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**Precariousness and spaces
in digital society**

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EDITORIALE

L'uso del web integrato con la tecnologia mobile sta disegnando una nuova modalità flessibile e dinamica di spazi e tempi di lavoro e di vita. Ma qual è l'esperienza della precarizzazione lavorativa ed esistenziale nella dimensione spaziale e digitale delle società contemporanee? L'obiettivo di questo numero parte da questa domanda di fondo e si propone di ricostruire una sorta di territoriologia delle relazioni sociali, indirizzando la riflessione sulla logica di connessione/disconnessione e sull'ambivalenza strutturale della connettività come aspetto che caratterizza le relazioni nella società digitale, già parzialmente esplorato sulle pagine della rivista qualche anno fa ([n.13, 2009, p. 11-14](#)).

Da un lato, infatti, la connettività si pone in modo liberatorio, enfatizza le dimensioni di immediatezza, velocità e flusso, fornisce ulteriori gradi di autonomia ai soggetti, possibilità di costruire relazioni al di là dei tradizionali vincoli di tempo e di spazio. Dall'altro, è proprio la connettività ubiquitaria, la possibilità potenziale di "esserci sempre", che comporta l'indistinzione tra tempo di vita e di lavoro, l'indistinguibilità tra spazio della casa e luogo di lavoro, tra relazioni personali e rapporti professionali, inglobando una forma di controllo differente e più intensa sul lavoro e sulla vita. Il tempo appare introiettato e svincolato dal controllo formale esterno, ma insieme esteso, indefinito e dilatabile all'inverosimile.

Le relazioni costruite grazie alle connessioni attivate attraverso il web, e più in particolare nei social network online, si collocano in uno spazio né pubblico, né privato, né solamente tecnologico, né solamente di relazioni interpersonali. La vita sociale ed il lavoro ci appaiono in questo senso riterritorializzati nello spazio intermedio della connettività. La tradizionale concezione spazio-temporale della geografia politica e i modelli di acquisizione della conoscenza vengono riconfigurati nella socialità mediata: l'esperienza della connettività *always on* in ambienti come i social network disegna così nuovi paradigmi di creazione condivisa della conoscenza, nuove appartenenze, ma anche inedite gerarchie sociali e con esse nuovi confini e ibridi politico spaziali, oltre che culturali.

La vita e il lavoro nella fase digitale del capitalismo sono dunque meno dipendenti dalle categorie di "spazio" e "tempo" di quanto non lo fossero in epoca fordista. Richiamando Deleuze ed il suo *Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle* (1990), potremmo dire che siamo passati da una forma di controllo esterno disciplinare a un controllo di tipo interiorizzato al corpo sociale del lavoro e della società. Il senso della precarietà appare non solo più riconducibile alla precarietà contrattuale e occupazionale — su cui molto si è già discusso negli ultimi anni — ma emerge in modo peculiare, in relazione all'immedesimazione negli obbiettivi che i soggetti assumono e perseguono, nel contesto organizzativo digitale di liquidità e fragilità delle relazioni connettive.

Riferimenti culturalmente e geograficamente distintivi dell'identità sociale quali presente/assente, appartenente/estraneo, vicino/lontano, incluso/escluso, interno/esterno, nord/sud, est/ovest, vengono trasformati e integrati negli spazi e nei livelli di partecipazione digitale. Il territorio viene decostruito e ricostruito attraverso i confini comunicativi della connettività. Ma tali confini non sono né completamente chiusi né perfettamente permeabili dal mondo delle relazioni face to face, ed è proprio nell'intersezione tra le aggregazioni online e le interazioni sociali che si ridisegnano le identità. Alcune caratteristiche peculiari dell'interazione connettiva tramite il web quali la velocità, l'operare multitasking, l'apparente ubiquità e la de-spazializzazione paiono performare in maniera nuova e sistemica i processi, le relazioni, le aspettative e la costruzione sociale del sé. Particolare interesse rivestono inoltre le connessioni tra spazi/o e potere, le forme specifiche di espressione e riconoscimento reciproco, di rafforzamento e amplificazione di vissuti, esperienze ed emozioni, di indignazione e speranza — secondo come le ha definite Castells (2012) — espresse con e attraverso la Rete, ma anche il portato di frustrazione relativa alle forme peculiari del lavoro contemporaneo.

I contributi raccolti in questo numero esplorano le relazioni che si costruiscono e si sviluppano nei diversi ambienti del web — dalle forme di aggregazio-

EDITORIAL

The web, integrated with mobile technologies, is drawing new flexible and dynamic features of working and living spaces and times. So, what is the experience of work and existential precarization into the spatial and digital dimension of contemporary society? The focus of this issue has started from this question and aims to reconstruct a kind of territorialology of social relationships, addressing the reflection on the logic of connection/disconnection and on the structural ambivalence of connectivity as an aspect that characterizes the relationships in the digital society, as partially it has already been explored in previous issue of *lo Squaderno* ([n.13, 2009, p.11-14](#)).

On the one hand, the connectivity arises as liberating; it emphasizes immediacy, speed and flow; it provides more degrees of autonomy to the subjects, as well as of possibility to build their relationships beyond the traditional constraints of time and space. On the other hand, it is just this ubiquitous connectivity, with its potential of letting us “being always here”, that determines the indistinguishability among the times of life and work, between the home-space and workplace, among personal and professional relations, as it incorporates a kind of new and more intense control of the work and the life. The time seems to be introjected and released from external control, but it is at the same time indefinitely extended, undefined and implausible expandable.

The relationships built through the web connections, and more specifically online by social network, are placed in a space nor the public, nor private, nor only technological, nor only made of interpersonal relationships. The social life and work seems to us as re-territorialized in the intermediate space of connectivity. The traditional space-time conception of political geography and the model of the acquisition of the knowledge are re-configured in a mediated sociality: so, the experience of the always-on connectivity in environments such as the social networks draws new paradigms of shared creating knowledge, new memberships, but also unknown social hierarchies and, with them, new boundaries and political-spatial hybridations, as well as cultural ones.

Life and work in the digital phase of capitalism are therefore less dependent on categories as “space” and “time” than they were in the Fordist era. According to Deleuze and his *Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle* (1990), we could say that we have passed from one form of external control to a kind of control internalized in the social body of work and society. The sense of precariousness seems due to not only contractual and employment precariousness – about which has already been much said in recent years – but also a different sense of precariousness emerges as related to the identification with the objectives that the subjects assume and pursue, in the digital organizational context of the connective relationships.

The references that define culturally and geographically the social identity – such as present/absent, member/stranger, near/far, included/excluded, interior/exterior, north/south, east/west – have been transformed and integrated into the spaces and the levels of digital participation. The territory is deconstructed and reconstructed by means of the communication boundaries of connectivity. But these boundaries are neither fully closed nor fully permeable by the world of the relationships face to face, and it is just in the intersection of the online aggregations with the social interactions that identities are reshaped.

Some peculiar characteristics of the connective interaction via web such as speed, multitasking, the apparent ubiquity and de-spatialization seem to perform in a new and systemic way the processes, the relationships, the expectations and the social construction of the self.

Of particular interest are also the connections between space and power, the specific modalities of expressions, mutual recognition, being reinforcement and amplification, experiences and emotions, indignation and hope – as defined according to Castells (2012) – that are expressed in and through the web network, but also interesting is the level of frustration linked to the peculiar shapes of contemporary work.

The papers collected in this issue explore the relationships that we build and develop in the different web

ne dei lavoratori in rete a quelle di collaborazione tra prosumers, in cui i confini tra lavoro e attività si intersecano, fino alle quelle tra gruppi di immigrati e/o persone che il lavoro lo hanno perso – e come esse si inseriscono e si intrecciano con la vita quotidiana, lo spazio fisico e le soggettività.

Sono queste, dunque, le principali coordinate concettuali di questo numero, cui contribuisce Marianne Flotron, con alcuni frames di diverse serie tratte video-istallazione *Work*, che fanno emergere luci ed ombre delle logiche del linguaggio e dei dispositivi aziendali, con le e deformazioni e le ripercussioni sulle relazioni interpersonali.

I vari articoli, nello specifico, propongono letture originali e molto diverse tra di loro, per contesto ed approccio, che consentono di costituire una riflessione molteplice, che superi la parzialità di mere apologie o critiche delle relazioni tra precarietà e spazi nella società digitale.

In *Precariousness and the 'end of salarization' in the informational society*, Frederick Pitts, muovendo da alcuni assunti teorici di Paolo Virno, discute come digitalizzazione e connettività non preannuncino la fine della salarizzazione e del tradizionale rapporto capitale-lavoro, ma ne mostrino piuttosto un'estensione e un approfondimento. La precarizzazione diviene la modalità in cui si esprime e si rinforza tale cambiamento, attraverso la colonizzazione degli spazi della vita.

Analogamente di stampo teorico-critico è il contributo di Miya Yoshida – *The Hidden Homeless in Japan's Contemporary Mobile Culture* – che rilegge i risultati di una ricerca empirica sull'uso dei dispositivi mobile (cellulari) da parte degli homeless nella società contemporanea giapponese. Il fenomeno dei senzatekto in Giappone viene analizzato in relazione alle pratiche del capitalismo neoliberista e della connettività mobile, con una chiave di lettura peculiare – quella della commodification del bios mutuata da Lazzarato – che ne esplori gli aspetti bioeconomici e biopolitici.

Marco Briziarelli in *Social Work or Unpaid Labor? The Ideological Reproduction of Facebooking* mette a tema le pratiche di lavoro precario connesse più specificamente al *free labour* – muovendo dal concetto definito dalla Terranova – attraverso i concetti di coscienza neoliberale e semantiche del lavoro sociale. Nella generazione “volontaria” e “libera” di contenuti da parte degli utenti del *social web* vengono meno i tradizionali confini tra produzione e consumo, tra lavoro e attività, e si evidenzia tutta la profonda ambivalenza della connettività, in cui i tradizionali

tratti di emancipazione e sfruttamento, tipici della dimensione lavorativa, appaiono offuscarsi nel percepito dei soggetti.

In *Place-based and virtual embeddedness of knowledge and creative workers in Milan* Marianna d'Ovidio e Alessandro Gandini analizzano, attraverso una ricerca empirica, le relazioni tra prossimità fisica (embedded nello spazio urbano) e prossimità relazionale (incanalata in reti online di relazioni) degli operatori della moda a Milano. Gli autori propongono una riflessione sui lavoratori creativi, mettendo in evidenza l'influenza dell'inserimento in reti sociali online rispetto alla costruzione della propria identità professionale. Oltre all'allargamento delle possibilità lavorative, emerge in modo indiretto il tema della costruzione di una comunità professionale determinata dal lavoro e le possibilità di costituire (anche) una soggettività collettiva in rete. La connettività viene interpretata con uno sguardo più apologetico, ossia come allargamento, travaso, trasformazione e riterritorializzazione di relazioni dal campo virtuale a quello face to face.

Il ridisegnarsi dei territori relazionali è anche al centro del contributo empirico di Luca Zambelli – *Spazi di socialità precaria: da Internet all'ufficio condiviso* – in cui lo “spazio di lavoro condiviso” dei redattori e freelance diviene il luogo di elaborazione collettiva dell'esperienza precaria. La connettività viene letta principalmente nelle sue potenzialità di spazio per l'espressione e l'attuazione di tentativi di resistenza alla precarietà. Nel solco di Castells, la rete emerge come veicolo di riflessione e di potenziale elaborazione politica, per riappropriarsi della dimensione pubblica del lavoro e della vita sociale. A stimolare una sorta di meta riflessione su un lavoro di ricerca a sua volta molto spesso precario e reificato in spazi fisici e virtuali, segue il pezzo di Maurizio Teli, che, con *Mapping the digital panorama of precariousness: ethnographic challenges*, muove anche da alcuni stimoli nati dalla condivisione della ricerca empirica di Zambelli e propone una discussione critica sulle questioni metodologiche che i ricercatori etnografici affrontano negli spazi digitali, intercettando aspetti e dialettiche identitarie, individuali e collettive, seppur nella indefinizione dei confini delle situazioni da osservare. Il piano della consapevolezza metodologica che il testo determina, oltre alla digressione ed approfondimento che consente nella sequenza delle esperienze collezionate, apre nuove questioni e prospettive per la ricerca e l'attivismo.

La precarietà viene invece messa in relazione alle mo-

environments – from the aggregation ways of workers in the web network to the collaboration ways among prosumers, where the boundaries between work and activities are intersected, until those relationships among migrants and/or individuals who have lost work – in order to explore how they fit and are interlaced with everyday life, the physical space and the subjectivities.

These are the main conceptual coordinates of this issue. The visual contribute by Marianne Flotron contributes with some frames taken from the video installation *Work*. They let emerge the lights and the shadows of the logic of the business language and devices, together with the deformations and the implications into the interpersonal relationships.

The various articles present original interpretations that are quite diversified in terms of context and approach. They accordingly afford a multi-faceted reflection which transcends the mere opposition of defense vs criticism of the relations between precariousness and spaces in the digital society.

In *Precariousness and the 'End of Salarization' in the Informational Society*, Frederick Pitts reflects on how digitalization and connectivity do not herald the end of salarization and of the traditional capital-work relationship, but rather highlight an extension and deepening of both. Precarization becomes the mode in which this change is expressed and strengthened, through the colonization of the spaces of life.

Of a similar theoretical-critical nature is "*The Hidden Homeless*" in *Japan's Contemporary Mobile Culture*, by Miya Yoshida, based on a piece of empirical research on the use of mobiles by the homeless in today's Japanese society. The phenomenon of the homeless in Japan is analyzed with reference to the practices of neoliberal capitalism and of mobile connectivity, with a peculiar investigation of their bioeconomic and biopolitical aspects.

In *Social Work or Unpaid Labor? The Ideological Reproduction of Facebooking* Marco Briziarelli examines the practices of precarious work more specifically connected to 'free labour' through the notions of neoliberal consciousness and the semantics of social work. The "voluntary" and "free" generation of contents by users of social networks shows no sign of the traditional boundaries between production and consumption, or between work and activity. Besides, it highlights the profound ambivalence of connectivity, where the traditional traits of emancipation and exploitation, typical of employment, become blurred in the subjects' perception.

