesters customers within its own monopolistic range of services from music downloads to the array of later applications. And, Jobs himself was a ruthlessly exploitative businessman. For example, just before the launch of the iPhone, Jobs forced Chinese workers, through the supplier Foxconn, to labour flat out at immediate notice to replace the plastic screens that he had himself spotted scratched easily at the last possible moment with scratch-proof glass screens. The grim conditions in which Apple gadgets are produced in China especially instead of the still comparatively higher-pay labour market and less docile labour force of the USA were becoming increasingly well documented in Jobs’s last few years (see McGuigan, 2012).

As Isaacson (2011: 451) remarks of Jobs, ‘Jangling inside of him were the contradictions of a counterculture rebel turned business entrepreneur, someone who wanted to believe he had turned on and tuned in without having sold out and

cashed in'. What Isaacson does not realise, however, is that there is no structural contradiction at all today between the technology-mediated cool culture of communicative mobility that is promoted and to a large extent commanded by companies like Apple and the extreme logic of neoliberal capitalism.

Jim McGuigan is Professor of Cultural Analysis, Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, UK. E-mail: j.t.mcguigan@lboro.ac.uk

References

- Althusser, Louis (1970/1984): 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)', *Essays on Ideology*, London: Verso.
- Ball, James & Tom Clark (2013): 'Generation Self', *G2 of The Guardian*, 12 March 2013, 6-8.
- Beck, Ulrich & Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2001/2002): *Individualization*, London: Sage.
- Boltanski, Luc & Eve Chiapello (1999/2005): *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso.
- Bourdieu, Pierre & Loic Wacquant (2001): 'NewLiberalSpeak: Notes on the New Planetary Vulgate', *Radical Philosophy*, 105 January-February, 2-5.
- Brown, Wendy (2005): 'Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', Ch. 3 of her *Edgework – Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 37-59.
- Budgen, Sebastian (2000): 'A New Spirit of Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 1 (second series), January-February 2000, pp149-156.
- Castells, Manuel (1996): *The Rise of the Network Society*, Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chang, Ha-Joon (2013): 'A Nation in Decay', *Guardian*, 9 March, 50.
- Elliott, Anthony & John Urry (2010): *Mobile Lives*, London: Routledge: 2010, x.
- Foucault, Michel (2004/2008): *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979*, translated by Graham Burchill, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Glynn, Andrew (2006): *Capitalism Unleashed – Finance, Globalization, and Welfare*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Habermas, Jurgen (1970), 'Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence', Hans Peter Dreizel (ed.): *Recent Sociology 2 – Patterns of Communicative Behavior*, New York: Macmillan.
- Hall, Stuart (1988): *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, London: Verso.
- Haliday, Josh (2012): 'The Quiet Lifestyle of the 28-year-old, 23rd wealthiest person on Earth', *Guardian*, 19 May 2012, 31.
- Hall, Stuart (2011): 'The Neoliberal Revolution', *Soundings*, 48, Summer, 9-27.
- Harvey, David (2005): *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haunschild, Axel & Doris Ruth Eikhof (2009): 'Bringing Creativity to Market: Actors as Self-Employed Employees', Alan McKinlay & Chris Smith (eds): *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 156-173.
- Hilferding, Rudolf (1919/1981): *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development*, translated by Tom Bottomore, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Isaacson, Walter (2011): *Steve Jobs*, London: Little, Brown.
- Kamenetz, Anya (2006): *Generation Debt: Why Now is a Terrible to be Young*, New York: Riverdale.
- David Kirkpatrick (2010/2011): *The Facebook Effect*, London: Virgin/Random House.
- Klein, Naomi (2000): 1st edn., *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, London: Flamingo 2000.
- Klein, Naomi (2007): *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise Of Disaster Capitalism*, London: Allen Lane.
- Lasch, Christopher (1979): *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminished Expectations*, New York: Norton.

- (1984): *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times*, New York: Norton.
- Levine, Donald (ed.) (1971): *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Form*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MacPherson, Crawford Brough (1964): *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McGuigan, Jim (2009): *Cool Capitalism*, London: Pluto.
- (2012): 'The Coolness of Capitalism Today', *Triple C – Cognition, Communication, Cooperation* 10.2, 425-438.
- Quart, Alissa (2003): *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*, London: Arrow.
- Riesman, David, with Nathan Glazer & Reuel Denny, (1950/2001) *The Lonely Crowd – A Study of the Changing American Character*, 2nd Revised Edition, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ross, Andrew (2009): *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labour in Precarious Times*, New York: New York.
- Schor, Juliet (2004): *Born to Buy: The Commercialised Child and the New Consumer Culture*, New York: Scribner.
- Sheller, Mimi & John Urry (2006): 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A* 38, 207-226.
- Stedman Jones, Daniel (2012): *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tressell, Robert (1914/2004): *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, London: Penguin.
- Twenge, Jean (2006): *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled – And More Miserable Than Ever Before*, New York: Free Press.
- Urry, John (2007): *Mobilities*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Weber, Max (1905/2002): *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism (and other writings)*, translated by Peter Baehr & Gordon C. Wells, London: Penguin.
- Whimster, Sam (ed.) (2004): *The Essential Weber: A Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Williams, Raymond (1974): *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, London: Fontana.
- Yergen, Daniel & Joseph Stanislaw (1998/2002): *The Commanding Heights: The Battle for the World Economy*, New York: Touchstone.

'Being in the Zone' of Cultural Work

By Mark Banks

Abstract

In the cultural industries, workers surrender themselves to ultra-intensive work patterns in order to be recognised as properly creative subjects. In its more affirmative versions, there is a recurrent idea that captures that special moment of creative synthesis between the ever-striving worker and the work – the moment of *'being in the zone'*. Being in the zone (hereafter BITZ) describes the ideal fusion of the intensively productive mind and the labouring body. But what precisely is this 'zone', and what is its' potential? As part of a wider project examining exemplary and intensified subjectivity, in this article I examine BITZ from different perspectives. The main aim is to contrast affirmative readings of BITZ (mostly derived from 'positive' social psychology) with other, more critical perspectives that would seek to politicise the conditions of its emergence and examine its range of social effects. The overall aim of the article is therefore to suggest the kinds of social and cultural frameworks that might facilitate exploration of the political potential of BITZ in different kinds of empirical context.

Keywords: Being-in-the zone, flow, work, subjectivity, cultural industries, politics.

Introduction

What is a body *capable* of?
(Lotringer 2004: 17)

In the cultural, media and creative industries – organised worlds of symbolic production – the total integration of the creative person and the creative work has long been standard. By practitioners, this is not necessarily regarded as problematic. The worker and the object of cultural work have often been regarded as two sides of the same coin; synonymous, even – the perfect fusion of human intent and material expression. Investing one's person into the act of creative production is merely the asking price and guarantee of an authentic art. Indeed, in cultural work – at the leading edge of media, fashion, art, music and design – to not surrender one's person to the work and all its demands is to endanger the prospect of producing anything of value at all.

In its more affirmative versions, there is a recurrent idea that captures that special moment of perfect synthesis between worker and the work – the idea of '*being in the zone*'. Being in the zone (hereafter BITZ) describes the epitomic, optimal fusion of the productive mind and the labouring body; an exceptional temporality where ordinary human capacities are transcended to produce excellence beyond convention. In the cultural industries BITZ is viewed as the special attribute of, and reward for, the most creative of workers, as well as the locus of much-needed original creativity. 'The zone' is simply where the best work gets done. As we'll see, in this cherished space of productivity, and time without time, the consummation of the union of person and work is at its most intense – the body in labour made both transcendent and ecstatic.

This article seeks to outline a range of socio-cultural perspectives on BITZ as part of a collaborative and exploratory project examining the contemporary prevalence of exceptional or intensified modes of social subjectivity¹. In this inquiry 'the zone' is posited as a somewhat open-ended, discursive and embodied mode of intensity, characteristic of the psychological and social demands made by 'immersive' activities such as music, sport and – in this particular case – cultural industries work. At the heart of this project is a particular concern with the *politics* of intensity, or how BITZ, when activated, might illuminate something of the productive interface between culture and the body, or the relationships between the 'inner', individual world and the broader social relations that individuals embody and inhabit. Thus, by exploring some of the theoretical perspectives that have a handle on BITZ, that allow us to grasp BITZ in social and cultural (and not just psychological) terms, the aim of the article is to help develop a theoretical-analytical framework which might usefully examine BITZ as a particular expression of the kinds of contested, politicized – and increasingly intensive – subjectivities that pertain to cultural work (and other) immersive social settings.

The article begins by defining BITZ, before outlining its origins and popularisation in some of the more affirmative or ‘positive’ social science perspectives. These are then contrasted with critical social science accounts, which are imputed to understand BITZ rather less as a gateway to ecstasy and rather more as a biopolitical instrument for managing dutiful workers. In attempting to find ground between these perspectives, the final part of the article outlines the recent conversion of some exponents of ‘positive’ psychological approaches to a more nuanced social and cultural perspective on intensive work. The parallels of this reformulated theory with some emergent and increasingly influential critical sociologies of media and cultural industry work are then outlined. Finally, a more radical, autonomist rendering of the ‘affirmative’ potential of BITZ is speculated upon. The article is therefore deliberately suggestive and exploratory, concerned with potentials, rather than advocating the putting into play of any singular approach. In assessing these possible perspectives, and drawing attention to the overlaps and tensions between them, one aim is to invite others to evaluate the appropriate frameworks in which BITZ might be theorised, as well as consider the broader – or more fundamental – question of what might be the social or political potential of the zone, unleashed?

BITZ Defined

Being in the groove. It just takes you away. You’re not even in the world
Bootsy Collins

I was in the zone ...executing my shots...staying in the moment
Victoria Azarenka

Sometimes I think I have multiple personality disorder, my personalities are ‘me in the zone’ and ‘me not in the zone’
Jacques, programmer

Once I pick up those bamboo knitting needles and start with a simple knit or purl, I’m hooked. As an athlete would say, I’m in the zone
Carla, knitter²

BITZ is a term commonly used to describe the feeling of existing ‘in the moment’, or in a state of exceptional concentration, clarity or productivity. BITZ is also associated with ‘peak’ performance, or the attainment of an extraordinary excellence. The most commonly identified inhabitants of the zone are creative artists (such as Bootsy Collins) or athletes (such as Victoria Azarenka), though it is widely used as a term to describe and account for a closed and focussed excellence within activities – such as Jacques’ computer programming or Carla’s knitting. The apparent consistency across fields suggests, in theory, everyone is capable of having zone-like experiences, alone or with others, however unexceptional their talents. By dint of having the human capacity for immersing ourselves in compelling and engaging tasks and activities we open up the possibility that we

too will enter the zone, and achieve excellence beyond the ordinary. Likely we can recall a time when we experienced something like BITZ, immersed in an absorbing activity to the extent that time and all external matters faded into insignificance and where, maybe, like Bootsy, we felt out of this world. Clearly, BITZ is usually regarded as positive and desirable. Accordingly, to begin to explore the range of socio-cultural perspectives on BITZ in cultural work, we first need to evaluate its origins in similarly affirmative and 'positive' forms of social science.

BITZ and Flow

The precise origins of the idea of BITZ remain unclear³, but is most strongly linked in academic terms to the concept of 'flow' developed by the social psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in the early 1970s (Csikszentmihalyi 1975).⁴ Since then Csikszentmihalyi has periodically refined and expanded his descriptions of the kinds of productive outcomes generated by flow – understood as the harmonious and productive synchronicity of mind and body:

These exceptional moments are what I have called *flow experiences* [his emphasis]. The metaphor of 'flow' is one that many people have used to describe the sense of effortless action they feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives. Athletes refer to it as 'being in the zone', religious mystics as being in 'ecstasy', artists and musicians as aesthetic rapture (...) their descriptions of the experience are remarkably similar (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 29).

Csikszentmihalyi contends that flow is an intense psychological state where both 'arousal' and 'control' are at peak levels and where levels of 'anxiety' and 'apathy' are low. Time goes unnoticed as distractions are eliminated and self-consciousness fades – all that remains is the actor in unthinking action, yet still wholly oriented to the task. Flow is a kind of forgetting, or abandonment of temporal consciousness – an unconscious negation of one's own bodily sense. Yet, while one can try to engineer entry to the zone, this is not always possible, and, conversely, it may simply happen when one is not expecting it. Neither are the outcomes of flow determinable in advance. There is therefore a certain kind of elusiveness or contingency in its availability or undertaking.

Nonetheless, according to Csikszentmihalyi, in all flow or zone-like moments, the balance between 'challenges' and 'skills' equalises, and there is perfect alignment between 'physical and psychic energy'. Here, then, 'life finally comes into its own' (ibid: 32), providing the 'flashes of intense living' (ibid: 31) necessary for animating otherwise routine and conventional situations. BITZ is thus a positive affirmation of the individual self and its creative capacity to transcend the confines of the ordinary; a rhapsodic timelessness, beyond self-consciousness, predictability or measure.

While activities of various kinds might be regarded as potentially absorbing and engrossing, in the literature, the concept of flow is especially earmarked as

being work or task-oriented – and so has proved ideal for application into different workplace contexts (Csikszentmihalyi 2003). For example, encouraging workers to enter the zone, to find their flow is, of course, one of the ways in which work can be intensified and productivity and efficiency gains can be made. Employers can also offset or counter worker disharmony by encouraging their charges to engage in (apparently) stimulating, rewarding and self-realizing activities. Here, flow, or BITZ, is imagined as an unqualified good – beneficial to employer and employee alike. Such insights have helped inform both an academic sub-discipline (‘positive psychology’⁵) as well as inspire a diverse literature in management commentary, psychology and training (see for example Geirland 1996; Marsh 2005; Carr 2011; Brusman 2013).⁶ BITZ, then, is most commonly regarded as a *useful* form of bliss – a nirvana with purpose.