In *Place-based and Virtual Embeddedness of Knowledge and Creative Workers in Milan*, Marianna D'Ovidio and Alessandro Gandini, through a piece of empirical research, analyze the relations between physical proximity (embedded in the urban space) and relational proximity (channeled in online relation networks) among fashion workers in Milan. The authors reflect on the situation of creative workers, stressing the impact of joining online social networks on the construction of their professional identity. Besides focusing on the widening of work opportunities, the study indirectly points to the setting up of a professional community established by the working activities and the further opportunities of building a collective subjectivity online. Connectivity is interpreted from a more approving point of view, indeed as an extension, overflow, transformation and reterritorialization of relations from the virtual to the face-to-face area.

Also centering on the re-drawing of relational territories is Luca Zambelli's empirical contribution – *Spazi di socialità precaria da Internet all'ufficio condiviso*. Here the "shared work space" of editors and freelance workers becomes the place where the experience of precariousness is collectively re-elaborated. This is done through a network highlighting the potential of connectivity as an element which structures spaces for the subjects to express and implement attempts to resist precariousness. The Web emerges as a vehicle for reflection and possible political re-elaboration, a means to reappropriate the public dimension of work and of social life. With *Mapping the digital panorama of precariousness: ethnographic challenges*, Maurizio Teli stimulates a sort of meta-reflection on research work, which is itself very often precarious and reified in physical and virtual spaces. The essay presents a critical discussion on the methodological questions that ethnographic researchers face in studying and analyzing groups of precarious workers. These groups manage to self-organize in digital spaces, there by intercepting the various aspects and dynamics of individual and collective identity, albeit within the indefinite boundaries of the situations being observed. The level of methodological consciousness established by the text opens up new questions and perspectives for research as well as for activism.

Precariousness is otherwise connected to modes of relation and language use, within work contexts, in Ivor Southwood's essay *Every Day Matters*. The author investigates how media-based and connective representations are perceived and re-elaborated by subjects in different ways depending on their culture of origin and

dalità relazionali e del linguaggio, inserite nei contesti lavorativi, da Ivor Southwood, nel saggio *Every Day Matters*. Qui ci si interroga su come le rappresentazioni mediatiche e connettive siano differentemente percepite e rielaborate dai soggetti sulla base della loro cultura di provenienza e dei gap culturali. Il taglio narrativo che simula un'auto-etnografia ci permette di accedere in profondità agli schemi cognitivi che creano e sostengono gli spazi di dis-connessione.

Anche Tiziano Bonini propone una narrativa in *Sentirsi a casa ai tempi di Facebook*, nella quale emergono vissuti e rappresentazioni di vite di migranti, la cui partecipazione e condivisione su questo social network ridefinisce i confini delle identità sociali e degli spazi, nei contrasti e conflitti tra l'esperienza di vita "fisica" in un dato luogo ed il rapporto con le diverse società/comunità di appartenenza. I migranti parlano del lavoro, ma anche di sé nelle collettività umane, di amici, famigliari, conoscenti, possibili contatti. Si intravedono identità precarie e fluide che mutano rapidamente in relazione ai destinatari dei messaggi e collegate agli ambienti. Identità che sono solo "proiezioni" di come ci si vorrebbe rappresentare agli altri, e i cui confini vengono pienamente investiti e attraversati dall'esperienza della connettività che funge da dispositivo costituente.

Alle precedenti letture si affianca la possibilità di interpretare la dimensione della connettività come

dissoluzione/impovertimento, secondo la prospettiva presentata da Soenke Zehle in *Zones of Depletion: Of Impact Impasses and Experience Matters*. Il testo si presenta come una lettura descrittiva "apocalittica" della soggettività, in coerenza con gli approcci riduzionisti alla tecnologia digitale, che del web denunciano il deterioramento delle esperienze relazionali e della percezione del sé.

In chiusura, l'intervista a Carlo Formenti, che interpreta alcune delle questioni principali del dibattito auspicato con questo numero. Proponendo alcune aperture sulla questione che, seppur con aspetti talvolta convincenti e talvolta più problematici, sono foriere di spunti per ulteriori riflessioni, Formenti interpreta criticamente l'ambivalenza della connettività posizionandola nel concetto di Rete come dispositivo di sfruttamento, accelerazione e dominio. Secondo le sue tesi, che richiamano quanto espone nel recente volume *Utopie Letali, Capitalismo senza democrazia*, il web non è più in grado di costituire uno strumento di riappropriazione sociale né essere un veicolo per le nuove forme di coalizione; le speranze liberatorie in passato riposte (anche) da lui, si starebbero rivelando retoriche del discorso.

E.A., E.R., C.M.

possible cultural gaps. The narrative style simulating a sort of self-ethnography enables us to access in depth the cognitive schemes that create and support the spaces of dis-connection.

The same narrative style is used by Tiziano Bonini in *Sentirsi a casa ai tempi di Facebook*. The essay presents the lives and life stories of migrants, whose participation and sharing on this particular social network re-defines the boundaries of social identities and spaces, within the contrasts and conflicts between the “physical” life experience in a given place and the relationship with the various societies or communities that the migrants belong to. These migrants talk about work, but also about themselves as members of collectivities, and about friends, relatives, acquaintances and possible contacts. The identities presented appear to be precarious and fluid, rapidly changing according to the addressees of the messages and to the different environments. Such identities are mere “projections” of the way one would like to show oneself to others, and their boundaries are fully affected by the experience of connectivity, which functions as a structuring device.

Alongside the above readings stands the possibility of interpreting connectivity as a reduction plan. The dimension of connectivity as dissolution / depletion is the perspective that Soenke Zehle presents in *Zones of Depletion: Of Impact Impasses and Experience Matters*. The text appears as an ‘apocalyptic’ descriptive reading of subjectivity, in accordance with reductionist approaches to digital technology, which accuse the web of deteriorating relational experiences and self-perception.

The concluding piece of the present issue is the interview with Carlo Formenti, who poses some of the most relevant questions of the debate that the various essays are meant to arouse. Formenti’s open-minded approach suggests a far-reaching vision and, in spite of a few unconvincing arguments, it may well provide inspiration for further reflection. The author submits a critical interpretation of the ambivalence of connectivity by placing it within the notion of the Web as a device for exploitation, acceleration and dominance. According to his theses, which echo what he states in his recent volume *Utopie letali, capitalismo senza democrazia* (2013), the Web can no longer represent an instrument of social reappropriation or be a vehicle for new forms of coalition, so that the hopes of deliverance that even he cherished in the past might prove to be mere rhetoric.

E.A., E.R., C.M.



Precariousness and the 'end of salarization' in the informational society

**Frederick
Harry Pitts**

In this piece, I will critically reflect upon some of the claims made about precariousness and the end of salarization in the context of an informational society. The main source and target of the critique will be one of the most notable early renderings of the topic, that of Manuel Castells, with additional material from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The account will conclude, following Paolo Virno's negative rendition of Marx's thesis of the general intellect, that precariousness does not herald the end of salarization and the traditional capital-labour relation, but rather its reinforcement.

In his *Rise of the Network Society* (1996), Castells outlines his vision of a sweeping technological transformation characterized by the decentralization, dispersal and flexibilization of human relations in the informational society, that is, the guise that predominantly Western capitalist economies have taken under the increasing penetration of information and communications technology (ICT) into every pore of production and everyday life (ibid., p. 21). The way in which ICT permits the flexibilization of labour processes across space and time, for Castells, suggests a tendency towards a radical restructuring of the traditional relationship between employer and employee and the 'end of salarization'. Thus, precariousness is linked to the destruction of the wage relationship. The principal way in which such reorganization is permitted through the use of ICT is by allowing the decentralization of labour tasks across space and the communication of labour tasks across time. These two functions result in a tendency towards the 'individualization of labour in the labour process' and, by extension, an end to salarization and the traditional relationship between labour and capital (ibid., p. 265). In a nutshell, for Castells 'the traditional form of work, based on full-time employment, clear-cut occupational assignments, and a career pattern over the lifecycle is being slowly but surely eroded away' (ibid., p. 268). Castells writes that:

between one-quarter and one-third of the employed population of major industrialized countries (including self-employment) does not follow the classic pattern of a full-time job with a regular working schedule. The number of workers in variable job assignments is rapidly increasing everywhere. In addition, a considerable proportion of full-time workers (probably a majority of the professional labor force) are heading toward flexible time schedules, generally increasing their work load. The technological ability to reintegrate in a network of stored information contributions from various workers at various times induces the constant variation of the actual time of work performance, undermining the structuring capacity of working time over everyday life (ibid., p. 442).

Two claims are being made here. One concerns full-time workers, whose working schedules are seen to have incorporated a greater degree of flexibility. This is proposed to render their

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relation to the formal confines of employment more precarious, and their relationship to the workplace, employer command and so on more tenuous, whilst in effect 'increasing their work load.' The second concerns the growing proportion of properly 'precarious' workers employed in contingent, temporary, part-time and non-standard labour that does not conform to the traditional structure of the full-time job.

It is this precariousness which defines the new relationship between labour and capital posited by Castells. The complementary accounts of both Castells and Hardt and Negri are suffused with a kind of optimistic enthusiasm for the changes deemed to be taking place. It should be noted that both theorizations admit of downsides, such as the vulnerability of workers 'farmed out in a flexible network' (Castells 1996, p. 279) or the way

The flexibilization and informationalization of the labour process - and the precarization that results - stand as examples of the way in which capital has adapted the organization of production in order to maximize the amount of value it can derive from the labour

in which new conditions 'place labour in a weakened bargaining position', releasing capital from negotiation with fixed labouring populations in fixed territories (Hardt and Negri 2001, p. 297). However, Castells extols the 'greater freedom for better-informed workers' encapsulated in the glamorous icon of the 'networker', the 'necessary agent of the network enterprise'. Indeed, the influx of information technology erodes away salarization by freeing the worker from the factory floor as automation reduces the labouring task to a simple computer command to be carried out by machines (1996, p. 242). Hardt and Negri are even more effusive in their praise of the new relationship. The account put forward by Hardt and Negri needs to be located in the context of the way in which they see the changes in employment as stemming not from capital but from the immanent desires of 'the multitude'; but however voluntaristic the conception, their vision of a new kind of cooperation between workers completely divorced from the direction of capital and conducted across time and space, which possesses the 'potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism' (2001, p. 294), is an unabashed affirmation of the new employment relation the likes of which Castells only toys with expressing. Thus, precarization and the social circumstances that give rise to it are celebrated as a possible means by which the continuing hold of the capital-labour wage relation can be loosened.

However, the very way in which both Castells and Hardt and Negri perceive of the new employment relationship, equipping workers with increasing capacities the further their proximity from the traditional framework of capitalist control, invites a critique of the thesis of the end of salarization whereby we may say, instead, that precariousness does not threaten salarization but protects it. Put simply, whilst many aspects of work have changed, specifically in the way labour-time and the working day are structured, the fundamental relationship between capital does not change. As Doogan asserts, 'capital needs labour' (2009, p. 206). The flexibilization and informationalization of the labour process - and the precarization that results - stand not as evidence against this, but as examples of the way in which capital has adapted the organization of production in order to maximize the amount of value it can derive from the labour at its disposal once that labour has been purchased through the market device of the wage, and, by extension, the 'salary'. Castells misperceives the wholly plausible tendency of precariousness and its contributory factors of flexibilization and informationalization as resulting in a tendency towards the end of salarization, when in fact they serve to bolster the social and economic relation between capital and labour - namely

that of the wage– of which the concept of a ‘salary’ is the mere expression. Highlighting the impermeable and foundational nature of the wage relation, Doogan posits that non-standard employment patterns actually extend the orbit of the capital relation, ‘enhancing labour market attachment rather than disaffiliation.’ Only by ignoring the fundamental way in which capital commodifies labour power in the shape of the wage relation can one seriously envisage precarization as a ‘qualitative shift[] in employment relations that can support societal transformation’ (ibid., p. 210–211). Salarization is by definition that process of buying labour-power with the wage; as Marx hypothesized, it is the precondition to the labour process, as opposed to the distribution of rewards afterwards (Fine and Saad-Filho 2004, pp. 67–8). Without it, capitalist production is impossible; it would not, indeed, be capitalism in any real sense.

It is a theoretical ally of Hardt and Negri, Paolo Virno, who gives the best treatment of the themes of Rise of the Network Society, accepting that the changes Castells posits have taken place in the world of work whilst stopping short of seeing an end to salarization and the liberation of workers from capitalist command. Virno (2001) draws upon Marx’s developmental, tentative conception of the general intellect outlined in the Grundrisse (1973), to paint a picture of the way in which increased ‘freedom’ from the formal infrastructure of the labour process is turned to capital’s advantage as a means whereby the bond between employee and employer can be strengthened. As does Castells, Marx states that the increase in machinery in the labour-process displaces human labour to the extent that the activity of workers is reduced to a purely supervisory or regulatory role alongside the new chief actor of the labour process, the machine, weakening the role of labour-time as the measure of human productive activity. This technological leap brings about the possibility of a social development on a massive scale, as workers, freed from physical subordination to the means of production and newly possessive of the increased ‘power to enjoy’ in their disposable time, avail themselves of great advances in their intellectual and cooperative capabilities. In defining the ‘general intellect’ so enabled, Marx makes the assertion that the capacities developed in the worker’s new free time will reinsert themselves into the production process without coercion as fixed capital, incorporating the worker only at a distance, rather than as a constituent part of the capital relation (ibid., pp. 705–6).

However, against the portrayal of greater freedom given in Marx’s original outline, Virno’s considered account of the reality of the general intellect disavows any temptation to claim that these conditions are those we are party to today, asserting instead that this greater freedom is reconciled with and channelled back into the labour-capital relation. Virno, like Marx and Castells, accepts that technology, when it fails to subordinate workers ever further to its command, has opened up time in which the worker may devote his energies to other tasks, what Castells correctly identifies as a ‘diversification of working schedules and patterns’ as opposed to a definitive shortening of work time (1996, p. 442). Furthermore, like Marx, Virno claims that the results of this precarisation do find their way back into the production process. However, Virno presents an account of the situation whereby the emancipatory content of precariousness, flexibilisation and the general intellect it fosters is neutered, its benefits ploughed by capital into ever-increasing control over the organization of time and the reduction of human activity to a subservient function of the imperative to produce and profit. Virno writes that ‘[w]hat is learned, carried out and consumed in the time outside labour is then utilized in the production of commodities’ (Virno 2001). As Virno concludes, rather than destabilizing capitalist production, the general intellect, and the precarious organization of time around it, has in fact become ‘the stabilizing component’ of the capitalist

mode of production' (1996, pp. 22–3), and thus of salarization.

The principal charge that can be brought against Castells is that of being too underestimating of the capacity of capital to adapt to economic imperatives. Capital has reinforced the relationship with labour through precariousness, flexibilization and informationalization: the wage relation is as strong as ever, diversifying and expanding into new forms and areas of life. The characteristics of contemporary capitalism that Castells summarizes in the 'end of salarization' thesis do not mark the disintegration of the capital-labour relation, but rather its renewal and fortification. Despite the potential presented by precariousness for a recalibration of the capital-labour relation, it exists today in the service of salarization rather than anything otherwise.

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The “Hidden Homeless” in Japan’s Contemporary Mobile Culture

Miya Yoshida

Mobile telephony and all it ensues has frequently gained incredible attention due to the massive impacts, which has had on the organization of daily life as well as on popular and youth cultures. This has been widely discussed in recent years as one significant aspect of the changes brought by the device; however that is not all. Attributed to capitalism, there are other, very contemporary socio-political issues at stake around the mobile telephone, especially among the younger people. In my article, I will focus on one specific phenomenon in Japanese society where the media have taken to speaking of so-called “hidden homeless”. Jobless and homeless persons that for various reasons have to (or, in some cases, have chosen to) live in mostly self-built, “mobile” shelters made of fortified cardboard boxes and containing only the bare necessities for urban survival. The “mobility” implied here, and that will be the central point of my essay, is not only on the level of bricolage survival in improvised shelters as in earlier decades – since that has even already been, for instance, the topic of a famous novel as early as 1973 (Kobo Abe, “Hakootoko”). But today, in order to find any kind of job or to keep any kind of contact with society, cardboard box dwellers have to strive for access to mobile phones and other contemporary network media. In my presentation, I want to explore the ambivalent space opened up by their encounter with the mobile telephone.

Hidden homeless. The term addresses those impoverished members of society who are rendered invisible, a very contemporary socio-political problem effecting especially on youth in Japanese society. The hidden homeless are, literally, those who cannot be recognized as homeless by their appearance. Generally, the homeless might be thought to be easily distinguishable by their worn-out clothes and shoes, by the big plastic bags in which they carry their all possessions, and by the cardboard houses they inhabit (rather than “better” housing in a large park), etc. But the hidden homeless do not look different from “normal” people – they are neatly dressed and carry mobile phones or sometimes PCs and portable music devices as well. However, in many cases, they are employed on a day-to-day basis and can certainly not earn enough money to rent a flat. They usually combine different places to stay, such as their friends’ flats, or 24-hour spots such as internet cafes, McDonald’s restaurants, and saunas. Because of this, they are also called “Net Cafe Refugees” or “Mac Refugees”¹.

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¹ Following the United Nations Convention Relating the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country. Using words as NetCafé “Refugee”, Macdonald

The hidden homeless became particularly noticeable after the Japanese government – under the Koizumi/Takenaka Cabinet – diminished the legal regulations for employers in 1999, and permitted production industries to hire a short term temporary workers through Haken in 2003, in order to stimulate the Japanese economy and conspicuously decrease the official number of jobless. At first, it seemed to work – at the surface level of statistics. However, the government's policy was more beneficial to big corporations and companies. It led to full-time employment being transformed to contract based work, and even to a large amount of day-to-day employment with no legal insurance whatsoever. Government data

shows that the average number of non-permanent workers rose to 17.3million in the year to March 31, 2007. Tsuyoshi Inaba, a representative of MOYAI Independent Life Support Center – a non-profit organization working to support the home-

The positive and optimistic message of sustainable development does not highlight the many dimensions of conflicts that are associated: conflict between the economic, the environmental and the social dimensions, conflict between different generations and among the same current generation

less – warned about the changes among the homeless as early as 2004, when he said in an interview: “The overall situation is becoming more complicated. 10 years ago most of the homeless people were day-laborers, construction workers. Now people who have worked at different kinds of jobs became homeless.

It is not so long ago that the functionality of the “mobile office” or the portable home/living room (Kopomaa 2000; Bull 2000 and 2004; Fujimoto 2003) was seen as an important part of the capabilities of such portable gadgets, in an extension of the concept of “mobile privatization” proposed, for instance, by Raymond Williams (1974). However, a vision such as this seems to be too simple, too naïve, in order to describe with any precision the reality in the post-Fordist capitalism. There are many argument referring to psychological effects brought by mobile telephony – impacts of mediated presence, an efficiency of micro coordination of daily life, an emphasis on distanced intimacies and youth culture that opened up a new mode of pop culture as well as of amateur production. Taking a closer look on the phenomenon, “Hidden Homeless” in Japan, I would like to explore biopolitical aspects of mobile telephony in the following paragraphs.

Having no fixed address has effects on many levels of life, but it also makes the mobile telephone more important in the pursuit temporary solutions. For example, almost all job arrangements made by the hidden homeless—search, offer, confirmation—are done by mobile phone. The hidden homeless also use mobile phones for reporting their arrival at a meeting point. For them, the mobile phone guarantees availability to the market, but they have learned to see that this availability spells dependency more than so called “freedom”, for simultaneously, they are managed by the capitalist rationale that is “embodied” in the mobile gadget. Individual subject becomes a social body of a target as a new form of the capital in

“Refugee” confront a strong sense of provocation. January 29th, 2007, one documentary program, titled “Net Café Refugee- the poor who floats around a city”, by Nihon TV was on air. It was about youth without a fixed place stray who receive a daily job offers by job organizing companies on their mobile phone or e-mail account, which gained a great amount of attention. Under a severe economic crisis in the country, the naming “refugee” supports a discourse that the poor is not due to a social responsibility but only to an individual without any critical reflection neither or the government politics nor a social structure. I intend to use the notion of “hidden homeless”, or “one call worker” accordingly to that.

addition to a consumer and a user. Simultaneously, the Hidden Homeless also become a new marketing target for venture businesses.

Mobile connectivity is connoted a symbol of new freedom from location, a certain hierarchies and social structure, emphasizing on values of informality, immediacy and a sense of play. However, different social groups imply different relationships with a structure and an architecture of media. For the hidden homeless of Japan, the mobile phone is a necessary—even desperately—device to become, and to remain, available to the market. This suggests us necessity to question what kind of effects lie bioeconomically and biopolitically as the consequences and the results of micro coordination? The mobile phone certainly gives us accessibility to persons we would like to connect/be connected. What kind of “freedom” the mobile phones actually represent and bring to the certain users? Is the notion of “freedom” a sort of misused and abused to catch a quick attention? Can it be replaced by other words such as a temporary substitution of pleasure within a given framework undercurrents of capitalism? Why it is so difficult to imagine other alternative ways of communication and of organization? Does an emphasis on micro coordination function as a motor to create an illusion that all has to be done immediately?

The fact that they cannot vote without having a physical address is continually ignored within the political sphere, but extreme capitalist solutions react quickly enough, with the emergence of “new business[es] for the poor”. These new industries—such as one-night residences for the homeless, 24-hour manga/internet cafes, real estate agencies dealing in low-rent properties requiring no deposit, and others—rely on the existence and the functioning of a BOP (Bottom of the Pyramid) in society. They grow with the population of the poor. Such camouflaged social venture businesses exactly fit the area that the government used to address with social welfare. Cynically enough, the hidden homeless are those who are excluded from capitalist society, and then re-included—but as consumers. In this endless cycle, the mobile phone is playing a significant role, much more than just a gadget associated with the sweet-talk of “connectivity” or “ubiquitous communication”. Mobile connectivity can be twisted to open another social dimension altogether. The more the mobile phone is considered an essential tool, the more the “fluency” of information exchange through the mobile phone plays a key part in sustaining the new conditions. Here again, the mobile telecommunication service is an industry that both supports and benefits from such users. The distinction between them is quite ambivalent.

Moreover, once the acknowledged that the hidden homeless can be expected to carry their own mobile phones has been diffused, a great number of social and economic transactions are performed exclusively through the network of mobile telephony. These include automatically initiated cycles, which introduce differences or hierarchies among the homeless according to whether or not they have a mobile phone. And, all the supporting systems are also developed heavily around the device. Surviving and supporting, both are created and recreated around the mediated communication. This, again creates another necessity to be equipped by a device. It is rather about not as a personal presence, but about more as a data economy in the established system of mobile network society. A new dynamic of social forces emerges there as a form of governance, that maybe totally different from one can imagine from the Foucault’s time in the 70’s, but strongly reaffirms a personal relationship to economy. Lazzarato (1996) once wrote that modes of subjection no longer tend to remain expressed through generality and abstraction of social class. However, hidden homeless points out the fact that mode of subjection is still strongly under control of new forms of capitalism and organized around by social class. In other words, hidden homeless presents

the fact that economic power penetrates through human body. It means that the problem is not only an economic, but an ontological matter today.

Hidden homeless tells us two important points. First, the influence of mobile networks is not limited within immaterial labour, and has to be seriously considered on material labour as well. Material labour never disappears and should be disputation together. Many cases, so called "one call workers" are engaged in a segmented manual labour in factory as a temporary employment, which can be cancelled anytime to adjust a condition of micro economy whenever storage of products is slightly increased in a fluid manner. Connectivity occupies higher priority for surviving to a residency, and invites more competition in a restless manner. As the major actors on the discussion are naturally academics and cultural workers who belong to the sphere of immaterial labour. So, thinking the significant influence on labour including material labour has almost become a blind spot.

Observing how hidden homeless is situated in a circulation system of labour, – demanded by one call to get a job, and by another call to cancel a contract any time without notice in order to adjust a flow of economy– people are seen nothing more than a tool to fulfill the scheme or a flow of economy. Under such a consequences, the Agamben's phrase, "de-subjectivation without generating new subjectivities" can imply an insight on the beginning of a process to treat a person not as a subject but as a data-object, that is a new form of capital.

When the phenomenon around the mobile telephony is reconsidered biopolitically and bioeconomically, it certainly opens up another level of understanding neither techno pessimism nor positivism.

Actually, jobless is a problem nothing new, and job hunting used to be based on human communication. However today, it is more reply on mediated communication or search on the net. When a specific form of communication is heavily capitalized by industry, it overtakes not only any other possible forms of communications, but also centralizes itself as the highest priority (aesthetics) of life – that means, even takes away certain crucial base for life–, and simultaneously to shape a new system of capital as well as circulating labour.

This could really raise a problematic aspect of fluid organization and circulation network system of labour: not only deskilled material labour as well as dehumanization of labour, that is equivalent to a material object.

Matters of jobless or homeless in earlier time, was a matter of interpersonal communication. By turning this communication into something immediate, yet immaterial/mediated, must have the impact on a structure of the future social development.

Mobile telecommunication is a capitalized form of communication and absolute commodity. Therefore, seeing in the example above, it is very crucial to urgently consider more bioeconomical as well as biopolitical effects more seriously in the research of mobile telephony.



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When you don't see them, then you have to look for
other ways to be in touch.

Social Work or Unpaid Labor? The ideological reproduction of Facebooking

Marco Briziarelli

As Mosco (2005) observed, every new wave of media technology has carried contrasting sentiments, frequently approaching in popular discourse hyperbolic messianic and apocalyptic manifestations. In the specific case of digital media, on the one hand, they are considered as democratic sears, rescuers of the public sphere, prophets of the digital economy, which can potentially make of every spectator, an actor and an author. On the other hand, they have been accused of jeopardizing face-to-face communication, deepening the level of commodification of our private lives and of exploiting user-generated generate content.

The issue in the end reflects the need of coming to terms with modernity and answer the question that thinkers such as Rousseau, Smyth, Freud, Marx, Weber, Simmel and Baudelaire asked: is technology emancipating or aggravating human labor? In this small article, I draw on Terranova's concept of free labor (2000) to claim the coexistence exploitative and (allegedly) emancipatory in the ideologically driven practices of user-generated content associated to Facebook. Terranova considers "free labor" as an ambiguous activity that stands in between technophilia and technophobia, between democratic emancipation and exploitation potential, between «gift economy» and «capitalist economy» (p.55).

Free labor implies the existence of a distinctive consciousness of the digital environment, which, according to Marx and Engels (2001), digital users have generated while generating content for the web:

The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the spiritual intercourse of men, appear here as the direct efflux of men's material behavior [...] Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness (pp.35-36)

Such a process of production of consciousness does not take place in vacuum, but should be contextualized in a pre-existing context of ideas and practices. In this sense, based on the ethnographic research I succinctly report here, one of the most significant ideological construct that surrounds web 2.0 users is the liberal idea of using Facebook as a democratic platform of discussion, deliberation, a sort of digital bourgeois public sphere. Such an ideology promises to liberate men through the realization of the free market, the public use of reason and mediated communication.

Facebook indeed combines both exploitative and liberal-utopic aspects of media. On the one hand, Facebook outsources and crowdsources the work of media production through the producer-consumer, a practice of cost-reducing that not accidentally coincided with rising

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layoffs in media industries (Dueze 2007). On the other hand, as Kessler (2007) notices, Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, consistently utilizes rhetoric of novelty, social change and promise of social amelioration through media technology, which, in its clear instrumentality, also resonates with genuine existing democratic sentiments. In the Facebook “manifesto,” (2007) the founder describes the “social mission” of the platform as it follows:

Facebook aspires to build the services that give people the power to share and help them once again transform many of our core institutions and industries [...] We believe building tools to help people share

can bring a more honest and transparent dialogue around government that could lead to more direct empowerment of people, more accountability for officials and better solutions to some of the biggest problems of our time. (p.1)

Zuckerberg rhetorical arguments makes leverage on a technologic

One of the most significant ideological construct that surrounds web 2.0 users is the liberal idea of using Facebook as a democratic platform of discussion, deliberation, a sort of digital bourgeois public sphere

utopianism which recovers liberal idea of “transparency” and the idea of political power under public scrutiny which tends to frame Web 2.0 media as “social media,” “participatory media,” “citizen journalism,” “user generated content,” “user driven innovation,” or “social software.”

In the case of the participants my study, the sense of a normatively driven civil society was mediated by a sense of community constructed around reciprocal solidarity as unsteady workers. From such a perspective, the primordial understanding of social work translated into supporting each other as individuals sharing a common condition of precariousness. Similarly to what Risi (2010) observes, young precarious workers utilize web2.0 platforms such as Facebook in order to understand their experience through processes of narrativization of their everyday labor condition. The sharing of those stories contributes to create both a process of reflection on the self and social relations.

The participants of my study consisted of Italian Facebook users in the age between 18 and 30, students, part-time workers and job seekers. The informants refer about the importance of what their network of friends say, do and post on Facebook, because that also define indirectly their persona. Furthermore, the same concern also reveals the preoccupation to earn cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986a), a wealth they acquire in cultivating their digital social relationships which is considered necessary to succeed in the current working environment.