BITZ and Cultural Work

Developing on this ‘positive’ approach, I want to argue that in affirmative readings of the cultural and creative industries, the ideas of BITZ and flow might carry a particular resonance. It is in such work – long regarded as the benchmark form of creative, un-alienated and progressive labour (see Stahl 2013) – that the possibility of productive, flow-like work appears particularly fertile. Here, immersive, intensive modes of work are commonly regarded as standard and intrinsic (Virno 2004). The cultural worker has also been perceived to anticipate the ‘model figure of the new worker’ (Menger 2002: 10, cited in Stahl 2013: 74), one exposed to, and able to uphold, the kinds of creative subjectivity now becoming more commonly distributed across the social body. Therefore, in cultural work, not only is BITZ more likely to be found, it might also provide the blueprint for a more thoroughgoing dispersal of its intensive mode to other kinds of professional and knowledge work.

In cultural work, cultural objects and commodities not only appear to emerge from free, productive union of the various ‘physical and psychic energies’ possessed by their autonomous, individual creator(s), but the imagined close bond between object, creation and creator rests on the social premise that only in ‘creative’ or artistic work is the product fully invested with an author’s own intentions. Given this relative autonomy, and productive control, the zone therefore becomes both an attainable and necessary state. To be in the zone, to feel flow, is widely regarded as a prerequisite for actually making an authentic (rather than inauthentic or ersatz) cultural object or commodity. Thus, with the more recent emergence and institutionalization of the cultural and creative industries, the emphasis on harmonious union between the creative process and commodity outcome has prompted much renewed theorising about how to get workers into the zone sufficient for them to execute their work – or channel their ‘energies’ – most effectively.

In creative industry policy, business and management literatures, promoting the zone will often involve some initial lionisation of the well-known individual ‘creative’ – be it a Damien Hirst or Sheryl Sandberg, a Joseph Beuys or Gertrude Stein; some archetype who has the capacity to make visionary ideas come to life while immersed in the state of flow, as popular commentator Eric Calonius positively suggests:

Steve Jobs ‘stood back’: ‘You can’t really predict what will happen,’ he said. ‘But you can feel the direction you’re going. And that’s about as close as you can get. Then you just stand back and get out of the way, and these things take on a life of their own’. (Calonius 2011, no pagination)

BITZ is just one element of the composite personality of the ideal-type celebrity-creative, who not only commands respect by making commercial profits, but by self-consciously (or some might say egregiously) disavowing much of the conventional means for their attainment. Conventional work narratives of cultural professionals routinely promote the necessity of emulating such free-spirited and zone-inhabiting role-models as a means for realising their own personal, latent (and comparably unrecognised) ‘talent’ – part of what Angela McRobbie (2002) has previously termed the wider ‘auteur relation’ underpinning the formation of cultural and creative work identities.

Managers, who try to emulate these inspiring individuals, or create flow or zone conditions that inspire their charges or employees, can rely on a range of interventions that might enable them to coax employees into the required states of productive ecstasy. It is now commonly argued that the workplaces can be engineered to enable flow states to more readily develop; usually by facilitating relations of informality, open communication, creativity and play, and by reducing bureaucratic management and discredited variations on Taylorism. Andrew Ross’s (2003) groundbreaking study of the ‘no collar’ technology workplace revealed firms providing their staff with the kinds of stimulating environments designed to induce the types of work intensity that generated the seductive thrill of BITZ-like experiences:

It was intoxicating at first. Look at me! I’m in New York and I’m working really late! Then, of course, you realize that it sucks. But, even then – and this was the strange part – it was still a rapturous feeling. (Kathy, tech-worker, quoted in Ross 2003: 76)

More explicitly, Yuri Martens (2011: 76) suggests the provision of ‘games rooms, relax lounges and green space’ and avoiding having ‘too high temperatures or too much noise, or not enough space to host the number of people’ as a potential means of manufacturing BITZ. That creatives can be given discretionary dispensations to ensure they more readily enter the zone (better workstations, more resources, research days, flexible hours, free time) has become a commonplace at leading technology firms like Microsoft and Google, and their emulators. Here, the zone is often an expression of normatively engineered workspace, one that

values the freedom of maverick individuals (usually men) to express outwardly their inner creativity in ways conducive to production imperatives (Nixon 2003). Yet, inspired by others or not, ordinary workers also routinely strive for the zone in their own everyday practices, viewing it as special pleasure or privilege of their personal creative endeavour – as revealed in David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker’s (2011) recent study of workers in television, magazine publishing and music recording (more on this later). Finally, note that BITZ can arguably occur *anywhere*, not just in the formal workplace – moments of focussed creativity inspiration, especially for the mobile and autonomous cultural worker, can occur at home, on the road, in leisure⁷, or in any circumstance where they might happen to be suitably stimulated or inspired.

BITZ, then, in its idealized form, is not simply an industry imposition, but a process of elective self-valorisation; both inside and ‘outside’ of work. It has become common for cultural and creative industry professionals to identify with, and publicly voice, the necessity of routinely experiencing flow or zone-like experiences. In fact, to identify oneself as someone capable of BITZ is a sure sign that one is as serious participant and true contender; for if one is not able to rouse one’s passion and enter the zone, and so attain the levels of in-flow excellence characterised as essential to the best kinds of cultural and artistic creativity, then what reasonable claim does one have to be a true creative, at all?

BITZ and the Social Subject – Critical Perspectives

Clearly, ‘positive’ theorists of flow and BITZ seek to emphasise the pleasurable, productive aspects of work – those qualities that might make it such a compelling and attractive activity, beyond economic necessity. But that work *is* actually the source of much of our personal happiness and self-respect should not be lightly discounted – given the choice of giving up work for a life entirely comprised of leisure and ease, many people would choose to decline the opportunity. Work, to some significant degree, makes people happy. It fulfils and enriches lives. This truth has long been recognised – not just by Csikszentmihalyi and generations of managers, trainers and employees – but even by work’s most radical critics (see Granter 2009 for a most effective summary). It would be remiss therefore to discount the fact that BITZ at work *can* be pleasurable and productive – at least for some. Yet, to simply assume that it is a universal, or even commonplace, experience – beyond the realm of the social – is to insulate it from any kind of critical challenge, evaluation and analysis. This section suggests some perspectives that may help us to meet that challenge.

First of all, let us make the obvious point that for many people, work fails to generate anything like a feeling of BITZ or flow. For the majority, work is – at best – a routine and just-about-tolerable necessity, rarely punctuated by moments of transcendent bliss. Even in the kinds of creative and cultural industries that I’m

concerned with, which presume a degree of free intellectual and creative engagement not always found in routine manual and service labour, BITZ might occur only infrequently, maybe not at all. Across all industries, the continued existence of entrenched forms of structural inequality, ill-treatment and exploitation are likely to militate against having joyful ‘in the moment’ experiences. This much is given.

Additionally, the preponderance of alienation in work – in a plural sense of being alienated from the specific product of one’s labour, and being distanced from the regimes of organisational control and normative structures that prefigure it, might often lead workers to feelings of isolation, meaninglessness and self-estrangement sufficient to undermine the possibility of accessing and enjoying BITZ opportunities (Mitchell, 1988).⁸ Given that BITZ and flow presuppose unfettered opportunity to enter (and exit) heightened states of creative productivity, then it is unlikely (given the division of labour and its associated conflicts) that the kinds of useful ecstasy imagined by flow theorists are commonplace or widely accessible – even in the cultural sector which claims to have privileged access to them.

But if we accept from this (broadly Marxian) perspective that BITZ *can* sometimes occur in the cultural industry workplace, this might still be explained through conventional forms of ideology critique, denunciations of a false and fictive consciousness and so on, and recourse, perhaps, to Adorno’s and other critical-theorists’ insistence that the idea of transcendental, free-thinking subjectivity at work is either a relic or more likely a manufactured ‘social effect’ (Adorno and Horkheimer 1992: 126) of the administrative machinery of capitalist production. However, more recent theorists of cultural industry – such as Bill Ryan (1992), Robert Witkin (2000) Sarah Brouillette (2009) – have tended to argue that the provision of subjective autonomy for creative workers (of the kinds likely sufficient for BITZ to occur) is actually a significant structural precondition for effective capitalist production, since it is only through providing people with the ‘free’ time and space to fashion new and ‘authentic’ commodities, that any future returns can be anticipated. The zone, therefore, is able to be imagined as part of the mixed repertoire of actions and temporalities that enable reproduction of the field conditions of cultural (industry) capitalism – where the freedoms of the cultural worker are part-protected to ensure that public demands for original products marked by the impress of authentic creation can actually be met. It is axiomatic that those designated as ‘creatives’ can never be entirely incorporated as abstract labour and subjected to standardised work routines, simply because they need to be given the latitude to create exciting and novel works that can be commodified – BITZ, therefore, might be regarded as part of the means to this end; an absolutely *necessary* temporal concession within a more familiar, fundamentally-ordered industrial structure.

By way of contrast, in other inquiries, the problem of creative subjectivity has been more keenly addressed using the concepts of governmentality and biopower – suggested by Michel Foucault as, respectively, the power to manage, and the power to produce and administer life itself (Foucault 1991; Lemke 1991). Here, under (neo)liberal rule, workers are willingly seduced and entrained to self-produce, uphold and refine the productive interplays of power and knowledge that ensure their subjection to the prevailing logic. Constituted through discourse and practices that affirm the personal freedoms to be obtained through inhabiting self-directed, entrepreneurial modes of being – ones that happen to be calibrated to effect discipline and responsibility in affairs of commerce – the worker-subject's desire becomes seamlessly enjoined to the accumulation imperative. Through such a lens, BITZ might be regarded as a kind of Grail-quest that promises deliverance to the higher plane of creative ecstasy, while simultaneously normalising the self-exploiting surrender of body and soul to the economic principle. In less purple prose, BITZ is now simply a routine part of the professional identity of the self-disciplined creative worker; which is nonetheless a 'tactic' – in Foucault's terms – effected by those concerned interests whose aim is to 'arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved' (Foucault 1991: 95).

Viewed in such a way, the provision of BITZ opportunities is another spatio-temporal mechanism for breaking down any residual reluctance amongst workers to recognise and accept the necessity of surrendering oneself to the logic of production. Similar to recent innovations like 'away-days', 'boot-camps', 'Open Space', 'ideas-pools' and 'sand-pits', the zone provides a named concession to a human need for play, free space, autonomous time, and creative self-expression – one that just happens to be congenial to the kinds of governmental ordering it appears to disavow (Donzelot 1991). It is hard to read the accounts of, say, the fashion workers studied by Amanda Bill (2012) or the television workers studied by Gillian Ursell (2000) and not give some credence to claims that creative subjectivities are (at least partly) a manufactured means of ensuring obedience to a prevailing model of productive selfhood, one that also invites workers to co-write the scripts of their own subordination. And while in the wake of the legitimisation crises of industrial capitalism *all* kinds of work have been to some extent re-arranged in this 'empowering' fashion, it is cultural and creative industries work, with its veneration of sovereign talent and preference for individualized and performative modes of subjectivity, that appears most receptive to the kinds of organising technology that promise to propel workers more rapidly towards the promised land of meaningful work – or the kind of place where BITZ opportunities might more 'naturally' take root and flourish.

But is BITZ more fundamentally attributable to wider temporal adjustments in work? Autonomist writers such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009) and Paolo Virno (2004) have brought to our attention the contradictory ways in which

time at work is now being transformed, sufficient to question the kinds of separation of functions and practices that marked the industrial epoch. On the one hand, workers are subject to the kinds of managerial biopower and surveillant organizing previously discussed – and engaged in diligently (re)producing the social as freely-acting, self-constituting bodies, endowed with autonomous time. Yet on the other hand, time is never autonomous or disinterested, since one can only act within the limits prescribed by the situation of totalized precarity that now appear to unite working populations. Precarity names the process through which work has now escaped the confines of the plant, firm or factory, and become embedded in the social fabric, in the form of a necessary and generalized labouring subjectivity, which not only ruptures the historical partitioning between work and non-work, but ensures the worker's whole life experience is given over to capital. Indeed, Hardt and Negri (2009: 147) understand the term precarity partly as a kind of 'temporal poverty', a *lack* in which workers are no longer able to establish or exert control over their own ostensibly 'free' time. In such terms BITZ might be rendered as both a temporal endowment of biopolitical labour – part of a provision and demand for more intense temporalities of self-subjection – and an expression of the capacity of precarity to diminish the quality of free time, representing the further invasion of instrumentality into temporal relations hitherto protected from the generalized capitalization of life. In cultural work, analogous to the kinds of 'immaterial labour' studied largely by autonomist thinkers, this temporal dynamic is most markedly felt, since not only is the 'production of ideas, images and affects' (Hardt & Negri 2009: 147) demanding of freedom for producers to organize their own time, the capacity for producing such goods is now extended into the general social body in the form of uncontainable productive time and 'free' labour (Terranova 2000).

Further, not unrelated to these previous critiques, BITZ might be considered as one element of the administrative apparatus of an ascendant culture of intense or 'extreme work'. In extreme work (as in extreme leisure, see Elias & Dunning 1996), people work much longer than the norm, assume greater responsibilities and risk-burdens, and are pushed continually to the limits of their mental and physical capacities (Hewlett & Luce 2006; Granter 2009; 2013). On the one hand, we might account for this as a structural feature of an advanced capitalism that demands ever more effort from ever more power-less workers (while tending increasingly to disregard their non-productive needs), and, on the other hand, a testament to the extent to which work has displaced non-work as a significant source of human pleasure and meaning (Hochschild 1997). Indeed, it must be acknowledged that, *in extremis*, a gratuitous and exalted pleasure – not to mention elevated status – can be extracted by those workers who revel in the narcotic pull of working harder, faster and longer, or glory in their exaggerated and excessive labour. BITZ, then, might be regarded as both a way of thinking in the context of an affirmative language of total possibility, and a practical means of being a pro-

ductive person sufficiently geared to working extremely. Critics in this vein have, of course, identified the many deleterious effects on personal and social well-being of extreme work; one of which is – ironically – that it may not even be that economically productive (Hewlett & Luce 2006). While students of ‘edgework’ and others seeking adventure beyond the soporifizing effects of modernity would doubtless challenge the inherent pessimism of this reading of the ‘extreme’ (Lyng 1990), they would likely not deny the *potential* risks of those kinds of work where excess is construed as standard, and where the means of achieving the desired production intensity might tend more towards the authoritarian than the consensual.