A specific meaning is given to Facebook function of “sharing.” 14 out of 15 of them believe that “sharing” content requires a higher level of moral investment. Chiara thinks, “sharing can means alternatively a recommendation, a proposal, a political approval, a political condemnation.” Andrea suggested that sharing has the highest level of publicity because «sharing implies a certain responsibility that goes beyond looking cool or interesting. » For Benedetta, sharing a piece of news or a link has a social utility, is «sharing knowledge. » Nicola shares newspaper articles that he thinks, «everybody should read » and he states that «Facebook can have a pedagogical function. » Similarly, Mario and Elisa use the sharing function to support causes, websites, and people’s activity. Almost all of them, they see in the sharing content/link/thoughts a powerful political tool.

The informants offered an understanding of Facebook practices that gravitates around one essential principle: investment on sociability. The interest in affective relations (Virno,

2004) presents three main aspects: enjoyment, instrumentality and a political/normative dimension. First, people seem to enjoy living in a network of ideas, practices, gossip and information. There is an important sense of gratification associated to Facebook practices that reinforce the identity and the communal sense of precarious workers. Second, people invest time on Facebook (instead of simply spending it) not simply for gratification but in order to actively find a place in the social sphere of production, in order to acquire social cultural and symbolic capital. Third, the “social” dimension of Facebook is also where another less instrumental aspect emerges: the sense of social and political agency. Such a sociability presents a normative aspect that resonates with existing ideologies, which, in the author’s view, tend to re-signify digital labor into a sort of social labor, or voluntariat.

To conclude, I tried to critically interrogate an emerging aspect of several contemporary capitalist societies, which is gradually characterizing the condition of precarious workers: the exploitation of their “free labor.” In fact, as in the case of the participants of this study, students, unemployed and part time workers become subject and objects of media practices that reproduce the existing social relations through both the unpaid work of producing profitable net content for user generated-content-driven business as well as through producing the ideological conditions of reproduction of capital. In other words, I claim that “free labour” implies the hegemonic dynamic of transforming “necessity” into “freedom.”

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Territorial embeddedness and virtual connections of knowledge and creative workers in Milan

**Marianna d'Ovidio
Alessandro Gandini**

The paper discusses the relation between territorial embeddedness and virtual connections among knowledge and creative workers in Milan by challenging the idea that co-presence is crucial for interaction and that face-to-face (F2F) relations are essential for their success. Knowledge and creative workers are thus embedded in a wider “space”, that is not necessarily a physical one, but also virtual and ICT mediated. The literature on co-presence and interaction (particularly within the economic sphere) originates from Becker’s (1974) and Granovetter’s works (1983). The social mechanisms and internal relations of groups of professionals are explored by many authors that elaborate on the idea that, notwithstanding the technological improvements in mobility and communication, people still have to meet in person and that F2F interactions and physical proximity still matter (Scott 2000; Storper 2013). Both theoretical and empirical researches assign many functions to F2F interactions: notably, the functions performed cover different aspects of the job sphere, being them acknowledged as the most efficient means of communication, strong vehicles of creativity, information, knowledge and trust, and a way through which people can “be into the loop”, in order to have their reputation tested and screened.

Knowledge and creative industries are also characterised by being organised on nonstandard forms of employment based on temporary contracts and a growing diffusion of freelance work. This enhances the necessity of entertaining forms of interaction that maintain and manage professional contacts, social capital and the personal reputation across the network. The recruitment mechanisms in such a fragmented and individualized labour market are shaped by relations based on informal interaction (Lee 2011). Therefore, creative industries rely on a “project-based” culture founded on a logic of quality, rather than one based on recognition of time needed to fulfil the task (Christopherson 2008), together with free labour and the development of personal relations (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

Nevertheless, particularly thanks to the development of ICT, social media are increasingly at the heart of the recruitment processes, and they represent one of the privileged places where human resources managers and hirers look for information on possible candidates (Pais 2012). In this context it is even possible to calculate one’s reputation through algorithms, “likes”, “mentions” and “retweets”, up until more elaborate Online Reputation Systems which determine a “digitization of word of mouth” (Dellarocas, 2003) by which reputation becomes “visible and measurable” under certain conditions.

The literature about forms and functions of F2F interaction is thus challenged by works exploring the ICT impact on relations and communication, questioning the role of internet in

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reinforcing or diminishing the importance and frequency of F2F communication. Notwithstanding the development of ICT, many empirical researches proved that, despite replacing them, on-line communication intertwines with face-to-face one in maintaining ties and relationships: even in the digital creative economy there are many empirical evidences at testing the embeddedness of creative workers in urban environments (Pratt 2013)

Two forces are therefore at play: the agglomeration economy and the possibility of being connected on-line due to the improvements of the ICT. What seems to be questionable is

Their job, in other words, is a contact sport. The relationships built with other workers in their filed or in related ones tend to form a network which is the basis of an exchange system where information and support circulate

whether the cultural operators are still embedded in places or not, or, in other words, whether they rely exclusively on their face-to-face interactions, exclusively on their on-line communication means, or in a combination of the two ways of connection. Our hypothesis is

that F2F interactions are still crucial and that on-line interactions act as a multiplier of functions, but it cannot substitute them.

So, how do professionals in the creative and knowledge economy cope with the precariousness of their working conditions? What kind of relations characterise their job activities? Research (d'Ovidio 2010) suggests that the work of such professionals is all about being engaged in making and maintaining relationships, which requires direct and frequent interactions and therefore co-location of actors. The main demand of their job is to be in the city, constantly reachable and permanently available to meeting people who are part of the system or are engaged in the creative field.

No, you cannot [work elsewhere], I would like to live in the countryside, for example, but I cannot; you have to be here to meet people, your friends [...] you cannot stay away from Milan very long (Fashion designer)

Their job, in other words, is a contact sport. The relationships built with other workers in their filed or in related ones tend to form a network which is the basis of an exchange system where information and support circulate. The reciprocal recognition of professionals within the same network generates a virtuous circle where trust to co-workers has chances to be multiplied. Especially in those industries where activity is mainly organised on projects with free-lance operators collaborating together, trust and recognitions are crucial in order both to conclude projects and to gain new appointments.

However, this implies that creative and knowledge workers are subjected to aesthetic judgments which are volatile and not easily predictable, within unstable and highly competitive markets. In this sense interactions, although costly in terms of time and management, serve to develop trust-based relations that reduce risk and enable more efficient partnering in joint projects, thus increasing motivation in collaborative efforts. Nevertheless, as relationships are constantly renewed in the network, this practice of "network management" often resembles a closed loop, where it is difficult to enter, and where opportunities for collaboration arise as a result of a lengthy process of "reputation construction" via "getting known".

em or are engaged in the creative field.

You can do this job without knowing anybody, working with only few customer, but you'd never gain real success. [...] If you are out of this network it is very difficult for you to be smart: we never actually look for a work, never directly promote ourselves, never have an advertising campaign. Our customers are the

ones who seek us out because they already know who we are (Designer)

These dynamics of place-based interactions intertwine with the digital sphere as they get into the discussions on the contemporary forms of labour. Because of the extremely importance of reputation, workers have to confront with their own image on the Web, thus to integrate together the online and offline dimensions of interaction. The public dimensions of connections and shares become a proxy for the evaluation of knowledge, creativity and talent.

Facebook is a wonderful resource to link your own articles, but Twitter is more efficient as a whole. You know, in the end the number of followers you have, counts, if you have 100 people who follow you, or 1,000, it is evident you develop more interest around you, and that the one with 1,000 uses the tool better (. . .) How do you evaluate if an article is successful? From the number of comments, shares, likes, tweets. . . It's a silly thing, but it's the first thing you look at, and it's true, I have a return on the fact that my article is linked or shared a lot (Journalist)

At the same time, the presence on Twitter, the quality and quantity of connections and recommendations on LinkedIn, the quality of websites or blogs, generate positive word of mouth, which in turn reinforce face to face interactions – and viceversa. The place-based face-to-face interactions that developing among knowledge and creative workers is sidelined by an online dimension of interaction centred on practices of self-branding that are instrumental to generate word-of-mouth and the 'positive loop' that follows. In this sense digital interaction does not substitute for, rather integrates face-to-face dynamics, combining with them and enforcing their impact.

[. . .] there is an offline and an online word-of-mouth but these are correlated, and incentivize each other. Producing interesting content on my blog, on social media, creates a reputation and a word-of-mouth. My blog for instance helped me in emancipating from my dependent job, as I got in touch with a lot of people, something I could not do if I kept working for the same company (Social media/marketing consultant)

To conclude, it may be argued that actors inserted in territorial embedded networks have to play also within a wider space: the Web. Being active within both spaces intertwine and contribute to the acquisition of a status within the professional network, which is instrumental to the professional success. These specific dynamics of actions and interactions are necessary because of the "public" status of each actor. The worker is required to participate in highly relational contexts and to develop specific social skills in order to exploit the whole set of professional opportunities available within such environments. The combination of on-line and off-line dynamics is at the ground of a complex set of reputation mechanisms that become crucial in such a frame, characterised mainly by a self-branding culture.

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Spazi di socialità precaria

Da internet all'ufficio condiviso

Luca Zambelli

L'editoria è stata in questi anni un laboratorio di sperimentazione per varie forme di esternalizzazione e precarizzazione. Grazie allo sviluppo delle tecnologie dell'informazione e alla diffusione del web le case editrici hanno potuto cambiare la loro struttura organizzativa imponendo alle persone che si apprestavano a lavorare in questo settore modalità di collaborazione meno tutelate. Un esempio indicativo è quello dei redattori e delle redattrici che nell'arco degli ultimi vent'anni sono passati dall'essere figure centrali e caratterizzanti l'attività della casa editrice ad essere collaboratori/trici esterni/e, in condizioni precarie¹. In questo contributo presenterò delle riflessioni e del materiale² che ho iniziato a raccogliere durante la stesura della mia tesi di laurea nell'estate del 2011, e che sono tutt'ora oggetto delle mie ricerche: i processi di auto-organizzazione di una rete di lavoratori e lavoratrici dell'editoria, la Rete dei Redattori Precari (Re.Re.Pre.).

A partire dalla più recente iniziativa portata avanti da questa rete: lo Spazio Ufficio Condiviso (SUC), intendo qui evidenziare alcuni aspetti delle condizioni lavorative e di precarietà nell'editoria. Seguendo le ragioni espresse a favore della realizzazione di questo progetto, e le modalità di nascita di questa iniziativa, avremo accesso all'esperienza soggettiva quotidiana di questi/e lavoratori e lavoratrici. Vedremo quindi in primo luogo il processo di elaborazione collettiva sotteso alla nascita del SUC, gli spazi e gli strumenti usati per confrontarsi all'interno della Re.Re.Pre. e quindi le ragioni che sottendono questa azione politica. Sono venuto a conoscenza di questo progetto attraverso una mail, della quale vi propongo uno stralcio:

(Oggetto: Questo NON è un co-working, Lia, 32 anni, 9 maggio 2013)

Sono stanchissima ma devo scrivervi anche questo perché sono giorni che mi frulla in testa e sono mesi che sene parla (con Claudia, Gianni, e Tina, principalmente ma non solo).

QUESTO NON È UN COWORKING (trovare altro titolo, ora non so perché ma mi viene in mente questo con l'immagine - fattami vedere da Claudia - che raffigura tante bici che pedalando insieme accendono una lampadina)

Questo messaggio è stato trasmesso attraverso la mailing list usata dalla Re.Re.Pre. per coordinarsi al suo interno. In poche righe il messaggio evidenzia come i contenuti e le iniziative

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¹ Per approfondire cosa sia il lavoro redattoriale e perché si possa parlare di precarietà in questo contesto si guardi la sezione "Chi siamo" sul sito della Re.Re.Pre. <http://www.rerepre.org/index.php?/2008121048/redattori-editoriali-precari/redattori-editoriali-precari-chi-siamo.html>

² In questo contributo presento alcuni stralci provenienti da interviste e da email raccolte in questi anni. Per maggior garanzia delle persone che mi hanno raccontato la loro storia ho sostituito i loro nomi con degli pseudonimi.

promosse dalla rete nascano e si sviluppano non attraverso un confronto virtuale in qualche modo contrapposto a quello reale, ma piuttosto all'interno di entrambe queste dimensioni. Gli scambi tra le persone avvengono online e offline, si mischiano tra di loro e creano un terreno comune nel quale le persone coinvolte sviluppano il loro sistema di significati³.

La mailing list è lo spazio dove condividere un'idea, dove sviluppare i discorsi iniziati in altri contesti, dove elaborarli e valutarne collettivamente l'opportunità. A questa mail di lancio seguono altre 8 mail nell'arco delle successive 24 ore, tutte molto positive riguardo a questa iniziativa, poi il discorso esce dalle conversazioni nella mailing list fino al 19 luglio, quando viene rilanciato in seguito alle chiacchiere nate durante una cena. Scompare quindi nuovamente, per riapparire con una forma più elaborata e matura il 10 settembre, in seguito alle riflessioni ed alle decisioni prese durante la riunione di nodo di Milano.

Da questa data, l'iniziativa entra a far parte dell'ordine del giorno delle comunicazioni nella mailing list dove vengono discusse e commentate le proposte e decisioni prese negli incontri faccia a faccia. Le riunioni di nodo svolgono un ruolo fondamentale nella discussione e nel confronto per elaborare e definire meglio la proposta, per darle concretezza e valutarne la fattibilità, ma la discussione viene costantemente allargata e condivisa anche all'interno della mailing list per arricchirsi e quindi tornare ad essere implementata negli incontri faccia a faccia. Mentre le riunioni di nodo sono incontri pianificati e concordati, con alcune caratteristiche formali, le mail sono atti spontanei che si adattano completamente alle tempistiche della persona che le scrive. Il confronto via mail costituisce quindi l'attività quotidiana nei processi di costruzione dei significati nella Re.Re.Pre., mentre l'incontro faccia a faccia segna un punto di passaggio. Attraverso questa attività online e offline nasce il 4 ottobre il SUC, lo Spazio Ufficio Condiviso, targato Re.Re.Pre. Questo luogo rappresenta la prima realtà di co-working solidale per i precari dell'editoria, in Italia, e ha preso luogo all'interno del PianoTerra, uno spazio occupato dai precari nel quartiere Isola a Milano. Per approfondire le riflessioni alla base di questa iniziativa, seguiamo nella lettura della mail di lancio di questa iniziativa:

(Oggetto: Questo NON è un co-working, Lia, 32 anni, 9 maggio 2013)

Ripartiamo dal mutuo soccorso.

L'idea è questa: organizziamo un appuntamento fisso, probabilmente a PianoTerra (perché c'è il wireless e la caffetteria e non costa nulla ed è uno spazio di precari per i precari), un pomeriggio alla settimana (a cadenza fissa, chissà, tutti i mercoledì pomeriggio) di pseudo-coworking, + scambio esperienze-contatti-competenze, con un momento merendero, dove ognuno porta qualcosa e si parla, ci si conosce, si fa rete, si sta insieme eccetera eccetera.... Insomma, si lavora ma non a casa da soli, e se non si ha il lavoro lo si cerca insieme.

All'interno di questa rete di persone che cercano di contrastare la precarietà derivante dalle condizioni lavorative e sociali, nasce quindi l'idea di fare un ulteriore passo di condivisione nel proprio percorso di resistenza: riappropriarsi della dimensione collettiva del lavoro. Se si vuole approfondire in che modo è caratterizzato questo comparto produttivo, invito alla lettura della recente inchiesta Editoria Invisibile⁴, condotta da IRES-CGIL Emilia Romagna assieme a Re.Re.Pre. e a STRADE, il sindacato dei traduttori precari. Per una lettura soggettiva e divulgativa, rimando invece al documento scritto dalla Re.Re.Pre. stessa e pubblicato all'interno dei Quaderni di San Precario, dal titolo "Voltiamo pagina"⁵.

3 Per una riflessione più approfondita su questo tema si guardi il contributo presente in questo numero a firma di Maurizio Teli

4 <http://editoriainvisibile.netsons.org/>

5 <http://quaderni.sanprecario.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Q2-Voltiamo-pagina.pdf>

La connessione tra redattore/trice precario/e e casa editrice è divenuta sempre più labile e impersonale grazie alla possibilità di svolgere il lavoro da casa, attraverso computer e telefoni. Il dislocamento fisico e simbolico all'esterno dell'azienda ha comportato non solamente la perdita delle tutele garantite ai colleghi assunti, ma una maggior precarizzazione esistenziale aggravata dall'isolamento dalle altre persone soggette a medesime condizioni. I ritmi lavorativi richiesti, molto elevati, e il legame inscindibile tra il lavoratore/trice e il suo principale strumento di lavoro, la sua attività intellettuale, possono comportare un'incapacità di contenere il tempo dedicato al lavoro che quindi pervade la dimensione privata.

Lavorando in casa c'è una totale identità tra vita privata e lavoro. Quando lavori la vita privata te la devi proprio un po' imporre, per non soccombere completamente. (Zenobia, 60 anni, Bologna)

I ritmi lavorativi richiesti, molto elevati, e il legame inscindibile tra il lavoratore/trice e il suo principale strumento di lavoro, la sua attività intellettuale, possono comportare un'incapacità di contenere il tempo dedicato al lavoro che quindi pervade la dimensione privata

Oltre a queste implicazioni fortissime sul piano soggettivo vi è anche un effetto secondario derivante da questo isolamento fisico: la difficoltà a condividere e simpatizzare con i/le colleghi/e riguardo ai cambiamenti lavorativi subiti. Non solo il contesto lavorativo erode la dimensione soggettiva e privata di queste persone, ma polverizza le istanze solidaristiche tra precari/e, seguendo il principio della contrattazione individuale, ognuno/a si trova a dover far fronte da solo/a alle vicissitudini lavorative.

Il SUC è quindi un'iniziativa portata avanti da persone che, attraverso l'attività nella Re.Re. Pre., hanno identificato nella condivisione e riflessione collettiva uno strumento importante al fine di contrastare il senso di precarietà vissuto soggettivamente. Questa riflessione politica nasce dopo cinque anni di attività della rete stessa, durante la quale questa ha portato avanti molte iniziative, a volte percepite come più efficaci, altre meno. Con lo Spazio di Ufficio Condiviso Re.Re.Pre. cerca di innovare ulteriormente le modalità d'azione e gli strumenti con cui prosegue nella propria attività, sperimentando nuove risposte alle sfide della precarietà.

(Oggetto: Questo NON è un co-working, Maria, 30 anni, 9 maggio 2013)

Sono d'accordo con voi: Rerepre non deve fare l'avanguardia (l'abbiamo fatta negli anni scorsi, con iniziative belle ma dispendiose e un po' folkloristiche come il flash mob al Salone del Libro, ma la massa non ci seguiva) ma anzi dovrebbe porsi come punto di riferimento. fare gruppo, far circolare informazioni e competenze, creare consapevolezza. ottima l'idea del coworking!

Gli stralci che ho riportato in questo breve articolo, per quanto parziali ed estratti dal contesto di confronto e dibattito nei quali sono nati, credo ci permettano di riflettere su almeno due questioni che riguardano il tema di questo numero monografico.

Il caso della Rete dei Redattori Precari ci mostra come la diffusione e accessibilità del web, supportata dalla tecnologia mobile, abbia cambiato in modo ambivalente i rapporti di forza e le dinamiche nei luoghi di lavoro, contribuendo in modo importante all'isolamento dei lavoratori/trici, ma divenendo al contempo strumento di socialità per le persone decise a cercare strategie collettive per il superamento della precarietà. Lo Spazio Ufficio Condiviso ci racconta un tentativo di riappropriarsi del proprio tempo lavorativo, un'azione dal valore senz'altro anche politico. Il SUC è una sfida che mira a ricostruire spazi d'incontro e discussione per svolgere la propria attività lavorativa, rispondendo a un'esigenza professionale e umana con uno spazio che stimoli letture critiche e riflessioni sulla propria condizione, e sul sistema economico e sociale di cui si fa parte.



The video installation WORK is based on the idea of bringing the Theatre of Oppressed to the employees of a multinational insurance company based in the Netherlands.

The Theatre of Oppressed is originally invented in Brazil to unmask totalitarian political strategies and to develop ways of resistance. Through different techniques participants start to detect and understand strategies of oppression and learn through acting the first steps of resistance or change.

The Colombian Theater of Oppressed director Hector Aristizabal was invited by Marianne Flotron to work for one week in an insurance company in the Netherlands. He set up a forum theater play (a form of the Theatre of Oppressed) at the company's premises helped by several actors and employees of the company.

In the contemporary labor society where most of the subjects identify themselves over work, the project tried to bring up the idea of a possible democratization of work. The video installation/video WORK is emphasizing the way the capitalistic economy is forming behavior and influencing mentality by employing knowledge of social science.

In her work Marianne Flotron is mainly interested in the interrelationship between political and economic systems and human behavior. How the subject creates the society and how, in return, the society is creating its subjects, forms a basis for her work. Recently she employed different techniques based on role-playing and introduced them to actual situations exploring the impact of social science on behavior.



WORK is produced by Kunsthalle Bern and Philippe Pirotte supported by Mondriaan Foundation Amsterdam, Carola und Guenther Ertle- Ketterer Bern, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam

*MarianneFlotron – WORK (2011)
4 channel installation, HDV, color, sound
Sequences: “Rehearsal”, “Interview HR”, “Interview 1”, “The Play”*



Mapping the digital panorama of precariousness

Ethnographic challenges

Maurizio Teli

In the last thirty years we have witnessed the widespread adoption of digital technologies, the individualization of social relations, and the growing relevance of informational capitalism and work precarity, its preferred working arrangements¹. Such social transformations have been deeply correlated with the reshaping of the territories of collective action and the diffusion of feelings of fragility of human existence, feelings that Judith Butler defines as “precariousness” (2004). According to Butler, the recognizance of precariousness is the basis for constituting what is human, vulnerable and interdependent. Discussing Butler’s argument, Neilson and Rossiter (2005) make two relevant points: that precariousness and work precarity are interconnected, and that “the ontology of precariousness is immanent to networked systems of communication”.

In my understanding of contemporary social life, that depends on how digital technologies and networked communications have been continuously deterritorializing the experience of social relations and, at the same time, on how they have been able to reterritorialize them in new spaces of relations². In the process of reterritorialization of work and life through the networks of communication, individual and collective identities are redefined through the personal profile pages and through the digital spaces of collective presentation and of collective production, often quickly, making identities themselves fragile, precarious. How to conduct empirical research in such a context?

Inquiries in the territories of connectivity ask ethnographers to develop adequate instruments to engage with the wide panorama of digital relations. In the following paragraphs, I will outline some of the methodological challenges for ethnographers studying self-organized groups of precarious workers, for whom work precarity and precariousness meet and are

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1 The reflections presented here are the result of my collaboration with Annalisa Murgia and Luca Zambelli when the latter was conducting the empirical research he discusses in this special issue (p. 29–31). I am in debt with them for the rich and thoughtful professional relation, nevertheless the concepts presented here are my own, as well as all the possible mistakes.

2 The description of the novelty of digital technologies as a spatial one is evident in one of the terms used since the beginning of a widespread adoption of networked communication, cyberspace (It is quite ironic that such concept has been used in the mid’90s to identify the independence of a supposedly politically progressive social group, like in John Perry Barlow “Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace”, 1996, while now it is clear that what is independent through networked technologies is the global financial capital, as brilliantly discussed by Saskia Sassen in her work during the last decade).

challenged through collective action. In particular, I will focus on the relationship between the digital stage of public presentation of groups and individuals and the digital and physical backstage of production of collective identities, as spaces different one from the other and in a constant relation of mutual shaping.

To map the digital public presentation. The use of digital technologies is nowadays so widespread and differentiated that one of the initial strategy of ethnographers, to look at a single website or a few, is rarely able to let researchers engage with the complexity of

Presupposing the nature of goods and how they are managed traps us in a framework that prevents us from adopting an evolutionary perspective and from reclaiming the sustainable and equitable management of our unprotected factors of livelihood and enablement – what the commons actually are

the way social relations develop through the internet. danah boyd (2008) has overtly defined the groups forming and living with the support of digital technologies as “networked publics”, that is groups of people drawing upon a

multiplicity of digital technologies to create, maintain, and sustain their relations. That poses a first challenge for ethnographers dealing with the digital dimensions of social relations: how to circumscribe the terrain of empirical inquiry? How to deal with the multiplicity of digital technologies, mailing lists, websites, page and profiles on different social networking sites? Briefly, how to construct, methodologically, the spaces of precarity when data can be abundant and easily overload the researcher?

A first answer, the only one I can provide now, is to refer to mixed methods and tools, in particular to try to connect quantitative measures, in particular social network analysis, to the theoretical sampling procedures typical of ethnographic approaches. Some efforts in this direction have already been done, with suggestions dating a decade back (e.g. Howard, 2002) and systematic empirical research and tool development consolidating among a subset of internet scholars, most notably the “Digital Methods Initiative” at the University of Amsterdam (Rogers, 2010).

In such approaches, social networking techniques are used to sketch out the boundaries of the panorama of precarity and to identify the key nodes, the ones to look at with a more qualitative, deep gaze. The general idea is to draw upon the traces of networked communication and re-purpose them for the sake of research. For example, that can help to digest huge archives of mailing list communications, identifying the key actors and/or threads, as well as making sense of the amount of data generated on a single topic by Twitter conversations. In the case of Zambelli’s empirical research, discussed also in this special issue, the use of Issuercrawler³ allowed the researcher to connect the group of precarious workers he was interested to the wider panorama of trade unions, social movements, traditional media like newspapers and television, and other networks of action. Briefly, such tools and techniques have been able to locate the public stage of digital self-presentation into the wider panorama of the social world of precarity.

To research fragility and resistance. When studying self-organized groups of precarious workers, the delimitation of digital territories through publicly available data brings to the second main challenge for ethnographers engaging with such kind of study: how to deal with digital spaces that are not publicly available? One of the downsides of the current narrative on “Big Data” is the underlying assumption that everything we need to understand contemporary societal dynamics is publicly available through technological means like Facebook or

3 <https://www.issuercrawler.net/>

Twitter API (Application Program Interfaces).

The case of self-organized groups of precarious workers is an excellent antidote to such simplification, for two main reasons: first, these groups are the clear example of people who need private spaces, outside of the public gaze, to organize themselves, mainly as a reaction to the risk of being blackmailed on their workplace and of losing their job, the thing they are fighting for; second, to understand the sense of precariousness connected to precarity, we need to understand the sense of fragility, as well as the strategies people enact to cope with it in their daily life and collective action. In both cases, the use only of publicly available digital data is clearly insufficient: on one side, because the self-organization of resistance to the deterioration of working condition is necessarily private, also when it is digital (for example, recurring to technological platforms like *autistici.org*, oriented to the protection of users' privacy); on the other, the public expression available on digital data is often missing the biographic or collective narratives able to let the researchers make sense of the people's sense of fragility and resistance. In both cases, the good old instruments of ethnographers, observant participation in apt physical contexts and in-depth interviews (with the correlate of an overt relationship of trust), are irreplaceable in understanding the backstage of production of individual and collective narratives on identities.

In conclusion, my main argument is that drawing upon the use of available digital data and more traditional ethnographic engagement, scholars and activists can understand the wider panorama into which specific groups of precarious workers, and other people in similar conditions of production and communication of identities, act daily to reshape their everyday conditions, reconstructing the power relations they are experiencing. Moreover, traditional ethnographic engagement is what is needed to make sense of the narrative and identity content of the both the private and public digital territories of social relations in the age of precariousness.

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in work but also in personal concerns.

Every Day Matters

Ivor Southwood

A common phrase heard around Toyota is "Before we build cars, we build people."¹

Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe.²

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Is there a name for that sub-genre of advertising which is aimed not at consumers, but at producers? I shall call it workplace propaganda: the mission statements, smiling faces and inspirational slogans adorning walls and screensavers, and the inspirational messages placed by photocopiers and in kitchens and toilets, chivvying the employee along on her daily journey from entrance to workstation to inbox, filling those between-spaces where the mind might wander. These materials comprise a script to be read and enacted within the workplace, presenting a one-sided and largely fictional account of work as intrinsically good and a place of happiness and togetherness.

Alongside these formal texts, the directors of this corporate script demand contributions from staff which must appear spontaneous and freely given, through reams of informal, self-generated material: team-building sessions, emails, conversations, body language, all authenticated by individual personalities and experiences³. Imperceptibly, unconsciously, the actors come to believe in the roles they are playing, while any less than enthusiastic cast members can be identified and removed or, more likely, remove themselves from the stage.

I witnessed an exhibition of such workplace propaganda in situ during three weeks of part-time work emptying bins at the office of financial services company Legal & General. The space was a veritable gallery of posters, pictures and quotations in various fonts and sizes, startling in their excessive cheerfulness and colourful detail.