Finally, for other critics, the simple question of the wider *ethical* purpose or ends of BITZ or flow has been neglected in the positive psychology literature. For Chris Rojek (2010) BITZ could be said to be suffering from a normative deficiency, in so far as we lack any substantive account of the ethical *reasons* one might be trying to be in the zone and what the ends of being in the zone might be – outside of some idea of its usefulness in enabling individuals to self-affirm, or to reach a point of extra-ordinary transcendence. Rojek develops this line in criticism of Csikszentmihalyi’s work on flow, where he forcefully makes the point regarding the necessity of developing a fully socialized and ethically-laden understanding of the concept:

From the standpoint of critical theory the objection to [flow] centres upon the ethical content of behaviour. Without a discussion of the *lebenswelt*, the context in which the experience of flow is located, it is really a somewhat facile concept. It is a reprehensible truth that the Nazis experienced ‘flow’ in the programme of Jewish extermination [...] From Arendt’s (1963) account [...] we know that [Adolf] Eichmann derived a powerful sense of work satisfaction and life justification by making the Nazi death trains [...] run on time. (Rojek 2010: 112)

An extreme example perhaps – but used to underpin the more general argument that we should not automatically associate BITZ or flow with positivity, affirmation, and life-enrichment, since both harmful deviancy and the most criminal horrors are equally likely to produce some intense, BITZ-like feelings. Rojek’s point is that any inquiry into the political potential of BITZ must involve situating it morally or ethically, by evaluating it in the context of the communities and practices within which it occurs. To do otherwise is to artificially separate BITZ from the very conditions and conflicts that both produce it and render it meaningful – or, put otherwise, to ignore why BITZ matters, socially and culturally. The following section therefore explores how others have tried to ground BITZ in some discernible socio-ethical context.

BITZ and the Social, a Retrieval?

While the idea that BITZ is used to discipline and motivate (rather than to politically autonomise) compliant workers seems persuasive, in this section I speculate as to whether BITZ could still provide a means to other meanings, or other social outcomes. This requires thinking of an intensified labouring subjectivity as something potentially productive and generative – not just of happy work and compliant workers, but of an otherwise capable and capacitarian worker-subject, able to utilise the zone as a means to some kind of determined, social or non-capitalistic end. In fact, such a possibility is not wholly discounted by either the affirmations or critiques I have previously discussed – but let us return to them and outline some possible other scenarios.

First of all, we should acknowledge that consideration of such potential is, already, not entirely absent from the ‘positive’ literature. The more recent writings of Csikszentmihalyi and others have tried to explore the prospects for using flow to achieve progressive reforms in the workplace (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi & Damon 2001; Csikszentmihalyi 2003). It is suggested here that flow helps workers more intensively realise their self-potential, which, when appropriately directed, can contribute to maximising the sum of human well-being – with ‘good work’ loosely defined in relation to certain social and ethical precepts and standards now regarded as threatened by the commercial imperative. For example, in their study of journalists (identified as a hitherto flow-rich profession), Howard Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi and William Damon suggest that the ‘insatiable quest for profits’ (2001: 138) has undermined the ethical basis of journalism, damaging its core ‘mission’ (ibid.) of upholding the democratic polity and providing honest, and honourable labour for liberal minds. Clearly, here, flow has become inappropriately blocked or stymied. But little is actually revealed about the essence of ‘good work’ or how flow might help us move beyond the unfortunate situation of its lack – BITZ in itself appears to possess no particular qualities that would enable it to allow ‘bad work’ to be overcome.

While this work represents a welcome effort to lift flow/BITZ into a projective social horizon, beyond any previous expositions of the ‘positive’ genre, it remains limited by its tendency to retain strong faith in the ability of enlightened firms and benevolent managers to recognise and value the symbiotic relationships between flow and ‘good work’. Its focus is only on transforming only the behaviour and performances of free-choosing individuals *in situ*, which is presumably deemed sufficient to overcome any of the obstacles configured by those social structures that might actually preclude the possibility of ‘good work’ flourishing. Nonetheless, such writings do at least offer some initial counter to Rojek’s critique of the lack of ethical discussion in flow theory, and suggest that exponents are seeking to pull together the psychological and the sociological in the interests of a unified, outward facing set of formulations about the effective purpose and goals of BITZ

at work. However limited as a form of critical inquiry, such work holds the virtue of suggesting a potential for further cross-over and rapprochement with other kinds of work sociology, from contrasting critical traditions.

Indeed, such a view of ideal-type journalism – with its focus on shared, ethical standards and excellence, geared to social rather than individual ends – has at least something in common with more critical, politically-focussed understandings of cultural work more recently developed in sociology and media and cultural studies. Here a number of researchers have tried to identify the ways in which workers are entrained to a labour process that can provide for (but just as easily diminish or degrade) capacities for ‘good work’ (variously defined as excellent, secure, meaningful, autonomous, interesting) cultural work – examples include Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s work already mentioned, as well as research on new media and web-designers (Kennedy 2012), visual artists (Taylor & Littleton 2012), craft workers (Luckman 2012) and film-makers (Vail & Hollands 2012) to name but a few. Work here is presented as a complex moral economy of mixed desires for wealth and esteem, autonomy and self-actualization, personal and social well-being, and political commitments of a worldly nature, all of which combine to influence significantly how the practice of cultural production takes place and how cultural goods actually emerge and become valued. Yet a striking commonality of this research lies in its persisting with the understanding that while capitalistic work remains plagued with various injustices, and plainly directed towards ‘external’, instrumentalizing ends, it also provides a focus for animating different kinds of ‘internal’ collective, co-operative activities (unions, associations, communities, practices) that might in different ways furnish critical understandings and actions that have the capacity to challenge some of the less-welcome impositions and iniquities of the labour process. But where might BITZ come into this work, *explicitly*? Let me suggest one example.

Recall that Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s study outlines how flow experiences play an important role in providing creative media professionals with moments of what they term ‘pleasurable absorption’ (2011: 132), that further enhance the satisfactions of what is taken to be inherently stimulating and rewarding work. They also recognise, however, that such flow or BITZ experiences may constitute only individualized and relatively self-contained compensations for what is otherwise somewhat difficult or exploitative work – the sweetener that ensures a more general (if never unquestioning) compliance. Yet the stronger point we could make here about BITZ, is that it is also part of an enabling repertoire of shared activities that help make up the ethical constitution of the total *practice* of cultural work. By practice I am explicitly adopting Alasdair MacIntyre’s (2007/1981) rendering of the term which is used to describe any kind of skilled, complex and collective activity that possesses its own ‘internal goods’ – a set of standards of excellence, techniques and ethical precepts which are unique to the specific practice in question. What unites people in a practice (in the cultural industry context, let us say

journalism, painting, screenwriting or opera) is not simply that they might singularly and competitively pursue or accrue ‘external’ goods (such as money, fame or power), but that they share some commitment to the internal goods of the practice, which are recognised as distinctive and special, and collectively valued for their own sake. In this respect, practices are not simply (or only) understood as ‘ways of doing things’ (as in their most commonplace definition) nor, as in Bourdieu’s formulations, ultimately concerned with optimising strategic interests, but as shared, ethical endeavours – strongly linked to ideas of how one should live, and, crucially, how one should treat others, in the practice, and beyond. Practices are therefore not simply analogous to professional ‘ethics’ or ‘integrity’ or ‘product quality’ but much more deeply linked to the collective extension of ‘human powers’ and the creation of ‘the good of a certain kind of life’ (MacIntyre 2007: 190-1). While practices are not guaranteed to be benevolent and harmonious, desires for internal goods tend to incline practitioners towards co-operative and collaborative modes of living that allow these goods to be most effectively obtained, since, as MacIntyre has it, it is only through concentrated absorption in the virtues⁹ of a practice (his equivalent of BITZ is of a painter living a ‘Gauguin-like’ existence) that one becomes able to elicit its full array of internal goods and rewards. We might use this to speculate that the demand for virtuous engagement and excellence inherent to practices may be more likely met when practitioners adopt a position of *intensive engagement* in its characteristic activities.

In these terms, BITZ might be imagined hypothetically as a means of intensifying the production of a different kind of ‘good work’ – work that meets or surpasses the standards of excellence identified as consistent with the practice *and* that has benefits not just to practitioners and their community but – potentially – to wider publics (Banks 2012). When an author enters the zone to create a powerful new text, genre or style of writing that transforms the perspective of the practice, when jazz musicians get ‘into the groove’ and create a new composition or improvisation, one that significantly advances the practice and public appreciation of jazz as a whole, or when programmers intensely co-operate to create new software or applications that have wide community benefits, or cohere a political action – then one might say that zone has done its work. Ideally, here, standards have been raised, the ‘human powers’ of practitioners extended and the strengths of the community enhanced. Intensive modes of singular or co-operative work, in the context of a cultural practice, can have social or politically-beneficial effects – benefits that, theoretically, may *not* have accrued if those intensive, creative, zone-like conditions had not been made available. In short, BITZ *in itself* can be a route to the advanced cultivation of politically significant ‘internal goods’ – goods that might potentially cohere, unite, mitigate or challenge social worlds.

And yet (as ever) we must be cautious, sceptical even – not least because practices are not necessarily oriented to virtuous or ‘good’ work, only potentially so¹⁰. And the particular progressive, practice-enhancing uses to which BITZ might be

put – and the special intensive qualities that BITZ possesses to entail them – still remain contained within, and perhaps only a weak compensation for, the broader patterns of control, iniquity and injustice that pervade capitalist work. An awareness of the value of BITZ in a practice may raise consciousness but offer little challenge to established property relations, for example. And while a practice may have its own internal rewards and potentials, as might be obvious, it must develop them in relation to external pressures (such as money, institutions, markets) that are necessary to support the practice, but may also (as MacIntyre noted) threaten its foundation or integrity. Nonetheless, in linking intensive subjectivity to demonstrable ethical concerns (and the kinds of virtue needed to fulfil them), a redemptive prospect for BITZ at work is at least theoretically raised, beyond that conventionally offered in the more affirmative literature.

Finally, I want to briefly consider how this concern with the intrinsically productive qualities of intensified work might take on a somewhat different political cast in the autonomist perspective. We have already seen in a previous section how the social spread of precarity might serve to intensify regimes of biopower, sufficient to institutionalise BITZ as a mechanism of rule. Yet, here, the latent potential of the ‘multitude’ – the plural society (or dispersed unity) of active individuals and activating networks – also provides a way of thinking the possibilities of BITZ through a more radical lens; one that focuses not on the amelioration or reform of capitalism, but on its refusal.

For example, one of the more provocative claims of Virno (2004) is to suggest that all work (but especially work in the cultural industries) has increasingly taken on the form and character of politics, since (in its post-industrial guise) it now relies more strongly on political skills of communication, association, negotiation, managing contingency and problem-solving. Work (like politics) is also more performative, concerned with ‘being in the presence of others’ (ibid, 51), impressing an audience, and, crucially, directed towards producing not (or not simply) a physical commodity-object, but an open-ended, immaterial outcome, (such as) more communications, a brand, or an immaterial service – an execution of labour *potential* ‘without end product’ (ibid. 55). This assumes that workers are now more likely to be judged as productive in so far as they can embody these performative, communicative competencies – where they *show* they can self-manage and project their own labour-power, almost independent of any conventionally ‘objective’ or measurable outcome. With this in mind, Virno sketches striking parallels between the ‘virtuoso’ and the contemporary post-industrial worker. The virtuoso is an artist who offers a memorable performance, a display of artistry that carries within it its own internal weight and value – not someone who necessarily produces a commodity or object to take away, but an expert stylist or auteur whose work is ongoing and never complete, a potential always *becoming* – and, for Virno, this provides a quite congenial model for understanding the cultural (and non-cultural) worker.

Here, then, we might imagine BITZ construed *as* a particular expression of virtuosity – a performance of becoming that guarantees a worker’s ability to inhabit the creative role ascribed to her; a presentation of a body committed to the necessary but uncertain process of self-expression and exploration. Indeed, in the performative mode, BITZ is not simply passive or benign, but also about visibly and vocally putting oneself ‘out there’ in a creative sense, publicly displaying extraordinary creativity and risk-taking capacities of the kind that Virno artfully links back to Max Weber’s definition of the ‘vocation’ of the politician – namely, ‘knowing how to place the health of one’s own soul in danger’ (Virno 2004: 55). This suggests that, in cultural work, BITZ is about a wilful imperilment of the self – since one of the things we ‘know’ about BITZ is that its outcome can never be pre-ordained. What does BITZ *itself* actually produce? How can we predict or measure its effectivity or efficiency? We cannot, or cannot easily, answer these questions. Managers must rely on the virtuoso to present their own (though arguably stylised and pre-formatted) evidence of the zone’s intrinsic worth and value. Hence, the familiar ways in which cultural workers must talk-up the affects and dis-affects of BITZ, its glamour and its triumphs, its draining intensities – and seek to do so publicly, to ensure that it is appropriately witnessed, just as a virtuoso must be witnessed. The allusion is somewhat overdrawn as the products of BITZ are often tangible in a way – the text, code, document, symbol or image that might be produced – but equally they are perhaps as intangible as Virno imagines, often producing only an affirmation of faith in the process as the worker reproduces the desirable ‘score’, ‘script’ or communicative performance of acceptable competence and quality.

This, then, is the enthrallment, and the control, but what of the politics? For Virno, the performance of the virtuoso intrinsically contains an excess potential, able to be put to other than work-serving uses. This potential arises because the singular expression of virtuosity is also an expression of the general intellect, the stock of common creativity possessed by the multitude, and one that is never entirely shackled by the productive ends imagined for it. Constantly updating, and transmuting, the multitude is the radically heterogeneous source of creative surpluses that can never be fully expropriated. In such a register, BITZ seems remarkably analogous to the kinds of energetic and visceral modes of revolutionary being imagined by autonomist thought. Cast in Hardt and Negri’s most effusive terms, the intensities inspired by BITZ are easily imagined as part of the ‘spontaneous movement’ (Hardt & Negri 2000: 399) of the multitude, where productive flows of bodies transform spatio-temporal horizons and forge ‘new paths of destiny’ (ibid. 397). Clearly, the role of the zone here would *not* be to do ‘good work’, or enhance excellence in a communitarian practice, but to create an anti-reformist politics of civil disobedience, defection and exit from capitalist work relations. The refusal of work characteristic of the autonomist perspective would likely demand that BITZ (as, hypothetically, a time of intense virtuosity) be employed only

as a means to activate the ‘flee-option’ rather than the ‘resistance-option’ (Virno 2004: 71) – BITZ harnessed to a flight to future possible worlds, beyond the grasp of work itself.