I was employed by an agency contracted by a facilities company hired by L&G, and not having the status of a proper employee (signified by the red sweater I was given to wear, to distinguish me from the office workers), was able to observe the workplace to some extent as an outsider. Indeed, in the absence of any communication with the admin staff my un-

¹ Jeffrey Liker, *The Toyota Way – 14 Management Principles from the World's Greatest Manufacturer* (McGraw Hill, 2004), p182.

² Blaise Pascal, cited by Louis Althusser in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (Monthly Review Press, 2001 [1971]), p114.

³ For a study of this form of "emotional labour" see Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (University of California Press, 2003 [1983]).

derstanding of their duties was shaped entirely by the visual material surrounding them. My impressions were usually fleeting as I had to keep moving, collecting sacks of takeaway cups, food packaging and discarded paperwork, but on one occasion my usual four-hour shift was extended and a rare lunch break gave me an opportunity to sit in the large collective area on the ground floor and begin to conduct a close reading of this ambient discourse.

The pillar behind me was decorated with conversational quotes: "I wouldn't say there was any stress. It's just the challenges and demands of each day." "You could change anything in a day, you could achieve anything in a day. It's what you put into it." "My manager said good morning and asked about my journey to work." A statement seemingly taken from a survey read: "6% of employees were happy because a colleague had made them laugh."

Similar material was wrapped around the other pillars in the room. Even my own job was included, in a way which, like the previous quotes, evoked a sense of familial warmth and everyone looking out for each other. "The cleaner made me happy today. He always makes an effort and is always a happy, lovely man."

This last statement was particularly interesting given the outsourcing of the cleaning staff, and also because the cleaner's infectious mood — or rather, someone's assertion about it, based upon his actions — was associated with his always making an effort. I wondered whether the cleaner's own views had been sought on his apparent happiness.

The foyer display was explained as follows: the trademarked motto underlining Legal & General's umbrella logo is "every day matters". This play on words has the advantage of being easily flipped from an advertising slogan reminding potential customers of their insurance or pension needs into a mantra reminding employees of their constant duty to the company. Using this phrase as its starting point, over the course of a day in 2011 the company's staff were observed and interviewed, presumably either by an in-house or external marketing team, for a project entitled "One Day". Soundbites were obtained from compliant employees and then used to sell a particular version of the business.

This exercise might then be seen as the seed of a corporate narrative which then spread like a sort of foliage through the glassy, open-plan space of the building. This narrative was literally multi-layered: it operated across floors and between departments, in different settings and different forms, with some images and phrases being widely replicated and some appearing unique and 'handmade'. The "One Day" project was crucial because it gave the great corporate narrative an apparent basis in truth, as if the story it told emanated not from a boardroom or marketing suite, but from the staff themselves.

On each floor desks were arranged into 'pods' representing different departmental teams. There were no enclosed offices, just glass-walled meeting rooms. The open-plan layout abolished privacy, leaving everyone visible, even during meetings, and giving an impression of transparent, horizontal collaboration. On closer inspection, however, it seemed that the old-fashioned hierarchical authority of the looming manager had been displaced or dispersed into the endless charts and posters which adorned every vertical surface and served as constant reminders of the company and its expectations. These charts were the boss of everyone, including the people who created them.

The texts seemed to blend into each other, creating an uninterrupted flow. One noticeboard was covered by an elaborate mural depicting a landscape populated by figures emitting self-help thought-bubbles. Another was decorated with a collage of photos showing people or moments of personal significance to team members, all imprinted with the ubiquitous words

“every day matters”. Among the nights out and football team colours, an ultrasound image of an unborn baby had been duly stamped with the company motto.

The imagery had some characteristics in common with the management technique of ‘visual control’. The three principles “People, performance, continuous improvement” were much in evidence, hinting at the influence of ‘lean management’ and the so-called Toyota Way, with its quasi-holistic and highly visual approach; but it was also noticeable that rather than physical processes or even customer service tasks, these visual cues referred almost exclusively to the employees themselves, as if they were the products on the assembly line.

One of the dictums of the Toyota Way is “use visual control so no problems are hidden”⁴. Here, however, it might be more

The imagery had some characteristics in common with the management technique of ‘visual control’. The three principles “people, performance, continuous improvement” were much in evidence, hinting at the influence of ‘lean management’ and the so-called Toyota Way

accurate to say that visual control ensures that *all problems are hidden*. If this plethora of visual material can be read as a kind of narrative, then an interpretation of this narrative in terms of its ideological function might see it as providing what Fredric Jameson has called an imaginary solution to a real social contradiction⁵. The ultimate priority of the company is not happiness, fairness or social responsibility, as proclaimed on its walls, but profit, and labour is imposed on its employees on this basis. Similarly, even if staff are genuinely helpful to customers, the company exists to make money out of those customers. While this reality is perfectly obvious to all involved, if it were openly acknowledged the interpersonal production line would grind to a halt. The constellation of texts can be read in this way as a repressive apparatus.

The Toyota Way or lean production business model might in fact, more than any literary novel, be the quintessential contemporary manifestation of Jameson’s definition of an ideological narrative. Toyota workers are famously ‘empowered’ to stop the production line not to demand higher pay but for reasons of quality control; the company’s twin goals of ‘continuous improvement’ and ‘respect for people’ conveniently obscure the fact that in business terms continuous improvement means getting more out of people for less. The post-crash era of recession and malignant growth has given this harmonising fiction a harsher edge.

Various themes were involved in effecting the imaginary resolution and smoothing of conflict in this particular workplace. Firstly, the felt-tip drawings and awards for staff achievements, together with the open-plan workstations and areas for consumption serviced by an outsourced support staff, gave the place a school classroom-like atmosphere, where along with technical skills the correct conduct and attitude were learned and reinforced. Related to this were the motifs of game-playing and cartoon characters. Team-building exercises were visible everywhere, and many teams had given themselves dynamic names: one, “The Marvels”, displayed pictures of themselves re-imagined as superheroes. Another department had adopted the identities of Pokemon characters. By the lift on the ground floor stood a life-size ‘Skyman’ action figure, from a smartphone game promoting the company’s products. With his sleek armour and aspirational jet pack, this character also represented the ideal caffeinated, target-ready employee. These elements hinted at a nascent gamification of the workplace

⁴ Liker, *The Toyota Way*, pp149–158.

⁵ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Routledge, 2002 [1981]), pp62–64.

which may or may not yet be formalised⁶. Finally, the portrayal of work as an aspirational game with a reward of happiness which anyone can win with the right attitude brought it into the orbit of positive psychology, as documented by Barbara Ehrenreich, in which self-belief is deemed all-powerful and social problems are reduced to personal failings⁷.

Back in the foyer, a kind of mission statement was narrated over eight framed wall posters in the form of a journey; specifically “the journey to outstanding”. From the predictable starting point that “every day matters”, via various bullet points the destination of this journey was “a great place to work”. On my bin-emptying route I had already noticed a grid of text entitled “Our Behaviours” pinned up in various places. This, I now realised, referred to a stage in this corporate journey-narrative headed “delivering a great performance”⁸.

Similar performative employment regimes have been installed in other workplaces; for instance the takeaway food chain Prêt A Manger attracted some attention last year for its so-called “Prêt behaviours”⁹. Here, six official Legal & General behaviours were stipulated, including the double-edged command “lead like you mean it” – which, the accompanying text emphasised, applied to all employees, whether nominal leaders or not. This particular behaviour was elaborated as follows: “Be visible, communicative and inspirational. Commit to growth and show your team and colleagues that what they do impacts the business. Communicate our strategy, take ownership for your results, and share our successes.” “Take ownership” was another key phrase, and reappeared as a “behaviour” in its own right.

This behavioural code was given absolute jurisdiction over its open-planned subjects through its use as a formal disciplinary instrument. “Our six behaviours now form a key part of your Performance Management review. ... how you behave will influence your potential for reward and career progression.” Under the positive descriptors, a number of “derailers” were also listed for each category: “behaviours that someone would be expected to improve upon”. These included undermining or being negative about the growth of the business, and not taking an interest in the performance review itself.

Anyone looking to progress along the career superhighway and avoid derailment is therefore advised to attend to these signs directing their inner “journey”, a narrative which moves from the corporate to the personal, *making the personal productive*. The “outstanding” (i.e. totally blending in) individual will “take ownership” of that journey-narrative, and come to see it not just as something of her own making, but as the making of her.

6 While sales work has arguably always been gamified by bonuses and league tables, a more formal and technological gamification of work is gaining prominence, fuelled by increasing precarity and the lessening intrinsic value of employment. For the purveyors of gamification misery and insecurity constitute a promotional opportunity: see for instance an article by Adena DeMonte, marketing director of Badgeville (a company specialising in workplace gamification), entitled “More Workers Hate Their Jobs in 2013” (13 November 2013): <http://badgeville.com/2013/11/13/more-workers-hate-their-jobs-in-2013>. This digital gamification might be seen as just the latest form of virtual control. In her discussion of “performativity” in *Contract and Contagion* (Minor Compositions, 2012), Angela Mitropoulos says of Pascal’s aphorism quoted above, “It is prudent to believe, or to act as if one does, *because it is necessary to play the game*.” (p41).

7 See Barbara Ehrenreich, *Smile Or Die* (Granta, 2009), especially pp97–122, pp147–176.

8 The “Our Behaviours” document can be viewed online at http://csr2011.legalandgeneralgroupcsr.com/servicepages/downloads/files/behaviours_booklet.pdf

9 See Paul Myerscough, “Short Cuts”, *London Review of Books*, Vol.35, No.1, 3 January 2013. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n01/paul-myerscough/short-cuts> These behaviours were also listed on the Prêt website but have since been removed.

Sentirsi a casa ai tempi di Facebook

Tiziano Bonini

Safia¹ è nata in Algeria, è cresciuta un po' lì e un po' in Francia. I suoi compagni di scuola sono algerini e francesi. Ha studiato Scienze politiche a Parigi e ora insegna francese a Milano. I suoi genitori sono tornati in Algeria, una sorella vive in Canada, questa estate si riuniranno tutti per una vacanza in Turchia. Safia usava Facebook, poi lo scorso anno ha deciso di cancellare il proprio profilo e uscirne. Quando le ho chiesto il perché, ha risposto che non le andava che i suoi amici in Algeria vedessero com'era la sua vita in Italia, le foto delle feste a cui partecipava: "Ho una vita normale, ma se vado ad una festa e qualcuno mette su FB una foto di me mentre mi diverto e mi lascio un po' andare mi dispiacerebbe se qualche mio amico algerino ci rimanesse male". Safia ha amici musulmani, cattolici, atei, mentre lei è laica. Non riuscendo a tenere separati su FB i due mondi a cui appartiene (Safia non conosceva bene le funzioni di editing del proprio profilo che le avrebbero permesso di escludere alcuni amici dalla visione di alcune parti delle proprie pagine), quello algerino e quello "occidentale", Safia ha deciso di uscirne, per vivere in pace la propria vita senza sentire su di sé gli sguardi lontani ma vigili del mondo d'origine. Goffman direbbe che Safia aveva un problema di "controllo della ribalta", non riuscendo a "segregare il proprio pubblico":

"È necessario sottolineare che, come per l'attore è utile escludere dal pubblico quelle persone che lo possono vedere in un'altra rappresentazione – diversa e contrastante –, così gli è anche utile escludere dal pubblico coloro davanti ai quali in passato ha rappresentato uno spettacolo contrastante con quello attuale. (...) L'attore opera una segregazione del pubblico in modo tale che gli individui che lo vedono in uno dei suoi ruoli non lo vedano mentre ne incarna un altro (controllo della ribalta)"²

Gli amici di FB sono una rappresentazione controllata della nostra rete amicale, una messa in scena delle nostre relazioni, ma non rappresentano la nostra effettiva rete di amici né il grado di intimità tra noi ed essi. Il ruolo di questa équipe di amici (secondo Goffman, l'équipe è "un complesso di individui che collaborano sul piano drammaturgico"³) è quello della compagnia di attori che asseconda i voleri del regista, ovvero quello di collaborare positivamente alla riuscita della messa in scena, confermandone il copione e approvandone le battute. Facebook rappresenta oggi uno degli strumenti più potenti a disposizione del singolo per la messa in scena di sé stesso, la narrazione, manutenzione e propaganda di sé. È quello che

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1 Il nome è chiaramente di finzione. L'intervista a "Safia" invece risale al luglio del 2010.

2 Ervin Goffman, *La vita quotidiana come rappresentazione* (1959), trad. it. Il Mulino, Bologna 2007, p. 159.

3 Ivi, p. 97.

Zizi Papacharissi chiama il “networked self”⁴, un Sé connesso costantemente con una rete di contatti sociali, che rappresentano non soltanto un pubblico di fronte al quale mostrarsi ma anche un vero e proprio capitale sociale sul quale far leva, come hanno dimostrato Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield e Vitak⁵. Sempre secondo Papacharissi i social media sono strumenti performativi, che permettono uno “storytelling” della propria identità⁶. Facebook permette di controllare la scena (editando il mio profilo posso definire al millimetro i confini della ribalta, ovvero scegliere chi ammettere o meno alla mia personale rappresentazione) molto meglio che nella vita reale. Su FB è più facile dare coerenza all’immagine di sé, perché siamo “pa-

Il mantenimento degli affetti a lunga distanza è passato attraverso mezzi differenti, cambiando forma e frequenza, ma non sostanza. I social media si vanno a sommare a tutti i media precedenti e amplificano l’effetto di riduzione delle distanze

droni a casa nostra”, abbiamo il controllo totale del copione che mettiamo in scena.

Secondo la sociologa americana Alice Marwick i social media sono tecnologie della soggettività che insegnano agli utenti

come avere successo e raggiungere la popolarità nella società di consumo postmoderna. Marwick afferma criticamente che i social media educano gli utenti alla pubblicizzazione del proprio sé, alla manutenzione della propria reputazione digitale attraverso tecniche di auto-promozione e micro-celebrità. Strategie che spingono gli utenti a pensare se stessi in termini di brand da promuovere e controllare, attraverso “la creazione sui social media di una versione elettronica del proprio sé strettamente editata e controllata”⁷. Marwick parla di “edited Self” per descrivere il tipo di identità che si costruisce sui social media. Prendendo a prestito alcune categorie foucaultiane, Marwick sostiene che “i social media sono diventati degli strumenti attraverso i quali le persone si auto-governano”⁸.

Se qualcuno posta una foto di noi o un commento che non ci piace possiamo immediatamente rimuoverlo, assicurando noi stessi sulla coerenza del racconto che vogliamo fornire al mondo. Nella vita quotidiana invece è più facile che il nostro copione venga interrotto da imprevisti e interferenze⁹. Normalmente quindi, è più facile mettersi in scena su FB che nella vita reale.

Nel caso di Safia invece accadeva il contrario. La sua doppia identità, europea e algerina, aveva bisogno di due copioni per due pubblici differenti. Il problema di Safia è lo stesso di molti migranti o figli di migranti che sono iscritti a FB. Per tutti coloro che se ne sono andati, Facebook e gli altri social networks sono allo stesso tempo una grande risorsa per mantenere i contatti con gli amici lasciati a casa, ma anche un modo, molto contemporaneo, di alimentare le nuove relazioni strette nel paese che li ha accolti.

4 Zizi Papacharissi (ed) *A Networked self: identity, community, and culture on social network sites*, Londra, Routledge, 2010.

5 Nicole B. Ellison, Cliff Lampe, Charles Steinfield, and Jessica Vitak, “With a Little Help From My Friends. How Social Network Sites Affect Social Capital Processes”, in Zizi Papacharissi (a cura di) *op. cit.*, 2010, pp. 124-145.

6 Zizi Papacharissi, “Without You, I’m Nothing: Performances of the Self on Twitter”, *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 2012, pp. 1989–2006.

7 Alice Marwick, *Status Update. Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*, Yale, Yale University press, p. 13.

8 Ivi, p. 11.

9 Cfr. Tse Hei-man, “An Ethnography of Social Network in Cyberspace: The Facebook Phenomenon”, in *The Hong Kong Anthropologist*, II, 1, 2008, pp. 53-77.

I migranti hanno i piedi in due scarpe: da un lato la nuova identità che si vanno costruendo con la nuova vita all'estero, la ricerca dell'integrazione, della comprensione; dall'altro l'identità di partenza, che a seconda dei contesti passa continuamente in primo piano o sullo sfondo. FB è un'arma a doppio taglio per la messa in scena di queste due identità. Alcuni, come Safia, preferiscono negoziare off-line le proprie identità e non pubblicizzare la propria sfera personale. Altri accettano di mettere in scena se stessi per entrambi i pubblici, ma la loro performance on line è controllata e attentamente costruita, per non urtare la sensibilità di uno dei due pubblici. Molti, come Marco Paulo Taruc, un immigrato filippino negli Stati Uniti¹⁰, usano due lingue diverse, quella del paese ospite e quella del paese d'origine, a seconda del pubblico a cui si vogliono rivolgere. Nel caso di Taruc l'inglese viene usato per condividere con gli amici americani gli aspetti più privati della propria vita quotidiana e i propri gusti musicali (un video dei Green Day), mentre il filippino serve per comunicare e commentare con gli amici rimasti nelle Filippine o con la diaspora filippino-americana, le notizie d'attualità e politica del proprio paese.

Turuc ha seicentotrentacinque amici, la metà circa dei quali con nomi non filippini, quindi se ne deduce che ha relazioni più o meno stabili al di fuori della propria comunità (anche se è sposato ad una filippina come lui). A confermarcelo sono anche i commenti ai suoi post, che provengono non soltanto da amici filippini (nel maggiore dei casi) ma anche da americani. Turuc passa costantemente da un continente all'altro, da un'identità all'altra, commentando le foto del parente filippino che si è appena sposato, il video di una manifestazione di protesta a Manila o la vittoria dei Los Angeles Lakers nella finale di basket Nba. Le pareti (il Wall di FB) virtuali della casa di Turuc su FB sono come quelle insegne elettroniche ai bordi dei campi di calcio che cambiano pubblicità ogni cinque secondi. Sono pareti mobili, temporanee, il cui decoro cambia a seconda degli ospiti. Se Turuc vuole sentirsi a casa nelle Filippine le sue pareti mostreranno prodotti culturali filippini, se invece vuole sentirsi a casa negli Stati Uniti, basterà aggiornare il wall personale e addobbarlo di prodotti americani, come il video dei Green Day. Turuc dimostra di essere molto consapevole della possibilità di controllare, autogovernare, editare il proprio sé connesso.

Non abbiamo dati certi sulla quantità di immigrati che usano i social network, ed è molto scarsa la letteratura sul rapporto tra emigrazione e social media — un territorio di ricerca ancora vergine e molto fertile — ma basta inserire la parola "immigration" in Facebook e saltano fuori quasi settemila gruppi (alcuni nomi: "Ebrei messicani", "Haitiani in Connecticut", "Indiani all'estero", "Colombiani a Londra", "Israeliani nel mondo" ecc.). Gli immigrati, come scrive Gonzalez sul blog "Feetintwoworlds.org", "usano FB come una piattaforma transnazionale per costruire reti di connazionali che vivono all'estero come loro, discutere con loro i problemi del loro paese d'origine, mantenere i contatti con le persone care lasciate a casa, promuovere cause politiche e generare il cambiamento"¹¹.

Arlene Garcia, un'ecuadoriana di cinquantasei anni che vive nel Queens da diciotto anni, ricorda i giorni in cui comunicare con la propria famiglia era un'odissea: "Chiamavo mia madre una volta alla settimana da un telefono pubblico, mia sorella forse una volta al mese. Mi tenevano informata sulle vite dei miei cugini, zii, parenti e amici. Adesso è cambiato tutto.

¹⁰ Ho osservato l'attività Facebook del profilo pubblico di Turuc (è un nome di finzione) per tutto il mese di giugno 2010.

¹¹ Maibe Gonzalez Fuentes, "Immigrants use Facebook to reconnect with family and issues back home", pubblicato il 9/09/09 Cfr. <http://news.feetintwoworlds.org/2009/09/09/immigrants-use-facebook-to-reconnect-with-family-and-issues-back-home/>

Ora in Ecuador chi può è su FB e non facciamo altro che parlare e chattare tutto il tempo. È come averli vicini”¹². “Io continuo a parlare al telefono con mia madre, ma prima di FB ero preoccupata di perdermi la crescita dei miei nipotini. Ora li vedo crescere seguendo le loro foto e mi sembra di perdermi meno cose”, dice Andrea Moreno, una venezuelana di trentasette anni emigrata a New York prima che le sue gemelle avessero dei figli¹³.

Il mantenimento degli affetti a lunga distanza è passato attraverso mezzi differenti, cambiando forma e frequenza, ma non sostanza. I social media si vanno a sommare a tutti i media precedenti e amplificano l’effetto di riduzione delle distanze.

L’incorporamento dei social media all’interno delle pratiche quotidiane ridefinisce le identità sociali e i confini spaziali. Ci si sente a casa tra le pareti virtuali del proprio profilo Facebook mentre si chatta con la sorella a migliaia di chilometri di distanza. Sfere private e sfere pubbliche sono state completamente ridefinite dalla diffusione dei nuovi media sociali.

Possiamo sostenere che il mix di nuove correnti migratorie, globalizzazione e nuovi media sta modificando la forma, i confini, la configurazione spaziale e la fertilità (il tasso di rigenerazione) delle sfere pubbliche nazionali. Grazie ai nuovi media, piccole cellule, piccole spore e frammenti di queste sfere pubbliche si sono staccati dalle sfere-madre localizzate su ogni territorio nazionale, e sono riapparsi a centinaia di chilometri da esse, continuando però a nutrirsi di e partecipare a gli stessi temi discussi all’interno delle sfere-madre.

L’idea di sfera pubblica nazionale è stata rimappata dai movimenti dei migranti a tal punto che non insiste più su una singola area geografica ma su una comunità dispersa su una varietà di luoghi tenuta insieme dai mezzi di comunicazione. Roger Rouse, studiando la diaspora aguilillana (una regione messicana) negli Stati Uniti si è convinto che “attraverso i continui andirivieni, il telefono cellulare e altri mezzi di comunicazione a distanza, i residenti della comunità aguilillana sono capaci di mantenere attivi i legami con i loro cari lontani duemila miglia tanto quanto lo sono i legami che intrattengono con i loro vicini di casa”¹⁴.

¹² *Ibidem*

¹³ *Ibidem*

¹⁴ Roger Rouse, “Mexican migration and the social space of postmodernism”, in *Diaspora*, I, 1, 1991, p. 9.

Zones of Depletion

Soenke Zehle

1. *Common Exhaustion.* Depletion is more than a term, it offers a way to map a terrain, to delineate a horizon from within which to articulate a politics of depletion. Traversing an open semantic field to sketch a cartography of the political, the use of depletion as a shifting vantage point to survey sites and situations of physical and psychosocial exhaustion opens up new modes of relation, suggesting that we translate shared (semantic) properties into technologies of the common as we connect the exhaustion of resources to the depression that follows the work of the soul and the cellularization of the work day. Depletion is where the common begins, in sites to which no-one lays claims because they have been exhausted. Exhaustion leaves fragments, ruins, waste, its ethico-political economies emerge after production, after use, after work. Tracking the abandonment of technologies rather than economies of abundance, depletion shares sensibilities with steampunk, survivalism, and subterranean materialisms of the encounter. Developing at the edge of statist imaginaries, depletion is here to stay¹.

2. *Craft Takes Command.* The small-scale artisan economies special to maker cultures illustrate the difficulty of matching the neoindustrial imagination of making with the scale-free mesh of molecular matters. At worst, such practices 'integrate the point of view of manual labour back into a sociomorphism derived entirely from nonmanual understandings of labour activity'². Initiated in the context of a global venture capital scene, maker networks call attention to the becoming-machinic of craft under the conditions of algorithmic capitalism³. But we can articulate this return of gesture beyond a contemplative materialism, including the 'forgotten space' of global supply chains, the recursive indexicality of financial markets, and the lifestream logistics sustaining the user-as-product paradigms that have turned aesthetic experience into a metamodel of commercial innovation⁴. We can use it, that is, to engage the enclosure of experience.

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xm:lab.org

1 On matters of exhaustion, also see Carolin Wiedemann and Soenke Zehle (eds), *Depletion Design: A Glossary of Network Ecologies*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2012, <http://dd.xm:lab.org>

2 See McKenzie Wark, 'A More Lovingly Made World', *Cultural Studies Review* 19.1 (2013): 302. Available at: <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/csrj/index>

3 See Chris Anderson, *Makers: The New Industrial Revolution*, New York: Crown Business, 2012; Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, Yale: Yale University Press, 2008.

4 See Allan Sekula and Noël Burch, 'The Forgotten Space: Notes for a Film', *New Left Review* 69 (May-June 2011), <http://newleftreview.org/11/69/allan-sekula-noel-burch-the-forgotten-space>.

3. *Electric Dreams*. The current shift toward cloud-based computing, we are told, will turn computing into something like electricity, a utility, possibly a future public good⁵. And if software is the steam engine of our time, what we might learn from steampunk is what it means to dwell on the threshold of an electrical age, of using one technology as the reflexive boundary of another. A term created in 1987 by K. W. Jeter to describe the alternate-history, retro-technology works written by Tim Powers, James Blaylock, and himself (Jeter was a close friend of Philipp K. Dick's and author of three sequels to *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), steampunk has evolved into a stable register of global maker networks, rooted in an ethos of design and creativity which acknowledges the humanly physical, that which we can understand with our fingers⁶. Whenever it reaches beyond rummaging the global wasteyards of our electric dreams for prototypes of the neoanalogue, steampunk shifts the focus of collaborative creation from the newness of objects to the ruins of use. Its comprehension of the death of objects (of a certain kind of objecthood) is not about the past but 'the instability and obsolescence of our own times', reminding us that 'the way that we live has already died'⁷. And even steampunk's irritating imperial nostalgia, rekindled in neo-Victorian imaginaries of a global concatenation of diy practices, contains a sober reminder of the centrality of oikopolitics to the reproduction of economic and social order in times of financialization.

4. *Pragmatist Pathos*. The return of the undead as exhausted subjects no longer capable of maintaining a social order mirrors our own exhaustion, prompting survivalist strategies as if self-organization, muted by the inscription of selves into the matrices of competitive self-optimization, can only be accessed as an instinct triggered by the fear of contagion⁸. In *The Walking Dead*, the everyday of life within a plague of apocalyptic proportions is not marked by a search for origins of crisis but the creation of structures of self-defence out of the ruins of our economic, political and social institutions. Yet the self-transcendence in the face of adversity that is the core of every ethos of self-empowerment (writ large in the current superheroism renaissance powered by comics conglomerates) appears as the sobering reordering of modes of relation, the patriarchal pathos of a violent pragmatism exploring the usefulness of remaining models of reference by assessing their capacity to meet the immediate demands of the state of exception rather than assist passages beyond survival toward a horizon of liberation: the alternative thought experiment of an order created out of contagion that does not fold contact back into contract.⁹

5. *Swerving Matter*. Whereas idealist teleologies may have found refuge in the evangelisms emanating from the former Valley of Heart's Delight, contractual thought does not survive in aleatory materialisms: in the Lucretian narrative of contagion genealogical ties only serve to tragically multiply the corpses ... there is no demand for austerity, no dream of re-foundation¹⁰. The latter offer us an a-topian thought of autonomy unrelated either to the house-

5 Nicholas Carr, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, from Edison to Google*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

6 Nick Harkaway, 'The Steampunk Movement is Good and Important', (17/03/2013), <http://harkaway.tumblr.com/post/45604944287/the-steampunk-movement-is-good-and-important>

7 Bruce Sterling, 'The User's Guide to Steampunk', *Steampunk Magazine* #5 (2008), 30-34, 33.

8 See <http://www.thewalkingdead.com/comics/the-story>.

9 Angela Mitropoulos, 'From precariousness to risk management and beyond', *ecipc.net* (2011), <http://ecipc.net/transversal/0811/mitropoulos/en>

10 Angela Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion: From Biopolitics to Oikonomia*, Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions:

hold economics that support the financialization of everything or the aesthetic economies of competitive self-optimization. Instead, the swerving matter of the accidental encounter recalls the always-present circumstance of a transitional phase in which things neither had to transpire as they did and could always turn out to be otherwise than anticipated.¹¹ And a politics of swerving matter does not suggest a retreat from a translocal horizon, quite the contrary, 'there is no local that is not already global as far as the molecules are concerned'¹². We will have to comprehend (and appreciate) anew the scale of the accidental encounter.