Towards a Theory of the Zone?

This article has offered a speculative and exploratory investigation into the phenomenon of flow or ‘being in the zone’ (BITZ), across different kinds of cultural or creative industry work. As an expression of a now more widespread intensification of labouring subjectivity, within an exemplary and influential field of work, such a study might prove suggestive of the broader and changing character of contemporary employment. What patterns or relationships have been detected, sufficient to underscore any future inquiry?

Evidently, a persuasive case can be made for a critical (either broadly Foucauldian, or neo-Marxist) interpretation. There seems no doubt that cultural workers today are being induced to offer employers the full, productive capacities of their unconscious bodies. This involves the immersive, kinaesthetic engagement of the worker into the productive tasks demanded of her; habitual acts of (re)production that enable the worker to become fully absorbed in her work and to undertake it ‘without thought’ – while remaining alert to its particular intellectual challenges and demands. Of course, labour – particularly in its idealised, craft forms – has always required some surrender to the beat and rhythm of the task in hand, a kind of necessary detachment from exteriority, sufficient for the very best or most rewarding work to be done (Sennett 2007). But now – especially across the kinds of professional cultural work I’ve considered here – the habituation to immersive and intensive work appear to act as a kind of organised and instrumental reflex; a standardised orientation to being usefully active that nonetheless remains largely internalised, un-spoken and un-examined. One is simply required to inhabit or even become one’s job, regardless of any intrinsic virtues or qualities it might lack or possess. BITZ is a manifestation of that compulsion. It remains important, politically, to resist that compulsion when it can be shown to have personal and socially-deleterious effects.

Nonetheless, it seems vital to continue to explore the possibility that BITZ – as an expression of a contingently creative and intensive subjectivity – might have other potentials, that might demand a different explanation. As we have seen, for positive psychologists, the potential of BITZ lies in its capacity to orient people towards ‘good’ and useful work – to create a ‘harmony of the spheres’ where managers and workers of enlightened good character, co-operate to enhance the shared quality of existence (Csikszentmihalyi 2009). The Panglossian and quasi-spiritual leanings of this approach, coupled with its determination to disregard either the problems (or potentials) of established social structures and divisions make it easy to dismiss it as an approach laden with unrealistic expectations. Less

easy to dismiss are the more critically-informed kinds of analyses that acknowledge the enduring value and appeal of cultural work, for both individuals and societies, while also recognising and seeking to challenge its deeply-entrenched and institutionalized injustices. It is here (in the kind of approach represented in this article by Hesmondhalgh and Baker) that studying BITZ as a form of intensive commitment to accessing internal goods and improving standards of excellence in the cultural work 'practice' appears potentially most fruitful – alongside or in conjunction with the equally necessary evaluations of the uses of the zone to control and exploit workers. This more 'balanced' approach is not without its own difficulties and limitations, however. For example, even a politically-directed and practice-led valorization of BITZ might provide only temporary consolations from – or help mask, or inhibit reform of – fundamental inequalities and enduring injustices. The rich plethora of active and ongoing demands for social justice within cultural work (amongst unions, collectives, worker associations and so on) already provides real contexts for the elaboration of debates about what might constitute the appropriate intensity of work and to what useful ends moments of extraordinary excellence might be directed. In this context, some extended inquiry into the capability of the body, and the politics of the zone, might prove illuminating.

This is not to discount the value of autonomist approaches that envisage a world pregnant with the possibilities of workplace defection and exit; worlds where BITZ might be – at least hypothetically – cast as an expression of intensive virtuosity, or a revolutionary disruption of the ordinary. BITZ certainly has affinities with the kinds of revelatory, spontaneous action imagined to (one day) fuel the exodus from work, though we must keep in mind the possibility that it may remain effective only as a temporary and fleeting form of escapism, as work rolls on regardless. Indeed, questions remain about the extent to which workers (and, actually, which workers in particular) are able to be 'spontaneously' direct themselves towards defective acts and networks of refusal. For the majority, work is a question of everyday struggle and subsistence, but one that is recognised as an absolute necessity – for diverse reasons that range from basic survival to perceived fulfilment of instinct or human essence. Much less is it regarded as a source for fomenting one's ungovernable surplus. And we must accept that those for whom work *does* actually provide the kinds of life-enhancing pleasures that other social realms fail to provide, are likely to be among the most reluctant to abandon its rewards and satisfactions. Nonetheless, it remains vital that BITZ in an autonomist register continues to suggest a potential to significantly disrupt (rather than simply try to redeem) the organisation of cultural work¹¹, and here – as is the case with the other approaches I have outlined – there remains much reason to theorise the political uses of intensity in cultural work, and realms beyond. Perhaps, then, for now, at this largely pre-empirical stage, it is simply enough to offer a universal, rather than any particular, defence of BITZ; one that does not so much

celebrate intensity, as sympathise with its prevalence and acknowledge the condition that lies at its heart – a desire for transcendence, or a manifest longing for something else, both ecstatic and extraordinary, either within or without the confines of work.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Tim Jordan and Kath Woodward, the originators and organisers of the AHRC Research Network ‘Being in the Zone: The Importance of Culture to Peak Performance in Sport, Art and Work’, as well as my co-organisers of the ‘Working Lives and Being in the Zone’ symposium held at King’s College London in June 2013.

Mark Banks is currently Reader in Sociology at The Open University, UK and has written widely on work and policy in the cultural and creative industries. Recent work has looked at issues of identity and value in the exchange of artmoney, the politics of craft labour, and the practices and history of Black British jazz. From March 2014 he will take up a role as Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Leicester, UK E-mail: mark.banks@open.ac.uk

Notes

- ¹ AHRC Research Network ‘Being in the Zone: The Importance of Culture to Peak Performance in Sport, Art and Work’, led by Kath Woodward (The Open University, UK) and Tim Jordan (King’s College, London) For more details see: <http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/research/projects/being-in-the-zone>
- ² Sources: accessed April 2013
[http://juicemagazine.com/home/2009/09/bootsy-collins/#!prettyPhoto\[Gallery\]/0/](http://juicemagazine.com/home/2009/09/bootsy-collins/#!prettyPhoto[Gallery]/0/)
<http://sports.ndtv.com/australian-open-2013/news/202064-victoria-azarenka-says-she-is-in-the-zone-after-another-win>
<http://jacquesmattheij.com/living+in+the+zone>
<http://blog.medbroadcast.com/?p=1491>
- ³ Some have attributed the first use of ‘the zone’ in popular culture to tennis coach Timothy Gallwey and his book *The Inner Game of Tennis* (1974), others to tennis player Arthur Ashe, or even baseball player Ted Williams (see Young & Pain 1999). Given its synonymy with older musical terms such as ‘in the groove’ and ‘in the pocket’, or even older ideas of being ‘open’ or ‘connected’ in everyday religious or spiritual contexts, we might presume to identify BITZ contains some general and long-established qualities of experience, even if particular descriptions and understandings of that experience have tended to vary across disciplinary fields and historical contexts.
- ⁴ Note that Maslow’s (1964) idea of ‘peak’ performance has close affinities with ‘flow’, though the latter has become more widely employed in work and employment contexts.
- ⁵ Positive psychology is concerned with the exploration of ‘positive’ human emotions, such as happiness, well-being and contentment, developed by its exponents in direct contrast to the

- (perceived) hegemonic social scientific focus on the negative, disabling and pathological aspects of the human psyche; see <http://www.positivepsychology.org> for more details
- 6 'One of the most powerful questions you can ask yourself is "Am I helping to create a work culture and climate that nourishes a state of flow?" Emotionally intelligent and socially intelligent organizations provide executive coaching and leadership development for leaders to be more innovative at motivating others' (Brusman 2013: no pagination)
- 7 In May 2013 The Economist ran an article entitled 'Cycling is the New Golf' in which the benefits of road biking for business networking were espoused, as well the effectiveness of cycling for generating useful zone-like experiences. As architect and cyclist Jean-Jacques Lorraine offered, on a group ride, "The adrenaline rushes, the serotonin pulses and the surges of endorphin create a kind of high, a sense of euphoria. I feel open, honest and generous to others. I often find I'm saying things on a bike which I wouldn't normally say, and equally I've been confided in when I wasn't expecting it." See <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2013/04/business-networking> (accessed May 2013).
- 8 While alienation might discourage the flourishing of BITZ, one might also think of some kinds of repetitive, boring, menial or meaningless work as generating their own particular kinds of BITZ experiences, ones much less positively-valued than the kinds open to the creative worker. Any production line or routine labour that requires low skill and maximum repetition might be said to induce workers into another kind of zone – a 'dead zone' where thinking is unnecessary, or into a deliberate zone of 'switching off' by the worker as a means of coping with monotony, alienation and self-estrangement. Here the zone is about suppressed potential and capacity, not about extension and elaboration.
- 9 A virtue is a quality of moral excellence (e.g. justice, courage, benevolence) that aids the flourishing and progressive development of human-beings, which are seen (by virtue ethicist philosophers such as MacIntyre) as vital to the creation of equal and just societies. Derived from Aristotelian ethics, virtues are character traits which enable those who possess them to 'live well'.
- 10 At the time of writing, in the UK, the most recent example of where the 'vices' rather than the 'virtues' appear to have taken hold in a cultural work practice came in tabloid journalism, as revealed by the 2012 Leveson Inquiry.
- 11 See Stephen Shukaitis's *Imaginal Machines* (2009) for a lively and energising account of 'intense relations' and the possibility of some zone-like political interventions at work.

References

- Adorno, Theodor & Horkheimer, Max (1992): *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Verso.
- Banks, Mark (2012): 'MacIntyre, Bourdieu and the Practice of Jazz', *Popular Music*, 31:1, 69-86.
- Bill, Amanda (2012): 'Blood, Sweat and Shears: Happiness, Creativity and Fashion Education', *Fashion Theory*, 16:1, 49-66.
- Brouillette, Sarah (2009): 'Creative Labour and Auteur Authorship: Reading *Somers Town*', *Textual Practice* 25:3, 829-47.
- Brusman, Maynard (2013): 'Executive Coaching for Creating a State of Flow': <http://www.evancarmichael.com/Leadership/2038/Executive-Coaching-for-Creating-a-State-of-Flow---Ten-Essential-Flow-Factors.html> (accessed, May 2013).
- Calonius, Eric (2013): 'How to Think Like Steve Jobs': http://money.cnn.com/2011/03/15/news/companies/steve_jobs_thought_process.fortune/index.htm (accessed, April 2013).

- Carr, Alan (2011): *Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Human Strengths*, Hove and New York: Routledge.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihalyi. (1975): *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: Experiencing Flow in Work and Play*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- (1997): *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement With Everyday Life*, New York: Basic Books.
- (2003): *Good Business: Leadership, Flow and the Making of Meaning*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Donzelot, Jacques (1991): 'The Mobilization of Society', Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller (eds): *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 169-180.
- Elias Norbert & Eric Dunning (1986): *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Foucault, Michel (1991): 'Governmentality', in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller (eds): *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 87-104.
- Gardner, Howard, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi & William Damon (2001): *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*, New York: Basic Books.
- Geirland, John (1996) 'Go with the Flow', *Wired*:
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/4.09/czik.html> (accessed May 2013).
- Granter, Edward (2009): *Critical Social Theory and the End of Work*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- (2013) "'Sometimes it Goes Up To Eleven": Extreme Work in Healthcare Management', paper presented at 'Working Lives and Being in the Zone' King's College, London University, June.
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2000): *Empire*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- (2009): *Commonwealth*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hesmondhalgh, David & Sarah Baker (2011): *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*, London: Routledge.
- Hewlett, Sharon & Carolyn Luce (2006): 'Extreme Jobs: The Dangerous Allure of the 70-Hour Workweek', *Harvard Business Review*, 84, 12
- Hochschild, Arlie (1997): *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*, New York: Holt.
- Kennedy, Helen (2011): *Net-Work: Ethics and Values in Web Design*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Lemke, Thomas (1991): 'The Birth of "Bio-politics": Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-liberal Governmentality', *Economy and Society*, 30:2, 190-207.
- Lotringer, Sylvère (2004): 'Foreword: We, the Multitude', Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 7-19.
- Luckman, Susan (2012): *Locating Cultural Work: The Politics and Poetics of Remote, Regional and Rural Creativity*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Lyng, Stephen (1990): 'Edgework: A Social Psychological Analysis of Voluntary Risk Taking', *American Journal of Sociology*, 95, 851 - 86
- MacIntyre, Alasdair (2007): *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London: Duckworth.
- Marsh, Ann (2005): 'The Art of Work', *Fast Company*, August:
<http://www.fastcompany.com/53713/art-work> (accessed April 2013).
- Martens, Yuri (2011): 'Creative workplace: instrumental and symbolic support for creativity', *Facilities*, 29:1/2, 63 – 79
- Maslow, Abraham (1964): *Religion, Values and Peak Experiences*, New York: Viking.
- McRobbie, Angela (2002): 'Clubs to Companies: Notes on the Decline of Political Culture in Speeded Up Creative Worlds', *Cultural Studies*, 16:4, 516-531.
- Menger, Pierre-Michel (2002): *Portrait de l'artiste en travailleur: métamorphoses de capitalisme*, Paris: Seuil.
- Mitchell, Richard (1988): 'Sociological Implications of the Flow Experience', Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi & Isabella Selega Csikszentmihalyi (eds): *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 36-59.
- Nixon, Sean, (2003): *Advertising Cultures*, London: Sage.

- Rojek, Chris (2010): *The Labour of Leisure*, London: Sage.
- Ross, Andrew (2003): *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and its Hidden Costs*, New York: Basic Books.
- Ryan, Bill (1992): *Making Capital from Culture: The Corporate Form of Capitalist Cultural Production*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Sennett, Richard (2007): *The Craftsman*, London: Allen Lane.
- Shukaitis, Stevphen (2009): *Imaginal Machines: Autonomy & Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Life*, Autonomedia.
- Stahl, Matt (2013): 'Specificity, Ambivalence and the Commodity Form of Creative Work', Mark Banks, Rosalind Gill & Stephanie Taylor (eds): *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in the Cultural and Creative Industries* London: Routledge, 115-139.
- Taylor, Stephanie & Karen Littleton (2012): *Contemporary Identities of Creativity and Creative Work*, Farnham: Ashgate.
- Terranova, Tiziana (2000): 'Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy', *Social Text*, 63, 33-50.
- Ursell, Gillian (2000): 'Television Production: Issues of Exploitation, Commodification and Subjectivity in UK Television Labour Markets', *Media Culture and Society*, 22, 805-825.
- Vail, John & Robert Hollands (2012): 'Cultural Work and a Transformative Arts: The Dilemmas of the Amber Collective', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 5, 3, 337-353.
- Virno, Paolo (2004): *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)
- Witkin, Robert (2000): 'Why Did Adorno "Hate" Jazz?', *Sociological Theory*, 18:1, 145-170.
- Young, Janet & Michelle Pain (1999): 'The Zone: Evidence of a Universal Phenomenon for Athletes Across all Sports', *Athletic Insight: The Online Journal of Sports Psychology*: http://www.athleticinsight.com/Vol1Iss3/Empirical_Zone.htm (accessed April 2013).

Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat

By Greig de Peuter

Abstract

The figure of the self-reliant, risk-bearing, non-unionised, self-exploiting, always-on flexibly employed worker in the creative industries has been positioned as a role model of contemporary capitalism. Although the notion of the model-worker is a compelling critical diagnostic of the self-management of precarity in post-Fordist times, I argue that it provides an insufficient perspective on labour and the so-called creative economy to the extent that it occludes the capacity to contest among the workforces it represents. Informed by a larger research project, this article thematises salient features of select collective responses to precarity that are emerging from workers in nonstandard employment in the arts, the media, and cultural industries. The discussion is structured in three main parts: the first, *aggregation*, identifies initiatives in which employment status – rather than a specific profession or sector – is the basis of assembly and advocacy; the second, *compensation*, highlights unpaid work as a growing point of contention across sectors; and the third, *occupation*, describes cases in which precarious cultural workers are voicing their grievances and engaging in direct action in the context of wider social movements. These dimensions of the contemporary response to precarisation in the creative industries are at risk of being overlooked if the research optic on workers' strategies is focused upon a single sector or a particular profession. In conclusion, I emphasise that the organisations, campaigns, and proposals that are surveyed in this article are marked by tensions between and among accommodative adaption, incremental improvements, and radical reformism vis-à-vis precarity.

Keywords: Labour, precarity, creative industries, cultural workers, resistance.

Role Model Worker

Cultural, media, and ‘creative’ workers – especially those outside the fraying ‘standard employment relationship’ – are role model subjects of contemporary capitalism.¹ Variations on this claim frequently arise in the literature on labour that has surged in recent years within and beyond cultural studies. Freelance, contract, self-employed, and intermittent workers in the arts, the media, and cultural industries are invoked as paradigmatic figures of 21st century capitalism, specifically, of a political-economic order putting a premium on risk-taking, flexible employment, valorisation of immaterial labour, entrepreneurial forms of subjectivity, and a mode of governmentality expecting individuals to shoulder responsibilities otherwise borne by an employer or the state (Ross 2000; McRobbie 2001; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005; Neff et al. 2005; Fraser 2006; von Osten 2007a, 2007b; Sholette 2011; Bryan-Wilson 2012; Steyerl 2012; Raunig 2013).

The thrust of the role model proposition is that priorities of post-Fordist, neoliberal capitalism are exemplified by the conditions and propensities of those in nonstandard employment navigating the liquid labour markets of the vaunted ‘creative economy’: habituated to self-reliance; accepting a high level of risk; allergic to bureaucracy; juggling multiple short-term ‘projects’; blurring the boundaries of work and non-work time; preternaturally adaptable; striving to be innovative and unique; producing monetary value from knowledge, symbols, or otherwise intangible resources; carefully branding the self; personally funding perpetual education upgrades; vigorously managing social networks within highly informal labour markets; performing work without a guarantee of compensation; assuming responsibility for maintaining a steady flow of paid work and, hence, on a job search without end; and willingness to put the passion for the work ahead of the size of the pay.

Such portraiture is intended to critically diagnose self-exploitation and the pragmatic adjustment of behaviour to the rigours of flexibility. There is a dominant analog to the role model idea, however, in early 21st century celebratory discourses surrounding labour flexibility and the creative economy: for example, the business writer Daniel Pink (2002) declared ‘the MFA the new MBA’ and mused enthusiastically on ‘free agency’; the academic-consultant Richard Florida (2012) nominated the ‘creative class’ a key to post-industrial prosperity and a paragon of rewarding job opportunity; and the New Labour Party, under the leadership of Tony Blair, refined the now globalising creative industries policy framework, which sought to join together the value-adding promise of symbolic production, the intellectual property imperative, and the enterprise culture of Thatcherism. It is tempting to conclude that these official perspectives and their critical counterparts make basically the same point – that workers animating the creative economy have contemporary capitalism’s preferred labour profile.

The critical role model idea is, however, distinguished by normative concerns, namely, that the risk-bearing, benefit-bereft, non-unionised, self-sacrificing, meritocratic-minded, always-on independent creative worker is hardly a template for spreading economic and social justice, let alone emotional well-being (Ross 2000; McRobbie 2002; Neff et al. 2005). Indeed, the turn to labour in cultural studies was itself accelerated in response to turn-of-the-century government discourses about the creative industries, which scholars roundly criticised for neglecting the flipside of often glamourised occupations in the arts, the media, and cultural industries (McRobbie 2002; Rossiter 2007; Banks & Hesmondhalgh 2009; Ross 2009), a flipside that many activists and academics would come to know by the shorthand, ‘precarity’.

It is at this point worth recalling that the liberating tone of official tales of ‘free agents’ and the ‘creative class’ is an echo of dissident genealogies. As several theorists have argued with reference to 20th century capitalist transformations, one-time oppositional impulses – to escape the routines of standard employment, to avert the Taylorized rhythms of the factory, to access expanded opportunities to be creative – came to be accommodated by and increasingly generic to capitalism (Hardt & Negri 2000; Berardi 2003; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005; Fraser 2006; Lorey 2006; von Osten 2007a, 2007b). The spread of nonstandard, creative work under post-Fordism demonstrates capital’s remarkable capacity to absorb, adapt to, and thrive off desires opposing it. Rather than reinforce capitalist triumphalism, however, a reading along these lines derives its perspective from below, affirming labour’s ability to collectively withdraw from and seek alternatives to the prevailing organisation of work.

In contrast, the role-model portrait conjures up a figure so thoroughly formatted to the exigencies of flexible exploitation that it runs the risk of adding to the sense that there is no way out (c.f. Gillick 2010; Rosler 2011). So although the notion of the model-worker is a compelling critical diagnostic of the self-management of precarity in post-Fordist times, it provides an insufficient perspective on labour and the so-called creative economy to the extent that it occludes the capacity to contest among the workforces it represents. Glossing over countervailing possibilities is potentially debilitating politically. Raising this concern does not imply a rejection of the role model proposition, however. On the contrary, if the cultural worker in nonstandard employment exemplifies tendencies in contemporary capitalism that promote precarity, by the same token, such workers may be a strategic locus of resistance against these tendencies.

Creative Precariat

Barely a decade ago, labour issues were rightly characterised as a ‘blind spot’ in such fields as communication studies (McKercher & Mosco 2006: 493). Since then, labour research has proliferated in media and cultural studies. Much of this

research carefully documents conditions and experiences of work in individual sectors of the creative industries, including, among others, television, fashion, journalism, new media, video games, and the arts (e.g., Ursell 2000; Neff et al. 2005; Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter 2006; Deuze 2007; Gill 2007; Arvidsson et al. 2010; Lloyd 2010). While this literature is heterogeneous, a couple of general observations can be made about this welcome wave of labour scholarship. Firstly, it illuminates the prevalence, across sectors of the creative industries, of precarity, that is, of financial, social, and existential insecurity exacerbated by the flexibilisation of labour under post-Fordism, a process exemplified by freelancing, short-term contracts, internships, solo self-employment, and other unstable work arrangements that are familiar in creative industries. A second general observation about the research on labour in creative industries is that greater attention has tended to be given to manifestations of precarity as compared to collective efforts to confront precarious conditions of labour and life.

Gathering momentum, however, is a current of inquiry where the primary focus is on efforts to counteract precarity in the arts, the media, and knowledge and cultural industries (Bodnar 2006; Corsani & Lazzarato 2008; Mosco & McKercher 2008; Ross 2008; Brophy 2010; Cohen 2011; Murgia & Selmi 2012; Murray & Golmitzer 2012; Raunig 2013). Working in this stream, this article is informed by a larger, collaborative research project, Cultural Workers Organize (see www.culturalworkersorganize.org). This ongoing project is rooted in a memory of ‘precarity’ as a conceptual tool forged in the context of activism (Papadopoulos et al. 2008; Mattoni 2012). Cultural Workers Organize sets out to survey emerging collective responses to precarity by contract workers, interns, self-employed, freelancers, part-timers and other flexworkers in creative economy milieus. At the core of the research are organisations, campaigns, and policy proposals that variously seek to expose, resist, and mitigate precarity. Between 2010 and 2013, fieldwork was carried out mostly in London, Milan, New York City, and Toronto, where interviews were conducted with sixty people, spanning professional associations, trade unions, activist groups, coworking spaces, and cooperatives. Spot-lighting collective initiatives and listening to activist voices, this research underscores that flexibilisation, individualisation, and precarisation may be leading mechanisms of post-Fordist exploitation, but these processes have not exhausted labour’s capacity to act collectively.

In their wide-ranging review of recent literature on nonstandard work, Dennis Arnold and Joseph Bongiovi (2013: 304) conclude: ‘... there is a need to better understand the ambitions, desires and strategies of precarious workers’ efforts in organizing and the broader implications of social struggle for alternatives to the dominant development paradigms’. A modest contribution to this task, in what follows I identify three broad ways in which precarious workers are responding – or might respond – to the challenges they face, responses that are, to varying degrees, accommodative of or antagonistic toward the creative economy paradigm

of contemporary capitalism. The first section of the paper addresses emerging flexworker organisations in which a (quasi-)employment status, rather than a particular occupation or sector, is the basis of aggregation and advocacy. The second section zeroes in on unpaid work as a point of contention in a variety of creative economy quarters, a grievance dovetailing with diverse compensation proposals. And the third section considers precarious cultural workers' involvement in wider social movement politics, in particular, the politics of occupation. In conclusion, I highlight the tension between incremental improvements and more radical reforms in the 'ambitions, desires, and strategies' catalogued herein.

The responses to precarity focused upon in this paper require a final framing comment. How precarity manifests, and the means by which workers might confront it, will be shaped by sector-specific dimensions, ranging from industrial structure to professional culture, work organisation, and access to and forms of collective representation – dimensions with, moreover, distinct national and regional contours. This is why, in the research project informing this article, an effort has been made to share sector-specific accounts of precarity and strategies for mitigating it (e.g., Ziff 2012; Condé & Beveridge forthcoming) and to provide case studies addressing particular national and metropolitan contexts (Cohen & de Peuter 2013; de Peuter 2014). In this article, however, I take an intentionally generalist perspective, arguing that if the research optic on workers' strategies in creative industries is limited to a single sector or a particular profession then important features of the contemporary response to precarity may be overlooked. Of interest here are organisations that reach across sectors or occupations; policy proposals with potential effects beyond one professional group – and beyond cultural workers per se; and moments where cultural, media, and creative workers air their grievances via participation in wider counter-capitalist social movements. In these and other ways, the initiatives surveyed below have significance for thinking through the possibilities and the limitations of a 'creative precariat' (Arvidsson et al. 2010: 296).

Aggregation

Densely concentrating labour power at a single production site not only enabled mass-scale extraction of surplus value, but also deepened the consciousness of common cause that fueled industrial trade unionism. Such conditions of counter-power are short-circuited by the spatial and temporal disaggregation of workforces. Short-term stints and off-site working, characteristic features of many creative industries, complicate workplace-based labour organising and the objective of employment continuity. 'The organizing template of long-term stability and security in a single workplace', writes Andrew Ross (2009: 211), 'is not well-suited to industries where a majority of workers shift their employers on a regular basis, whether voluntarily or involuntarily'. Workers in low-wage service sectors and

their allies were the first to collectively address flexible and precarious employment through campaigns such as Justice for Janitors and new organisations such as worker centres. Novel responses are emerging from flexworkers in creative-economy sectors, too, as precarity trickles up the value chain. Discussed below is a subset of these collective responses for which the aggregating factor is not necessarily craft, occupation, or industry – conventional sources of labour solidarity – but (quasi-)employment status.

Organised labour has had difficulty adapting to the sort of transformations in occupational structures and employment relationships that converge in the creative industries. Emerging at the margins of the union movement, however, are atypical workers' associations exploring strategies for bringing together workers in nonstandard employment, including the self-employed, across a variety of occupations, at the higher end of the value chain in the creative economy. Along these lines, the most established collective organisation in the cities covered by our research is New York's Freelancers Union (see Abrahamian 2012). Boasting some 229,000 members, the Freelancers Union has been developing – outside the scope of collective bargaining – infrastructure for protecting and supporting 'independent workers' excluded from entitlements available to their counterparts in standard employment. Its strategic gambit for bringing its dispersed constituency together is to service independent workers' unmet need for medical insurance. Recognising that mobile workers require benefits that are not fixed to one employer, the Freelancers Union pools members' financial resources so as to provide access to healthcare coverage at a discount rate as compared to purchasing insurance individually. Based on this foundation, the Freelancers Union has evolved a model that combines fee-based services, free resources (e.g. its Online Contract Creator), legislative advocacy to improve freelancers' socio-economic conditions, and, more recently, it has opened a medical clinic for members in New York City. The Freelancers Union – and likeminded groups such as Milan-based *Associazione Consulenti Terziario Avanzato* – is an actor in what Joel Dullroy and Anna Cashman (2013) describe as the fledgling 'freelancers' rights movement' – integral to which are strategies, beyond the bargaining table, for expanding social protections for flexworkers.