6. *Automating Affect*. In Spike Jonze's *Her*, artificial intelligence is above all affective intelligence, the fantasy of an automation of affective labor. From the machine, not from each other, do we learn what it is to be human, what it means to like, to share, to decide, a sobering reminder that the self is possibly just one object among others, its assumed complexity of personhood dwarfed by the power and plasticity of machinic intelligence. Does it come as a surprise that we embrace machines that offer to make the work of the self more efficient, rewarding our faith in the (capitalist) promise of linking gains in the efficiency of the labor process to higher (social) wages with the allure of the algorithmic object, prompting us to follow its protocols of self-constitution? As we long to limit the work of unfolding a self across the algorithmically designed topologies of life and labor, we have already come to love the social media machine, touching its mobile interfaces as if to nurture the cognitive and emotional development of what has already grown into one of our most significant others. And finally, the love affair between a lone user and his polyamorous operating system (whose operation assumes that the extractive economies based on the capture of experience have in fact become scale-free) offers us an image of a 'soft' corporate state, gently nudging us toward decision in the name of our own humanity¹³. If this delineate a dystopian horizon, we should instead map the sites of disappearance in the economies of loss¹⁴.

7. *Traverse Networks*. Once upon a time, the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it¹⁵. Temporarily considered a useless venture, the map of empire is now so vast that we welcome misalignments as reminders both of the craft of code and a 'soft thought' that acknowledges that algorithms themselves tend towards abstraction, infinity, or the reality of the incomputable.¹⁶ While repetitive references to server farms as the engine rooms of the digital economy end up affirming the already widespread sense of the seemingly incomprehensible complexity of its algorithmic operations, the invisibility of infrastructures is only one and at the extreme edge of a range of visibilities¹⁷. The glitch may no longer offer orientation for an antagonistic

2012, 10, 9.

11 Ibid., 20.

12 Benjamin Bratton, 'Notes on Chemistry and Urbanism', *Fulcrum* #84: Transcendence, Architecture Association of London (10/02/2014), <http://fulcrum.aaschool.ac.uk/84>

13 The market for paternalism: Nudge unit leaves kludge unit', *The Economist* (07/02/2014), <http://www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2014/02/market-paternalism>

14 Cesare Casarino, 'Universalism of the Common', *diacritics* 39.4 (2009): 162-176,

15 Jorge Luis Borges, 'On Exactitude in Science', in: *Collected Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges*, trans. Andrew Hurley, London: Allen Lane / Penguin Press, 1998, 704-5, 705. On Google Earth, see Clement Valla, 'The Universal Texture', *Rhizome* (31/07/2012), <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2012/jul/31/universal-texture>.

16 Luciana Parisi and Stamati Portanova, 'Soft Thought (In Architecture and Choreography)', *Computational Culture* 1 (2011), <http://computationalculture.net/article/soft-thought>

17 Brian Larkin, 'The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013), 327-43,

politics, but it helps map the sites through which the enclosure of experience proceeds.

7. *Scaling Sense*. Whether in the name of a search for an infancy of experience or the poesis of collaborative constitution, we continue to make the common of experience the source of retreat and renewal. Sense is at the core of experience. As we follow (and allow) the folding of the algorithmic into experience, we witness the end of objecthood as we know it; not as the autonomy of 'smart' objects but as the dispersal of the technical object into the processuality of networks¹⁸. Maybe we can learn from the dispersal of the algorithmic machine how to figure (give a body to) a political subject whose autonomy is rooted neither exclusively in its status as (liberal) bearer of rights nor in an ownership of the self based on the comprehension of the gestures of self-constitution as work. As each body is already multiple, a gestural ensemble whose provisional unity is provided by deliberately choreographed narratives and the ongoing work of the self increasingly structured by algorithmic prompts from across our own networks, so the idea of collective existence is no longer an alien aggregate, it is part of what we already are. (However, if the elaboration of common futures were a more widely shared desire we would not continue to struggle with the absence of solidarity.) Rereading the late Stuart Hall affirmation of a 'will to connect', there is a sense of the need to explore the making of networks as element of procedural literacies that only the act of making contains and communicates: gesture is what the body does to itself¹⁹. Above and beyond yet another injunction to enlarge the space of the self, the making of networks scales our senses, and we'll soon have to figure out what to do with theses sensibilities. Maybe we'll start by experiencing a heightened sense of the local, identifying the registers of the global that constitute its economic, cultural, and social architecture. The extent of our connectedness is overwhelming, but that should not be what exhaust us.

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18 Erich Hoerl, 'The Artificial Intelligence of Sense: The History of Sense and Technology after Jean-Luc Nancy (by way of Gilbert Simondon)', trans. Arne De Boever, *Parrhesia* 17 (2013): 11–24, http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia17/parrhesia17_horl.pdf.

19 Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies', in Lawrence Grossberg et al. (eds), *Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge 1992, 277–85, 278.



That's the reason why we are working so hard. Because we have the opportunity and we have the freedom to read a newspaper for 5 minutes if we want to.



I think 99% of the people - they come here and when they walk through the turning door, they get a smile on their faces.

Precarietà e spazi nella società digitale

intervista a Carlo Formenti

D. Nella call supponiamo che uno degli elementi caratterizzanti la connettività sia la ridefinizione dei “confini” in termini spaziali ma anche tra produzione e consumo, identitari e relazionali, di accesso alla conoscenza e in definitiva di potere. Quale è la sua opinione e che cosa ne pensa della ridefinizione dei confini?

R. Francamente non credo che il tema dei confini possa essere affrontato in termini tanto larghi e astratti: in molti degli esempi che fate nella vostra domanda il termine viene usato in modo quasi esclusivamente metaforico rispetto al significato originario di barriera spaziale, geopolitica fra popoli, nazioni o etnie. E spesso tale uso (che non di rado diviene cattivo uso) metaforico è tale da generare confusione più che aprire nuovi orizzonti di conoscenza. Se, per esempio, parlo di indebolimento del confine fra produzione e consumo, rischio in primo luogo di dare per scontata una originaria differenza assoluta fra le due sfere, laddove già Marx, elaborando il concetto di consumo produttivo, aveva messo in luce la loro relazione di reciprocità circolare. Credo che sarebbe molto più utile regionare sulla specificità che le attività di consumo produttivo vengono assumendo nel contesto delle trasformazioni tecnologiche, produttive e finanziarie indotte dalla comunicazione su piattaforme digitali: come il lavoro gratuito non percepito come tale, o l’appropriazione capitalistica dei processi di cooperazione sociale in rete (basta che non si aggiunga l’aggettivo “spontanei” perché di spontaneo hanno ben poco, nel senso, come ho già più volte messo in luce, che hardware e software incorporano modelli di relazione che pre determinano in larga misura forme, finalità e contenuti della cooperazione produttiva). Ancora più depistante l’uso del termine confine se riferito al tema delle identità, infatti, mentre un approccio topologico all’argomento si giustifica dal punto di vista della teoria psicanalitica (le topiche di Freud e Lacan), credo vada rifiutato apriori se associato alla concezione dell’individuo come soggetto isolato, atomo in relazione con altri atomi, da un punto di vista marxista, i confini identitari non esistono per definizione dal momento che ogni identità è apriori un prodotto sociale, un nodo di relazioni, quindi si tratta di analizzare l’evoluzione di tali relazioni e non dei “confini” identitari, impresa che lascio volentieri agli psicologi comportamentisti e agli svolazzi del politicamente corretto. Quanto alla problematica dei confini nella tematica della relazione sapere/potere, qui la mia distanza dall’approccio foucaultiano – oggi egemone – è assoluta. Foucault ha un’idea metafisica del potere (derivata dalla volontà di potenza in Nietzsche) concepito come una sorta di entità trascendentale (ancorché microfisicamente diffusa) che non viene ricondotta ai rapporti di forza fra le classi sociali né a nessun’altro fondamento materiale. Le sue genealogie sono storie delle idee, e fondano una visione “costruttivista” (l’invenzione della clinica,

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ecc) ideliasta e antistoricista che non posso condividere e che non credo aiuti a comprendere la realtà contemporanea. Quanto al tema del sapere, mi limito a esprimere il mio dissenso in merito all'illusione che le nuove tecnologie avrebbero abbattuto le barriere di accesso al sapere rendendolo virtualmente accessibile a tutti: diventa accessibile ciò che serve ad aumentare (e a disciplinare!) la forza produttiva del lavoro sociale, il resto resta saldamente nelle mani nel sistema di dominio, controllo e sfruttamento.

D. La call sollecita la riflessione su connettività e nuove forme di lavoro e su come la tecnologia mobile incanala la soggettività. Come definirebbe una serie di aspetti tipici del rapporto tra connettività e lavoro quali accelerazione, apparente ubiquità, de-spazializzazione, operare multitasking, cooperazione volontaria e coattiva, formattazione del linguaggio, precarizzazione delle relazioni. Si tratta principalmente di potenza o di impoverimento, e per chi? O siamo di fronte ad un ibrido (magari mostruoso) dove convivono entrambi?

R. L'elenco che fate nella domanda contiene già, in un certo senso, la risposta: accelerazione, despaializzazione, "ubiquità", multitasking, standardizzazione dei linguaggi, ecc. sono tutte forme di ciò che ho in vari testi definito con il termine taylorismo digitale. Sono, cioè, il marchio di uno spaventoso depauperamento/spossessamento della forza lavoro da parte del capitale digitale. Qui la potenza sta tutta dalla parte del capitale, è la potenza del general intellect che appare totalmente incorporata nell'hardware e nel software (riconoscere il carattere di "macchina" dei codici informatici è di fondamentale importanza!). Ecco perché la tesi operaista del rovesciamento dei rapporti di forza fra lavoro morto e lavoro vivo è una mera idiozia, fondata sull'ignoranza totale di come opera il "capitale fisso" dell'era digitale, e sull'ingenua accettazione delle tesi dei guru della new economy "alternativa" (open source, ecc.) che teorizzano la "autonomia" dei knowledge workers dal capitale (tesi miseramente naufragate di fronte ai processi di riconcentrazione del comando seguiti alla crisi). Inutile spendere troppe parole sul modo in cui i "cognitari" sono stati letteralmente asfaltati dalla crisi, con una minoranza cooptata nella stanza dei bottoni e la grande maggioranza ricacciata nelle catene di subfonitura delle app o, peggio, nelle fila del terziario arretrato. Quanto alle idee su convivenza, ambiguità ecc. di subordinazione e libertà che caratterizzerebbero le condizioni dei lavoratori autonomi di seconda e terza generazione, mi pare che ormai siano gli stessi teorici che se ne sono occupati a riconoscere di averne sopravvalutato le capacità di autonomia; più interessante il concetto di ibridazione se applicato alle forme miste di sfruttamento messe in atto dal capitale: oggi le tecnologie di rete consentono, al tempo stesso, di adottare le strategie di dominio, gestione e controllo tipiche del vecchio lavoro a domicilio sia quelle tipiche della grande fabbrica fordista; la nuova estrazione di plusvalore si presenta dunque, ad un tempo, con i tratti dell'estrazione di plusvalore assoluto e con quelli dell'estrazione di plusvalore relativo.

D. Una possibile chiave interpretativa della connettività (ad esempio quella di [lo Squaderno n.13](#)) è infatti quella che mette in evidenza l'ambivalenza dei fenomeni connettivi, che tende a non disgiungere i due piani. In ogni caso, la connettività segna irreversibilmente il cambiamento verso ciò che da più parti è stata definita la svolta del capitalismo informazionale e finanziarizzato, e verso modelli più sofisticati e interiorizzati di sfruttamento. A partire da questo assunto come si possono dare oggi i processi di coalizione e le forme di solidarietà?

R. Ho già contestato l'uso del termine ambivalenza rispondendo alla precedente domanda, per cui non intendo ripetermi. Se il nuovo capitalismo finanziarizzato e digitale (i due aspetti, come ho cercato di mostrare nei miei ultimi due libri, sono strettamente intrecciati: il digitale ha potuto conquistare con fulminea rapidità il controllo di produzione, reti commerciali,

reti sociali e vita relazionale solo grazie alle bolle speculative degli anni 90, e il processo di finanziarizzazione ha subito un'accelerazione esponenziale grazie all'integrazione globale delle reti di scambio di titoli e monete virtuali) appare in grado di mettere in atto, come dite voi, modelli più sofisticati e interiorizzati di sfruttamento, non ha molto senso interrogarsi sulla possibilità di mettere in atto inediti processi di coalizione e forme di solidarietà; o meglio: non ha senso interrogarsi in merito a tale possibilità a partire prevalentemente o esclusivamente da quegli strati di forza lavoro che più di altri sono al centro di tali nuove forme di sfruttamento. Chi adotta questa logica sceglie evidentemente di affrontare l'analisi della composizione di classe a partire dalla composizione tecnica invece che dalla composizione politica. L'idea (degnata del vecchio materialismo

Credo che sarebbe molto più utile ragionare sulla specificità che le attività di consumo produttivo vengono assumendo nel contesto delle trasformazioni tecnologiche, produttive e finanziarie indotte dalla comunicazione su piattaforme digitali: come il lavoro gratuito non percepito come tale, o l'appropriazione capitalistica dei processi di cooperazione sociale in rete

storico e dialettico di staliniana memoria) è che l'analisi debba partire dal livello più avanzato di sviluppo delle forze produttive perché è là che, inevitabilmente, la contraddizione fra forze produttive e rapporti di produzione si dispiega al livello più elevato. Peccato che l'intera storia del movimento operaio abbia smentito questo dogma, affidando, di volta in volta, il ruolo di avanguardia a contadini, operai non qualificati, migranti, ecc abbia cioè privilegiato sempre la composizione politica sulla composizione tecnica di classe. Il punto di rottura è sempre là dove si lotta. E oggi la composizione globale del proletariato vede momenti di ricomposizione nelle grandi masse del nuovo lavoro industriale in Paesi come Cina, India, Brasile e Sudafrica, nelle lotte di contadini e indigeni andini e ammazzonici, e nelle lotte di quel terziario arretrato che, in Europa e negli Stati Uniti sembra assumere il ruolo che fu quello delle fabbriche fino a pochi decenni fa. Quindi anche gli strati dei nuovi lavori, che trovano serie difficoltà a superare le proprie condizioni di frammentazione/dispersione è a quelle esperienze che devono guardare, non per copiarle, ma per apportare il loro autonomo e specifico contributo a un processo di ricomposizione del proletariato globale che sarà inevitabilmente lungo e difficile e, presumibilmente, più simile, per quanto riguarda cultura e forme organizzative, a certe esperienze di fine Ottocento che alla tradizione novecentesca.



lo Squaderno 31
Precariousness and spaces in digital society

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Guest Artist // Marianne Flotron



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In the next issue:

Early morning – as the city wakes up...

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