Those in nonstandard work arrangements are also coming together via coworking, the practice of freelancers and other self-employed operating out of a shared workspace (de Peuter, Cohen, & Saraco 2013). Mostly populated by communication, design, and business services professionals, coworking spaces respond to two manifestations of precarity for solo operators: the isolation of working alone at home, and a lack of access to affordable commercial property. Virtually unheard of a decade ago, coworking spaces are mushrooming, with an estimated 2,500 globally (Foertsch 2013). Charging membership fees based on usage, coworking spaces are typically for-profit entities. There are, however, contending models, including free, ad hoc coworking events, a.k.a. 'jellies'; municipally sup-

ported spaces, such as the Hive at 55 in Manhattan; social enterprises, such as the Impact Hub, an international network of coworking spaces; and co-operatives, such as Montréal's Ecto. There are glimpses of the potential for these spaces to help their constituencies confront aspects of precarity beyond social isolation: for instance, the Hub Islington in London has hosted workshops raising the subject of freelancers' rights; members of the Toronto Writers' Centre informally support one another in conversations about negotiating decent publishing contracts; and coworking spaces in the Canadian province of Ontario have collaborated on an extended benefits program for their members. Coworking is one of the sites where common cause might be recomposed among otherwise dispersed workers.

Anti-precarity aggregations are also forming around the quasi-employment arrangement known as the internship (de Peuter, Cohen & Brophy 2012). High youth unemployment, socially glamorous sectors, and careers promising self-expression are among the factors bulking up the youthful reserve army under competitive pressure to accept low- or no-wage internships, in the hope of securing stable, paid work in creative industries. Misclassification of entry-level staff as interns, diminished social protections, and the cordoning off of professions from those insufficiently privileged to be able to work for free are just some of the grievances expressed by intern activist groups that have proliferated internationally in recent years – including, in the cities of our research, Intern Labor Rights in New York; Intern Aware, Precarious Workers Brigade, and Ragpickers in London; and the Toronto-based Canadian Intern Association. While some unions have begun to advocate for interns, most intern initiatives are cropping up at the margins of organised labour. Rather than in bargaining units, interns are converging in nimble collectives, participating in direct actions targeting dubious internship schemes; in class-action suits, challenging employers on the legality of their internships; on social media networks, naming-and-shaming companies recruiting unpaid interns; and on campuses, where past, present, and prospective interns congregate for longer than the average placement. Interns' oppositional initiative has made wageless young workers a high-profile subject, prompting some politicians to press for more stringent regulations (see Cohen & de Peuter 2013). Most significantly, intern activists have broached the taboo topics of labour exploitation and workers' rights among the children of neoliberalism.

Atypical workers' associations, coworking spaces, and intern initiatives are aggregators of workers differentially detached from a single, stable employer. Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher (2008: 13) remark, 'it is uncertain whether the stories of ... new forms of organizing in unlikely places ... represent a new dawn for the labor movement or its last defensive gasps'. 'Last gasps' are within earshot, when, for example, atypical workers' associations sell benefits to independents, the latter shouldering the financial burden of outsourcing; when coworking members buy access to the workplace community that has been eroded by flexibilisation, and, in the process, activate a site for 'network sociality' (Wittel

2001); or when campaigns against exploitative internships stop short of troubling the inherently exploitative character of waged labour. Still, the above-discussed efforts are exposing real challenges faced by precarious workers in creative industries – and are mitigating some of those challenges in significant, if not always systemic, ways. These nonstandard aggregations demonstrate that the spatio-temporal fragmentation of the workforce is incomplete. It is important, however, to avoid making a virtue of a necessity; in particular, collective bargaining unit certification surely is not the only legitimate mechanism of labour politics, but, absent that, it is difficult to confront one of the most basic indices of precarity – pay.

Compensation

One way to widen the lens on labour politics in the creative industries is to search out common concerns among precarious workers in different sectors. The previous section, for example, identified social isolation and weak social protections as manifestations of precarity around which media and cultural workers in nonstandard employment are aggregating. This section turns to another point of contention among flexworkers in the arts, the media, and cultural industries – compensation, specifically, unpaid work. As the activism surrounding internships indicates, discontent is rumbling at the zero-wage margins of the creative economy. This section flags some of the forms of unpaid work that individual workers and their organisations are problematising, the strategies characterising their efforts, and the proposals being forwarded for redressing this grievance. Identifying shared sources of agitation is a preliminary step toward exploring possibilities for pan-sectoral labour campaigns and solidarities across, and perhaps beyond, creative industries.

Lacking union representation, the primary strategies used by nonstandard workers and their organisations to respond to the problem of unpaid work have involved litigation and legislation. Take, for example, the Freelancer Payment Protection Act, currently awaiting a Senate vote in New York State, which was initiated by the Freelancers Union (2013) in an effort to better protect freelancers when clients do not pay; the class-action suits forwarded by unpaid media interns, perhaps most notoriously, the *Black Swan* case (Perlin 2013), in which it was persuasively argued that interns performed work that merited statutory minimum wage; and the successful wage-theft cases pushed by the labour group Retail Action Project (2012) through the New York State Office of the Attorney General to win unpaid wages for part-time workers in the fashion retail sector from employers that failed to comply with minimum wage regulations. While costly and timely, litigation and legislation are often the only options for nonunionised precarious workers to confront unpaid work.

For the creative-economy paradigm, the figure of the artist is especially worthy of emulation, due partly to the dubious yet enduring notion that self-expressive work offers ‘nonmonetary rewards’ (Ross 2000: 22) which counteract the sting of low earnings, a characteristic feature of artistic labour markets (see, for example, Miranda 2009). In lieu of payment, visual and performing artists are frequently invited to provide work in exchange for a very particular nonmonetary reward, that of exposure, says New York City artists’ group, W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy). Contesting the legitimacy, and doubting the convertibility, of the ‘promise of exposure’ (W.A.G.E. n.d. a), W.A.G.E. formed in 2008 in response to what the group describes as the ‘common practice’ (W.A.G.E. n.d. b), among New York’s non-profit galleries, of not paying artists for their contributions to shows. Operating in a non-unionised sector, W.A.G.E. began by leveraging art-world communication platforms for ‘consciousness-raising’ (W.A.G.E. n.d. b); went on to research the scope of non-payment via an online survey (58.4% of respondents reported cases of non-payment) (W.A.G.E. n.d. c); and, currently, is designing a regulatory framework, ‘W.A.G.E. Certification’, for recognising those cultural institutions that transparently budget for, and consistently pay, artist fees.

Advocating for minimum standard rates, W.A.G.E. is inspired by organisations such as Canadian Artists’ Representation / *Le Front des artistes canadiens* (CARFAC). Since 1968, CARFAC has published updated base-fee schedules that are more or less adhered to by galleries in Canada. Presently, CARFAC is lobbying for a policy response to another variety of unpaid labour; the association is pushing for national legislation – the Artist’s Resale Right – that would redistribute a five percent royalty to an artist when their work is flipped on the art market (CARFAC 2013). Unpaid cultural work is an issue gaining attention well beyond the visual arts. For example, the UK’s 30,000-strong Musicians’ Union initiated the campaign ‘Work Not Play’ after members reported being asked to perform for free at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. W.A.G.E., CARFAC, and the Musicians’ Union are on a growing roster of organisations engaged in struggle over the meaning of cultural work as such, from refusing the cliché of the labour-of-love to debunking the half-truth that working unpaid is a commercial opportunity. For its part, W.A.G.E. (n.d. b) is straightforward about the stakes: the promise of exposure ‘denies the value of our labor’. Fighting this devaluation, these organisations’ efforts underscore the need for blended labour/cultural policies to counteract a model whereby cultural production is subsidised by those economically equipped – by debt, inheritance, or precarious secondary jobs – to perform cultural work on spec.

‘[G]etting the multitude to work for free’, writes Yann Moulier Boutang (2011: 133), ‘is the general line of cognitive capitalism, wherever it has the possibility’. Nowhere in the creative economy does unpaid work find more favourable conditions than online. Prospects are particularly bountiful in the byline business: ‘The

easier it is to get published, the harder it is to get paid for it', says the President of the US National Writers' Union (Goldbetter 2011). Writers, their allies, and organisations are, however, pursuing multiple strategies against the normalisation of the provision of content for nothing, or nearly so, to profit-seeking media outlets, including, among others: class-action suits, such as that filed against *The Huffington Post* in which unpaid bloggers sought (unsuccessfully) a cut of the \$315 million that AOL paid in 2011 for the news website whose valuable online traffic, plaintiffs argued, was partly their collective product; contributor boycotts, including one called by the National Writers' Union – against *Huffington Post* again – as part of its 'Pay the Writer!' campaign, and, another, informally called in 2013, targeting the *Daily Review*, an Australian arts and culture site; online pay 'walls' – such as 'Who Pays Writers?' and 'Pay Me Please' – which use the same Internet infrastructures that enlist unpaid or low-paid media work to instead expose it; and research efforts, with the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, for example, surveying the extent of unpaid work as part its campaign, launched in 2013, 'Free Is Not An Option'.

The plight of freelance writers is, however, a specific case of a more general trend: network communication technologies are multiplying the options available to capital for accessing creative labour power without entering standard employment relationships, a process of ongoing destandardisation ultimately arriving at the online continuum of productivity, and hence of exploitability, now widely theorised as 'free labour' (Terranova 2004).

Imposing minimum rates via collective agreements is a necessary element of a response to the problem of unpaid work in the creative economy. A more sweeping additional possibility is basic income, that is, the proposal for the introduction of a universal and unconditional annual guaranteed income, set at a rate sufficient for meeting basic human needs (see Raventós 2007; Weeks 2011). Rather than seek a specified wage for a given contribution, basic income would delink compensation from employment. Across our research sites, the basic income proposal is most prominent among activists in Italy, and, in the early 2000s, the EuroMayDay parade, which incubated in Milan, was a vehicle for the transnational circulation of the proposal (Negri 2008: 215). Understood as a radically expanded version of what has been termed 'precarity pay' (Vosko 2000: 226), basic income potentially provides a threefold response to the problems of unpaid work and income insecurity generally, across and beyond creative economy sectors.

First, access to an incrementally dispensed annual basic income could bridge the payless gap between contracts that affects intermittently engaged workers (Gill 2007: 7; Horowitz et al. 2005: 5). Pointing in this direction is the unique indemnity available in France to media and cultural workers on short-term contracts, *l'intermittent du spectacle*, which brings some stability to erratic incomes (see Corsani & Lazzarato 2008). By compensating the interval between gigs, this income security measure, writes Antonella Corsani (2007), begins to recognise

there is ‘a wealth created outside of time spent in employment’; between paid jobs, a cultural worker could be rehearsing, conducting research, acquiring skills, developing ideas, or otherwise replenishing the creativity coextensive with future productions. This dovetails with a second case for basic income: it would offer some compensation for contributions to the creative economy – from maintaining the social networks that undergird flexible labour pools, to feeding content to social-media firms, to lending cachet to gentrifying neighbourhoods – that generate financial value but are currently unremunerated. ‘We are’, to borrow the words of anti-precarity activist Alex Foti (2004), ‘100% of the time part of the (re)production of capital’. From this point of view, basic income is not conceived as welfare support for those excluded from production but rather as a ‘social salary’ (Vercellone 2007) for those always already a participant in it. Basic income is, then, a policy correlate to the claim that cognitive and affective labour are not restricted to specific occupations but instead are diffuse social capacities and exceed activity performed in the context of paid employment.

A third case for basic income vis-à-vis unpaid activity is also the most urgent case: basic income could be a policy strategy for swiftly ‘eradicating poverty’ (Raventós 2007: 107). Distribution of earnings in creative industries are characteristically lopsided, between, as Gillian Ursell (2000: 817) remarks in a study of television labour, ‘a well-placed minority ... and the rest’. ‘The rest’, even if unemployed, are productive for capital: the standing reserve army can be expected to exert downward pressure on the wage that a creative-economy employer is likely to bear, and, thus, raise their return. Additionally, basic income could lower the class barrier to labour market entry to the arts, the media, and cultural production. Although it could be a mechanism for mitigating cultural worker precarity, basic income’s promise of greater economic justice has, of course, vast relevance for impoverished populations beyond those selling their labour in creative industries.

In addition to bridging the pay gap between gigs, recognising the value contribution of activity performed outside employment, and insulating against immiseration, basic income has further potential to transform the conditions of media and cultural production. Jim Shorthose and Gerard Strange (2004: 58) suggest basic income could be a policy component of ‘governance for autonomy’ in the sphere of cultural work. Not only would access to basic income enable cultural producers to experiment with content and forms that do not abide by dominant criteria of commercial viability, but also, by providing a base level of material security, basic income would enable cultural workers – among a range of other groups – to pursue their work in the context of alternative economic experiments, including, for instance, worker cooperatives, with the basic income providing some protection for counter-capitalist experiments from the competitive pressures of the market. In these and other ways, basic income begins to show its promise as a ‘tool of counterpower’ (Fumagalli & Lucarelli 2008). Ultimately, however, the basic income proposal broaches issues of class inequality, the privatisation of socially

produced wealth, and a desire for autonomy – systemic issues that are more fully confronted by precarious cultural workers when they spread out and contribute to social movements.

Occupation

Representing the figure of the artist as a model for contemporary capitalism flattens out the ‘heterogeneity of art practice’, including the persistence of what Alberto López Cuenca (2012) refers to as ‘autonomous projects seeking to produce non-hegemonic social practices’ (see also Gillick 2010; Rosler 2011). Artists and other cultural workers are, moreover, among the protagonists of struggles against exploitation and inequality in the neoliberal era. Spatial disaggregation of the workforce, exclusion from union representation, and the apparent difficulty of stemming income inequality through collective bargaining are some of the reasons why the problem of precarity has been posed beyond the confines of workplaces, in public spaces, via social movements. Indeed, the circulation of the concept of ‘precarity’ was itself propelled by autonomous organising and street-level protest in Europe in the early 2000s (see Cosse 2008). And, more recently, the dissident wave of occupations, cycling from North Africa to New York, has been read by labour researchers as, in part, a response to conditions of precarity (Lee & Kofman 2012; Schram 2013). Highlighted below are two cultural worker organisations that are voicing grievances and staking claims within the context of contemporary counter-capitalist movements for which occupation has been a decisive strategy.

As public squares were squatted in the Arab World, anti-austerity protest raged in Greece, and *indignados* camped in Spanish cities, the politics of occupation – and its US prospects – were up for discussion at 16Beaver, an artist-run space in New York City. 16Beaver, which for over a decade has hosted conversations with international activists, was one of various seedbeds of the Occupy Wall Street movement (Kroll 2011; McKee 2012). In New York, Occupy spawned numerous working groups, several of them comprised of artists – frequently distant from the representational structures of unionism; one such group is Arts & Labor. A trans-occupational alliance, Arts & Labor (n.d.) defines its membership inclusively: ‘We are artists and interns, writers and educators, art handlers and designers, administrators, curators, assistants, and students. We are all art workers and members of the 99%’.

One of the enduring offshoots of Occupy Wall Street, Arts & Labor sets out to raise awareness about and fight against ‘exploitative working conditions’ in the arts (ibid.), through, among other means, teach-ins and direct actions. Its members shedding light on the often-invisible precarious labour sustaining the art world (Kasper 2011), Arts & Labor has been pressing for higher labour standards throughout the art economy. In an intervention in 2013, for example, the group

joined unions in a counter-publicity campaign, challenging the Frieze Art Fair for not hiring local union labour, at a living wage, to set up the lucrative art show, on a site made available to Frieze by the City at a bargain rate. Notably, Arts & Labor has also – through the activities of its Alternative Economies subgroup – foregrounded the need to move beyond prevailing structures of work and wealth altogether. The radical promise of artists' labour activism, to borrow the words of Julia Bryan-Wilson (2012: 46), does not necessarily lie in a focus on 'getting a bigger piece of the art-market pie', but furthering 'analysis of economic conditions attuned to larger struggles against inequality'.

This attunement is clear in what has been called the 'Italian Occupy movement' (Mattei 2013: 366), in which oppositional cultural workers are mixing direct action and legal strategies. A glimpse of this movement is provided by an occupation that took place in Milan on May 5, 2012. In a bold rejection of austerity-imposed restraint, a group of cultural workers and their allies took over a 31-storey skyscraper that had been sitting empty since the late 1990s. The tower's new tenants announced themselves as 'the multitude of workers of the creative industries...' (Macao 2012). The early days of this occupation, named 'Macao', were marked by 'magmatic creativity' (Foti 2012a): performances, workshops, and parties; drafting communiqués, preparing gardens, and developing working groups; and deliberating over the occupation in general assemblies. Envisaged as a centre for arts and research, unfurled from atop the massive building was a banner – 'You could even imagine flying'. A steady stream of visitors, endorsements by prominent artists, and social media exposure were not enough to protect the occupation, however: ten days in, police evicted Macao. About a month later, the group installed itself in a more modestly sized space, Ex Borsa del Macello, where it remains at time of writing.

Macao arises from familiar material conditions. One of the themes in the discussions leading up to the occupation was, said one of Macao's organisers, 'the way in which creative work is increasingly precarious' (Braga cited in Cultural Workers Organize 2013: 180). The significance of art, design, and events to Milan's urban economy is manifest, but, reflecting a classic creative-economy cleave, the rewards are skewed to 'major names', leaving little, says Foti (2012b), for 'bottom-up creative classes'. Doubtless aggravating discontent, Milan's 'so-called creatives', remarks another Macao organiser, face 'gentrification' (cited in Tozzi 2012), which makes it difficult to work and live affordably in a city dotted with unused spaces, preserved as bets on a 'rent gap' (Smith 1987). Occupation, in this setting, can be understood as a kind of refusal of rent, or an act of 'autoreduction' (see Cherki & Wieviorka 2007).

In using the lexicon of precariousness to diagnose working conditions, Macao could be connected to the activism in Milan which, a decade earlier, helped to disseminate 'precarity' as a keyword in an 'alternative system of meaning ... about labor market flexibility' (Mattoni 2008: 108). Likewise, the audacity to

seize a skyscraper cannot be separated from a well-established tradition of squatting in Italy, in particular, the model of the *centri sociali*, social centres occupied and self-managed by activist communities (Ruggiero 2000). Macao, however, was the product of a desire for far-reaching transformations: to ‘create alternative models able to threaten the current mode of production’ (Braga cited in Cultural Workers Organize 2013: 186). In this Macao is not alone: it is one node on a fledgling network of cultural spaces – *Lavoratori dell’arte* – in which cultural production is linked to an emerging ‘commons’ movement in Italy (see Mattei 2013).

Organisers presented Macao as an ‘occasion for the construction of a common good’ (Vecchio 2012). The background of this vision includes a national referendum in 2011 – forced upon government by activists and critical legal experts – that prevented Italian parliament from authorising the privatisation of water management (see Fattori 2013). The movement opposing the enclosure of water used the category of ‘common goods’ to subvert the public-private binary, arguing that the institutional domain designated ‘public’ increasingly functions as conduit for ‘private’ interests to access new zones of accumulation. Harnessing the momentum of a sweeping referendum victory, a group of cultural workers, on the heels of the vote, occupied Teatro Valle, an 18th century theatre in Rome. They did so out of concern for the ‘uncertain future’ of this venerated facility: after a national theatre association was shuttered, ownership of Teatro Valle was transferred to the city of Rome, raising fears about privatisation, which could jeopardise the theatre’s cultural project (Bailey & Marcucci 2013: 397). Straddling ‘legality and illegality’, the occupiers and their legal allies appealed to a constitutional article legitimating expropriation in situations where a case can be made that a vital public need is served (ibid: 399). Insisting ‘culture was as essential for human development as water, air, and other common goods’ (ibid: 398), Teatro Valle’s occupiers leveraged the official institutional form of a ‘foundation’, writing a statute for the cultural space rooted in the principle ‘that culture and art are a collective process of wealth creation and cultural goods like the Valle should not be treated as commodities and owed privately’ (ibid: 402).

In terms of precarious labour politics generally in the creative industries, one of the challenges is to go beyond opposing precarity, and, indeed, beyond developing policy mechanisms enabling workers to better cope with flexible labour markets – to go a step further to propose and experiment with political-economic infrastructures of cultural creativity that provide an alternative to the dominant social relations of production. Such possibilities are most actively explored by precarious workers’ initiatives that do not arise from a specific concern with, for instance, employment stability or income security, but, rather, initiatives that arise from broader social movements anchored in a structural critique of inequality and enclosure in neoliberal capitalism. So although the desire that animates Macao – to ‘take ownership “from below”...’ – may not necessarily lead to a resolution of

labour precarity for its protagonists, the participation of cultural workers in occupation politics points to ways in which capacities and desires radically exceed the portrayal of cultural workers as post-Fordism's role model (Braga cited in *Cultural Workers Organize* 2013: 184). After all, at the core of many of the new institutions emerging from occupation are not enterprising selves, but the general assembly, and attendant processes of horizontal, consensus-based decision-making. At a broader level, these interventions confirm that occupation is not merely about the voicing of grievances; occupation is a constituent practice signaling 'a post-capitalist politics' (Gibson-Graham 2006). In this respect, these interventions could be linked to traditions of workers' control in general (see Azzellini & Ness 2011) and 'self-organisation' among artists in particular (Davies et al. 2006; see also Robertson 2006), domains where it is expected that 'autonomy' in cultural work (see Banks 2010) mean something more than having wiggle room within commercial confines.

Within, Against, Beyond

This article surveyed some of the varied ways in which the nonstandard worker in the celebrated creative economy defies its reputation for being a role model in contemporary capitalism – by, for example, exploring strategies for combating workforce fragmentation, mutually confronting rather than privately managing precarity, and turning capacities susceptible to flexible labour control against it. The organisations, campaigns, and proposals touched upon above confirm that, as Isabell Lorey (2010) remarks, 'In insecure, flexibilized, and discontinuous working and living conditions, subjectifications arise that do not wholly correspond to a neoliberal logic of exploitation...' Informed by a larger project on precarious labour activism, for which fieldwork has been carried out primarily in London, Milan, New York City, and Toronto, this article set out to thematise salient features of select collective responses to precarity among workers in nonstandard employment in the arts, the media, and cultural industries. It identified, first, atypical worker aggregations, in which (quasi-)employment status, rather than a specific profession or sector, serves as a basis for assembly and advocacy; second, it revealed a mounting concern about unpaid work across sectors of the creative industries, and flagged compensation proposals for redressing wageless labour; and, third, it offered examples of the participation of precarious cultural workers in wider social movements, namely the politics of occupation, which have provided a context, outside the bounds of a circumscribed workplace, for voicing grievances and asserting demands. These sorts of responses to precarisation are likely to be overlooked by research in which the lens is restricted to how cultural workers negotiate precarity within a delimited sector, a particular profession, or an individual collective bargaining unit.

The survey approach taken in this article is not without limitations. Assessing the efficacy of the initiatives documented here requires extended case study research. Nonetheless, a cataloging of different initiatives, campaigns, and proposals has the advantage of illuminating tensions between and among responses to precarity in the creative economy. Self-employed workers pooling financial resources via a social enterprise so as to access more affordable healthcare or workspace, for example, is a significant instance of mutual aid, which lessens independent worker precarity in meaningful ways; however, such efforts are not on the same plane, politically, as a collective of precarious, self-identified art workers squatting a skyscraper and declaring it a ‘common good’, in the context of social movements opposing privatisation and seeking greater autonomy over cultural production. The cases introduced above – while far from adding up to a comprehensive portrait – begin to reveal a continuum of responses, ranging from those that accommodate to flexible labour control, to those that achieve incremental improvements within it, through to those that seek more radical reforms against, and potentially beyond, capitalist imperatives and relations. Going forward, an evaluation of the contribution of these efforts vis-à-vis political recomposition must grapple with a fundamental tension between accommodative and antagonistic responses; doing so, however, does not necessarily call for hard-and-fast distinctions, for reasons that can be gestured at by way of conclusion.

Maurizio Lazzarato (2013) recently lamented ‘... our incapacity to invent modes of collective subjectivation that break from contemporary capitalism.’ His chosen historic benchmark, the First International, is humbling, yet Lazzarato’s point was neither defeatist nor nostalgic. Instead, he invoked this workers’ movement to insist it is ‘entirely possible and desirable to repeat their active invention’. The strategies inventoried in this article would not appear to hold a candle to such a tall order; at the same time, it would be unwise to dismiss the potential of these strategies in the context of contemporary capitalism, where the flexibilisation of labour and the immaterialisation of production are twin tendencies. Still, to stand on ground firmer than hope, Lazzarato’s claim must be supplemented by practical experiments taking up a research question posed by Franco Berardi (2011): ‘How can [we] create solidarity in ... conditions of precariousness?’ The atypical worker aggregations, compensation proposals, and occupation politics overviewed here can be read as partial replies to Berardi’s question – a question that is at the crux of the idea of ‘the precariat’ (Standing 2011; see also Frase 2013).

Rather than label an ascendant, unified, vanguard subject, the precariat is a concept, which, firstly, presumes the historical malleability and multiplicity of agents, forms, and sites of workers’ responses to exploitation, and, secondly, designates a laboratory of labour activity driven by populations differentially excluded from – but not necessarily motivated to restore – the standard employment relationship. Approaching flexible workforces in the arts, the media, and cultural industries as participants in a politics of the precariat opens a counter-narrative to

that of self-exploitation, a prominent theme of critical research on labour and creative industries. The organisations, campaigns, proposals, and direct actions described in these pages are, ultimately, helping to define, spatialise, and generate common ground – a condition of possibility for solidarity. What transpires from this common ground is contingent, unpredictable, and without guarantees – in short, precarious. It is, however, a small leap of ‘radical imagination’ (Haiven & Khasnabish 2010) to picture the emergence, from these crucibles, of, say, transnational assemblies of interns strategising against youth exploitation, globalising ‘common goods’ policy initiatives, and networks of coworking spaces providing a social base for organising the unorganised. After all, a role model always carries within it the potential to become a bad example – therein lies the promise of a properly *creative* precariat.

Acknowledgements

This article is informed by research undertaken in collaboration with Enda Brophy and Nicole Cohen for our project, Cultural Workers Organize; I am grateful to Nicole and Enda for our ongoing conversations, which infuse this article. I also thank those who generously gave their time for an interview for the Cultural Workers Organize research project. I am thankful as well to Roberta Buiani, Jessica Fanning, Matthew Greaves, and Francesca Saraco, for research assistance; the journal’s anonymous reviewers, for helpful feedback; and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, for financial support.

Greig de Peuter is Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada. He is coauthor, with Nick Dyer-Witheford, of *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* (University of Minnesota Press), and coeditor, with Mark Coté and Richard J.F. Day, of *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization* (University of Toronto Press). E-mail: gdepeuter@wlu.ca.

Notes

- ¹ Leah Vosko (2008: 132) defines the standard employment relationship as an ideal-type employment arrangement encompassing a ‘full-time continuous employment relationship where the worker has one employer, works on his or her employer’s premises under the employer’s direct supervision, normally in a unionized sector, and has access to social benefits and entitlements that complete the social wage’.

References

- Abrahamian, Atossa Araxia (2012): 'The "I" in union', *Dissent* (Winter): <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-i-in-union> (accessed 7 March 2012).
- Arnold, Dennis & Joseph R. Bongiovi (2013): 'Precarious, Informalizing, and Flexible Work: Transforming Concepts and Understandings', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57:3, 289-308.
- Arts & Labor (n.d.): 'About': <http://artsandlabor.org/about-al> (accessed 13 December 2013).
- Arvidsson, Adam with Giannino Malossi & Serpica Naro (2010): 'Passionate Work? Labour Conditions in the Milan Fashion Industry', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14:3, 295-309.
- Azzellini, Dario & Immanuel Ness (eds) (2011): *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Control from the Commune to the Present*, Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Bailey, Saki & Maria Edgarda Marcucci (2013): 'Legalizing the Occupation: The Teatro Valle as a Cultural Commons', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 112:2, 396-405.
- Banks, Mark (2010): 'Autonomy Guaranteed? Cultural Work and the "Art-Commerce" Relation', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14:3, 251-269.
- Banks, Mark & David Hesmondhalgh (2009): 'Looking for Work in Creative Industries Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15:4, 415-430.
- Berardi, Franco "Bifo" (2003): 'What is the Meaning of Autonomy Today?' *Republicart* (September): <http://www.republicart.net> (accessed 2 December 2013).
- (2011): 'Semio-capital and the Problem of Solidarity': <http://libcom.org/book/export/html/45057> (accessed 21 May 2013).
- Bodnar, Christopher (2006): 'Taking it to the Streets: French Cultural Worker Resistance and the Creation of a Precariat Movement', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31:3, 675-694.
- Boltanski, Luc & Ève Chiapello (2005): *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Gregory Elliott (trans.), London: Verso.
- Brophy, Enda (2010): 'The Subterranean Stream: Communicative Capitalism and Call Centre Labour', *ephemera*, 10:3/4, 470-483.
- Bryan-Wilson, Julia (2012): 'Occupational Realism', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 56:4, 32-48.
- CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation / *Le Front des artistes canadiens*) (2013): *Recommendations for an Artist Resale Right in Canada*, April. Ottawa, ON: CARFAC: <http://www.carfac.ca/carfacwp/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Artists-Resale-Right-Proposal-CARFAC-Final-April-2013.pdf> (accessed 2 December 2013).
- Cherki, Eddy & Michel Wieviorka (2007): 'Autoreduction Movements in Turin', *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, Elizabeth A. Bowman (trans.), New York: Semiotext(e), 72-78.
- Cohen, Nicole (2011): 'Negotiating Writers' Rights: Freelance Cultural Labour and the Challenge of Organizing', *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society*, 17/18, 119-138.
- Cohen, Nicole & Greig de Peuter (2013): 'The Politics of Precarity: Can the Urban Worker Strategy Address Precarious Employment for All?', *Briarpatch*, Nov./Dec., 6-9.
- Condé, Carole & Karl Beveridge (forthcoming): 'The Art of Collective Bargaining: An Interview with Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge', interviewed by Greig de Peuter & Nicole Cohen.
- Corsani, Antonella (2007): "'What We Defend, We Defend For Everyone": Traces of History in Motion', trans. Mary O'Neill, *Transversal*: <http://www.translate.eipcp.net> (accessed 22 May 2013).
- Corsani, Antonella & Maurizio Lazzarato (2008): *Intermittents et Précaires*, Amsterdam: Editions Amsterdam.
- Cosse, Emmanuelle (2008): 'The Precarious Go Marching', *In the Middle of a Whirlwind*: <http://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/2008/10/03/the-precarious-go-marching/> (accessed 10 December 2013).
- Cuenca, Alberto López (2012): 'Artistic Labour, Enclosure, and the New Economy', *Afterall*, 30 (Summer): <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.30/artistic-labour-enclosure-and-the-new-economy> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Cultural Workers Organize (2013): "'Messages of Rupture": An Interview with Emanuele Braga on the Macao Occupation in Milan', Roberta Buiani (trans.), *Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy*, 04, 179-187.

- Davies, Anthony, Stephan Dillemath & Jakob Jakobson (2006): 'There is No Alternative: The Future is Self-Organized, Part I', Nina Möntmann (ed.): *Art and its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations*, London: Black Dog Publishing, 176-178.
- de Peuter, Greig (2014): 'Confronting Precarity in the Warhol Economy: Notes from New York City', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 7:1, 31-47.
- de Peuter, Greig, Nicole Cohen & Enda Brophy (2012): 'Interns Unite! (You Have Nothing to Lose – Literally)', *Briarpatch*, Nov./Dec., 8-12.
- de Peuter, Greig, Nicole Cohen & Francesca Saraco (2013): 'Evaluating Coworking as a Response to Precarity in Creative Industries', Canadian Industrial Relations Association, annual conference, University of Toronto, Toronto, 29 May.
- Deuze, Mark (2007): *Media Work*, Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Dullroy, Joel & Anna Cashman (2013): *Independents Unite! Inside the Freelancers' Rights Movement*: <http://freelancersmovement.org> (accessed 19 December 2013).
- Dyer-Witthford, Nick & Greig de Peuter (2006): "'EA Spouse" and the Crisis of Video Game Labour: Exploitation, Exclusion, Enjoyment, Exodus', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31, 599-617.
- Florida, Richard (2012): *The Rise of the Creative Class-Revisited: 10th Anniversary Edition*, New York City: Basic Books.
- Foertsch, Carsten (2013): '4.5 New Coworking Spaces Per Workday', *DeskMag*: <http://www.deskmag.com/en/2500-coworking-spaces-4-5-per-day-741> (accessed 28 November 2013).
- Foti, Alex (2004): 'Precarity and n/european Identity: An Interview with Alex Foti (ChainWorkers)', interviewed by Merijn Oudenampsen and Gavin Sullivan, *Mute Magazine*, 5 October 2004: <http://www.metamute.org> (accessed 22 May 2013).
- Foti, Alex (2012a): 'Skyscraper Squatted: The Precarized Cognitariat Rises in Milano', *MilanoX*, 9 May: <http://www.milanox.eu/skyscraper-squatted-the-precarized-cognitariat-rises-in-milano> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Foti, Alex (2012b): personal communication.
- Frase, Peter (2013): 'The Precariat: A Class or a Condition?' *New Labor Forum*, 22:2, 11-14.
- Fraser, Andrea (2006): 'A museum is not a business: It is run in a businesslike fashion', Nina Möntmann (ed.): *Art and its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique, and Collaborations*, London: Black Dog Publishing, 86-98.
- Freelancers Union (2013): 'Payment Protection', Freelancers Union: <https://www.freelancersunion.org/advocacy/paymentprotection.html> (accessed 19 December 2013).
- Fumagalli, Andrea & Stefano Lucarelli (2008): 'Basic Income and Counter-Power in Cognitive Capitalism', paper presented at Basic Income Earth Network 2008, Dublin, 20 June.
- Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006): *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gill, Rosalind (2007): *Technobohemians or the New Cybertariat? New Media Work in Amsterdam a Decade after the Web*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
- Gillick, Liam (2010): 'The Good of Work', Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood & Anton Vidokle (eds): *Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 60-73.
- Goldbetter, Larry (2011): personal communication.
- Haiven, Max & Alex Khasnabish (2010): 'What is the Radical Imagination?' *Affinities*, 4:2.
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri (2000): *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Horowitz, Sara, Stephanie Buchanan, Monica Alexandris, Michel Anteby, Naomi Rothman, Stefanie Syman & Leyla Vural (2005): *2005 Report. The Rise of the Freelance Class: A New Constituency of Workers, Building a Social Safety Net*, Brooklyn, New York: Freelancers Union.
- Kasper, Chris (2011): 'Open Letter to Labor Servicing the Culture Industry', *dis magazine*: <http://dismagazine.com/discussion/16545/> (accessed 15 December 2013).

- Kroll, Andy (2011): 'How Occupy Wall Street Really Got Started', *Mother Jones*, 17 Oct.: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-international-origins> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Lazzarato, Maurizio (2013): 'Does Cognitive Capitalism Exist?' Paper presented at Psychopathologies of Cognitive Capitalism Vol. 2, 7-9 March, ICI Berlin.
- Lee, Ching Kwan & Yelizavetta Kofman (2012): 'The Politics of Precarity: Views Beyond the United States', *Work and Occupations*, 39:4, 388-408.
- Lloyd, Richard (2010): *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Post-Industrial City*, London: Routledge.
- Lorey, Isabell (2006): 'Governmentality and Self-Precarization: On the Normalization of Cultural Producers', *Transversal*: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- (2010): 'Becoming Common: Precarization as Political Constituting', *e-flux*, 17: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/becoming-common-precariation-as-political-constituting/> (accessed 09 November 2013).
- Macao (2012): Press release, 5 May: http://www.teatrovalleoccupato.it/press-release-macao_may5th-milan (accessed 21 May 2013).
- Mattei, Ugo (2013): 'Protecting the Commons: Water, Culture, and Nature: The Commons Movement in the Italian Struggle against Neoliberal Governance', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 112:2, 366-376.
- Mattoni, Alice (2008): 'ICTs in National and Transnational Mobilizations', *tripleC*, 6:2, 105-124.
- (2012): *Media Practices and Protest Politics: How Precarious Workers Mobilize*, Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- McKee, Yates (2012): 'Occupy Response', *OCTOBER*, 142, 51-53.
- McKercher, Catherine & Vincent Mosco (2006): 'Editorial', *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31:3, 493-497.
- McRobbie, Angela (2001): "'Everyone is Creative": Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?' http://www.k3000.ch/becreative/texts/text_5.html (accessed 20 May 2013).
- (2002): 'From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at Work in the New Cultural Economy?', Paul du Gay & Michael Pryke (eds): *Cultural Economy*, London: Sage, 97-114.
- Miranda, Michael (2009): *Waging Culture: A Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Canadian Visual Artists*, Toronto: The Art Gallery of York University.
- Mosco, Vincent & Catherine McKercher (2008): *The Laboring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Moulier Boutang, Yann (2011): *Cognitive Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Murgia, Annalisa & Giulia Selmi (2012): "'Inspire and Conspire": Italian Precarious Workers Between Self-Organization and Self-Advocacy', *Interface*, 4:2, 181-196.
- Murray, Catherine & Mirjam Gollmitzer (2012): 'Escaping the Precarity Trap: A Call for Creative Labour Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 18:4, 419-438.
- Neff, Gina, Elizabeth Wissinger & Sharon Zukin (2005): 'Entrepreneurial Labor among Cultural Producers: "Cool" Jobs in "Hot" Industries', *Social Semiotics*, 15:3, 307-334.
- Negri, Antonio (2008): *Goodbye Mr. Socialism: In Conversation with Raf Valvola Scelsi*, New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Papadopoulos, Dimitris, Niamh Stephenson & Vassilis Tsianos (2008): *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century*, London: Pluto.
- Perlin, Ross (2013): 'Unpaid Interns: Silent No More', *The New York Times*, 20 July: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/jobs/unpaid-interns-silent-no-more.html?_r=0 (accessed 19 December 2013).
- Pink, Daniel (2002): *Free Agent Nation: The Future of Working for Yourself*, New York: Business Plus.
- Raunig, Gerald (2013): *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity*, Aileen Derieg (trans.), Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Raventós, Daniel (2007): *Basic Income: The Material Conditions of Freedom*, London: Pluto Press.
- Retail Action Project (2012): 'SoHo Retailer Pays \$950,000 to Workers in Wage Theft Settlement', Retail Action Project, Media Advisory, 18 Dec.:

- <http://retailactionproject.org/2012/12/soho-retailer-to-pay-925000-to-workers-in-wage-theft-settlement/> (accessed 19 December 2013).
- Ruggiero, Vincenzo (2000): 'New Social Movements and the "Centri Sociali" in Milan', *The Sociological Review*, 48, 167-185.
- Robertson, Clive (2006): *Policy Matters: Administration of Art and Culture*, Toronto: YYZ Artists' Outlet.
- Rosler, Martha (2011): 'Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III', *E-flux*, 25, May: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-iii> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Ross, Andrew (2000): 'The Mental Labor Problem', *Social Text*, 63: 18.2, 1-31.
- (2008): 'The New Geography of Work: Power to the Precarious?' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25:7-8, 31-49.
- (2009): *Nice Work if You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times*, New York: New York University Press.
- Rossiter, Ned (2007): *Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*, Amsterdam: NAi Publishers.
- Schram, Sanford F. (2013): 'Occupy Precarity', *Theory & Event*, 16.1.
- Sholette, Gregory (2011): *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, London: Pluto Press.
- Shorthose, Jim & Gerard Strange (2004): 'The New Cultural Economy, the Artist, and the Social Configuration of Autonomy', *Capital and Class*, 84, 43-59.
- Standing, Guy (2011): *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Steyerl, Hito (2012): *The Wretched of the Screen*, Berlin: Sternberg Press.
- Smith, Neil (1987): 'Gentrification and the Rent Gap', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 77:3, 462-465
- Terranova, Tiziana (2004): *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*, London: Pluto.
- Tozzi, Lucia (2012): 'Macao: Chronicle of an Occupation', *domus*, 12 May: <http://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2012/05/12/macao-chronicle-of-an-occupation.html> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- Ursell, Gillian (2000): 'Television Production: Issues of Exploitation, Commodification, and Subjectivity in UK Television Labour Markets', *Media, Culture & Society*, 22:6, 805-825.
- Vercellone, Carlo (2007): 'Cognitive Capitalism and Models for the Regulation of the Wage Relation: Some Lessons from the Anti-CPE Movement', posted to edu-factory email list, April 18.
- Vecchio, Giovanni (2012): 'Macao, Milan: Trying to Make Goods Commons', CoLab Radio, 18 May: <http://colabradio.mit.edu/macao-milan-trying-to-make-goods-commons/> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- von Osten, Marion (2007a): 'The Artist: A Model for Innovative Work and Lifestyles - The Creative Imperative', Goethe Institute, May: <http://www.goethe.de/ges/soz/dos/arb/alw/en2355609.htm> (accessed 20 May 2013).
- (2007b): 'Unpredictable Outcomes / Unpredictable Outcasts: A Reflection After Some Years of Debates on Creativity and Creative Industries', Geert Lovink & Ned Rossiter (eds): *MyCreativity Reader: A Critique of Creative Industries*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 49-58.
- Vosko, Leah F. (2000): *Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- (2008): 'Temporary Work in Transnational Labor Regulation: SER-Centrism and the Risk of Exacerbating Gendered Precariousness', *Social Indicators Research*, 88:1, 131-145.
- W.A.G.E. (n.d. a): W.A.G.E., 'wo/manifesto', <http://www.wageforwork.com/about/1/womanifesto> (accessed 10 November 2013).
- (n.d. b): W.A.G.E., 'History', <http://www.wageforwork.com/about/3/history> (accessed 10 November 2013).
- (n.d. c): W.A.G.E., 'W.A.G.E. Survey Report Summary', <http://wage.thepresentgroup.com/resources/4/w.a.g.e.-survey-report-summary> (accessed 10 November 2013).

- Weeks, Kathi (2011): *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Post-work Imaginaries*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Wittel, Andreas (2001): 'Toward a Network Sociality', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18:6, 51-76.
- Ziff, Sara (2012): 'Modelling Workers' Rights: An Interview with Sara Ziff', interviewed by Greig de Peuter, *Shameless Magazine*:
<http://www.shamelessmag.com/stories/2012/06/modelling-workers-rights> (accessed 22 May 2013).